



For Immediate Release

Easton, MD – December 22, 2021

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Talbot County Council Meeting Highlights, December 21, 2021

These highlights only reflect the business items covered from the Council's approved agenda. To view the complete County Council meeting, please visit: Talbot County Meeting Videos - Talbot County, Maryland (www.talbotcountymd.gov).

The Talbot County Council held their regularly scheduled meeting on December 21, 2021 with all Council members present (Laura Price connected by phone).

Introduction of Dionne Church, New Election Director, Talbot County Board of Elections – Joe Secrist, President, Talbot County Board of Elections introduced Dionne Church the new Election Director for Talbot County Board of Elections. She replaces Jeri Cook who retired earlier this month. Ms. Church previously served as Deputy Director at Wicomico County Board of Elections.

Presentation and Request by Talbot County Board of Elections – This item was removed from the agenda at the request of Lyndsey Ryan, Attorney, Talbot County Board of Elections.

Eligible for Vote:

Resolution No. 310, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF ANY INTEREST TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND HOLDS IN FLOOD AVENUE TO THE TOWN OF EASTON AND THE EXECUTION OF A QUITCLAIM DEED TO EFFECTUATE THE SAME was brought forward for vote and approved unanimously by Council.

Discussion of Expiration of Deferment of Interest and Penalties on Sewer Bills – Joye Nagle, Talbot County Finance Director – Ms. Nagle introduced Mr. Tracy Smith, Tax Accountant for the Finance Office. Ms. Nagle noted that as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency, the County Council had approved the deferment of interest and penalties on outstanding sewer bills on three separate occasions: from April 2020 to December 2020; January 2021 to June 2021; and July 2021 to December 2021. The deferment is set to expire on December 31, 2021. The number of delinquent accounts, those that have a balance of more than one quarter, has grown to 143 properties, or 5% of all sewer accounts from 127 properties or 4.3% back in June 2021. The average delinquent account is approximately \$400 - \$1,000. Interest owed on the total outstanding balances is approximately \$9,000. The balance on the delinquent accounts totals approximately \$111,000. “The deferment of interest and penalties does not get to the root of the problem,” stated Ms. Nagle as she recommended Council not continue the deferment into 2022.

Ms. Nagle explained if a customer has a delinquent account by the end of February 2022, the customer will receive notice that the tax sale process will begin. The customer will also receive information about programs and agencies that may be able to assist them. Customers will have time to get their account current with the tax sale file not being completed until the end of April.

Mr. Pack noted, “The Council has done a great job assisting citizens throughout the pandemic through distribution of the CARES funds to individuals and businesses. At this time I feel ending the deferment of interest and penalties on outstanding sewer bills is appropriate.”

Upon motion by Mr. Divilio, seconded by Mr. Pack, the Council unanimously approved ending the deferment of interest and penalties on outstanding sewer bills effective January 1, 2022.

County Manager’s Report:

- **Board and Committee Appointments**

Mr. Stamp recommended the appointment of Mr. Michael Weever to the Weed Control Committee. Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment.

Mr. Stamp noted the County advertises vacancies for various boards and committees on the County website (www.talbotcountymd.gov) and encouraged the public to review the openings and apply if interested.

- Request from Department of Public Works to Submit Grant and Loan Applications to the Maryland Water Quality Financing Administration Water Quality Infrastructure Finance Program - Mr. Stamp noted the Department of Public Works is requesting Council approval to apply to the Maryland Department of the Environment’s Water Quality Infrastructure Finance Program for seven new environmental projects. Applications are due January 31, 2022. Projects are as follows:

- Replacement of the Preserve at Wye Mills Wastewater Treatment Plant – \$1 million
- Replacement of the Martingham Water and Wastewater Emergency Generator - \$300,000
- Region I (Unionville, Tunis Mills and Copperville) and Region II (Royal Oak, Newcomb and Bellevue) Force Main Pressure Sensors and Region II (Martingham) Vacuum Collection System Sensors - \$600,000
- Bar Neck and Fairbank Sewer Extension to 110 Properties - \$2 million
- Region V (Tilghman) Sewer Collection System Inflow and Infiltration Improvements - \$3.5 million
- Region I (Unionville, Tunis Mills and Copperville) – Replacement of E-1 Grinder Pumps - \$800,000
- Region V (Tilghman) WWTP – Connection to Region II WWTP – Design and Planning - \$2 million

Council unanimously approved the submittal of applications as outlined by Ray Clarke, County Engineer, for the seven environmental projects to the Maryland Department of the Environment’s Water Quality Infrastructure Finance Program.

- Mr. Stamp provided an update on the fire that occurred at the Talbot County Courthouse. On Sunday, December 19, 2021 at approximately 11:30 a.m., Talbot County 9-1-1 Center received a fire alarm notification from the Talbot County Courthouse, 11 North Washington Street, Easton. Upon arrival, fire units from Easton and neighboring fire departments found that a fire

had started in the Clerk of the Court's office in the North Wing which activated the sprinkler system in that area of the building. The fire was extinguished, however significant water damage resulted. The incident largely affected the Clerk of the Court and Register of Wills offices with some smoke odor affecting the rest of the North Wing. Mr. Stamp noted that Royal Plus Disaster Clean-up has been onsite since Sunday remediating the damage and thanked them for their efforts as well as Judge Stephen Kehoe, Talbot County Circuit Court, Kathi Dulin-Duvall, Clerk of Court, Patti Campen, Register of Wills and Brian Moore, Facilities Maintenance Director. Mr. Stamp encouraged the public to continue to check the Maryland judiciary website for the most current information on office and court operations.

- County offices are closed on Thursday, December 23 and Friday, December 24 for the Christmas holiday and again on Friday, December 31, 2021 for the New Year's holiday.

On Tuesday, January 4, the County Council will be holding a Work Session beginning at 3:30 p.m. to discuss the creation of a Police Accountability Board for Talbot County in accordance with recently enacted State legislation. The Work Session will be held in the Wye Oak Room located at the Talbot County Community Center and is open to the public. At 5:30 p.m. that evening the Council will be holding a joint dinner meeting with the Board of Education. The dinner meeting will be held at the Board Office located at 12 Magnolia Street in Easton.

The County Council's next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 11 beginning at **6:00 p.m.** The Council will be convening in Open Session at 3:30 p.m. and immediately adjourning into Closed Session, to discuss real estate, legal and personnel matters as listed on the Statement for Closing that Meeting.



Dionne Church, Election Director, Talbot County Board of Elections