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**TOWN OF EASTON, MARYLAND
EASTON TOWN HALL
14 S HARRISON STREET
Promenade Workshop**

July 14, 2020

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PRESENT AT CONVENING.

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Mayor Robert C. Willey
Councilmember Alan I. Silverstein
Councilmember Donald M. Abbatiello
Councilmember Ron E. Engle
Councilmember Megan M. Cook

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Also present was the Town Manager Mr. Don Richardson, Town Attorney Mrs. Sharon VanEmburch, Captain Greg Wright of Easton Police Department, Town Engineer Mr. VanEmburch and Town Clerk Mrs. Kathy M. Ruf. Also present was Discover Easton/Easton Business Alliance Director Ross Benincasa.

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CALL TO ORDER.

President of the Council Mrs. Cook called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance. She stated that this is a workshop and the council will not be taking public comments but will be taking comments from the public back to the council at the regularly scheduled meeting on Monday at 5:30 p.m. She stated that discussion will occur at Monday's meeting.

President Cook stated they would love to hear from the businesses. Easton Economic Development Director Tracy Ward has offered to act as a moderator. President Cook stated that a special meeting can be held after today's discussions and then after Monday evening's meeting.

Mr. Engle stated he wants to have a meeting to hear from all the businesses.

Mr. Silverstein asked to have Mrs. Ward as moderator.

Mr. Benincasa has heard comments from email and social media. He stated that Mr. Abbatiello and Mr. Silverstein met with some stakeholders to discuss possible changes and revisions that could be made to help the businesses.

- 1) Weekend Friday evening thru Sunday with full closure of Washington Street with Public Works putting up barriers with minimal impacts to the courthouse. This plan does require set up and take down.
- 2) Closing the parallel parking on N Washington St seven days without impacting traffic on Washington. This plan can easily be expanded to other streets. This closure would need some type of barriers or walls. This plan is more permeance and may be able to build in parklets and allow for longer usage for dining.
- 3) Northbound closure which would allow southbound traffic to flow thru the area. Some concerns include a pretty major setup as well as traffic issues. Quickest plan to implement.

Mr. Benincasa stated some businesses are in favor of the original project, some are not in favor.

Mr. Abbatiello discussed a hybrid plan which would require the closure of the parallel parking spots on the east side of Washington Street Monday thru Friday. On the weekend it will be Washington Street closes from Dover to Federal Street.

Lt. Wright said the weekends are better. He said there are concerns with the load of traffic on Federal and Goldsborough Street and if this turns into anything other than outdoor dining, such as entertainment, the CDC does not recommend gatherings. Lt. Wright stated he supports using the parallel parking spaces and parklets.

President Cook stated that she feels the increase of foot traffic might draw the community to other shops.

57 Mr. Silverstein stated that COVID 19 cases are increasing; 111 to 187, 8 to 10 cases every day.
58 Queen Anne has a 7.8 positivity rate. He stated he has real concerns trying to draw crowds in to
59 the downtown area. He stated he is also not a fan of closing streets. Mr. Silverstein stated that we
60 must protect the public. He stated he should have asked for other things before his first vote.

61 Mrs. Cook stated that the businesses are in unprecedented times. She suggests utilizing the
62 outdoors and spreading out entertainment while having the dining experience.

63 Mr. Engle questioned whether the restaurant owners get enough from opening parallel parking.
64 He stated he is opposed to fully closing Washington Street. He stated that he things we tried to
65 do too much too fast and we need to have a MOU and constantly re-evaluate the plan. He
66 suggested an advisory panel to meet regularly to identify problems. Mr. Engle also stated that the
67 Town needs a meeting with merchants to see how they feel.

68 Mr. Benincasa stated that the businesses are okay with starting with a dining focus and he is okay
69 with going thru the public assembly events for a few weeks.

70 Mr. Silverstein stated that talks need to continue and suggested a facilitated meeting to get going.
71 He suggested moving forward with a meeting with business owners then come back with
72 concrete suggestions. Mr. Silverstein stated that the barricades do not represent the town in good
73 taste.

74 Mrs. Cook stated that the Town needs to try something this weekend even if it's increased tables
75 for dining; if only for one or two weeks.

76 Mr. Silverstein stated he is not in favor of implementing anything this weekend.

77 Mrs. Cook stated a plan can be implemented this weekend and hear back and add in more later.

78 Mr. VanEmburch discussed meeting with traffic consultant RK&K. He stated it would take 8
79 to12 weeks to do a traffic study and would cost approximately \$35,000 - \$40,000 which would
80 include traffic counts and recommendations. He stated that he has also spoken with Greg Slater,
81 MD Department of Transportation that is working with towns like ours to try to accomplish what
82 is on the table. He stated that a staff of engineers will evaluate and provide feedback from the
83 state level. Mr. VanEmburch stated that Mr. Slater would like to help us but we need to put
84 proposals on a drawing and get recommendations. Mr. VanEmburch stated we have rented 10
85 barricades and we can get more or try to figure out how to make some of the ideas work. Mr.
86 VanEmburch recommended setting up Saturday morning.

87 Mayor stated he has heard comments that we didn't do our due diligence. He stated that the
88 traffic barriers are not very appealing but nothing is going to appeal to everyone. Mayor Willey
89 stated that he doesn't want to close the streets and he is not in favor of another committee. He
90 suggested a small group to critique what is taking place and how successful it is. He suggests a
91 stronger liaison between EBA and EEDC.

92 Mr. Silverstein suggested putting tables out and see if we can draw more people.

93 Mrs. VanEmburch stated that the Mayor's Executive Order already permits some expanded
94 tables with the property owners' permission.

95 Mrs. Cook suggested putting more tables out and closing parallel parking for this weekend,
96 safely securing the parallel parking on Washington Street to move tables out and socially
97 distance.

98 Mrs. Cook stated that this would allow time for planning and time to hear from businesses. She
99 stated that something has to happen and we need to start somewhere.

100 Mr. Abbatiello made a motion to close the parallel parking to allow for additional tables,
101 seconded by Mrs. Cook and carried 3 to 1 with Mr. Silverstein voting no.

102 At 3:18 p.m., upon motion by Mr. Engle seconded by Mrs. Cook and carried unanimously the
103 workshop meeting was adjourned.

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105 Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk