

**Mayor & Council of Federalsburg
Workshop Meeting
Monday, March 17, 2025
6:00PM**

The Mayor & Council of Federalsburg held their monthly workshop meeting on Monday, March 17, 2025 at 6:00 PM, in the Mayor & Council meeting room located at Town Hall. Those in attendance were Mayor Abner, Councilmembers Hammond, Sewell, James, and Ferguson, Interim Town Manager Mercedes Moyer, Superintendent of Water/Sewer Abid Khan, Maintenance Supervisor Eric Hall and members of the public.

Call to Order

Mayor Abner called the Mayor and Council workshop meeting to order at 6:03 PM. Mayor Abner welcomed all guests that were present and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Previous Month's Minutes

The minutes from the March 3, 2025 meeting were not approved and need to be amended.

Introduction of New Treasurer

Interim Town Manager Moyer introduced the new Treasurer Jamie Washington. The Mayor and Council welcomed her.

Jeff Towers- Private Property Sewer Line Discussion

Jane and Jeff Towers came to speak on behalf of their daughter Jenna Towers who owns the property 201 Vernon Avenue. The Towers would like to appeal the responsibility for paying the invoice of \$2800.00. They believe it was the town's responsibility from the wrong pipe being installed from day one. Jeff stated that the pipe was a thin wall and when the ground settled it collapsed full rocks and busted in as he had on the drawing presented to Mayor and Council. The Mayor and Council decided to continue this discussion in closed session.

Chesapeake Utilities- Discussion of Franchise Agreement

Bill O'Brien, an in-house lawyer with Chesapeake Utilities Corporation and Craig a government relations manager in his office attended tonight's meeting. Bill stated that the company is doing an internal corporate reorganization where they are bringing the three Eastern Shore Utilities into one legal entity. Bill asked for the Mayor and Council to sign a consent for the franchise as the name would go from the Maryland division of Chesapeake Utilities Corporation to eventually Chesapeake Utilities of Maryland Inc.

The town had a franchise agreement with Chesapeake Utilities since 1966 and the one that Bill is asking to transfer was renewed in 2010 for 25 years. Councilmember James asked, "what happens if we don't agree to sign it?" According to Bill this is a courtesy that he is asking for because the franchise agreement itself does not require consensus.

Chaberton Solar Project- Discussion

Jesse Hammock, the attorney that represents the commissioners of Caroline County spoke on behalf of the Chaberton Solar project. Commissioners opposed the application that Chaberton has made due to the fact that it is zoned R1 in Caroline County. The property is described as the north side of town limits along Idlewild Road and Laurel Grove Road. If the Public Service Commission approves this application it would preclude this property from being residentially developed for the next 40 to 50 years. The lease on the property would last for 30 years, which would include 5 year renewals that will put this property at a 50 year lease that would lock solar on this property for 50 years precluding any residential growth to the north side of the town. Jesse requested the assistance of Interim Town Manager Moyer. Councilmember James asked Interim Town Manager Moyer if it would interfere with her current work load. Attorney Jesse Hammock stated that within the next two months it would take two to three hours and he would be doing a majority of the work. Councilmember Sewell made a motion, seconded by Councilmember James, unanimously passed by a vote of five to zero, to allow Interim Town Manager Moyer to participate in the Chaberton Solar Project discussion.

Alouse Jean- Discussion of Festival for Haitian Flag Day-May 17, 2025

Ms. Alouse Jean has lived in Federalsburg for 20 years and she provides free services to the community as well as helping people in the community apply for work cards. She has asked the Mayor and Council to give her permission to host a Festival for Haitian Flag Day on May 17, 2025 at Chambers Park. Councilmember Sewell asked if she planned on having porta potties at the event, Ms. Alouse stated yes. Mayor Abner checked the Lions Club building to ensure that building was not rented out. She has blocked that day from being rented. The Mayor and Council requested that Ms. Alouse fill out the rental application and return it to town hall.

Sue Simmons- Maryland Eastern Shore Trail Network

Sue Simons, former director of Caroline County Recreation and Parks, asked for the approval to create a Proclamation of celebration of the trails. She is asking for the consideration of a Proclamation to be signed on or before April 26, 2025. The Mayor & Council agreed to let the Interim Town Manager work with Sue on this Proclamation. Sue plans on attending the April 7, 2025 meeting.

