

ECA General Meeting Minutes
January 16, 2020 | 7:30 pm
Eastport Volunteer Fire Company

President Debbie Dillon called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. She welcomed all members and guest speakers:

- **Gavin Buckley**, Mayor, City of Annapolis
- **Sally Nash**, Acting Director of Planning and Zoning
- **Bob Waldman**, Chairman, Planning and Zoning Commission

Debbie acknowledged **Gary Mathis**, President of the Eastport Volunteer Fire Company (EVFC), for being such gracious hosts and for allowing the ECA to utilize the fire house for our general meetings. Gary welcomed the members and thanked the community for its support. Gary made the following announcements:

- **Fundraising** -- they are currently in the middle of their fundraising efforts and welcome any additional contributions. The EVFC offered a 50/50 raffle during the evening meeting.
- **Open House** -- there will be an open house at the end of this Winter, along with the christening of their new fire engine, which the community helped support. They are excited to reveal the new building and to show the community how the members of the EVFC operate (more information to come).

Debbie turned the meeting over to Moderator, **Charles Hernick**, ECA Board Member, Treasurer and Chair of the Safety Committee, who stated tonight's topics would be primarily on development, with a focus on Eastport.

- **Brief Intro** -- Charles stated he does energy policy work, but also has a background in international development projects, stakeholder consultations and community engagement projects around the world. A takeaway from his work is that each project is a learning process.
- **Meeting Format** -- to start with opening remarks by the speakers, followed by questions provided to the speakers in advance, along with ad hoc questions from tonight's audience.
- **Opening Question** -- Charles asked Mayor Buckley what his view of Annapolis is, now that he's two years into his role, with a particular focus on development?

Mayor Gavin Buckley's Key Mentions:

- **Australia Day Benefit** – Gavin thanked the EVFC for the work they do and encouraged the ECA to attend the upcoming 'Australia Day Benefit' on 1/25/20 from 1:00-5:00 p.m. at Fadó in support of the Australian bushfire efforts. All proceeds go to the WIRES, a wildlife rescue organization, and Australia Red Cross.
- **2020 will be a fantastic year** - Politics is a learning curve, and Gavin came from the private sector. With that, he has made some mistakes, but is trying new things to keep it interesting. Groundwork for this year: a new, more expansive pool around the corner where one can swim laps; new tennis and pickleball courts. Hiking and biking trails at Waterworks Park (great group of volunteers there), and we're orienting it as an energy park (solar with a dam), which is connected to the City via the WEE (West East Express), behind the Graduate Hotel, approximately 3 miles from the historic district. There are plans in the works for some unused public right-of-way access points (to avoid having to share the road with cars; including possible alternate means for getting downtown to work and vice versa).
- **Hillman Parking Garage** – initially were no plans for this, now within 2 years, there is a plan and way to fund it without going to taxpayers to get it done; will increase parking capacity from 450 to 700; will build it first and use the parking garage plan as a cornerstone of the City Dock Plan.
- **Ego Alley** – they're putting things in to filter storm water and catch the run-off from Main Street.
- **City Dock** – the County is looking to the City to see what we're doing with the Resiliency Project; we should receive multiple benefits from this initiative (including a beautiful public space). The plan is to take 100 cars off City Dock area.
 - **Resiliency Project** – designed to address sea level rise; relies in part on federal funding and without going to the taxpayer, and it is ahead of the curve compared to other cities. Our flooding problems are more related to tides than to storm waters.
 - A little raised section of waterfront stretching along Spa Creek will enable people to see the Bay

Bridge from this public space; in addition, it will filter storm water and prevent it from going into the Bay. It is a smaller version of the Highline in New York, which is fantastic and stretches for approximately 1.5 miles, and has stimulated billions of dollars in investment and improvements there.

- **New Public Library** – while County-based, will be great for the City, and will be connected to the bike trail.
- **Top of Main Street** – the former bank will have a speakeasy with a posh Italian restaurant.
- **Bottom of Main Street** (previous Fawcett’s location) – will be a new fish house established through Phillips with a watermen’s boats to the dock for more authenticity.
- **Money for Rebuilding Newtown** – they have things in motion for the funding, and for the Morris Blum building.
- **Public Housing** – need to invest here and change this model.

