

Policy statement issued on immigration

By **JOSH BOLLINGER**

jbollinger@stardem.com

EASTON — The Town of Easton has developed a policy statement in response to growing fears in the town's immigrant community.

The purpose of the statement is not to argue with federal immigration laws, however, but "really is to make clear what Easton's policy is," John Ford Easton Town Council president said.

The page-long statement starts with saying, "Easton believes a more diverse community is a stronger, more vibrant community, and is committed to treating all of its residents, including those who identify as immigrants, in a fair and just manner."

"Through its commitment to social justice and inclusion, one of Easton's most important objectives is to enhance relationships with all residents, including immigrants, and to make all residents, workers and visitors feel safe and secure re-



PHOTO BY JOSH BOLLINGER

Easton Town Council members are among the town officials who have signed off on a letter that officially lays out Easton's immigration policy. The town council worked on the statement in cooperation with the Easton Police Department, mayor and Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center.

ardless of immigration status," the statement reads.

"Toward that end, the Town of

Easton supports organizations like the Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center, whose mission is

to strengthen immigrant families and to use all available resources to more fully integrate our immigrant residents into our community."

The statement goes on to say that it is not the function of the Easton Police Department to enforce federal immigration laws, but rather focus on the safety and security of all the town's residents, regardless of immigration status. That is a long-standing policy of Easton police, who do not check someone's citizenship status when they interact with them or if they're witnesses to a crime.

"Easton Police Officers will continue to work in good faith with its federal law enforcement partners to apprehend criminals, especially those that commit serious or violent crimes, regardless of their immigration status," the statement reads.

"The Easton Police Department remains committed to upholding

See **POLICY**

Page A7

POLICY

From
Page A1

the laws it is empowered to enforce and to uphold the constitutions of the United States of America and the State of Maryland while recognizing it is not an authorized agent of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE)."

It goes on to say, however, that the Town of Easton will continue to honor all duties

imposed by a court order or any valid federal or applicable law.

"But in the absence of such a court order or law, Easton will not use its funds, resources, facilities, property, equipment, or personnel to assist in the enforcement of federal civil immigration law or to gather information regarding the citizenship or immigration status of any person," the statement reads.

"Easton recognizes that it is a part of a country born of immigrants and will con-

tinue to support efforts that assist our immigrant population in becoming fully-vested citizens of our community."

The statement is sort of a reaction to a reaction, Matthew Peters, Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center executive director said.

In January, President Donald Trump signed an executive order on immigration that sparked a fear among immigrant populations nationwide that undocumented immigrants would

be torn from their families, like their children who were born in the United States and are here legally.

Locally, Peters said that fear has started to manifest itself in "physical and economical hardships" for immigrant families in Easton.

"We've done this because we've seen first hand families and individuals shy away from their normal daily habits," Peters said. "It's a reaction to the fear that we're hearing from all of these families."

Some immigrants might

not send their child to school. Some might not call the Easton police about a legitimate crime committed on them out of fear of being deported, or take themselves to the hospital for a broken bone.

"Our reaction is we need people to stay healthy, we need people to stay economically active and continue to be part of this community, regardless of immigration status," Peters said.

The point of the policy is to draw focus to Easton taking care of the needs and

issues of its community, Peters said — to focus on local needs, but with an understanding of the country's immigration difficulties and the current debate surrounding it. But immigration status, Peters said, is between an immigration judge and a particular individual, something the Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center could help with, if that time ever does come for someone and they need help.

Follow me on Twitter @ jboll_stardem.