Supervisors Reports

● Maintenance Supervisor, Eric Hall Reported the Following:

- Additional stop signs were put up near Foodlion and Choptank Community Health, making the intersection a 4 way stop.
- Received estimate to rent a machine to lay the asphalt. The estimate came in at \$7500.00 to rent the machine for a month.
- Working on replacing the two bridges on the walking trail. Get an estimate from Culpeper to get marine grade wood. Mayor Abner suggested asking for the donation of the wood in replacement of sponsorship on the bridges.
- Reliance Road-did patch of asphalt.
- Filling the potholes on East Central as fast as they are coming back
- Mayor Abner would like to see trash cans placed on the walking trail by Old Denton Road and when you cross under the railroad bridge at the Marina Park.
- Councilmember James would like a game plan in writing to the council of the time line and estimates for the paving.
- One dump truck is down but one is still operating.

● Superintendent of Water/Sewer, Abid Kahn Reported the Following:

- Foodlion pump station continues to cause problems where the water department has to go at least twice a week to clean.
- Abid has talked to the manager of Foodlion and the Chinese restaurant to let them know about the issues with the pump station and what they can do to avoid the clogs. Interim Town Manager and Abid will work together to write a letter to the businesses within a 5 block radius to educate them on what should and shouldn't be down the drains.
- This week the new system of SCADA should be replaced, this system controls everything at the plant.

● **Chief of Police, Chief Gasser:** not in attendance but provided two reports that were given to the Mayor and Council.

● Interim Town Manager, Mercedes Moyer Reported the Following:

- Excited the new Treasurer Jamie has started, this will lighten the work load
- Pump station grant is moving forward
- Peter from GMB will be at the April 7, 2025 meeting
- Learned how to do payroll
- Code Enforcement has slowed down
- Keeping track of old employee emails
- Created new email for invoices- invoices@federalsburg.org

Old Business

A. PIA/FOIA- Discussion/Decision

Mayor Abner introduced the two types of policies for the Public Information Act, she stated she likes the one that has the bullets instead of the paragraphs, the Councilmembers agreed. Councilmember James stated the residents need a better understanding from the council of what the Town of Federalsburg Public Information Act Policy is. The Mayor and Council as well as the Interim Town Manager discussed if there would be a cost for printed copies of requested information from the residents. Proposed changing the wording so we reserve the right to charge depending on the situation. Mayor Abner to work on the changes along with a list of allowable and unallowable release of documents.

B. Business Letters for Roads- Discussion/Decision

Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan typed up a letter for business owners in the Town of Federalsburg regarding the funds to help pave the roads. Councilmember James questioned if the Mayor and Council should pause on sending the letter until Eric, the maintenance supervisor, has his estimates completed on how much it would cost for the town employees to pave roads. Interim Town Manager Moyer was concerned about the information that Town Attorney Lyndsey Ryan included in the letter on specific cost estimates that may not be accurate. Brooklyn would also need to be removed from the cost estimate in the letter as that road has been previously paved. Councilmember James would like to see the estimates written down. Greenridge Road and East Central are two of the main roads that need focus. Councilmembers are concerned about the semi trucks coming into town on roads that have signs posted clearly that no trucks are allowed. Interim Town Manager Moyer suggested she can email Chief Gasser asking for the police department to enforce that semi trucks are not allowed in town limits only on roads allowed.

C. Review Completed SOP's

Mayor Abner has completed a sample SOP for water and sewer for the Councilmembers and Interim Town Manager to review. As well as a folder for SOP's and a google sheet. The town should have internal SOP's and external SOP's. The items with the wells and the pump stations should be internal and not for public record for the security purposes. Interim Town Manager and Councilmember James would like to create a binder for what properties that town owns or an inventory of town properties. The town should consider SOP's that relate to our town and what capabilities our town can handle. Councilmember James requested that we have a policy book in place for the town office. The town should have a policy where if things such as fraud, waste or abuse were

held for so long before it comes to life that there is a certain amount of time to report these findings.

New Business

● Budget Discussion

- Councilmember James is concerned that the budget is not moving forward like it should.
- Councilmember James asked the Interim Town Manager what the line item for 10,000 that is called computer consultant. Interim town manager was not sure what that was.
- Consideration of virtual meetings to work in the budget.
- According to the charter a financial report needs to be given out monthly.
- April 7, 2025 meeting to be solely focused on the budget.

● Employee Handbook

- Should have a paragraph that states I know I work for the Town of Federalsburg and if I observe something out of the ordinary that I have the duty to report it or feel obligated to report it.
- The Mayor and Council and the Town Manager should review the employee handbook annually and all employees should be given an updated copy of the handbook as insurance and different things change throughout the year.
- Employees should sign annually once given.
- Suggest adding a one sheet synopsis that lists insurance information that way only one sheet can be updated instead of the entire handbook.

● Health Insurance/Retirement

- Plan to update new insurance plans/rates in September to be completed by December and ready in January.
- To be fully vested in the state retirement plan you need to work for 10 years.
- Consideration of changing the state retirement and health insurance

● Bicentennial-Discussion

- Councilmember Hammond asked if the monies from the bicentennial account could be used for anything. Mayor Abner responded that 5 benches still need to be purchased with the money.
- Councilmember Hammond asked who puts the Madness on the Marshyhope on. Mayor Abner stated that the host is the town but the fundraising comes through the Lions Club.

- The Lions Club received a grant from DNR for \$3500.00 to pay for the awards and costume.
- In the past the entry fees paid for the prize money and the Lions Club would solicit donations.

Public Comment

- Heather Harding of 309 Greenridge Road, voiced her concerns regarding the infrastructure of her road. She knows that her sewer line is orangeburg from her house to the road and in the road it consists of terracotta. This was placed there many years ago when the house was built and who knows what it looks like now. Heather wants to ensure that the decision the town makes to fix Greenridge Road is thought through and it will be a lasting fix. If temporary repairs can be made in the meantime that would help.
- Sabrina Barger-Turner, the President and CEO of Homeless & Humans and a representative of the Executive Committee Chair of the Midshore Roundtable on Homelessness introduced herself. People in the community are struggling with basic needs, cannot afford to pay utilities, buy food, clothes, or medicines. With new cuts in federal funding it is directly impacting our families even more and exacerbating these financial struggles. Sabrina requested an eviction moratorium from the Town of Federalsburg to protect further homelessness and displacement. She would also like support in the development of Propel. Propel is a real opportunity purchasing an existing listing which they are working with Connecticut and this takes place in the whole country. A coalition has started to form to create a universal basic income program that reallocates money from different funds and investors. Sarbina said she is not asking for funding but just for the support from the town. Currently there is a drop off for supplies at 105 South Main Street but she requested that the town put up a more visible donation drop off so more items can be accepted. A QR code would be available for donors to scan, this would print a receipt to be used for tax filing purposes. Sabrina would like to have a one-on-one meeting with the Mayor and Council and or Interim Town Manager to develop a plan for the unhoused during emergency situations. The Mayor and Council thanked Sabrina and encouraged her to be on the agenda for an action item rather than public comment. The Mayor and Council did not make any decisions on her request.

Mayor & Council Action Items

Councilmember Ferguson

- Supports the session for strictly the budget.

Councilmember James

- Concerned as to why only the agenda and minutes are posted on the towns website in comparison to the agenda, packet, audio, and minutes used to be accessible on the town's website.
- Requested that all supporting documents for the meeting that are included in the Mayor and Council go on the town's website as well.
- Mayor Abner stated only the agenda is to be printed for the residents, the whole packet should be loaded to the website for everyone to view.
- Copies of the packet would still be printed for Mayor and Council members.
- Verify which tax rate was correct for the Town of Federalsburg as 2 were listed.
- Budget line item for sale of truck that Toby was working with Town Attorney Lyndsey on. The Interim Town Manager believes we still have the truck and this did not happen.
- Update on Wawa- currently Wawa is working with GMB on the site plan.

Councilmember Sewell

- The Town Charter still lists the town as having an election this year and nothing has been fixed. A resolution that was passed in June of 2023 talks about all the seats for that election and it would be held in 2026 and 2028. A charter amendment would need to be in the works as well as Ecode 360 to be updated.
- Check on the process of how Ecode 360 is updated.

Councilmember Hammond

Nothing at this time

Mayor Abner

Nothing at this time

Announcement of Closed Session- The Mayor and Council of Federalsburg will go into Closed Session under the General Provisions Article, 3-305(b)(1) to discuss a personnel matter.

Councilmember James made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Sewell and unanimously passed by a vote of five to zero to go into closed session at 9:44 PM.

Regular Session

Mayor Abner reported that the Mayor & Council met in closed session from 9:44 PM to 10:15 PM to discuss personnel matters. Councilmember James made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Hammond and unanimously passed by a vote of five to zero to approve the 80/20 split of the invoice for Jeff Towers. Jeff Towers will be responsible for 80% and the Town of Federalsburg will be responsible for 20%.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Councilmember James made a motion seconded by Councilmember Ferguson and unanimously passed by a vote of five to zero to adjourn the meeting at 10:20PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheri Hendrix, Office Administrator