

**MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 3, 2025
CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
Council Chambers
7:00 p.m.**

Council Members Present:

Denise P. Bowden, Mayor
Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor
J. Nicholas Howard, Councilman
William T. McComb, Jr., Councilman
Ellen W. Richardson, Councilwoman
K. Jay Savage, Councilman
Gene W. Taylor, Councilman

Council Members Absent:

Staff Present:

Mr. Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager
Mr. Tyler Greenley, Chief of Police
Mr. Bryan Rush, Director of Emergency Services
Mr. Wes Parks, Public Works Director

Call to Order

Mayor Bowden called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Invocation

Councilman Savage offered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Bowden led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Mayor Bowden opened the floor for public comment.

- Ms. Donna Leonard, 6415 Leonard Lane, addressed the need of a new updated Town website. She suggested creating a task force to collaborate with experts in the community. She gave the names of people she feels have the expertise and suggested including staff.

Staff Recognitions

Mayor Bowden read the Proclamations for School Resource Officers and presented them to Officer Geno Geminiani and Officer John Carmody.



Proclamation for School Resource Officers:

WHEREAS, The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) is dedicated to making schools and children safer by providing the highest-quality training to school-based law enforcement officers; and

WHEREAS, school resource officers (SROs) bridge gaps between youth and law enforcement and embrace a triad concept of school policing, serving in informal counseling, education and law enforcement roles to support students and communities they serve; and

WHEREAS, by training law enforcement officers to counsel, educate, and protect school communities, the men and women of NASRO continuously lead by example and promote a positive image of law enforcement to school children and school communities; and

WHEREAS, SRO programs across the globe are founded as collaborative efforts by police agencies, law enforcement officers, educators, students, parents, and communities to create safe learning environments, provide valuable resources to school staff members, foster positive relationships with students and develop strategies to resolve problems that affect youth with the goal of protecting all children, so they can reach their fullest potential; and

WHEREAS, school resource officers are valuable and essential members of the education community and deserve unwavering respect and support from the public in the pursuit of keeping schools and students safe;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Town of Chincoteague hereby proclaims February 15 as School Resource Officer Appreciation Day, and recognizes Officer Geno Geminiani as an outstanding example of such a dedicated officer.

Approved this 3rd day of February 3, 2025

**Denise P Bowden,
Mayor**

**Michael T. Tolbert,
Town Manager**



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**Denise P Bowden,
Mayor**

**Michael T. Tolbert,
Town Manager**

Agenda Adoption

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Richardson to adopt the agenda as presented. Unanimously approved.

Staff Reports

General Government

Town Manager Tolbert reported he was contacted last week by staff from Rep. Kiggans' office about hosting a mobile office hours at the Town office. He explained that this provides constituent services for the public who may not be able to get to one of their offices. He added that two or three of Rep. Kiggans' staff will be in attendance. The unconfirmed date for the event is February 19th from 10:00a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Town office. They are still working on well relocation. He is applying for a VDH Planning Grant which will help with the planning and preliminary engineering work.

Town Manager Tolbert also gave an update on the sewer collection system project. He advised that the preconstruction meeting was held January 27th. The contractor has 150 days for completion of the work and has a shutdown period between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The Contractor plans to have the job completed before Memorial Day. Town Manager Tolbert then reviewed the Legislation of Local Interest. He reviewed which would impact Chincoteague. One is a bill which tried to protect pollinators regarding Mosquito Control. He advised this bill was killed at the committee level.

Town Manager Tolbert also advised of proposed legislation intended to alleviate the affordable housing crisis that forces the inclusion of Auxiliary Dwelling Units. He stated that if this passes it would have to be included in the zoning laws. It takes the choice out of the locality's hands. Other bills were to effectively allow public employees the right to collective bargaining. He has contacted Delegate Bloxom and Senator DeSteph and asked them to oppose all of the proposed legislations.

Town Manager Tolbert continued with the monthly Meals and Transient Occupancy Tax Report along with the Financial Report for January. He advised that Transportation Director King has submitted the grant application and working on the audit for FY24 with DRPT. He then reviewed the Center's monthly report stating the first event was the ladder truck fundraiser for the Fire Company. There was a birthday party, BINGO for the Island Community House, and a Red Cross blood drive. He then advised of the upcoming events in February and March. He continued with the Building and Zoning Report for January as well. There were 33 building permits. The total value of building cost for January was \$1,583,885.27 and the collected permit fees were \$2,646.01.

Vice Mayor Howard asked when they will start the sewer project, and where

Town Manager Tolbert advised they started today at the Museum.

Councilman Bott stated that they were supposed to receive an email on the route that was in the bid package. He also mentioned the water system and asked if the Town has independent assessments on the Town's water system periodically.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that Public Works Director Parks has talked with some folks that would do just that for the Town. This is a preventative maintenance program that gives an annual report, inspections, and painting. This will be proposed in the Water Budget presentation.

Councilman Taylor stated that when the contractor was here, he talked about having hookups at certain spots at less cost while he was doing it.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that this was recanted. It may be possible to save some money on certain connections because of the physical procedures involved, it wouldn't be beneficial to hook up just anyone because it would require extra work and would slow the project down. He continued that there will be a pit every 500' and if there's a connection that happens to be in the vicinity of that pit it could be done economically. If not in the vicinity of the pit, there wouldn't be any savings.

Police Department

Chief Greenley reported that in January the two newly graduated officers have successfully completed the Field Training Program and is now officially certified. He introduced the two newest officers, Officer Anthony Todd, and Officer Justin Newsome. He also introduced Officer Christian Stevens, who came from Accomack County Sheriff's Department.

Public Works Department

Public Works Director Parks reported that riprap was installed along the shoulder of the road leading to Wildcat. Christmas decorations were removed and stored. Snow removal was done last month which led to many behind the scenes activities. The heater was replaced in the well 6 building. The baseboard molding was removed at the Amrien Gym in preparation for the new gym floor coming in March. Many repairs were made at the old firehouse, including furnace and sewer work. He advised that they ordered the supplies for the repairs to the Memorial Park pier which will be done in March. They added they also have to complete the Harbor cleanup, monitor installation of the forced main sewer.

Vice Mayor Howard referred to the riprap installed at Wildcat. He asked if it is good and if it could be put on other spots of the Island like Eastside.

Public Works Director Parks stated that there are definitely spots that it would be useful. He advised that they installed it on Wildcat because the Town caused the issue.

Councilman Taylor advised that they have spent a lot of money in quarry stone.

Emergency Services

Director of Emergency Services Rush reported that they had 58 calls in January which were 12 more than January of 2024. He advised he met with Maryland State Police Aviation Division to discuss what went well and what didn't go well, ideas, other institutes and helicopter meet-up places. He, along with Paramedic Wheatley were asked for help other companies with implementation of the Drug Kit Program. He reported that the CVFC is the only Department on the Shore that has implemented the Drug Kit Program. He added that in the Tidewater Region

there are very few who have the kits up and running. They have been asked to share the passes and failures to help get others up and running. He also reported that the Eastern Shore Trauma Symposium was held last week. He stated that Parksley Volunteer Fire Company, Onancock Volunteer Fire Company, Oak Hall Volunteer Rescue, Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company, and Riverside in Onancock got together and had almost 50% in attendance. Chincoteague EMS had 3 instructors who taught and doctors who gave lectures. This was a 3-day event where the same things were taught each day to give everyone a chance to attend. They are planning another symposium for strokes and sepsis in the coming months. He added they are continuing with weather monitoring, launch monitoring and range meetings with the planning team to provide appropriate response for the visitors and from a safety perspective.

Director of Emergency Services Rush also reported on the Eastern Shore Disaster Coalition. They're trying to do maintenance on the Ham radio which put them in contact with Mr. Bill Wallace with the Eastern Shore HAM Radio Club. The Delmarva Emergency Task Force held their quarterly meeting in Salisbury. He advised they're still working on the EOP revisions. He reminded everyone to "Prepare Now". He concluded that they will continue with revisions and rewrites for 2025 of the plans, especially the EOP.

Committee Reports

Public Works Committee

Councilwoman Richardson reported they met January 7th and discussed the Eel Creek culverts and reviewed concrete culverts. They also talked about cleaning up at the Harbor and snow removal.

Mayor Bowden mentioned that on North Main Street 3 feet from Taylor Street is a dip.

Councilwoman Richardson advised this will be taken care of when they do the Taylor Street Project in the spring.

Budget and Personnel Committee

Councilman McComb advised they met January 14th and reviewed the revenues and tax rates for the upcoming year. They also talked with the Police Chief regarding fleet life, requirements, and future purchase needs. The Committee also reviewed the Community Center capital improvements which included chairs, lighting, and controls. He advised that they discussed verbiage and benefits regarding Sick Leave and Bereavement Leave.

Mayor Bowden asked if the tax rate that was unanimously approved by Budget and Personnel would be voted on this evening.

Town Manager Tolbert advised it will be voted on with the entire FY26 Budget.

Adoption of Minutes of January 6th and January 16th, Council Meetings

Councilwoman Richardson motioned, seconded by Councilman McComb to adopt the minutes of the January 6th and January 16th, 2025 Council meetings as presented.

Unanimously approved.

Chamber of Commerce Annual Report

Chincoteague Chamber Executive Director Moore reviewed the 2024 Annual Report. She gave the statistics for Economic Impact, marketing expenses, outreach, engagement, membership, workforce development, off-season events, achievements, grants, 2025 Visitor Guide, and 2025 outlook. She announced that the Chincoteague Pony Swim picture will be published on the summer Virginia Tourism Guide. She thanked Mayor Bowden, the Town Council, membership, partners, and volunteers for their continued support to continue economic growth for the Island.

Mayor Bowden asked if the Chincoteague App was a free app.

Chamber Executive Director Moore advised it is free without ads or inside purchases. She added that it also has the event calendar, itineraries, Trolley schedule and stops.

Councilman Taylor asked if the interest for coming to Chincoteague was up this year.

Chamber Executive Director Moore advised it is up and added that they received phone calls in January of 2024 for the summer of 2025.

Consider Personnel Policy Manual Changes

Councilman McComb read the proposed changes to the Sick Leave Benefits.

B. Sick Leave: Sick leave shall accrue at the rate of 4 hours per pay period, and, when taken, shall be used on an hour-for-hour basis. Sick leave shall be used:

1. In conjunction with FMLA leave (section 6);
2. For an illness or injury incapacitating the employee and preventing the employee from performing assigned duties,
3. For doctor, or dental appointments during working hours, and
4. For **illness, injury or** medically necessary care of family members, such as spouse, child, parents, siblings, or in-laws. ~~living in the same household as the employee.~~
5. ~~For illness, injury or necessary care of parents (mother and/or father) of the employee not living in the household~~

Councilman McComb advised that the Budget and Personnel Committee asks Council's consideration for adoption.

Councilman Savage motioned, seconded by Councilman Taylor to approve the proposed changes to the Personnel Policy Sick Leave, Section B, items 4 and 5. Unanimously approved.

Councilman McComb read the proposed changes to the Bereavement Leave.

A. Bereavement Leave An employee shall be granted up to ~~three~~ **five** days of paid bereavement leave in the event of the death of a spouse, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, sibling (or comparable step relations) **or legal domestic partner**. An employee may be granted up to ~~one~~ **three** days of paid bereavement leave in the event of the death of a father-in-law, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law.

Councilman McComb advised that the Budget and Personnel Committee asks Council's consideration for adoption.

Councilman Savage motioned, seconded by Councilman Taylor to approve the proposed changes to the Personnel Policy Bereavement Leave, Section A. Unanimously approved.

Committee Appointments:

Mayor Bowden advised that there are vacant seats on the Planning Commission, Harbor Committee, BBA, and BZA. She stated that Council has a list of vacancies and interested citizens in their packet. She explained the procedures for nominations.

Planning Commission

Mayor Bowden stated that the Planning Commission currently has 4 vacancies. She opened the floor for nominations for the Planning Commission.

Councilman Taylor nominated Mr. Steve Katsetos.

Councilman McComb nominated Mrs. Pat Farley.

Vice Mayor Howard nominated Giovanni Rosanova.

Councilman Bott nominated Mr. John Tavolaro.

Councilwoman Richardson nominated Mrs. Sonia Watson-Conser.

Mayor Bowden closed the nominations and called for a vote.

Mr. Steve Katsetos	6 – 0
Mrs. Pat Farley	6 – 0
Mr. Giovanni Rosanova	5 – 1
Mr. John Tavolaro	5 – 1
Mrs. Sonia Watson-Conser	1 – 0

Mayor Bowden announced that Mr. Katsetos, Mrs. Farley, Mr. Rosanova, and Mr. Tavolaro have been selected to serve a term on the Planning Commission.

Harbor Committee

Mayor Bowden reported that the Harbor Committee has 1 vacancy, which is Mr. Danny Bowden who has expressed interest in serving another term.

Mayor Bowden opened the floor for nominations of the Harbor Committee.

Councilman Bott nominated Mr. Danny Bowden.

Mayor Bowden closed the nominations and called for a vote.

Council unanimously voted for Mr. Danny Bowden.

Mayor Bowden announced that Mr. Bowden has been selected to serve another term on the Harbor Committee.

Board of Building Appeals

Mayor Bowden explained that the Board of Building Appeals currently has 2 vacancies which are for Mr. John Whalen and Mrs. Sonia Watson-Conser who have expressed their interest in serving another term.

Mayor Bowden opened the floor for nominations.

Vice Mayor Howard nominated Mrs. Sonia Watson-Conser.

Councilman Taylor nominated Mr. John Whalen.

Mayor Bowden closed the nominations.

No vote was necessary as there were 2 seats and 2 nominations. Town Manager Tolbert was directed to send a letter to the Circuit Court.

Board of Zoning Appeals

Mayor Bowden advised that the Board of Zoning appeals has 2 vacancies, 1 from the death of Mr. Eddie Moran and the other from Mr. David Quillen who has expressed interest to serve another term.

Mayor Bowden opened the floor for nominations.

Councilwoman Richardson nominated Mr. David Quillen.

Councilman McComb nominated Mrs. Sonia Watson-Conser.

Mayor Bowden closed the nominations.

No vote was necessary as there were 2 seats and 2 nominations. Town Manager Tolbert was directed to send a letter to the Circuit Court.

Mayor and Council Comments

Councilman Bott stated that with the Policy Manual changes that were made, administration needs to keep in mind the staffing levels. He added that they increased leave and don't want service to suffer, especially in the front office area of service.

Councilman McComb expressed his appreciation of everyone's interest in serving on the committees. He also agrees with Councilman Bott about staffing properly.

Councilman Taylor agreed that it's good to see the Scouts here. He stated that it won't be that much longer when the Scouts will be sitting there. He thanked the Scout leaders, adding that the youth of the community is worth it. He stated it is great to see the Police Officers here and thanked them for what they do.

Councilman Savage also expressed his appreciation of the volunteers for committees. He gave a shout-out to the SROs who do a fantastic job, and the kids love them.

Mayor Bowden thanked everyone for being here, adding that it would be nice to see younger folks sitting in the Council seats. She thanked the Boy Scouts for attending. She commented to Ms. Leonard that Town Manager Tolbert has been working with someone about developing a new website. She thanked all those who are willing to serve the Town. She also thanked Chamber Executive Director Moore for the report adding that the Chamber does a lot of work for the Town, and it pays the bills.

Adjourn

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded Councilwoman Richardson to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

Denise P. Bowden, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager