

**City of Aberdeen Council Meeting
May 20, 2013**

Present: Mayor Bennett, Councilwoman Elliott, Councilman Garner,
Councilwoman Landbeck, and Councilwoman Young

Absent: None

Also Present: Douglas Miller, City Manager
Phyllis Grover, Director of Planning and Community Development
Matthew Lapinsky, Director of Public Works
Henry Trabert, Chief of Police
Opiribo Jack, Director of Finance
Doris Manner, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order in the Council Chambers by Mayor Bennett at 7:00 p.m. The prayer was led by Pastor Calvin Wilson, New Life Christian Fellowship Church of God and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Councilman Garner.

A motion was made by Councilman Garner and seconded by Councilwoman Landbeck to approve the minutes of the Business Meeting, Work Session, April 8, 2013; the Business Meeting, Work Session of April 15, 2013; and the Council Meeting of April 22, 2013.

The motion was passed with a vote of 5 – yes.

PRESENTATIONS:

1. Beautification and Preservation Awards, Heritage Trust

- a) Carolyn and Harvey Thomas, 33A Swan Street
- b) Mary Goetz, 29 Mount Royal Avenue

Mayor Bennett and Mr. Dan Augustyniak of the Heritage Trust, acknowledged the beautification efforts of the award recipients. Ms. Carolyn Thomas was in attendance.

2. Aberdeen Lions Club Earth Day Contribution

Mr. Mark Schlottman of the Aberdeen Lions Club presented a \$500 contribution to the City of Aberdeen in the amount of \$500 for the Harford County Earth Day Committee.

3. Proclamation in Observance of National Kids to Parks Day

Mayor Bennett acknowledged the Proclamation in Observance of National Kids to Parks Day dated for Saturday, May 18, 2013.

4. Aberdeen Police Department Uniform Presentation

Mr. Harvey Klein, President of Red the Uniform Taylor, presented the North American Association of Uniform Manufacturers & Distributors (NAUMD) award for the “2013 Best Dressed Public Safety Award for Police Departments with Under 200 Officers” to Chief Trabert on behalf of the Aberdeen Police Department. This award was originally presented on April 5, 2013 at a reception in Orlando, Florida.

5. Mayor’s Budget Message/State of the City Address

The Mayor delivered the following address:

Good evening and thank you for attending this evening. I would like to brief you on the State of the City since that last time I gave this address a year ago. In a sentence, Aberdeen is doing well, not perfect, but doing well.

Since this time last year, the Council and I have made transparency and outreach a major priority. We have come to realize that the manner in which our citizens get their information has changed and then so must we change the way we let our residents and customers know what is going on in their city. We now have three meeting-work sessions per month which are televised. And, we have a least one formal business meeting per month which is also televised. I continually get comments from many of our citizens that they appreciate the fact that we do this. Most of them cannot squeeze attending a Council Meeting in their busy, personal schedules but they like the fact that they can tune in on Thursday nights and see what we are up to while at the same time tending to cleaning up dishes, doing laundry or helping their children with their homework. We have also received many compliments on our newsletter. We do six per year but want to increase that to ten. And, we are revamping our webpage to make it more comprehensive and more user-friendly. We’ve also created a Facebook page and have had a great deal of fun with that. And, last but not certainly least, we continue to support the traditional press; I am available to any reporter and even give them my cell number so they can reach me at the drop of a hat. We want there to be no obstacles for those who want to follow their municipal government.

Aberdeen has a wonderful sense of community. Much of that is attributable to the fabulous people that we have living here. And, it’s also because we have great volunteers. We have the **best** Christmas parade north of Baltimore, and 2012 was no exception. Caroline Curry and her committee also arranged for perfect weather. We also launched a parade in August to welcome the players and coaches visiting Aberdeen for the Cal Ripken Work Series. This was a great day and I was proud how our folks celebrated these teams who traveled the “Road to Aberdeen” from Canada, the Dominican Republic, Australia, Korea, Japan, Mexico and from all over the United States. We plan to do both events again in 2013.

Hopefully, you were able to attend Earth Day in Festival Park. It was again, an outstanding success. Hopefully, you plan to attend the Memorial Day Celebration in Veterans Park next week. This event and the Veteran’s Day event are organized by our various veterans organizations. As I said, Aberdeen has a wonderful sense of community.

We have had a busy year since last May. The Aberdeen Police Department continues to work towards being CALEA (*Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc.*) certified. This accreditation is not easy to get, but once we achieve this goal, we will be one of the few municipal departments with this honor. I am also pleased that our police department has taken great strides in being more visible in the community. The APD (*Aberdeen Police Department*) has hosted many community policing events in our different neighborhoods. In addition, the Chief has made it a priority that officers get out on foot patrol and visit our various businesses on a regular basis.

I must say that it has also been a sad year for our police department. We lost our K-9 officer, Charlie Armetta to a tragic off-duty accident. Charlie was admired by all who knew him and left a wife and one year old daughter. Then several weeks later, we lost our CSI, Mark Franklin, to cancer. He was a highly respected investigator and one who other departments liked to borrow because of his ability and expertise. And, while not a member of the department, we recently lost Al Severn, Sr. Al's son is a sergeant in our department who organized our community policing events. Al, Sr. was frequently at his son's side helping on the day of the event.

Our Public Works Department has been busy as well. We are about to throw the switch on a new Enhanced Nutrient Removal wastewater plant that will make it one of the most advanced in the State. We also purchased pipe bursting equipment with the hopes of lining some of the leaking sewer lines within the city. And, our crews continued to offer top notch, routine service even when faced with budget cuts.

I think one of the better experiences I had this year, in an odd way, was observing our police department and our public works department prepared for Super-storm Sandy. While the storm did less damage here than expected, thank God, we were ready. The Chief set up our own emergency operations center, and we simultaneously interfaced with the County's EOC (*Emergency Operations Center*). It was an all-hands-on-deck event for us. We truly lived up to the saying "prepare for the worst and hope for the best".

Our Planning Department is working on one of the most exciting projects that Aberdeen has seen in quite some time. We have an ambitious vision to create a transit oriented development around where the Amtrak station is currently. This project will take some time to plan, finance and build, but when done, we will have a mix of residences, shops, offices and, of course, a new train station.

All in all, our employees have been doing more with less. We have had no choice as we have been confined by our budget difficulties. But I am proud to say that our people have become innovative and service delivery in these difficult times was not affected.

On May 6th, we introduced the budget for FY 14. Budgets of late have not been easy to balance, and this one was no exception. But we feel that we are using the peoples' money wisely while, at the same time, pursuing some important priorities.

I have spoken about the transparency and outreach priority. I suppose the top priority for

FY 14 is to address the state of our roadways. Due to severe reduction in State shared revenue, we have had to delay the routine overlay of many of our streets. Well, the deterioration of those roadways did suddenly stop because we had no money. The condition of this infrastructure only got worse. So, in FY 14, we are committing three million dollars to catch up on the vitally important paving of our roads. We will do this by using increased State HURs (*Highway User Revenues*), by committing money out of our general fund and by dipping into our fund balance that we have been able to build up over time.

We were able to hold the tax rate where it has been for the past two years. Unfortunately, such was not the case for our trash sticker prices, our water rates and our sewer rates. Many of you will remember that the trash sticker program was created to encourage recycling. Ours was one of the best “pay as you throw” programs in the State. And, the money from those stickers was earmarked to pay the tipping fee for our trash. Those tipping feeds have gone up and we will adjust the sticker process to reflect that increase.

Our water and sewer funds are known as enterprise funds. Basically, the expenses in those funds must be covered by the rates charged. We have tried to keep our water and sewer rates stable for as long as we could, but this year, we had no choice but to raise them.

A sewer system is a very expensive operation to run. Most of you know that we have just completed a major upgrade to our wastewater plant. This upgrade will allow us to remove even more nitrogen and phosphorus from our effluent and, in turn, help the Chesapeake Bay. But, this does not come without a cost. Enhanced Nutrient Removal requires more electricity to operate the additional pumps, blowers and motors. And, while the ENR upgrade is new, we have many older components of the plant that have failed and need attention. We will have to take a loan to address those needs. There were many more capital needs identified for water and sewer; \$16 million to be exact. But, we know that our rate payers can absorb only so much, so many of these needs will have to be deferred.

I am proud that the City of Aberdeen is a good partner in the county, in the region, and in the State. One of my top priorities when I took office in 2007 was to build bridges. I believe that we have done that. I have an excellent relationship with General Ferrell of APG (*Aberdeen Proving Ground*), the County Executive David Craig and I meet and speak frequently. And, while Mayor Wayne Dougherty in Havre de Grace and I get into some very friendly spats on who offers the best city services; we have teamed together up on some major issues that impact our respective communities and have made a difference. I want to congratulate Mayor Dougherty on his recent re-election and on a great “War of 1812” weekend which, if you were there, was indeed a special event. Hats off to Havre de Grace for that. It was important to Aberdeen, that while I was President of the Maryland Municipal League for a couple years to make a lot of friends in Annapolis and was on a first name basis with most of the leadership in Annapolis. I think that this is all important for Aberdeen and for our friends and stakeholders. I additionally want to give a special thank you to Delegate Mary-Dulany James who worked with us on the Hotel Tax Bill and put a bill in for us this year; it got on the floor of the House but did not make it off the floor. But, she was also able put in a bill to get us \$450,000 in a bond bill to be used on the stadium to repave the parking

lot that has never had a top coat in ten years, and for repairing the railings. We would like to thank her for that opportunity and for those dollars to do that.

Aberdeen is a wonderful community. Your Council members and I love the city and pour our hearts and souls into trying to make it an even better place to live, work and shop. We value your trust in us and we look forward to a very successful year for Aberdeen.

God bless.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Ordinance No. 13-O-03, Budget FY 2014

Mr. Michael Hiob, Graceford Drive. Mr. Hiob questioned why the Auxiliary Police budget was zero for FY 2014. Mayor Bennett said this item is in the Police budget now and was restored to the FY 2012 level.

2. Ordinance No. 13-O-04, Repeal of Security Cameras

Ms. Grover provided explanation and there were no public comments.

3. Ordinance No. 13-O-06, Sign Code Amendments

Ms. Grover provided explanation and there were no public comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Mr. Bob Hartman, Paradise Road. Mr. Hartman was opposed to the Council salary increase.
2. Ms. Ellen Cutler, Beards Hill Road. Ms. Cutler was opposed to the Council salary increase.
3. Mr. Wayne Oberholtzer, W. Bel Air Avenue. Mr. Oberholtzer was opposed to the Council salary increase.
4. Ms. Janice Grant, Long Drive. Ms. Grant discussed property matters.
5. Mr. Gary Gerdom, Post Road. Mr. Gerdom was opposed to the Council salary increase and suggested a different amount.
6. Pastor Calvin Wilson, Rosedale Avenue. Pastor Wilson expressed his concerns regarding the current amounts proposed for the Council salary increase.
7. Ms. Beverly Norton, Post Road. Ms. Norton was opposed to the Council salary increase.
8. Mr. Ed Meehan Cambridge Avenue. Mr. Meehan stated concerns about high grass at foreclosed houses and the Council salary increase.

9. Ms. Karen Heavey, W. Bel Air Avenue. Ms. Heavey expressed her concerns about the Council salary increase.
10. Mr. Charles Vickers, Crestmont Drive. Mr. Vickers was opposed to the current amount of the salary increase.
11. Mr. Pat Faircloth, Southgate Road. Mr. Faircloth favors the salary increase.
12. Ms. Debra Shirley, Ruby Drive. Ms. Shirley was opposed to the amount of the salary raise; a smaller raise was more sufficient.
13. Mr. Bernard Backus, Northgate Road. Mr. Backus was in favor of the salary increase.
14. Mr. Michael Hiob, Graceford Road. Mr. Hiob stated his reasons for his opposition to the salary increase. He said that a referendum would be pursued if passed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

1. Ordinance No. 13-O-02, Amendment to City's Ethics Ordinance (For Adoption)

Mr. Miller said that there had been previous revisions to this Ethics Ordinance which had been sent to the State. The State had requested changes and the current document will comply with the request from the State.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Landbeck and seconded by Councilwoman Young to approve Ordinance No. 13-O-02, Amendment to City's Ethics Ordinance.

The motion was passed with a vote of 5 – yes.

2. Ordinance No. 13-O-05, Mayor/Council Salaries (For Adoption)

Mayor Bennett stated that this Ordinance will be scheduled for discussion at the June 10th 2013, Work Session. No vote would presently be taken.

3. Charter Resolution No. 13-CR-01, Exemption from County Law (For Introduction & Adoption)

Mayor Bennett introduced Charter Resolution No. 13-CR-01, Exemption from County Law.

Mr. Miller reported on the concept of home rule and that this resolution would enable home rule to be officially recorded in the City's Charter per the City Attorney's recommendation.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Elliott and seconded by Councilwoman Landbeck to approve Charter Resolution No. 13-CR-01, Exemption from County Law.

The motion was approved with a vote of 5 – yes.

BUSINESS OF THE CITY:

1. Unfinished Business – None
2. New Business – None
3. Business from the Director of Planning & Community Development – None
4. Business from the Chief of Police

Chief Trabert reported on past and upcoming policing events. He encouraged the public to report crimes no matter how small.

5. Business from the Director of Finance – None
6. Business from the Director of Public Works

Mr. Lapinsky said that the Gallery Walk at Aberdeen High School will have the presentation of the well field project completed by the student mentee. This will be submitted to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation for a grant consideration.

7. Business from the City Manager

Mr. Miller reported that June 3, 2013, was scheduled as Business Meeting at 7:00 p.m. The budget is up for approval at that meeting. The June 10, 2013 meeting is a business meeting/work session scheduled at 4:00 p.m. The budget must be approved and the schedule will be adjusted accordingly.

BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL:

1. Business from the City Council

The Council acknowledged those who attended the meeting and explained their thoughts on the salary increase. The Council members explained that the Mayor and Council members have dedicated immeasurable time and energy on the complex and demanding issues pertaining to the City. The increase is for future councils and the next election is 2 ½ years away. The current Council members already understood when they entered office that that they would never be adequately compensated. They are concerned with the future of Aberdeen and the quality of elected officials to follow.

The transit oriented development deal involves federal and state contracts that involve millions of dollars. The City has received two million, five hundred thousand dollars in an insurance settlement and they have developed an account to protect the funds for the future. In the past month, they have acquired over a million dollars in grants. The

Council has refinanced some loans because previous officials have made decisions that have almost bankrupted the City. They have said “no” to Presbyterian Homes, whereas previous administrations have said “yes” to the “Wetlands” against the peoples’ wishes. They have made the difficult decisions and have made developers pay their way for annexations. The train station and downtown development are underway and will take 15-20 years. The City now has an AA bond rating and they have saved the City millions of dollars relative to Ripken Stadium.

The members of the Council have dedicated much time to charity, volunteer, and service work; working on the Council is a job which currently pays \$7.00 per hour. Their desire is that the City’s future elected officials are adequately compensated and are able to conduct City work properly. A recent robo call contained misinformation about a tax increase; there was never a tax increase discussed. The Council received a letter from former Councilman Hiob that contained inaccuracies.

2. Business from the Mayor

Mayor Bennett thanked all who attended and made public comment. Council will take the comments under consideration. The point of their work is not to get rich but there should be reasonable compensation. Presently, a Council member’s yearly wages are \$7,500 and the Mayor’s wages are \$10,000. The Mayor enjoys his job and will continue working on the citizens’ behalf.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Council Meetings: Monday, June 3, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.
Monday, June 10, 2013 at 4:00 p.m.

Business Meeting, Work Session: Monday, June 17, 2013 at 4:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Councilwoman Elliott and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.