

MINUTES

CITY OF WESTMINSTER
Mayor and Common Council Meeting
December 13, 2021 at 7 pm
City Hall, 1838 Emerald Hill Lane, Westminster, MD 21157
[YouTube Channel Link](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Elected Officials Present: Mayor Becker, Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, Councilmember Hoff, and President Pecoraro.

Staff Present: Director of Housing Services Brown, Director of Technology Davidson, Director of Community Planning and Development Depo, Deputy Director of Public Works Department Dick, Comprehensive Planner Gray, Director of Recreation and Parks Gruber, City Administrator Imhulse, Police Administrative Services Manager Landsman, Chief of Police Ledwell, City Attorney Levan, Director of Human Resources McCullough (via Zoom).

Guests: Joe Dominick, Mike Thomas, Michele Szper, Kay Smith, Linda Herrmann, Beth Smith, Lynn Wimmer, Lauren Bumstead, Jeanne Vargo, and Sherri Lively.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

President Pecoraro requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Mayor and Common Council Special Meeting of November 15, 2021 and the Regular Meeting of November 22, 2021.

Councilmember Gilbert moved, seconded by Councilmember Chiavacci, to approve the minutes of November 15 and November 22, 2021.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

PRESENTATIONS

Ms. Gruber presented the donation checks to the Fallfest Charity Partners: Westminster Municipal Band, Special Olympics of Carroll County, Potomac Case Management, and MCQE Mobile Pet Pantry.

Ms. Gruber then presented the following awards for the Miracle on Main Street Holiday Electric Parade.

Best and Brightest – Carroll County Veterinary Clinic
Spirit of the Season – Carroll County Realtors Association
Main Street Champion – Merritt Athletic Club

Mayor Becker presented the following awards for the Holiday Storefront and Window Decorating Contest.

Best Traditional – Sterling Quality Water
Best Non-Traditional – Westminster New and Used Furniture
Best Kid- and Photo-Friendly – RockSalt Grille
Best Window Display – Flowers by Evelyn

Best Brightest Display – LUX Boutique
Best Overall – Spa at West Main

CONSENT CALENDAR

President Pecoraro requested a motion to approve the Consent Calendar, which consisted of Approval of PWA No. 1149 – Abbey Place.

Councilmember Dayhoff moved, seconded by Councilmember Chiavacci, to approve the Consent Calendar.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

REPORT FROM MAYOR

Mayor Becker thanked City staff for coordinating the Miracle on Main Street event, as well as providing a menorah on short notice to celebrate Hanukkah. She expressed her gratitude to her colleagues for supporting her initiative for free parking on Main Street in the downtown area.

Mayor Becker reported on attending a LEAD training session on November 30, the groundbreaking ceremony for East Middle School on December 1, and the unveiling of an historical marker at the Shellman House honoring Mary Shellman's involvement in the Women's Suffrage Movement. Mayor Becker noted that the Holiday Farmers' Market opened on November 26, and Councilmember Gilbert assisted with a food drive on December 4 and 5 to support Carroll County Food Sunday.

REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEES

There were no reports from the following Standing Committees: Finance Committee, Recreation and Parks, Personnel, and Technology.

Councilmember Dayhoff, on behalf of the Arts Council, reported that the winners of the 24th annual Festival of Wreaths were announced on December 6. There were 102 total entries and the silent auction raised over \$13,000 for the Carroll County Arts Center. He also announced a documentary series that will run each Friday in January.

Councilmember Hoff, on behalf of the Economic and Community Development Committee, stated that the Committee will meet again in January. He thanked City staff for the ongoing Downtown Business Association meetings.

Councilmember Chiavacci, on behalf of the Public Safety Committee, introduced the new Police Administrative Services Manager, Jay Landsman. He reported that the department continues to meet with the Carroll County Health Department for action regarding the opioid task force. Additionally, 11 officers attended the Catherine's Cause Remembrance Ceremony. Councilmember Chiavacci then reported that Boys and Girls Club Fundraiser in which Chief Ledwell participated raised over \$100,000. Finally, he reported that the crime rate in the City continues to remain low.

Councilmember Chiavacci, on behalf of the Public Works Committee, reported on a recent water main break on Tuc Road at Railroad Avenue, a sewer force main break on Route 140, and a water main break on Bayberry Court. He also reported that there are contractors working on the McDaniel College water tower painting project.

COUNCIL COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Councilmember Dayhoff thanked his colleagues for supporting the menorah at the City Administrative Office Building. He also thanked City staff for facilitating the Downtown Business Association meetings and shared positive feedback he received from several merchants regarding the City's renewed involvement.

Councilmember Gilbert expressed her appreciation for Brooke Hagerty, Manager of the Downtown Westminster Farmers' Market, and her hard work to implement the Holiday Market. She thanked staff for a great Miracle on Main Street event. Councilmember Gilbert reported on a recent Carroll CAN meeting at King Park, at which shopping and dining local was encouraged. She also commented that the historical marker dedication at the Shellman House was a great event. Councilmember Gilbert thanked Ms. Imhulse for organizing the Downtown Business Association meetings. Finally, she reported that the food drive raised \$90 and collected 125 pounds of food for Carroll County Food Sunday.

Councilmember Hoff complimented City staff for hosting an awesome holiday parade, adding that the holiday events were great for citizens.

President Pecoraro welcomed Mr. Landsman to the City. He also shared compliments from a local business owner regarding the Downtown Business Association meetings.

ORDINANCES & RESOLUTIONS

Approval of Ordinance No. 938

Mr. Depo provided background information on the item, stating that there was no change in the language from its presentation to the Planning and Zoning Commission and no feedback received from the public hearing.

Councilmember Gilbert moved, seconded by Councilmember Hoff, to approve Ordinance No. 938 – An Ordinance Amending Chapter 164, "Zoning and Subdivision of Land", of the Westminster City Code, to Amend Article I, "General Provisions", Section 164-3, "Definitions and Word Usage", to Add a New Definition Of "Satellite Automobile Storage"; to Amend Article X, "I-R Restricted Industrial Zone", Section 164-54, "Special Exceptions", to Provide for "Satellite Automobile Storage, Excluding Car Washing Facilities", as a Special Exception Use; to Amend Article XX, "Special Provisions", to Add Section 164-155.5, "Satellite Automobile Storage", to Provide New Standards for the Grant of Satellite Automobile Storage in Certain Zones; and to Amend Article XXII, "Board Of Zoning Appeals", Section 164-166, "Action Prior to Hearing" to Repeal Section 164-166.F.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

Approval of Ordinance No. 939

Mr. Depo provided background information on the item, stating that there was no change in the language from its presentation to the Planning and Zoning Commission and no feedback received from the public hearing.

Councilmember Hoff moved, seconded by Councilman Dayhoff, to approve Ordinance No. 919 – Amending Chapter 164, "Zoning and Subdivision of Land", of the Westminster City Code, Article XXV, Site Plans, Section 164-211.H., Lapse of Approval, to add Section 164-211.H.2. to allow for a one-year extension to an approved Site Plan.

Councilmember Hoff noted that this Ordinance was created as a business-friendly action due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Pecoraro asked if the Planning and Zoning Commission or the Mayor and Common Council would approve the additional year extension. After discussion, it was confirmed that the Planning and Zoning Commission would make the decision.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

Adoption of Resolution No. 21-09

Councilmember Dayhoff moved, seconded by Councilmember Chiavacci, to adopt Resolution No. 21-09 – Westminster Tree Commission’s Recommended City Tree Plan.

Mayor Becker noted that the only change from the prior year was the addition of the heat maps from Mr. Gray’s presentation. Mr. Gray added that the accomplishments from 2020 and 2021 were also added.

President Pecoraro asked if the existing street trees were correct for urban landscaping and if any changes were going to be discussed by the Tree Commission. Mr. Gray replied that it is an ongoing process finding the right time to phasing in replacement trees. Mr. Depo added that City staff will work with the Downtown Business Association to discuss trees, tree pits, and sidewalks as part of a larger Main Street project. Mr. Gray also noted that a list of unacceptable street trees is included in the Tree Plan.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

Adoption of Resolution No. 21-10

Councilmember Gilbert moved, seconded by Councilmember Hoff, to adopt Resolution No. 21-10 – Amendment to Housing Authority’s Administrative Plan.

Councilmember Hoff clarified that Mr. Brown had previously brought the housekeeping changes before the Economic and Community Development Committee, where it was discussed and approved.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

NEW BUSINESS

Vote to go into Closed Session

Councilmember Chiavacci motioned, seconded by Councilmember Hoff to go into Closed Session following the Regular Meeting to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals; and, to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

VOTE

AYES: Councilmember Chiavacci, Councilmember Dayhoff, Councilmember Gilbert, and Councilmember Hoff.

