

MINUTES
Regular Meeting of the College Park City Council
Tuesday, October 8, 2013
7:30 p.m. – 8:20 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Andrew Fellows; Councilmembers Kabir, Wojahn, Catlin, Stullich, Day, Afzali and Mitchell.

ABSENT: Councilmember Dennis.

ALSO PRESENT: Steve Groh, Acting City Manager; Janeen Miller, City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Robert Stumpff, Director of Public Works; Catherine McGrath, Student Liaison.

Mayor Fellows opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Councilmember Wojahn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: A motion was made by Councilmember Stullich and seconded by Councilmember Day to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting on September 24, 2013. The motion passed 7 – 0 – 0.

Announcements: Councilmember Catlin announced that the Berwyn District Civic Association would hold their monthly meeting on Thursday, October 17, at 8:00 p.m. at Fealy Hall.

Councilmember Wojahn said that the “Keep Me Maryland” 5K Fundraiser raised between \$10,000 – \$12,000 to help keep students in school. He also announced that College Park Day will be held on Saturday, October 19 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Wells Ice Rink parking lot.

Councilmember Kabir said the North College Park Civic Association would hold their monthly meeting on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. at Davis Hall.

City Manager’s Report: Acting City Manager Steve Groh reported that the Public Works yard will be open this Saturday for the final clean-up of the fall. The leaf collection schedule has been released and will be posted on the website. He called attention to the items in the red folders.

Student Liaison’s Report: Catherine McGrath also discussed the “Keep Me Maryland” 5K. The on-campus tailgate of October 8 is a “go” and will begin at noon. In order to go to the tailgate you have to have a ticket to the game. The safety walk is Thursday, October 10. Meet at the Union and take a bus to one of the three safety walk routes.

Comments from the Audience on Non-Agenda Items:

Mary Cook, 4705 Kiernan Road: She discussed the neighborhood noise caused by the “Cops on Tops of Donut Shops” that was held at Dunkin Donuts on a recent Saturday. University of Maryland police were on top of the store raising money for Special Olympics. She applauds the cause but objects to the noise caused by the megaphone. She also applauded Councilmembers Wojahn and Kabir for creating the north College Park Farmers Market.

Carl Patterson, College Park Housing Authority Commissioner, Attick Towers: Mr. Patterson thanked the City for their support of the College Park Seniors programs.

CONSENT AGENDA: A motion was made by Councilmember Wojahn and seconded by Councilmember Kabir to adopt the Consent Agenda, which consisted of the following items:

- 13-R-22** Resolution of the Mayor and Council of the City of College Park, Maryland Adopting the Recommendation of the Advisory Planning Commission Regarding Request for Certification of Non-Conforming Use CNU-2013-02 for College Park Enterprises, LLC, 4802 Calvert Road, College Park, Maryland, Recommending Approval of the Request for Certification of Non-Conforming Use.
- 13-G-107** Approval of recipient for 2013 Jack Perry Award.

The motion passed 7 – 0 – 0.

ACTION ITEMS

- 13-CR-02** Adoption of 13-CR-02, A Charter Resolution Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland, Amending Article III “Mayor And Council”, §C3-4, “Compensation” Of The City Charter To Increase The Mayor’s Annual Salary To \$10,500.00 And Each Council Members’ Annual Salary To \$7,000.00, Effective January 1, 2014.

A motion was made by Councilmember Catlin and seconded by Councilmember Wojahn to adopt 13-CR-02, A Charter Resolution Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland, Amending Article III “Mayor And Council”, §C3-4, “Compensation” Of The City Charter To Increase The Mayor’s Annual Salary To \$10,500.00 And Each Council Members’ Annual Salary To \$7,000.00, Effective January 1, 2014.

Mayor Fellows stated that because of the earlier Public Hearing, no public comment will be taken at this time.

Councilmember Catlin said Mayor and Council compensation hasn’t been increased in six years, and that in the past the City has made only small cost-of-living-type increases. He won’t be on Council next year to take advantage of any increase but he believes this is appropriate.

A motion was made by Councilmember Kabir and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to amend the salaries in the Charter Amendment by proposing a 10% increase, so compensation for Council would increase to \$5,500 and the Mayor’s to \$8,250.

Councilmember Kabir appreciates the hard work that Council puts into this; it is like a second job. But he feels a 40% hike is too much, especially in a year when we raised our residents’ tax. It doesn’t feel right to raise taxes and ask to be paid more in the same year. Anyone on Council should do the job to serve the community, not to make money. A 10% increase is above the COL and the CPI. This is taxpayer money.

