**Logo

Description automatically generated**

**MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL**

**Work Session Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, December 5th, 2023**

**4:30pm – Regular Session**

A Work Session of the Mayor and Town Council of Snow Hill, Maryland was held at The Old Fire Hall on Green Street on Tuesday, December 5th, 2023.

**PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT**

Mayor Mike Pruitt

Councilmember Janet Simpson

Councilmember Diana Walsh

Councilmember Margaret Ann Fletcher

**STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Rick Pollitt, Town Manager

Carol Sullivan, Executive Administrator

Melissa Kempfer, Clerk

Maureen Howarth, Esq. Town Attorney

Andy McGee, Police Department Chief

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

1. **Call to Order**

Mayor Mike Pruitt called the meeting to order at 4:34pm.

Mayor Pruitt switched the order of the agenda to accommodate Councilmember Walsh. The mayor moved to Item Two, the Black-Eyed Susan gangway.

1. **Surplus Property Disposition, continued**
   1. **Black-Eyed Susan gangway (pending legal counsel input)**

The gangway is still on the boardwalk in town and is a safety hazard and eyesore. Public Works Director Randy Barfield was charged with the task of dismantling and storing the gangway until the Town can dispose of it. There is interest from the purchaser of the boat to also acquire the gangway.

Town Attorney Howarth spoke about the process to dispose of government property. Ms. Howarth said that the town does not currently have a process in place for this type of property and shared that this is a good opportunity to establish a new process.

* 1. **Willow Street (donate?)**

Town Manager Pollitt updated that they were able to confirm that there are no grantimplications associated with disposing of the property and that any Department of Community Development grant money that could have been involved with the property has expired. The State of Maryland stated that we are free to do what we wish with the property.

Town Attorney Howarth reviewed the options that the town council had suggested and does not want to do unnecessary research until she knows what the council’s intent for the property is.

Councilmember Walsh would like to have a conversation with Dr. Blake of the African American Heritage Society. She would like to explore a partnership with the AAHS. Councilmember Fletcher agreed with Ms. Walsh about a partnership and wanted to explore grant funding. All councilmembers wish to preserve the history of the property.

Ms. Howarth suggested that Grants Administrator Paul Bessette look for grant opportunities with the focus of preserving African-American history. She mentioned that if AAHS receives the grant funds for the project on town owned property that a Memorandum of Understanding would be in order.

Mayor Pruitt shared his support of gifting AAHS the property. He voiced his unease with the idea of a partnership. The Mayor added that he is looking to clear the property from the town’s books.

Councilmembers agree that preserving the history of the site is most important. Councilmembers all agreed to hold on to the Willow Street property and explore projects and partnerships to preserve the site’s history. The councilmembers agreed the next step is to talk with Dr. Blake and do more research into the historical significance of the property.

* 1. **Market Street (donate Scarborough lot?)**

Ms. Howarth reviewed the information from the November 28th work session meeting. Councilmembers shared that they are uncomfortable selling off the property and not honoring the promises the town made to the Scarborough family. The Mayor, Town Manager, and Town Council all agree to look into the 2nd parcel that was purchased. They would like to see the year purchased and know the intent of the property that adjoins the Scarborough lot.

Chief McGee shared that he had the plans for the proposed police station, but they aren’t dated. He added that a much larger footprint would need to accommodate the police station than in the previous plans. The Chief shared that he believed new plans would need at least two of the parcels on Market Street.

It was suggested by Ms. Howarth to have an architect upgrade the site plans to include updated storm water management, increased parking, and other requirements.

After discussion by all parties, the Market Street properties will stay in the possession of the town until further research can be done.

* 1. **PNC property (new appraisal?)**

Mr. Pollitt updated that the town had received a State Community Legacy Grant for $150,000 in 2019 for the purpose of purchasing the PNC property. The total cost of the PNC property was $216,250 and the town paid the remaining balance. Mr. Pollitt shared that the grant’s initial intent was to encourage development of the property for a restaurant. The grant’s purpose shifted at the time of implementation to preventing the county from purchasing the building for office space. The town’s intent was to keep it a tax-producing property.

Ms. Howarth suggested that Grants Administrator Bessette confirm with State grants records that the town can move forward freely with the property.

Mayor Pruitt brought up concerns about the bulkhead on the property that Kevin Brown had spoken about at the November 28th work session meeting. Mr. Pruitt also agreed that if the property is sold that it should include the waterfront section.

Councilmembers expressed their interest in another appraisal to include the boardwalk and taking into account the National Flood Insurance Program restrictions. Ms. Howarth added that if the town decided to sell the property, a realtor would have their own idea of what the property would sell for.

Town Manager Pollitt shared that there are multiple people who have expressed interest in the property. Councilmembers collectively agree to start the process to sell the property.

1. **Vacant Properties Registration Ordinance**

Ms. Howarth and Councilmember Walsh have been working through the Vacant Property Ordinance. Councilmember Walsh is seeking input on Article II, Part 134-6 Definition of Vacant. Councilmembers addressed the addition with attention to commercial properties. Councilmembers will review the addition and address at a later time.

The Councilmembers reviewed Part 134-13 Appeals addressing appeals reviewed by the Housing Review Board. Ms. Howarth suggested that the appeals be handled by the Housing Appeals Review Board instead of creating a new board to address the issue. Councilmembers agreed with the suggestion.

Part 134-7 Applicability, Exemptions Part 4 was addressed. Councilmembers agree to keep the wording of Part 4.

It was discussed by Mayor Pruitt and Councilmembers that Part 2 of the Exemptions stating that buildings that suffered fire damage have 120 days to obtain permits seemed like not adequate time. Further research and review are needed.

Filing of Registration Statement Part D was next addressed. Councilmembers discussed the importance of having an inspection done in the off-years between State inspections by the Code Official. Further review is needed and the wording will stay until review is done.

1. **Dr. Pesaniello Train Station Proposal**

Mr. Pollitt spoke about Dr. Pesaniello’s interest in leasing the Snow Hill Train Station property. She proposed using part of the building for offices for her Mental Health practice and a portion to the space for her miniature zoo display.

Councilmembers shared that they don’t agree with the entirety of Dr. Pesaniello’s proposal. Councilmembers expressed concerns about the town’s current use of the property. The Mayor and Councilmembers discussed the possibility of creating a template for a possible lease of the property.

Mayor Pruitt expressed the desire to know the current price point on commercial property rental. Councilmembers expressed needing further discussion and research before leasing the building and would also like to see a draft of a lease for the Train Station. All parties agree that there is no interest in selling the Train Station.

Mayor Pruitt then moved to address additional Council comments at 5:53pm

1. **Mayor and Council comments**

Councilmember Simpson shared that she is happy to see progress in the building ordinance. Mrs. Simpson then inquired about the current opening for a Public Works position that is in the budget. Executive Administrator Sullivan shared that the position was not currently posted. Town Manager Pollitt stated that, so far, any applicants reviewed have not been qualified. Mrs. Simpson expressed that Public Works needs the help and would like to see it posted.

Mayor moved to open up the meeting to public comments at 5:56pm

1. **Public Comment**

Town resident Rob Hall expressed that he was not impressed by the progress being made in the working meetings. Mr. Hall shared his thoughts about the lack of upkeep on the Willow Street property. He believes that better maintenance would make it more attractive to potential investors. Mr. Hall also shared information about the Market Street property. He stated he spoke with Kelly Pruitt and she recalls a promise made to the citizens of the town that the purchased property would not be used for government offices. He is unsure if that statement is in writing. Mr. Hall also expressed that before the town starts a lease draft process, the value of the building should first be addressed.

Town resident Fran Price addressed the PNC building and suggested having a couple of realtors come in and give their suggestions at no cost. Ms. Price shared that she thought having a partnership for the Willow Street property was a bad idea. She also shared her concern about leasing the property and questioned who would be responsible for the utility bills.

Town resident John Gilliland posed questions about the historical significance of the Willow Street property and agreed with Ms. Price that a partnership for the property was not a good idea. Mr. Gilliland went on to address the PNC building and Train Station. He expressed that the town should know the value of the properties and shared that the town should have realtors come and assess the properties for free. He also expressed that if the town was going to lease the Train Station, that it should be a lease that is open to the public and not just one party. Mr. Gilliland wanted to know the significance and end goal of the vacant building registration.

Mayor Pruitt responded to Mr. Gilliland’s question. The mayor stated that the goal is to fill the vacancies. Councilmember Walsh shared that the code has been in the works for years. Ms. Walsh also shared that the council wants to see progress on enforcing the code.

Mr. Hall expressed the need for reports showing what the code accomplishes. Mr. Hall feels like there would be more support if the process and progress was shown.

Mayor Pruitt then asked for a motion to adjourn

1. **Adjournment**

Councilmember Simpson made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Councilmember Walsh and passed unanimously. The time was 6:18pm.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NAME** | **AYE** | **NO** | **ABSTAIN** | **RECUSED** | **ABSENT** |
| **Margaret Ann Fletcher** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Janet Simpson** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **Diana Walsh** | **X** |  |  |  |  |
| **TALLY** | **3** |  |  |  |  |

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Kempfer

Clerk I