NAYS: None.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

City Administrator

Ms. Imhulse reported that the City is in search of a new Finance Director, and will have a new City Clerk starting on January 4. She has been working with Dr. Wack at the Carroll County Health Department to develop a City policy regarding COVID-19 exposure. She also reported on working with Mr. Depo on a charrette process for Main Street between Pennsylvania Avenue and Longwell Avenue to unify the look and feel of the downtown area.

Technology

Ms. Imhulse reported that Director Davidson will retire from the City before the end of the year. She thanked him for his service to the City.

Housing Department

Ms. Imhulse commended Mr. Brown for identifying \$100,000 in federal funding for the City that would have forfeited at the end of the year. She also thanked him for his work on the changes to the Administrative Plan.

Westminster Police Department (WPD)

Chief Ledwell explained that Mr. Landsman will be handling administrative duties previously covered by retired Major D'Antuono, as well as the body-worn camera program, compliance with recent legislative changes, and ensuring compliance with Public Information Act requests. He reported that the volunteer police chaplain passed away earlier in the day after a brief illness. Chief Ledwell then reported that the 19th annual Shop With a Cop was held on December 11 with 15 children and their families. He had a recent meeting with Dr. Wack regarding software to manage coordination and collaboration for overdoses. The department apprehended a suspect in a string of thefts around the City; the suspect is currently awaiting trial in the detention center without bail. Finally, Chief Ledwell reported that the department recently received \$8,000 in additional grant funding for the body-worn camera program from the Governor's Crime Prevention Office.

President Pecoraro inquired about the cost per camera and what was included. Chief Ledwell stated that the contract with Motorola covers all material costs, including cloud-based data storage which the state's attorney's office can access when necessary. The department was currently evaluating the staffing requirements and will collaborate with the sheriff and other municipalities in the county.

Councilmember Chiavacci clarified that the equipment is being leased from Motorola, so it was less cost to the City for any repairs or replacements.

Recreation and Parks Department

Ms. Gruber reminded everyone that the upcoming weekend was the last chance to visit Santa and catch a horse-drawn carriage ride through downtown. She also shared several upcoming holiday-themed fitness classes.

Public Works Department

Mr. Dick stated that the aforementioned sewer force main repair took approximately five hours to complete, but did not require Route 140 to close down while staff removed and replaced a section of pipe. He announced that the leaf vacuum service will continue through December 17 due to the leaves falling late. He reported that the Westminster Fiber Network still had requests for drops and the current take rate is at 32%. Completion of the water tower at McDaniel College is anticipated before the end of the year. Finally, the Inflow and Infiltration Phase IV Request for Bids was issued and due by December 17.

Finance Department

Ms. Imhulse reminded everyone that budget season was soon coming and requested the Mayor and Common Council provide items to consider including in the upcoming year.

Community Planning & Development Department

Mr. Depo reported on December 9, the Planning and Zoning Commission conditionally approved Stonegate Section VI. There were no meetings in December for the Board of Zoning Appeals and Historic District Commission. He also announced that the Small Business Saturday Shopping Passport program winners would be chosen on December 15. Finally, Mr. Depo reminded everyone that although December 18 and 19 was the last weekend for the Holiday Market, the Winter Farmers' Market will start in January.

Westminster Volunteer Fire Department

Councilmember Dayhoff reported that for the month of November, there were 574 total calls; 483 EMS and 91 fire. Of those calls, 320 were inside City limits and 210 were outside, with 316 (55%) overlapping. There was one significant fire on December 1. Councilmember Dayhoff also reported that the Santa Run started December 13 and will continue on select evenings in the next week.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Joe Dominick, 345 Meadow Creek Drive, stated that he is working with a group to preserve the Ellsworth Cemetery just outside of the City boundary. He has created a website which tells the story of the Cemetery and those who are buried within. Mr. Dominick requested the City consider annexation of the Cemetery into the City corporate limits so that additional grant funding can be pursued. He has met with the Carroll County Historical Society and NAACP and would like to also involve the City.

President Pecoraro asked Ms. Imhulse to research annexation for the Ellsworth Cemetery.

ADJOURNMENT

President Pecoraro announced that the next meeting would be on January 10. He adjourned the meeting at 8:39 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Samantha Schlitzer, Executive Assistant

Full audio version is available on www.westminstermd.gov