Comments on the Amendment:

Mary Cook, 4705 Kiernan Road: She supports the amendment. This is not the time for a 40% increase.

Douglas Schontz, 4707 Fordham Road: No one is ever going to support an increase in taxes, just like it will never feel like a good time to increase salaries. It has been six years since the last increase and this is a needed correction. He opposes the amendment.

Councilmember Catlin is opposed to the amendment. We need to find ways to encourage people to run for office and to stay on Council. He has been on Council for 16 years, but overall the longevity numbers have plummeted. The job takes more time now than it used to because of e-mails and social media. Many other cities do not have the same complex issues to deal with that we do: the University, US 1, Purple Line and re-zoning – these things take a lot of time.

Councilmember Wojahn has heard compelling arguments on both sides but is opposed to the amendment. He works at least 20 hours each week as a councilmember, so his salary is less than minimum wage. If we don't increase the salary we are closing the door to people who may want to run for office. Contested council seats create a vibrant democracy.

Councilmember Afzali opposes the amendment. He won't be on Council next year so he won't benefit from the increase, but he strongly supports the original proposal. Many times we have to beg people to run for Council which is unhealthy for democracy.

Councilmember Stullich agreed that no one runs for City Council for the money and said it is not always easy to find people to run for Council. It is a challenge to fit the responsibilities required of a Councilmember with other responsibilities. College Park's salaries are historically low compared to other municipalities. The impact of this increase on the City budget is going to be very small.

Councilmember Kabir discussed the budgets and Council compensation in other municipalities. He said we should be spending what we have, not just what we want.

Councilmember Mitchell supports this amendment because of her fiduciary responsibility. The placeholder in the budget was for a 10% increase, and that is all we should consider now.

Councilmember Stullich said this is a fiscally conservative City with one of the lowest municipal tax rates in the County. Councilmembers work very hard for their community. Most of her constituents support this increase.

Councilmember Day will not support the amendment because of the amount of time and effort that council puts into this job.

Roll Call vote on the motion to amend the Charter Amendment:

Yes: Kabir, Mitchell

No: Wojahn, Catlin, Stullich, Day, Afzali

The motion to amend the Charter Amendment fails 2 – 5- 0.

Roll Call vote on the Charter Amendment, as introduced:

Yes: Wojahn, Catlin, Stulich, Day, Afzali

No: Kabir, Mitchell

The vote on the main motion for the Charter Amendment passes 5 – 2 – 0.

13-R-20. Adoption of 13-R-20.Amended, An Amendment To The Resolution Of The Amended Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland, Establishing The Neighborhood Stabilization Committee

A motion was made by Councilmember Afzali and seconded by Councilmember Wojahn to adopt 13-R-20 Amended to adopt amendments to the resolution that was adopted at the last meeting to add one City resident and one member of the Graduate Student Government.

Comments from the Audience:

Matthew Popkin, 6901 Preinkert Drive: He supports the amendment and the creation of the committee. This amendment will include all stakeholders in the ongoing discussions.

The motion passed 7 – 0 – 0.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilmember Catlin said the Governor is scheduled to visit the College Park Academy on Monday, October 21 at 9:30 a.m.

Councilmember Kabir asked if the College Park Community Foundation could be added to the list of groups that is approved to use City facilities free of charge. The Council concurred.

ADJOURN: A motion was made by Councilmember Afzali and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to enter into a closed session to consult with counsel on a legal matter. The council will not return to open session. With a vote of 7 – 0 – 0, Mayor Fellows adjourned the regular meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller, CMC
City Clerk

Date
Approved

Pursuant to §C6-3 of the College Park City Charter, at 8:20 p.m., in the Council Chambers of City Hall, a motion was made by Councilmember Afzali and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to enter into an Executive Session for the following reasons:

G: To Consult with Counsel on a Legal Matter

The motion passed 7 – 0 – 0 and after a brief recess the Closed Session convened at 8:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Andrew Fellows; Councilmembers Kabir, Wojahn, Catlin, Stulich, Day, Afzali and Mitchell.

Absent: Councilmember Dennis.

Also Present: Steve Groh, Acting City Manager; Janeen Miller, City Clerk; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Catherine McGrath, Student Liaison; Jimmy Marcos and Tommy Marcos.

Topics Discussed: The City Attorney advised the City Council about the outcome of an appeal before the District Council and about legal and financial issues related to an existing lease agreement.

Actions Taken: None.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Councilmember Afzali and seconded by Councilmember Wojahn to adjourn the Executive Session, and with a vote of 7 – 0 – 0, Mayor Fellows adjourned the Executive Session at 9:55 p.m.
