

Town of Onancock
Town Council Public Hearing & Town Hall Meeting
June 7, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

Mayor Fosque called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and roll was called. Mayor Fletcher Fosque and Councilmembers Robert Bloxom, Joy Marino and Thelma Gillespie were present. Councilmembers Maphis Oswald and Ray Burger were absent. A majority of members were present, and a quorum was established.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Business:

- a. Public Hearing – Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Amendment – Sewer and Wastewater Department: Mayor Fosque opened the public hearing at 6:01 p.m. Mr. Spuck explained that during the first budget public hearing the sewer budget was not presented, it was initially thought that HRSD would take over the wastewater plant on July 1st. Through the negotiation process it has been determined that the transfer may not happen until after the start of the new fiscal year which means that Onancock needs to have a sewer budget in place on July 1st. The proposed sewer budget has no rates changes, salary changes and the proposed expenses are the same as the current year’s budget. Mr. Spuck explained that once the wastewater treatment plant transfers to HRSD the new water rates will go into effect.

Mayor Fosque asked for public comment. With none, he closed the public hearing at 6:06 p.m. Mayor Fosque shared that the budget will be adopted at the June 28th Town Council meeting.

- b. Town Hall – To hear public input on how Onancock Town Council might appropriate funds made available to the Town through the American Rescue Act of 2021 (ARPA)
 - a. Town Manager presentation on guidelines for use of funds: Mr. Spuck shared the following guidelines for the use of the ARPA.
 - The Town will receive a prorated portion of the Commonwealth’s portion of the funds which is based on the Town’s population size. Onancock’s estimated distribution is approximately \$1.1 million. Onancock is what the Department of Treasury calls an NEU – or Non-Entitlement Unit which is what other similar sized localities are designated. Once the State receives its portion of the ARPA funds they are required to release the NEU’s distribution within 30-days. This process could be delayed if the State requests an extension to create a process for small communities to certify that the amount being received meets the criteria set forth the Department of Treasury. After the communities certify, the funds will be transferred in two equal payments no more than 12-months apart.

- There are specific reporting requirements that the Town must comply with to expend the funds within the criteria set forth by the Department of Treasury. Below are the categories for allowable expenditures.
 - a. Category A: Public Health and Negative Economic Impact: To respond to the health emergency or negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, and nonprofits, or aid to impacted industries such as tourism, travel and hospitality.
 - b. Category B: Premium Pay to Eligible Workers: To provide premium pay to eligible workers who perform in-person work, interact with others at work or physically handle items handled by others. Sanitation would be an example.
 - c. Category C: Government Services to the Extent of Revenue Reduction: To provide services affected by loss in government. These services can include but are not limited to maintenance of infrastructure, or services of immediate benefit, but cannot pay outstanding debt, pension funds, or financial reserves. The amount able to be used in this category is the greater of 4.1% growth rate or the actual rate as calculated by the formula provided by the Treasury.
 - d. Category D: Investment in Water, Sewer, and/or Broadband Infrastructure: This includes stormwater project investments as well as a wide range of investment to include planning, design, and construction.
 - All public proposals will be gathered along with ideas generated from Town Council and Staff to be reviewed further by Town Council. Town Council is solely responsible for prioritizing the appropriation of these funds.
 - If Onancock certifies and receives the funds prior to Town Council's appropriations, the funds will be moved in a restricted bank account. This account will be maintained throughout the term of the grant and accounted for in a manner to fulfill all reporting and single-audit requirements.
- b. Town residents and businesses are allowed up to 3- minutes to share ideas for Town Council to consider in its decision to appropriate ARPA.

