

**COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY**  
**OCTOBER 7, 2024**  
**TOWN MEETING**



The Commissioners of Ridgely met on the above date at 6:00 pm for the October town meeting. The following were in attendance: President John Buckle, Commissioner John Hurley, Commissioner Brad Sears, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Director of Operations David Crist, Zoning Administrator Melissa Leonard, Sgt. Keith Collison, Financial Assistant Gerald Sutton, Kelly Buckle, Thomas Himmelman, Alicia Moxley, Heather Amador, Jenifer Nesselroad, Gary Nesselroad, Greg Nesselroad, Rick & Cathy Schwab, Christine Eckrich, Brenda Walls, Holly Justice, Barbie Utz, Stephanie L. Larimore, Jennifer Van Lou, Robert Van Lou, Robin Martin, Lokia Peirce, Clinton Gill, Annie Rossi-Gill, Chad, Norma Pinkney, Melvin Pinkney, Leroy Harris, Sandra Pitts, Daphine Croom, Chesta Brown Jr., VIA ZOOM Heidi Olson King, Nancy Sears, Error 404, Scott Barron, Brandon Samuel, Frankowski, Matthew Malinowski, Megan Clarke, JS, Jamie Romph.

President Buckle opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance. Commissioner Sears discussed the new setup for the meeting room to make the room more like the county meeting room.

Commissioner Hurley made a motion to approve the 9/13/24 Special Meeting RE: Martin Sutton Park Grant and the 9/9/24 town meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sears, all in favor.

**STAFF REPORTS**

**CLERK-TREASURER**

Commissioner Hurley made a motion to approve payment of the bills, second Commissioner Sears, all in favor approved. Total general funds reconciled \$117,337.88, total sewer funds reconciled \$48,651.42, total water funds reconciled \$42,115.51, total ARPA funds reconciled \$30,152.86. The town website technology is outdated, and we have been having many issues posting and editing on the website. The original website creators (Maven and Smith) provided a quote for a new website more geared towards municipal governments. They have experience working with the county and other Caroline County municipalities. The quote is for \$10,875. Commissioner Sears has experience working with websites and said this is a good price. He made the motion to approve the agreement with Maven & Smith, seconded by Commissioner Hurley, all in favor. We received a donation request from Belly Bustin Grill for their annual Compass Regional Hospice event. Commissioner Hurley made a motion to donate \$500, seconded by Commissioner Sears, all in favor. I read a prepared statement (attached) regarding inaccurate information on social media, and concerns about the funding of the winter festival.

**DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS**

David Crist discussed the sidewalk situation with the following points: there is no consistent sidewalk grid throughout the town and many streets have none, we need to decide if we are going to uphold the charter that says the homeowner is responsible for the sidewalks, moving forward do we require new builds to have sidewalks. David would like to start on Maryland Avenue 300 block and make the sidewalk there ADA accessible. Commissioner Sears made a motion to proceed 2<sup>nd</sup> Commissioner Hurley, all in favor. Mr. Maxie said that he appreciated the planning. He also asked for code enforcement to check the sidewalks for bushes and limbs that hang over and other items that block the sidewalks. The flag memorial at Martin Sutton Park needs repairs as well. Commissioner Sears agreed and said that these issues did not happen overnight. We will need to look at the overriding issue and cost. It will take some time, patience and ideas are appreciated.

A resident informed the town that we were experiencing multiple issues with ZOOM.

#### **CAROLINE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

Sgt. Collison presented his report to the Commissioners (attached). Commissioner Sears asked if there were any updates on the 3<sup>rd</sup> deputy. Sgt. Collison said that once the new officers graduate from the academy and complete field training, we should get the assigned officer. Hopefully, March.

#### **ZONING ADMINISTRATOR**

Melissa Leonard said the Comprehensive Plan meeting is scheduled for 5 pm tomorrow and invited the public to attend. We did community outreach for the plan at the community block party.

#### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANT**

Gerald Sutton said that we are waiting for the FY24 audit report.

#### **HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Cathy Schwab thanked public works for repairing the ramp at the telephone exchange building. The historical society is planning to participate in the Halloween Parade. November 3<sup>rd</sup> the Easton Amateur Radio Society will be at the train station from 10-2. They will be sending transmissions like it was in 1867. They went to the small cemetery on River Road and purchased a sign for the Lockerman Cemetery. May 17, 2025, they will be working with the Caroline County Historical Society to tour 5 older homes including Marblehead. Tickets will be available. David Crist told them the telephone exchange roofing price came back the same as the prior quote. They hope to start soon.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Patrice Flamer gave an update on the Martin Sutton Park grant project. They have a meeting on Friday to learn more about when the funding will come. They have picked out the playground equipment and would like input as they are ready to move forward. David Crist suggested keeping the colors light because of fading and hot equipment.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Holly Justice said that the feedback from the block party was positive and has ideas to improve. 2025 will be a greater event. She thanked the town and the residents and asked for volunteers for next year. The commissioners thanked the committee and congratulated them on the event.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jennifer Vanlou said that it is very hard to navigate the town in her wheelchair. The intersections with the dips are dangerous. She asked us to please enforce the code.

Leroy Harris from Bridge Maryland and the Hannah Henry Association said that notices were sent to the Commissioners of the town and the county for their meeting, and it was appalling that no one showed up. Melissa Leonard explained that it was a last-minute invite, 2 commissioners were out of state.

Robin Martin asked what the likely hood of the ethics committee was being established. She thinks we will get a lot more community support and would be prudent. She encouraged the town to think about this.

Heather Amador told Cathy Schwab that regarding the cemeteries, it is now popular to clean old headstones. It would be a good idea to check with the high school about service-learning hours. She also asked when there will be a decision made on the police departments. She wants community input in a public forum.

Thomas Moxley asked if we were putting the sidewalks everywhere. He does not have them and does not want them. A discussion followed.

Holly Justice is the owner of Glamher. She is considering making a community resource center at her office that would provide kids with a place to go. She wants to know what the community would think and is planning a survey.

Christine Eckrich asked how we were planning to handle the security for the winter festival. The Commissioners responded that the Sheriff's Office will be handling it.

Jennifer Nesselroad asked Stephanie if her email with the questions she had from the September meeting was received. It had not been received and she was asked to bring the questions in person or to send them again.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stephanie Berkey, CMC  
Clerk-Treasurer

I want to take a few minutes to address some issues that have been brought to my attention. It has been said multiple times on social media that the Ridgely tax rates have gone up because of the lawsuits that have been brought against the town. I have placed the Real Property Tax Rates that residents have been charged over the past 10 fiscal years in the back with the agendas. Ten years ago, the rate was .59 and today it is .4656. Not one time over the past ten years have the tax rates been raised. They have either stayed the same as the previous year, or were lowered. While I have nothing to do with the Maryland State Assessment office, its practices or procedures, I am sure that like the rest of the county, your property values have increased. I want to reiterate that the town is not involved in how your property is assessed for value.

I was made aware that after the September meeting, there were questions and concerns about how the Christmas in Ridgely Winter Festival is funded and whether the town employees are being paid to work the festival. The idea for the winter festival came from the public works department staff and the town hall office staff. We wanted a way to give back to the town and throw a festival that would enable families to come into our town and have a magical holiday experience for free. We planned the attractions and researched the costs. We knew that fundraising was going to be a huge part of the festival and that it would be entirely up to us. We were adamant that we did not want to charge for the attractions – they should be free. On May 3, 2022, we were so excited when we received our first sponsorship. We have worked hard on many fundraisers over the past few years. Our kiss the cow contest, holiday paint nights, horse drawn carriage rides, Christmas in July campaign, food truck Wednesdays, Christmas ornament sales, t-shirt sales and the donation box at the public works produce stand (where public works gives away free the produce they grow), grant funding and vendor fees all help to pay for the festival. Since that first donation, and as of today, we have raised \$106,776.06. We are currently working hard to secure sponsors for this year's festival and have many upcoming fundraisers.

