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3 **TOWN OF EASTON, MARYLAND**
4 **Easton Town Hall**
5 **14 S. Harrison Street**

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November 17, 2014

PRESENT AT CONVENING

9 Mayor Robert C. Willey
10 Council President John Ford
11 Councilmember Megan M. Cook
12 Councilmember Kelley K. Malone
13 Councilmember Pete Leshar
14 Councilmember Leonard E. Wendowski, Sr.

Also present was the Town Manager Mr. Robert F. Karge, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy Ruf.

OPENING REMARKS BY MRS. COOK AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Mrs. Cook gave opening remarks and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

EXECUTIVE SESSION.

President Ford informed the audience that the council had held a Closed Session prior to the regularly scheduled council meeting to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice and for an Executive update.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 3, 2014 MEETING.

Upon motion by Mr. Leshar seconded by Ms. Malone and carried unanimously, minutes of the November 3, 2014 meeting were approved as written.

President Ford stated that the utilities broadcast server is down but the meeting would be broadcast tomorrow.

FIRE BOARD.

Chief Sonny Jones discussed repairs to the new ladder truck. He stated that Sutphen put the Town of Easton at the top of the list for repairs. Chief Jones stated that the warranty will commence upon completion of the repairs.

Chief Jones reminded everyone to be responsible when using heating appliances and smoke alarms.

Chief Jones stated that the Department is excited about the holiday season. He encouraged everyone to visit the train show and the light display at the Easton Fire House.

Mr. Wendowski stated that the cost to take the truck to New York for repairs should not be the responsibility of the department.

Ms. Malone asked about the recruitment drive "Gear Up for Talbot, the county wide recruitment drive for membership in the Fire Department.

Chief Jones discussed technical training in the High Schools.

President Ford discussed Chief Sonny Jones' position as chief and his exemplary service.

President Tim Knotts discussed the recent Bull Roast. He stated that the fundraiser was not as successful as previous years but the golf tournament was well attended in September.

President Knotts stated that the Tower truck which was sold has been delivered. He stated that Hodgenville, Kentucky Fire Department had received training on it.

President Tim Knotts stated that this would be his last meeting as President.

President Ford expressed gratitude to President Knotts.

ITEMS BY MAYOR WILLEY.

Mayor Willey stated that the Naval Jr. ROTC, Post 70 and 77, VFW 5118 and the Town of Easton sponsored a Veterans' Celebration November 10 at the Talbot Auditorium which was well attended.

70 Mayor Willey stated Clifton Park Annexation is moving forward.

71
72 Mayor Willey stated that the Audited Financial Statement FY 2013 is complete. He stated that he would like to
73 draw attention to the accrued shortfall. The audit out brief will occur at the next meeting.

74
75 **ITEMS BY THE TOWN MANAGER.**

76 **APPROVAL OF PUBLIC ASSEMBLY EVENT.**

77
78 Mr. Karge asked for approval for the following Public Assembly Requests:

- 79 • Olde Tyme Holiday parade December 6, 2014 at 6:00 p.m. Easton Police Department and Easton Business
80 Alliance have worked together to make a route and Easton Police recommends approval.
- 81 • 5 & 10 K Run, November 28, 300 participants; fundraiser for Hospice.

82
83
84
85 Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mrs. Cook and carried unanimously, the Council approved the Public
86 Assembly Permits as submitted by Easton Police Department.

87
88 On behalf of the Town of Easton staff, Mr. Karge wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

89
90 Mr. Wendowski asked for information regarding the advertisement for bids to build a house.

91
92 Mr. Karge clarified that the town has been authorized by Program Open Space to substitute the lot on Chapel Road
93 for a different lot that is on the old Public Works property and the town plans to build a house to put the Chapel
94 Road property back on the tax roll.

95
96 **ITEMS BY THE TOWN ATTORNEY.**

97
98 Mr. Leshner thanked the Town Attorney for adding clarity to the Brant Court Ordinance.

99
00 **ORDINANCE NO. 645, "AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF EASTON GRANTING THE**
01 **APPLICATION OF PENGUIN VENTURES, LLC FOR APPROVAL OF A PLANNED UNIT**
02 **DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE EASTON ZONING ORDINANCE."**

03
04 The Town Attorney stated that the legislation before the council this evening is slightly different.

05
06 President Ford brought Ordinance No. 645 to the floor for a first reading.