Ms. Mrya Riley-Taylor, Onancock Bayside Area, is part of a group called "Onancock's 'Bayside' Revitalization" whose goal it is to help restore Onancock's "Bayside" Community by ditch maintenance as well as assisting homes with indoor plumbing upgrades. Ms. Riley-Taylor stated that while the group's service area is not located within the Town limits, they feel part of the community since they share the same zip code with the Town of Onancock. The group is asking that the Town of Onancock appropriate \$36,000 to them to assist with culvert replacements (12) in their area. This

request would fall into category D. Lastly, Ms. Riley-Taylor shared that the group is not currently a 501(c)(3) but that they are in the process of applying for that status.

Mayor Fosque asked if they have applied to Accomack County for this funding. Ms. Riley-Taylor stated that they had not because they were working with the County on another project but shared that if Onancock did not support this project then they would go to the County for the funding.

Ms. Shelley Strain, Executive Director of the Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ESCADV), shared that they have been located in the Onancock for over 40-years and during that timeframe they have served numerous survivors of domestic violence in both Accomack and Northampton Counties. Ms. Strain continued to say, over the last decade the organization has grown substantially. ESCADV provides a vital service on the Eastern Shore when responding to emergencies. The current shelter is no longer ideal to assist those in need especially during the pandemic hit. ESCADV could only shelter two families in its facility. Their cost of hotel stays over the past year more than doubled from previous years. Through a well thought out needs assessment it has been determined that ESCADV needs to be able to shelter up to 40 individuals. That need has given rise to a Board conversation about looking to purchase or construct a new shelter that would also house the offices of the advocates and administrative staff. Ms. Strain stated that ESCADV is asking Onancock for \$100,000 which would go to the purchase of a new facility located in Town. The cost for the entire project is \$1 million, which would be for the property purchase as well as the needed renovations. Ms. Strain shared that ESCADV is proud to call Onancock its home and that it is the intent of the organization to remain here.

Mr. Haydon Rochester, King Street, shared that as a Board member of the Historic Onancock School, he has been watching the old shop building deteriorate to the point of collapse. It is the Board's estimate that the removal of the building would be about \$15,000. Mr. Rochester is asking that Onancock fund that request for the Historic Onancock School, stating that with the new playground up and running the building is a huge safety concern.

Ms. Elizabeth Bell, Onancock "Bayside" Revitalization President, asked if these funds were only available to those located in the Town limits. Mr. Spuck stated that he was unsure if there are restrictions on the funds being only used within the corporate limits.

Ms. Carol Tunstall, Meadville Drive, spoke on behalf of Onancock's Main Street organization. Their request for funds is for \$12,000 which would help Main Street provide the matching funds necessary for a grant. The grant is through the Department of Housing and Community Development and would assist with filling vacant store fronts in the downtown area. Another aspect of this grant is a 6-8-week course that Main Street would provide to local entrepreneurs, giving them the keys to getting their businesses off the ground. Once the courses are completed the entrepreneurs would

then present their business plan to a panel of judges in Town, the winner of the competition would receive financial assistance opening their business in Town. The amount of the grant request is \$45,000 and the Main Street match would be \$12,000.

Ms. Joani Donohoe, College Avenue and Executive Director of the Historic Onancock School, reiterated Mr. Rochester's safety concern about the shop building on the property. Ms. Donohoe stated that the cost of its removal will be more than \$15,000.

Ms. Priscilla Hart, Market Street, shared that she would like to see a space dedicated to Town residents as a community space. Ms. Hart stated that pandemic has been hard on so many people and that her hope is that a community room would help bring people together again. Ms. Hart stated that she has not looked into the cost of such a space but that it her expectation that would be about \$50,000. Ms. Hart also stated that she was unsure if it would need to be staffed.

Ms. Ruth Grillo, Market Street, submitted a written request funding request to Town Council, stating the sidewalks in Town need some attention and that her request would fall into category A.

Mayor Fosque asked for Council comments. With none, Mayor Fosque shared that Town Council will hold a work session meeting during the June Council meeting.

Adjourn:

Councilmember Bloxom made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Marino seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.



Fletcher Fosque, Mayor



Lisa Fiege, Deputy Clerk