The festival is not inexpensive. The attractions and bus transportation alone are \$35,950 for this year. There are other expenses that will need to be addressed and after the festival, deposits will need to be made at the beginning of 2025. So far we have raised \$25,798.27 for this year. We still

have work to do and a way to go. We greatly appreciate the people and businesses that have and continue to sponsor our event. We still believe that if we get to a point in this that we would have to charge, we will stop.

All these fundraising and holiday events take a lot of time and help. After spending weeks getting the park ready for the Christmas lights, we must focus on the holiday events. We have a very small staff that is typically here for every event during the holidays. The day of the festival starts at 3 am for David, and about 6 am for public works and office staff. There is no time for a break and as the festival gets started at 4 pm our public works staff are getting into costume to greet the festival goers. The lines are long, and the costumes are hot. The office staff is busy running back and forth during the event handling issues that come up, fielding questions, problems, helping vendors and amusements with their issues. Commissioner Buckle is in costume, Commissioner Hurley mans the information booth with our financial assistant Jerry Sutton. We are lucky to get volunteers but can always use more. There are few chances to get a break. At the stroke of 9 begins the process of shutting down. I want to thank the following people who, along with myself, were on hand after the event last year to help us clean up and break everything down: From public works, David Crist, James Moore and Brandon Samuel, Commissioners Buckle and Hurley, Carolyn Crist, Rosie Harris, Jennie Samuel and Joe Anderson. Sadly, Melissa Leonard was recovering from a surgery and could not be a part of the event. Most of these individuals were here until almost 1 am. I recall seeing on Really Ridgely someone making fun of the challenge coins we gave to Carolyn, Rosie and Jennie. These women are not town employees. They arrived at 10 am or earlier that day to help with vendors and anything else they could. At 4pm they donned their mascot costumes and happily stayed on their feet for the duration of the festival. I know that you are not supposed to tell a ladies' age, but 2 of these ladies collect social security. After the festival they stacked cones, collected stop bars and helped with the trash and tents. There is a cone in the lobby. Feel free to pick it up and see how much it weighs. Imagine a senior citizen carrying stacks of hundreds of them. These women were utterly exhausted but refused to leave without helping us. To say they were underserving of a simple challenge coin and thank you is disgraceful.

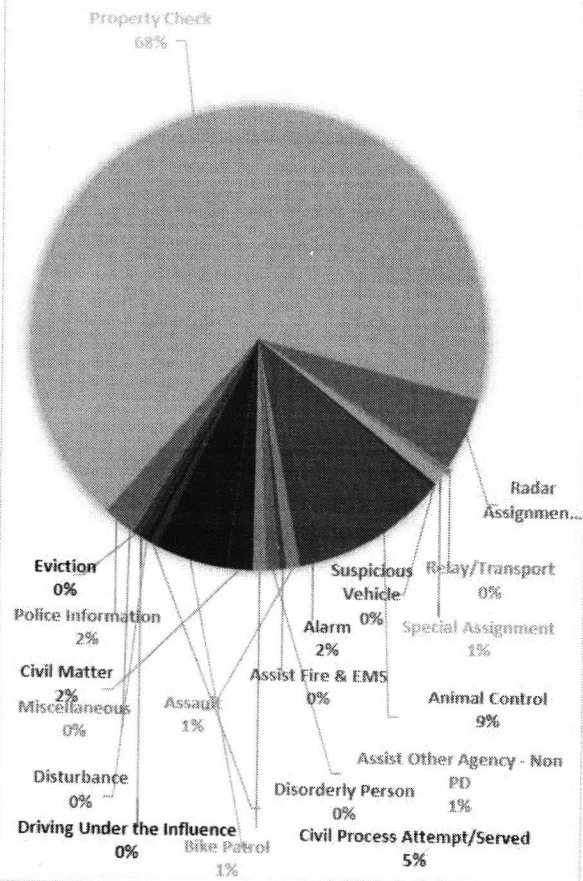
Over the years the town staff has been paid to work for both non-town and town sponsored events. The commissioners agreed to pay the staff for the winter festival. We take a lot of pride in the winter festival. We believe that most of the residents enjoy the events we plan during the holidays and the light display. We have heard from many local businesses how great the events are for their business. Many festival vendors are local. Since the inception of the first festival, we have had 4 new homeowners to Ridgely that said they came to the festival and decided to move here because of it. We hope others come and want to live or own a business here. I understand only a few have raised the questions, but I feel that they were important to address. We hope to continue the festival for years to come. I ask that you help support the festival in any way you can. Look at our website [christmasinridgely.com](http://christmasinridgely.com) and look at the pictures of the happy children that come to our town. It is worth it. I thank you for your patience in listening to me tonight.

# Ridgely

## September ACTIVITY REPORT 9/01/2024 TO 9/30/2024

Call For Service Type	Reports	CFS Count
Animal Control		19
Alarm		4
Assault	2	2
Assist Fire & EMS		1
Assist Other Agency - Non PD		2
Bike Patrol		2
Civil Matter		4
Civil Process Attempt/Served		11
Disorderly Person	1	1
Disturbance		1
Driving Under the Influence	1	1
Eviction		1
Miscellaneous		1
Police Information		4
Property Check		144
Radar Assignment		11
Relay/Transport		1
Special Assignment		2
Suspicious Vehicle		1
Theft	1	1
Traffic Accident - Code 89		1
Traffic Complaint		2
Traffic Details		10
Trespassing/Unwanted		3
Warrant/Summons Service	1	1
Traffic Stops	Captured	Below
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>231</b>

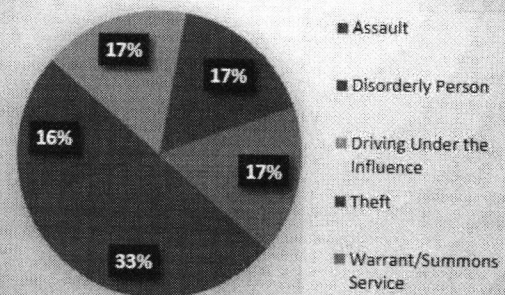
### Calls For Service Activity Breakdown



### QUICK FACTS

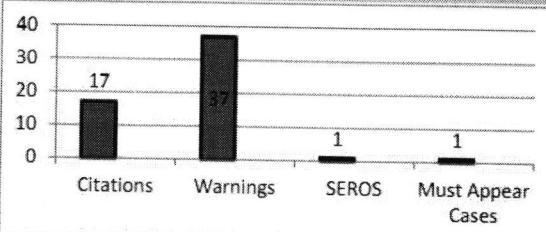
	TOTAL
Total Hours Worked:	344
Number of TOTAL CFS:	231
Number of Reports Taken:	6
Total Traffic Stops:	35
Total Traffic Violations:	55
Total Arrests:	4

### Calls For Service REPORTS percentage breakdown



### Traffic Enforcement Breakdown

Enforcement Type	TOTAL
Citations	17
Warnings	37
SEROS	1
Must Appear Cases	1
<b>Total Traffic Enforcement</b>	<b>55</b>





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Thank you for attending.

**PLEASE PRINT NAME CLEARLY**

Kelly Buckle

Thomas Himmelman

Alicia Moxley

Paul R. Smith

Heather Amad

Jenifer Nesselroad

Gary Nesselroad

Greg Nesselroad

Rick & Cathy Schwab

Christine Eckrich

Brenda Walle

Holly Justice

Barbie Utz

Stephanie L Lanmar

Jennifer Van Loon

Robert Van Loon

Robin Martin

Lakia Pierce

Clinten Gill

Annie Rossi-Gill

Chad

Kornel Pintica

Stephen Pinkney

Leroy Ann

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**PLEASE PRINT NAME CLEARLY**

Sandra Pitts

Daphne Croom

Cheta Brown IV

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**ZOOM ATTENDEES**

Heidi Olson King

Nancy Sears

ERROR 404

Scott Barron

Brandon Samuel

Frankowski

Matthew Malinowski

Megan Clarke

JS

Jamie Romph