07
08 Upon motion by Ms. Malone seconded by Mrs. Cook and carried, Ordinance No. 645 passed 4-1 with Mr.
09 Wendowski voting in opposition.

10
11 **PUBLIC HEARING TO DISCUSS A PROPOSAL FROM THE EASTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
12 **CORPORATION ON BEHALF OF THE EASTERN SHORE FOOD HUB CORP WHO SEEKS TO ENTER**
13 **INTO A LONG-TERM LEASE WITH THE TOWN OF EASTON FOR THE USE OF APPROXIMATELY 40**
14 **ACRES OF THE MISTLETOE HALL FARM SITE FOR THE PURPOSES OF BUILDING A HEALTHY**
15 **FOOD AGGREGATION, MARKETING, AND DISTRIBUTION FACILITY, OR "FOOD HUB".**

16
17 At 7:18 p.m., President Ford opened the public hearing.

18
19 President Ford stated that written comments have been received.

20
21 President Ford discussed the alleged potential conflict of interest with President Ford, and Mr. Leshner. He stated that
22 the Ethics Commission will be asked to weigh in. President Ford stated that the Eastern Shore Food Hub will not be
23 voted on this evening. The Council will listen to comments.

24
25 President Ford stated that the Easton Economic Development Corporation will begin the presentation.

26
27 Mr. Herb Miller presented the proposed project; Eastern Shore Food Hub. EEDC wants to establish Easton as a healthy
28 food hub which is a high job producing industry. Mr. Miller stated that the presentation tonight is to introduce a
29 regional food hub proposed in Easton.

30
31 Mr. Chip Akridge, resident of Talbot County stated that he is interested in the project. He stated that the idea of farm to
32 table is a great idea. Mr. Akridge stated that he is most concerned about the economy. Talbot County in the last year
33 had a gross product decline by 3% due to not creating jobs. He stated that the food hub will encourage other food
34 related business to locate in the county.

35
36 Mr. Miller stated this is a non-profit organization.

37
38 Commitment from state of Maryland and Department of Housing and Community Development was discussed.

39 Mr. Miller stated that the request is to lease 40 acres at \$12,000 per year which is six times what is currently received.

40
41
42 Mr. Miller reiterated that they intend to grow healthy food without chemicals for consumption.

43
44 Mr. Andy Andrews, Chestertown MD added that the Food Hub intends to work with growers that want to move in that
45 direction. Mr. Andrews stated that they intend to follow the best management practices.

46
47 President Ford opened the hearing for public comments.

48
49 Ms. Deana Liebman, Future Harvest, Cockeyesville MD (office address) discussed growing a new generation of
50 farmers. Create a beginner farmer program. Will supply produce and farmers to grow that produce.

51
52 Mr. Herman Espenhorst, 406 Arbor Place, was present to discuss the lack of information to the public. He asked that
53 information be available.

54
55 The Town Manager agreed to put the power point presentation which was presented at tonight's council meeting on the
56 town's website.

57
58 Mr. Adam Grant Goldsborough Neck Road, stated that he is generally reluctant in increasing traffic but excited about
59 Easton having an opportunity to grow safe, chemical free foods. Mr. Grant urged the council to take this opportunity.

60
61 Barry Coe, Ruby Road, stated he is very much aware of the need for jobs. He stated that this project will bring jobs to
62 the area as well as healthy food. He stated that this will help to grow the economy and recommended approval of the
63 request to lease the land.

64
65 Ms. Amy Owsley, Eastern Shore Land Conservancy Deputy Director, 120 S Washington Street, urged the council for
66 their support. Ms. Owsley read a statement in support of the project. She stated that she is on the Food Hub Advisory
67 Board.

68
69 Eric, a representative from Becky's Beans, stated that the proposal has a lot of transparency problems. He stated that he
70 runs a small business. He stated that this proposal has no numbers. He questioned the entities that are operating the
71 Food Hub. He called for more transparency, projections and disclosure of where the money is coming from. He
72 discussed the eastern shore growing season.

73
74 Mr. Miller stated that they have people that want to operate the food hub. They intend to find the best operator for the
75 town. Mr. Miller stated that a fiscal analysis will be sent to council. The Food Hub's intention is to help small farmers
76 aggregate food and distribute.

77
78 Mr. Ed Busch, Centreville, MD stated that he is representing Teddy Bear Fresh; a four million dollar operation. He
79 discussed his industry experience. Mr. Busch discussed Teddy Bear's Fresh position. He discussed how the Food Hub
80 will affect their private operation. He stated that the lease will give an unfair option. Mr. Busch stated that their
81 operation is a proven growth model. Mr. Busch stated that there are currently six food hubs in the state of Maryland. He
82 stated that his biggest concern is that their tax payers' dollars helping to fund their competition.

83
84 President Ford discussed the terms of the lease and how it applies to Economic Development.

85
86 Ms. Jennifer Coleman, Easton stated that she has worked in health care for 20 years. She stated that she is all for more
87 choices for healthy food.

88
89 Mr. Joe Gamble, resident of Talbot County, stated that he has two daughters that work at Teddy Bear Fresh at quality
90 jobs. He stated that they have 35 employees at Teddy Bear Fresh. Mr. Gamble stated that the Salins have tremendously
91 invested in this community. They bought their property and pay taxes. Mr. Gamble stated that this proposal looks like a
92 subsidized entity.

93
94 Ms. Kathleen Witte, resident of Talbot County and developer of Easton Market Square stated that the community is in
95 economic trouble.

96
97 Ms. Melissa Grant, Goldsborough Neck Road, stated that this is a wonderful community with a lot of potential. She
98 stated that she is a marine ecologist and teacher. Ms. Grant stated that she is very sympathetic but the Food Hub would
99 benefit a lot of small businesses. She stated that she is in support of the food hub and urged the council to consider the
00 far reaching implications.

01
02 Mr. Steve Harris, Preston MD stated that he grows about 50 acres of produce a year. He stated that he has no objection
03 to organic fruits and vegetables. Mr. Harris stated that he is not against the Food Hub. Mr. Harris stated that he is a
04 produce and grain farmer. Mr. Harris stated that this proposal would require a lot of land to sustain enough food to
05 fulfill the demand they are describing.

06

07 Mr. Bobby Hutchinson, Lewistown Road, Cordova stated he has concerns regarding tax payer money to start up their
08 project. Mr. Hutchinson stated that he sees no provision to payback startup funds. Mr. Hutchison stated that he believes
09 this will compete with local produce stands. Mr. Hutchison stated that this may take out local jobs. He stated that
10 Caroline county provides a lot of fresh market vegetables. Mr. Hutchison stated that the growing season makes it
11 difficult to sell year round.

12
13 Ms. Libby Dawkins, 11 N Thorogood Lane, discussed teaching how to buy and cook healthy foods. She stated that she
14 cannot justify the cost of organic food. Ms. Dawkins stated that she believes the nonprofits should not be subsidized by
15 government. Ms. Dawkins asked if the land is taxed. Ms. Dawkins asked the council to be mindful of the tax payers'
16 money.

17
18 Ms. Kelly Jackson, Cambridge, MD stated that she is an agricultural producer and is present to hear the presentation.
19 She questioned how this will impact business farmers. Ms. Jackson asked the council to dig deeper. She stated that she
20 would hate to have this proposal achieve negative impact on farmers that are already established.

21
22 Mr. Andy Andrews, Chestertown MD stated he is working with Easton Economic Development to get this going. Mr.
23 Andrews stated that he wants to work with farmers that want to implement best practices. He discussed the health of
24 the bay and environmental practices that are his main concerns. Mr. Andrews stated that he intends to have
25 informational meetings with famers.

26
27 Eric, from Becky's Beans, stated that it takes several years for farmland to be used as organic at the cost of \$5,000 for
28 an organic license. He stated that the council needs more education. He stated he would prefer the Food Hub be done
29 privately with private funds. He discussed a crop pathogen that may affect the eastern shore.

30
31 At 9:11 p.m., President Ford closed the public hearing. He stated that he would leave comments open until close of
32 business this week. President Ford stated that further comments need to focus on the core issue. He stated that the
33 application is to lease 40 acres and that is what the public hearing is about this evening; if that is a good use of town
34 property. He suggested concerned citizens send comments and questions to the town office.

35
36 **REVIEW OF INVOICES TOTALING \$617,014.83.**

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38 Upon motion by Mr. Wendowski, seconded by Ms. Malone and carried unanimously, invoices totaling \$617,014.83
39 were approved.

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41 **ITEMS BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

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43 Mayor Willey discussed turkeys given to employees for the holiday. He asked the council if they are in favor of a gift
44 card in lieu of a turkey.

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47 **ADJOURN.**

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49 At 9:27 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Wendowski seconded by Ms. Malone and carried unanimously, President Ford
50 adjourned the regularly scheduled meeting.

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Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk