

MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 17, 2024
CHINCOTEAGUE TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
Council Chambers

Council Members Present:

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor
Christopher D. Bott, Vice Mayor
Denise P. Bowden, Councilwoman
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

Call to Order

Mayor Leonard called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Invocation

Councilman Savage offered the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Leonard led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Mayor Leonard opened the floor for public comment. There was none.

Agenda Adoption

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

Proclamation – Cemetery Cleanup Week

Town Manager Tolbert read the proclamation.



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, throughout our community there are many cemeteries and family burial grounds; and

WHEREAS, over the years many of the loved ones of those buried in our cemeteries have moved away or are no longer able to tend to these cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, many organizations and individuals throughout our community have volunteered to assist in the cleanup of those sites and common areas within these cemeteries; and

WHEREAS, these organizations and individuals need assistance from all citizens to accomplish their cleanup goals to beautify and preserve our family burial grounds.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Mayor John A. Leonard do hereby proclaim the week of November 4th through 9th, 2024, as Cemetery Cleanup Week within the Town of Chincoteague and call upon our citizens to volunteer to organize and assist in the cleanup of our Island cemeteries.

DATED this 17th day of October 2024.

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

ATTEST:

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager

Public Hearing – Political Signs

Mayor Leonard opened the public hearing.

- Mrs. Patricia Farley, 3243 Lisa’s Lane, addressed 2 concerns with the proposed ordinance. She stated that there is no definition in the ordinance for “Political Signs”, it only states what the rules are for political signs. She feels the 1st Amendment of the sign article gives permission to have signs for political causes. She added that political signs need to be differentiated between political causes. She suggested that political signs reflect candidacy or campaign signs, and she gave examples. She then asked what a political sign was, and listed a banner, billboard, signs stuck in the ground, flags, something that flies on a house or on a pole, or up on a shed. She feels it is important. She stated that the definition of a sign included all of the types of signs she listed. She added that all types of signs, however, are decided that are defined as political signs need to abide by the new rules. She agrees with the limitation on when political signs should be out. Mrs. Farley feels the ordinance is weak. She also feels this should be rethought adding that there is no rush. She commented further and urged Council to table this and work on it to be brought up in a future meeting.

- Mr. Paul Brzozowski, 5122 Main Street, commented that he agreed with the removal of political signs within 14 days after an election. He asked for clarification of the 30 days before.

Town Manager Tolbert advised that it is 30 days before the 1st vote can be legally cast.

Mr. Brzozowski concurred that there is no rush and he feels that people didn't have a chance to weigh in on this.

- Town Manager Tolbert read a comment he received via email from Ms. Linda Ladas, 3241 Cakely Lane. "I am respectfully submitting my comments and questions regarding the proposed ordinance limiting the placement of political signs to be discussed during this evening's meeting. My questions are: Who proposed this change in the existing ordinance? What was the reason(s) for the proposed change? What is definition of "political sign", e.g. is it for just individual candidate(s) or does it include political opinion views such as "Support Gun Control Legislation", "Go Brandon"?"

If ordinance includes signs of "opinions or views", who decides regulations on whether or not they are permissible? Does the ordinance include flags, billboard or banners? and, if so, what size? What is definition of "sight distance triangle"? What is Town's definition of "clutter"? In my opinion, this kind of regulation change represents a "slippery slope" of unintended consequences. First, some might view the change as a kind of Town Council voter suppression tactic to try and limit public involvement in our elections. Second, it might encourage citizens to come up with other ways to express their support, i.e. banners from balconies, more stickers on public property like street signs, telephone poles, etc. Who and how will change be enforced? Police issuing tickets, fines being assessed, police confiscating signs from personal property?"

Mayor Leonard closed the public comment. He asked for Council comment.

Councilwoman Bowden stated that when they discussed this at the Ordinance Committee, she wasn't a fan of it, and was unaware there was a problem. She does agree with no later than 14 days the political signs should be removed. She agrees with the comments tonight on definition. She asked where they draw the line whether it's a campaign sign or isn't. She feels they have time. She does not want to outlaw everything and take away someone's 1st Amendment right. She feels there should be a better definition of this because it covers such a broad spectrum and area. She asked how they differentiate.

Councilman McComb feels they need a better definition of what constitutes a political sign. He likes the time frame on the front and back of the election as to when the signs go up and come down. He feels they look messy when they've been up too long. They don't want to intrude on someone's 1st Amendment right.

Councilwoman Bowden commented further.

Vice Mayor Bott motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to table this matter and send it back to the Planning Commission. Unanimously approved.

Consider RCEC Recommendations

Councilman Taylor listed and explained the costs associated with the RCEC's proposed projects.

Mem. Pk. Volleyball Court

Net and poles	\$4,500
Boarder curb	\$2,500
Washed Sand	\$5,000
	\$12,000

Mem. Pk. Fence Repair

3rd base Fabric only

1st base Fabric and poles

\$7,866

(**Includes 6' Fenced Dugouts)

Brianna’s Kindness Park (BKP) - Shade structures for the 3 existing benches located at the BKP playground including installation by Public Works.

Purchase - \$13,803.07

BKP “Hangouts” – 4 Mesh Rope Swings - @ \$1,700 =	\$ 6,800
Deck under hangouts	\$10,000
<u>4 Charging Stations</u>	<u>\$ 1,500</u>
Total Project	\$18,300

Memorial Park Pier Deck Replacement – Councilman Taylor advised that they will replace cross bracing and joists as necessary as well as the decking. Public Works will do this work in house again netting considerable savings. - \$22,000.

Dog Park Deck – Councilman Taylor stated that they will construct a raised platform in the corner under the shade sail that will keep the area dry. Again, Public Works will provide the labor. - \$2,500.

Town Manager Tolbert reported that Brianna’s Kindness Park projects will be paid for by a donation from the Island Community House of \$48,602.76 and the rest will be transferred from a reserve account. He stated that the money donated by the Island Community House was specifically for Brianna’s Kindness Park and they should have approximately \$15,000 left. The money for Memorial Park; ballfield, pier replacement, and volleyball court will be taken from the Parks, Recreation, and Beach Conservation reserve and if there is a surplus the funds will be replaced in that fund.

Mayor Leonard asked if another shade station is installed, will they put another deck at the Dog park.

Town Manager Tolbert advised they will and reviewed the details.

Mayor Leonard asked if the volleyball court was going where the old one was.

Town Manger Tolbert advised it is

Mayor Leonard asked if the fence would be set like a Little League field at 200 ft.

Town Manager Tolbert explained that now that they have added trailer parking for the boat ramp, they have taken part of the outfield, they can still get a little over 200 ft, which is Little League and high school ball fields.

Mayor Leonard asked if there was any money for the ballfield. He expressed how bad it was because of flooding and lack of management.

Town Manager Tolbert advised the RCEC discussed this but did not set aside funds for this.

There was discussion to possibly change the field to face the opposite direction.

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to approve the projects for Brianna’s Kindness Park Memorial Park, and the Dog Park and to fund as presented. Unanimously approved

Council Announcements

Councilman Savage expressed his appreciation for the Public Works out doing their jobs getting a lot done. He also stated that he appreciates the Town.

Councilman Taylor stated he wants everyone to pray for our Country. He added that a lot of times they’re divided. He stated that when you start working together you find out you can put things aside, love one another, care for one another, and work together to get things done. He added that they are blessed in our Town that people work together.

Councilman McComb appreciated the information on the political sign ordinance.

Councilwoman Bowden stated she appreciated everyone’s input on that as well. She stated that when you sit there, you think about all these great ideas, but sometimes it takes other people to ask the right questions. She added that they have some people in the community who are going through some serious health problems. She stated that they could use all the prayers they could give.

Mayor Leonard concluded with, “Go Yankees!”.

Adjournment

Councilman McComb motioned, seconded by Councilwoman Bowden to adjourn. Unanimously approved.

J. Arthur Leonard, Mayor

Michael T. Tolbert, Town Manager

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHbqpOo96JI>