

**Town of Westernport
Council Meeting
October 5, 2020**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Judy Hamilton, Sarah Llewellyn and Allen Shapiro

ATTENDEES: Town Attorney Mike Llewellyn, Tim Jackson and Pete Davis

Mayor Laura Freeman-Legge brought the meeting to order. All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Shapiro suggested a moment of silence. Commissioner Hamilton made a motion we dispense with the reading of the minutes. A second came from Commissioner Shapiro. Motion carried. Copies are available.

The mayor had some announcements. Halloween *Trick or Treating* will be held in Westernport on Saturday, October 31, from 5 to 7 p.m. She ask Commissioner Hamilton to reach out to the sheriff's department to make sure we have some officer/officers in town during that time. Commissioner Hamilton said she would do this. Mayor Legge stated that anyone having COVID 19 or in contact with someone having the virus, should not take part in anyway with this event. Masks should be worn, individually wrapped candy should be given out and no homemade treats. Commissioner Shapiro suggested an add be placed in the papers informing the public of the rules for Trick or Treating. The information will also be on Facebook. Perhaps, the elderly should not participate in Trick or Treating.

The next council meeting will be held on Monday, November 2, 7 p.m. at the council chamber. The Luke Water Line is complete. The meter will be set tomorrow. We are still waiting on some pressure reducing valves. Some landscaping will be done. Previous date for completion was Nov. 20. It should be earlier.

Mayor Legge declared 101 Howard Street as being surplus property. Many questions have come forth on town owned surplus property. She is thinking about creating a data base for all property owned by the town, how much money the town put into the property and can we sell the property. If a property is deemed a street, the town cannot sell this property. If there were a manhole on the property for access to a sewer line, this property would be not for sale. Again, Mayor Legge mentioned 101 Howard Street and gave directions on how to get to this property. The town has had this property since 1974 and there was a house on this property.

There is some interest in 101 Howard Street and it is big enough for a building. Attorney Llewellyn told the council that there is a Maryland State process for selling surplus property. It first has to be declared surplus and then give notice of 20 days of the intent to sell this property. Attorney Llewellyn said that the town is not required to bid the property out but it is a good idea to do this. Mayor Legge ask for a motion to declare 101 Howard Street surplus property. Commissioner Shapiro made this motion with a second from Commissioner Hamilton. Motion carried. Mayor Legge and all agreed that this sale should go out for bids.

Mayor Legge presented the council with a letter from MDE concerning Phases 5 - 7 of the Westernport Water Distribution System Improvements. MDE has offered a loan amount of \$14M and a loan principal forgiveness amount of \$1.5M. The loan would be for 20 years or 30 years for a disadvantage community. The council feels that Westernport is a disadvantage community. Rate of interest for a disadvantage community would be 0.40%. Administration fee is 5% of the total debt service divided by 30. Mayor Legge stated that the council has already voted to move forward with Phase 4 of the Water Distribution System. Phases 5 - 7 would finish everything. The council will be asking for grant money and loan forgiveness from USDA.

The mayor opened the meeting for discussion by the council on Phases 5 - 7. Commissioner Shapiro stated that the agencies are basically giving us the money. Water Rates for outside the corporate limits can be set higher than rates inside the corporate limits. Forty per cent of our customers in Phases 5 - 7 are out of town. Rates for both

will be figured out when it comes time to pay back the money. Westernport residents pay town taxes and they should not pay the same rate as out-of-towners.

The council agreed that there would not be a second chance to get this money. Mr. Tim Jackson mentioned that we are on borrowed time with a pump house. Commissioner Shapiro and Mayor Legge agreed and added that the town is on borrowed time with a lot of things. These phases would complete the project and give the town all new water lines and 2 new water tanks. The town should be good for 25 to 30 years. Commissioner Shapiro stated that maybe USDA would put in \$7M leaving us with \$7M instead of \$14M. Last year at PACE, Commissioner Shapiro could tell that MDE was very much interested in this project. Mayor Legge added that it was to our benefit to ask for everything. The town saved \$1M. Commissioner Shapiro said we would never see rates this low again. Commissioner Shapiro and Commissioner Hamilton recommend we accept this offer. Construction on these phases would have to start December 2021.

Mr. Tim Jackson asks if the town would have any say in the engineering of the phases. Could we have a new road (which would mean purchasing property) to the Horse Rock Water Tank and the Philos Avenue Water Tank? Mayor Legge said she did not see a problem with this purchase but it would have to be done now because Bennett Brewer & Associates have already been granted the PRER for this job. Commissioner Shapiro made a motion the town accepts the offer for the Maryland Department of the Environment for Phases 5 - 7 to complete the Water Distribution System in Westernport. There was a second from Commissioner Llewellyn. Motion carried.

Mayor Legge announced that the Christmas Tree Lighting and the Tri-Towns Christmas Parade would be cancelled this year. The tree lighting and the parade cause people to be very close together. Whereas, Halloween Trick or Treating was not cancelled because people are spread out.

Water Commissioner Sarah Llewellyn gave her report. The town filtered 13,670,000 gallons of water in September. We averaged 453,000 gallons per day and all the tests came back within the state regulations. A shed is being built around a generator to keep it protected. This is at a cost off \$452. Commissioner Llewellyn stated that the town needs more fire hydrants. Some damaged ones were fixed but the town will need to purchase some. Maryland Avenue has several fire hydrants that are not working. The council decided to purchase one fire hydrant. New fire hydrants will be included in the Water Distribution System.

Police Commissioner Judy Hamilton did not have anything to report this month.

Mayor Legge told the group that the town sent out reminder letters to residents who owed over \$300 on their water bill. They cannot be shut off but it was good to remind them.

Finance Commissioner Shapiro gave his report.

Water Fund July through August 2020

Total Income	\$ 111,117.28
Total Expense	100,070.49
Net Income	11,046.79

Sewer Fund July through August 2020

Total Income	41,581.57
Total Expense	26,646.70
Net Income	14,934.87

Garbage Fund July through August 2020

Total Income	\$ 24,366.00
Total Expense	20,675.50
Net Income	3,690.50

Commissioner Shapiro stated that he didn't think any tax payment was recently received. Town Clerk Renee Morris informed the council that there was a tax check in the safe. Copies of the financial report are available.

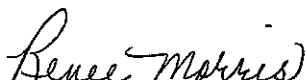
Mayor Legge informed the council that the town would have an emergency sewer line expense of approximately \$21,000. The sewer problem is on Poplar Street. Mayor Legge does not have all the information right now. She did receive two quotes: one from Belt and one from Beitzel. Belt came in lower at \$21,000. Public Works Director Tim Jackson explained the sewer problem in some detail. Mayor Legge said that this sewer problem would have to be fixed soon.

Commissioner Shapiro asks if we have heard anything from the UPRC on sewer issues. Mayor Legge said, "No." Commissioner Shapiro said that in approximately 45 days, Verso will be pulling out and they have been paying a large sewer bill for a long time. Will the UPRC come to us for new and higher sewer rates? Could we be blindsided? Council members have asked some question of the UPRC but they have ignored us. Mayor Legge stated that all were waiting on a report from the MDE on this issue. It should be done but she has not heard anything. Mayor Legge stated that maybe we should contact the UPRC and MDE; the town does have an agreement with the UPRC. Attorney Llewellyn said he would look at this agreement. Mayor Legge said that the agreement is based off of EDU's. With the mill closing, our EDU's would not increase.


Attorney Llewellyn stated that the UPRC was designed to treat a huge capacity of sewage and this will end once Verso is gone. Will the UPRC retool to handle less sewage? Many questions were on the table.

Mr. Jackson said he would call Chris Carski regarding the UPRC study. He also informed the group of a potential interest in obtaining the Savage Wood Yard, Water Plant, one boiler and one generator on the Verso property.

Mayor Legge requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hamilton made the motion to adjourn with a second from Commissioner Shapiro. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.



Renee Morris, Town Clerk



Laura Freeman-Legge, Mayor