

The City Commission held a Special Called meeting on Monday, January 31, 2021. The meeting was scheduled for its regular time of 5:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at 305 Gay Street in Cambridge.

The Commission President Lajan Cephas opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m. Those present in person or virtually were Commissioner Brian Roche, Commissioner Jameson Harrington, Commissioner Spuddy Cephas, Commissioner Chad Malkus, City Assistant Attorney Patrick Thomas, City Police Chief Mark Lewis, and Acting City Manager David Deutsch. Citizens were able to observe the meeting by going on-line to TownHallStreams.com. Citizens were invited to call in their public comments by calling the mayor during the meeting at 410-228-5808. Citizens were also able to participate in the meeting by logging into the meeting by calling 408-418-9388 and entering the meeting number and password: Meeting Number 2555 161 9336; Password 5808.

Commission President Lajan Cephas asked for a moment of silence for our youth and police department.

Commissioner Malkus led in the Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting started at 5:00 with two items on the agenda – first, a discussion of the American Rescue Plan Allocation (ARPA) and second, the Form of Government. The Acting City Manager then added two more items.

The Council then took up the request from the Acting City Manager to give \$400,000 in cash bonuses to the Cambridge Police Department. It was noted by Chief Lewis that his department was losing officers to other cities that paid them more and that something needed to be done now to stop the exodus. The Department is currently down to 35 officers from the 46 authorized in the budget. The proposal was to give a one-time \$10,000 bonus to each officer in return for a three-year commitment. If the officer left before that period, then he/she would have to pay it back. After some discussion on how the bonus amount was arrived at, the Council voted to approve the request.

The Acting City Manager, David Deutsch, had prepared a memo for the discussion of the ARPA funds which stated that the City had received \$6,039,640 from the Federal government to help with Covid relief. Of that amount, \$1,563,939 has already been allocated by the Council to fund a new aerial tower fire truck. He also recommended that 10% of the remaining balance to be set aside to fund requests from the City's non-profits. He also noted that the City would receive another \$6million from the same federal fund this summer.

The Council then moved on to the Dorchester School Board request for the City to fund metal detectors for the schools. No decision was made on the School Board request.

City infrastructure was next on the list, these include both water and sewer and broadband.

Commissioner Roche did not want to make any decisions on how to allocate the funds. The Council agreed that it was more important to get all the requests in and come up with a system, and application process. Council asked the Acting City Manager to get a list of items needed by the department heads for discussion. He suggested that the city also get public input.

The proposed change to the Charter to do away with the position of mayor, was discussed. There was no background information provided. The City Attorney said he had checked with the County Board of Elections, and they would not hold any City elections due to their commitments to hold primaries and elections for the County and State positions. The City Attorney said the last City election, done by a private firm, cost \$25,000. There was also a discussion on how much it would cost if a sitting Commissioner ran for Mayor and the answer was \$50,000 to \$100,000 depending on run-off elections.

There was a discussion on how to handle the allocation to the non-profits. There was a discussion on the Acting City Manager's request to set aside \$450,000 for non-profits and this could be increased when the city receives the second allocation this summer. After discussion, Chad Malkus made the motion to increase the amount to \$500,000, approved on a 5-0 vote.

It was also suggested to form a citizens committee to review and make recommendations to the Council on which non-profits to fund and how much each would receive. Council will choose a committee to help with funding decisions.

Commission President Lajan Cephas and Commissioner Roche will work with the Acting City Manager to create the form for the non-profits. This suggestion was approved on a 5-0 vote.

The Acting City Manager requested to give \$400,000 in cash bonuses to the Cambridge Police Department. The city keeps losing officers to other cities due to higher salaries and other reasons. The police department is currently down to 35 officers from the 46 authorized in the budget. The proposal was to give a one-time \$10,000 bonus to each officer in return for a 3-year commitment. If the officer left before that time, then he/she would have to pay it back. After some discussion on how the bonus amount was arrived at, the Council voted to approve the request.

Commission President Lajan Cephas brought up the possibility of giving city employees hazardous duty pay ranging from \$100 to \$350 per paycheck. The Acting City Manager stated the police department was the only department with attrition, so the discussion was tabled until a later date.

## **Adjourn**

A motion by Commissioner Spuddy Cephas to adjourn the meeting was seconded by Commissioner Roche and approved unanimously.

With no further business, Commission President Lajan Cephas adjourned the meeting at 6:55p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate account of the Council meeting Monday, January 31, 2022, insofar as I personally am aware.

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Lajan Cephas  
Commission President