



Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

Mayor Raymond M. Morriss
Councilman Richard J. "Rock" Cioni
Councilman Eugene T. Frazier
Councilman James L. Furstenberg
Councilwoman Laurie P. Marchini

City Administrator Jeffrey F. Silka
City Solicitor Michael S. Cohen
City Clerk Allison K. Layton

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WORK SESSION

City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, December 19, 2023, 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Raymond M. Morriss; Council Members: Rock Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Jimmy Furstenberg, and Laurie Marchini

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Michael Cohen, City Solicitor; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services

Media: Teresa McMinn, Cumberland Times-News
Kathy Cornwell, WCBC Radio

I. PROPOSED INFILL DEVELOPER INCENTIVE PROGRAM DISCUSSION

Mr. Tressler discussed the infill developer incentive program, and stated that the City has acquired properties the last several years primarily through the foreclosure donation process and said 62 properties have been sold. He said that some are suitable for building, and advised that over the last few months they've had three different developers asking for what's available. He provided a list of those properties.

Mr. Tressler advised that two, Maryland Avenue and Arch Street, got assistance through the County for demolition, and said they are going to sell those like they are full parcels. He explained that the Maryland Avenue property, previously being seven parcels, will go to one developer, which he said could end up being 15 townhomes.

Mr. Tressler stated that the developer has asked about incentives. He advised that after working with the County, he thinks they have an agreement, and provided a list of suggested incentives:

- The sales price will be based on the assessable base. It will be refunded to the developer as the housing units are completed (occupancy permit)

- The City will waive water and sewer tap fees. Water and/or sewer taps are already present on all of the properties. It is likely that additional taps will be required on one of the parcels (600 block of Maryland Avenue)
- The City will waive the building permit fee (0.4% of construction costs), the occupancy permit, and the filing fee (\$40 combined)
- The City will contribute \$10K per unit and the County will contribute \$15K per unit. The government contributions will be in multiple draws at specified stages of construction.

Mr. Tressler advised that this program is only for City-owned properties, but if successful, it may be expanded in the future. He stated that the number of units listed is estimated, and said the City cash contribution has a repay time of less than four years return on investment. He added that the County's is longer because their contribution is higher.

Mr. Tressler talked about the Bellevue townhome lots, and said they are still doing the environmental assessment. He said if mitigation is not required, the lots will be available and will be included in this program, and stated that if there is money left over in this years budget they will roll that over, saying that it makes sense in terms of payback and will potentially put new houses in neighborhoods.

Mr. Silka stated that infill development in those neighborhoods will serve as anchors to bring development back.

Mayor Morriss said when they talk about neighborhood revitalization, this is the phase the City is in now, saying blight removal was done for a long time, and they've sold lots in the past that weren't good, buildable lots. He stated that they have turned rehabs over to developers for the last couple years and were very successful with that. He explained that now it's at the point where they can find parcels that can build up to 23 potential homes, which can change the atmosphere on the street, spurring people to take care of their own properties.

Mr. Tressler stated that they've seen the benefit of the rehabs that are going on, and the interest in the communities is up, which is pretty exciting.

Council Member Marchini stated that this is a great idea, and thanked staff for coming up with it. She said this could be just what is needed right now.

Mr. Tressler stated that it's a pilot program, and said there are people who specialize in infill development. He stated that he thinks it will be successful, and said once they talk to the developers, they will try to finalize the program, get the County approval, and present it to M&CC.

II. AGENDA REVIEW – DECEMBER 19, 2023

The Mayor reviewed the agenda and asked for any questions or comments.

Mr. Silka reviewed a couple of the Orders for clarification. He explained that Order No. 27378, regarding the \$15K contribution to the CEDC, was discussed in December 2021, and said the CEDC had never requested the funding, so this is just making good on a commitment that had a consensus in 2021. He added that this will subsidize rents for new businesses coming in.

Mr. Silka explained Order No. 27382, saying basically that SCADA is the backbone of the City's email system, and is the City's license to use Google.

III. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Council Member Cioni mentioned the After School Program that took place at City Hall last week.

No updates from Council Member Furstenberg.

Mayor Morriss advised that last week he and Council Member Marchini went to the County building to do Leadership Allegany, with really good young people, and said these are the future leaders of our community. He added that that he and the Councilwoman recommended looking into the Boards and Commissions as a way of these young people going forward and serving.

Council Member Frazier discussed the Taste of Civility event that is happening this evening the same time as the public meeting. Mayor Morris mentioned that he and Council Member Frazier attended the Tri County Council meeting recently, saying that one of the bigger things the organization is working on is a transportation study to improve transportation options in the area.

The Mayor also talked about the second Saturday of the Winter Festival, held recently. He stated that the difference between the first and second Saturdays is that the Polar Express was on the first night, with lots of people going and coming from the train. He said the second night of the Festival didn't have that group of people, which made it able to see local attendance only. He said he doesn't think they could have done this any better for the first year of this project. He mentioned that with Canal Place, the DDC, City staff and volunteers, it was a fabulous event both weekends. He gave kudos to Melinda Kelleher for doing a fantastic job organizing the event, and said next year it will be even more interesting with the combination of Canal Place and the downtown area, when construction downtown is done.

Mayor Morriss talked about the Polar Express, saying they are running four trains a day, every day. He noted that ridership just in the next five days is up to 10K riders, and mentioned it's one time that it's socially acceptable to be out in public in pajamas. He said the WMSR has done a wonderful job, and mentioned that Governor Wes Moore and his family rode the Polar Express last weekend and were able to see the value that the scenic railroad brings to the community. He added that Senator McKay was Santa Claus, and said he did a wonderful job.

Council Member Marchini also talked about the Winter Festival, saying they will be creating a special committee for this next time, and said it was a lot of work, but feedback was positive. She said the committee will start up in January or February, and asked any who are interested to attend. The Councilwoman said the bike contest was well received, with Allegany High School Robotics winning First Place, and the Women's Civic Club taking second. She talked about New Year's Eve at Canal Place this year, with the ball drop at the train station, and mentioned that fire pits and heat lamps will be back. She also mentioned the last chance to have breakfast with Santa is this Saturday, and said he will also be at the Book Center. She talked about the Lakota Group presenting at the public meeting tonight, and said of the four requests made to the Community Legacy fund, three were granted. She advised that Ruth Davis-Rogers has the list. The Councilwoman talked about work continuing on Liberty Street, and said there have been a few surprises there, but businesses have been patient and cooperative. She stated that they are hoping to finish up taps and curbs before the first of the year. She also mentioned that 70% of cameras are online now. She advised that the micro revolving loan is now live and online, and advised that Edward Jones from LaVale has opened in the Rosenbaum. She added that of the facades,

eight have been completed, and mentioned the three visits to City Hall from the After School Program kids.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: January 2, 2024