Charles asked the Mayor: does the new City Dock revitalization plan include an effort to mitigate sea level rise, yes or no? The Mayor responded “yes”; however, others in the audience asked: “but, what about Eastport, in terms of sea level rise?” The Mayor responded: “yes, I absolutely agree; we have 17 miles of coastline we need to protect”. The Mayor went on to say:

- **Historic District and the Naval Academy** – are the first, somewhat easy targets to tackle the sea level rise issue; they know the threat is real, and they are preparing for it. The Naval Academy knows it can’t protect itself without also taking care of its immediate neighbor, the Historic District of the City. The City will be eligible for funding when the Naval Academy gets its plan and funding in line.
- **City Dock Concept** – will be done, because it will be financed through the federal resiliency money, the Naval Academy resiliency money, the P3 with the garage, and the Federal Resiliency Financing Authority. Sarah Elfret is in charge of this effort, which is getting a lot of attention in the State Legislature. It covers other vital areas in the State as well, to ensure financing for the magnitude of the task that lies ahead. Estimates state that sea level rise protections will add approximately 40% to costs (on top of other critical infrastructure challenges), so municipalities need to get moving and get creative.
- **Handout** – Mayor Buckley’s 2018 | 2019 City of Annapolis Mid-Term Progress Report was provided.

Sally Nash, Acting Director of Planning & Zoning, Key Mentions:

- **Comprehensive Plan (CP) Update** – Every jurisdiction in the State of Maryland is required to do a CP every 10 years, with updates every 5 years, and the Plan must contain certain elements. They have been working on the current CP for approximately 1 year and are halfway through to completion. There are three elements of particular focus:
 - Sensitive Areas Element – environmentally sensitive areas of the City
 - Water Resources Element – water supply and how much of it there is
 - Elements that are not ‘required,’ but the City has traditionally incorporated include - historic and neighborhood conservation, transportation, land uses required by the state (a hallmark of the CP)
- They’ve focused to date on background demographic and economic research needed to support development of the Plan (available online on the City’s webpage).
- Now they are doing public engagement, which involves the following strategies:
 - Working closely with the Planning Commission (Bob Waldman, Chair, and Diane Butler) and obtaining feedback re: the research done to date.
 - Meeting with the City’s boards and commissions (approx. 30 volunteer boards and commissions); Sally has had one meeting so far. They’ve asked the various chairs to provide goals and ideas back to Sally – they meet again in February.
 - Meeting with the presidents of local civic and homeowner associations and other groups – the first meeting will be on 1/23/20. She will ask the group to help her with the writing and more detailed work.
 - Sally plans to seek input from local school PTA presidents.
- There is a weekly email re: CP activities and updates; if interested in receiving, let Sally know.

Bob Waldman, Chairman, Planning & Zoning Commission remarked that the ECA is the largest and most well-organized civic association in the City at this point.

- One of the things the Commission is looking for from Eastport is intelligent responses as to what should be included in the CP. He had a good meeting with Debbie Dillon and Bill Reichardt recently, where they focused primarily on process.
- He agreed with their idea to form a steering committee comprised of local civic associations, HOA's, and PTA's to ensure information flows in all directions.
- He'd like to receive specific, concrete recommendations from these groups; some of which will be incorporated, some of which will not. Some issues will entail processes inside the City.
- Bob believes that as people become better informed, things will calm down, and we can work more productively. Work with Ross Arnett has been very productive to date, and he looks forward to working closely with Dajuan Gay in the future.

Charles cited a recent article in The Capital Gazette, which stated that the Board of Appeals agreed a City staff member made assumptions to rule for the developer rather than the public. Charles asked for a commitment from the City regarding the process and for developers to follow the rules. He asked whether as City officials, the Planning & Zoning Department was committed to enforcement of these rules:

- Sally said that she can't comment too much, because they don't have a written opinion from the Board of Appeals yet, but she acknowledged that the City has work to do to improve the Title 22 (Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance) in a lot of different areas. And the Mayor is committed to working on it. In addition, we will need input from citizens regarding what 'adequacy' means to them.
- The Mayor commented that it's a good opportunity to make improvements, and he will push for that. The Mayor, for one, would like to see a grocery store in the Eastport Shopping Center (ESC), but we can't "mandate" that it happen.
- Bob mentioned that at the Board of Appeals, they've noted that several agencies do not have clarified standards for what 'adequacy' means, and the agencies need to go back and do their homework.
 - Bob stated that the Eastport Landing development effort at the ESC did not come before the Planning Commission, as an arcane procedural maneuver was played.
 - They have an application on the table, and Bob said he doesn't know how much the application can be changed in a major substantial way, but after all of the comments come back from the agencies to satisfy the Board of Appeals, there may be some room for some modifications, and he asked for the community to be flexible and willing to negotiate to take advantage of any flexibility.
 - Traffic and Transportation – Alderman Arnett has some legislation developed to address what goes into traffic studies, which can help clarify that major area of adequacy public facilities. Expect things to move incrementally vs. drastically, but at least they move, and the ECA has been very prominent in forcing those movements.
- The Mayor commented that we have to improve our development codes, because otherwise it is the lawyers who "win" as a result of the back-and-forth delays that occur with development projects.

Charles agreed and believes that clear rules are needed. He raised again the question about sea level rise and stated that Eastport is concerned about development and the strain it puts on the community. He asked how we can maintain a balance between infrastructure and environmental concerns. He asked would the City consider development down-zoning? What can we do to increase revenue for the City while maintaining infrastructure and environmental quality?

- The Mayor stated: "The number one priority has to be quality of life. I would support downzoning or rezoning. We live on a peninsula which can only take so much density – we can only squeeze in so much to one area without it exploding. Our focus has to be Eastport and Forest Drive."
 - We have the political will; however, we need multiple strategies for addressing the issues.

- Sally stated that it's important to set expectations between developers and the community; i.e., what can be built now in conjunction with existing zoning. Zoning must be looked at to ensure it matches community character in terms of scale and size. That's what the Forest Drive Sector Study was trying to examine. Recommend that zoning be more concrete (e.g., for areas such as Watergate, and the Giant's Bay Ridge Shopping Center).
- However, Bob stated that it is a lot of work to come up with zoning guidelines (particularly as related to "down-zoning"), as it must be done in a comprehensive and constitutional manner.
- Bob encouraged the ECA to think in positive ways. He stated we must "think openly, positively, and in terms of opportunity for the future."

A question was raised about the quality of public education, particularly at Eastport Elementary based on recent test score results?

- The Mayor commented that his kids went to Annapolis Elementary, so he couldn't comment on Eastport Elementary specifically; although visits to the school have been very positive. He does, however, meet with the Superintendent of Schools every few months as well as the heads of our universities and colleges. He believes that we have a "good man" in Stuart Pittman, Anne Arundel County Executive.
- Sally commented that it's important to break up the broader education issues into parts. For the CP, she met with Jess Pachler and focused more immediately on the things they can control – e.g., funding sources for transportation, safety, and exploring City resources that could help.
- Bob suggested volunteering to help build a stronger neighborhood community school. Volunteer to read, help the PTA, tutor, offer assistance with school supplies.

Charles asked about whether there were plans for improving bike lanes in Eastport and with offering public access to water for launching boats and other activities (outside of marinas)?

- The Mayor agreed that this is an issue in that it's privatized. A lot of local kids don't have access to swimming areas and many kids don't know how to swim, despite being surrounded by water.

Charles asked how public housing properties are being incorporated into the CP, and is the Newtown public housing project fully financed?

- The Mayor stated "no, but we have a backup plan." He commented that Newtown should have been rebuilt 7 years ago; we applied, didn't get funding, and then essentially walked away. In addition, it was virtually abandoned by H.U.D., and the City is now bearing the brunt of this inaction. However, there is as much opportunity here as there is problem, and we have to bring resources to it. He commented on other possibilities, such as Robinwood, which backs up to a nice area, but cannot be used due to fencing around it. We need to build more shared community spaces.

Charles asked again about sea level rise mitigation and long-term planning as it relates to the CP?

- Sally stated that the CP will focus on resilience as related to climate, especially sea level rise for Annapolis. And the CP will also focus on resilient economies, as in how can we make sure that our businesses are able to bounce back from different kinds of market conditions.

Charles asked when it is totally flooded out in front of Davis' Pub, how are we to get there, and when will it get fixed?

The Mayor commented that the Resiliency Project is focused on the effect of climate issues. In terms of Davis' Pub, he stated "we will get something done about this; the first step and biggest issue is that the peninsula is a huge challenge. Eastport is 'Ground Zero.' We must work together on it and will look at City Dock as a model."

Charles asked how can we make our public interests known to developers, e.g., a grocery store in Eastport?

- Bob stated that we can't "force" property owners to do something. We can "allow" for things, we can negotiate, etc. However, the Eastport Shopping Center "got smaller and smaller, so it can no longer support what is wanted."
 - There was disagreement about this statement, and Bob was corrected re: its inaccuracy. [A

follow up letter was sent by the ECA to Bob, with a copy to the Mayor and Sally.]

- The Mayor stated the new Police Chief, Edward Jackson, is opening up some avenues. He's been working with Dajuan Gay, Alderman, Ward 6, on the need for more humanization. We need investment in certain areas, and we need to change the environment, so that we can change outcomes – e.g., provide more access to jobs, transportation, etc.

Dajuan Gay, Alderman, Ward 6:

- **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)** legislation proposal – to allow for additional dwelling units in single family neighborhoods. Dajuan commented they realize there are potential impacts to property values, parking, etc. They're willing to compromise to ensure affordable housing is provided for the community. They recommend the following for such dwellings:
 - One parking space must be provided for each dwelling.
 - ADUs cannot be used for short-term rentals.
 - The original size of the ADU will be adjusted, because 1,000 square feet is huge.

Bob acknowledged Richard Trunnell in the audience on being newly appointed as a Circuit Court judge.

- **Accessory Dwelling Units** -- Bob encouraged the public to take a look at the legislation, come to the next Planning Commission meeting, and listen to the facts about the proposal, because it is important for us to provide flexible housing in places that can handle that flexible housing.

Sally remarked that if anyone would like to be involved in the CP, please contact her as they have another year to go.

The Mayor commented that we must preserve the quality of life we enjoy here in Annapolis (it's one of the best places to live), while also staying flexible and being open to new ideas.

Ross Arnett, Alderman, Ward 8:

- **City Dock concept** (and it is a concept vs. a plan) -- has been introduced to the Council.
- **Hillman Garage** -- there are two bidders on the Hillman garage project, and that work is going to begin soon. While the garage is being done, they'll be working on refinements to the City Dock presentation.
- **Resiliency Authority** is a very big deal. The Mayor and Sarah Elfreth and County Executive are working on this currently and deserve a lot of credit.
- Two **Board of Appeal** items currently underway:
 - Fixes on proposed legislation;
 - Concept of Zoning Hearing Officer
- We cannot do "spot zoning"; we have 31 different zoning distinctions in the City. We'll be working on that, and it may be part of the CP or in addition to it.
- **Sea level rise** – Army Corp of Engineers study. We can only do 3 things in Eastport: 1) we can build a wall, 2) we can lift buildings/put them on stilts, or 3) we can run away . . . or we can deal with run-off. We want to ensure we're "first in line" to receive federal funding as we tackle these issues.
- **Short-term and Long-term Rentals** – there are no codes for these currently. Title 21 (regulates hotels, inns, bed and breakfast establishments), but does not deal with rentals, nor does it address accessory dwelling units, so we need to look at all of this.
- **Budget** – it's the beginning of budget season; we'll get the Mayor's budget at the Council meeting in April.
 - Would like to see us buy back slips on City Dock that we sold to the Wildlife & Fisheries

Department.

- The current City Manager has indicated that revenue is going to be very tight this year.
- **Annapolis City Marina** – has asked that we change the zoning for the WMM from 70% maritime, 30% non-maritime to 30% maritime, 70% non-maritime zoning, because they're losing their big renter, the Environmental Protection Agency. Ross needs to hear from the community if they support or oppose the Marina's request.
- Creation of the Office of Community Caring - to assist low-income individuals and individuals in need, with support services also being discussed in this budget.

Dajuan Gay - Additional Updates:

- **Youth Commission** – has been formed and provides a good opportunity for young people to have a voice in terms of education, economics, etc.
- **Affordable Housing Task Force** – to create housing within the City.
- **Eastport Terrace & Harbor House** – we have to make investment to redevelop there; possibly increase the density to make more attractive to redevelop; examine mixed use options (commercial & residential).
- **Question raised about Eastport Lofts** – Dajuan agreed a supermarket is really needed; also agreed w/the need to be more prepared when bringing in larger development projects.
- **Follow-up question was raised** pertaining to what the mechanism would be for the City to ensure ECA residents could be involved to voice concerns with development such as the ESC?
 - Sally commented we'll know more when we have a written opinion from the Board of Appeals on the Motion from the developer to reconsider the Board of Appeal's decision.

A request was made by an ECA member to have the City measure from the ESC development to Turner Park, because it is obvious that this public space is not within a ½ mile and therefore violates the development mandate.

Minutes from the 11/22/19 General Meeting were approved.

Membership Report – a reminder for all ECA members: **2020 Membership Dues are Due**. The ECA had 651 members in 2019; 79 members have paid their dues so far in 2020, with an additional \$855 donated to worthy causes.

- A suggestion was made to send membership mailings out in Spanish, since a significant portion of the community is Spanish speaking. Debbie Dillon stated she would look into this suggestion.

Treasurer's Report – Charles Hernick referenced the Budget Report handout; stated that November checks were cashed in December, which is why revenues were down, but are now up in January.

Architecture and Zoning Report – Jackie Wells reported that the Committee reviewed a property at 35 Eastern Avenue in December, which proposes a demo and addition to an existing single-family house and addition of a pool and decking – the Committee's comments may be viewed on the City's eTrakit system. There was no meeting in January, because no plans were submitted by the City for review and comments. There will be a meeting in February.

Communications – no report

Community Beautification & Enhancement – Bumper Moyer reported there is a cleanup effort on 2/23/20 for 1 hour. Neat Streets has been adopted by Annapolis Green. More information to follow. Greenscape will be on 4/25/20; order forms will be available for this on 2/5 and meeting will be at Pip Moyer.

Eco-Action – the Committee meets the 1st Wednesday of every month at Adams Ribs at 5:00 p.m. and welcomes new members. They'll be focusing on Back Creek step pool conveyance system that was originally in the Eastport Shopping Center application, but then disappeared. There is an opportunity to deliver on a public benefit that was promised, that the City can take advantage of to help with storm water treatment. The Eastport Shopping Center parking lot drains a 28-acre area into the Jones Cove area behind the Post Office for which developers offered to pay. The City just needs to ask for it, so taxpayers don't have to pay for it.

Grants – Deadline for applications for Spring grants is 3/15/20.

Home & Garden Tour – Susan Callis reported they were targeting the Parkwood area for house selection; however, out of 21 possible houses, they only got two “yesses”. Therefore, they need some help in figuring out a new fundraising option for 2020. Holly Foster, Debbie Dillon, and Susan will look at other fundraising opportunities. If anyone has any suggestions or wants to volunteer to help, please let Debbie Dillon know.

Nominations – nothing to report.

Planning & Major Development – Bill Reichhardt shared that he and Debbie Dillon sent a letter to the Mayor on behalf of the ECA asking him to appoint a working group to address the traffic issues as related to the Eastport Landing project. There were 5 elements that the Board of Appeals determined were not adequate – some of the areas of concern included *traffic, stormwater management, and adequate police presence*.

- They propose engaging in problem-solving activities to define where the issues can be fixed. The Motion to Reconsider that is before the Board of Appeals should not be a reason to delay forming a working group.
- The failing intersection (Bay Ridge & Tyler) was classified with a “D” rating. The Commission stated that a “D” is acceptable – we do not agree. The assessments mechanism needs to be fixed to elevate the project to a “C” level minimum before it is approved.
- Debbie acknowledged the work of people in the community who did a “deep dive” on the Board of Appeals Eastport Landing project.

Safety Meeting Reminder -- at the Blackwall Hitch on 1/23/20 @ 6 p.m.

A question was asked whether the variances for Adams Ribs were approved? There were 3 parts to the Adams Ribs application; two were approved (special exception for a restaurant; split zoning); the third was not. The third variance was a request to decrease the buffer (the undeveloped rear portion of property required by zoning to provide space between the business and its residential neighbors) to allow for a 77-seat restaurant, rather than the 55-seat restaurant allowed by Code.

Debbie asked if anyone has a suggestion for a guest speaker, to email her at ecapresident@eastportcivic.org.

No new members were in attendance.

Debbie mentioned that we lost a vital community member with the passing of Karen Feldman, co-founder of Seeds for Success. The Celebration of Life for Karen Feldman will be held on 1/25/20 from 3:00-to-5:00 at the Key School in the Activity Building.

Jess Pachler announced and welcomed people to come visit:

- **Eastport Elementary School Open House** – 1/23/20 @ 5:30 pm; followed by:
- **International Fair and Art Show** -- 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Next General Meeting & Location: Thursday, 3/19/20, 7:30-to-9:00 p.m., Eastport Volunteer Fire Department.