



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 Scott Cohen
City Clerk Allison K. Layton

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

2nd Floor Conference Room
Allegany Museum
3 Pershing Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 5:00 p.m.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Michael Scott Cohen, City Solicitor; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police; Shannon Adams, Fire Chief; Ruth Davis-Rogers, Historic Preservation Planner;

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

I. DISCUSSION ON DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DHCD) GRANTS

Jeff turned over the discussion to Ruth Davis-Rogers who explained that the funding the Historic Preservation department has been applying for through the Department of Housing and Community Development for Community Legacy Projects. The state is divided into five different areas and we are applying for four different grants for which approval from the Mayor and City Council would be needed. Ruth went over the programs with the Mayor and City Council members and stated that they will not know if they get approved for the funding for about six months.

The first project they have applied for is the Central Avenue Gateway Project in the amount of \$400K. The funds would be used to remove blighted properties along I-68 to enhance Cumberland's Gateway in an effort to improve the public perception of the community. There are currently 22 blighted properties that are included in this project. Cumberland has acquired 8 since June of 2017. The project was presented to Allegany County and they felt it had enough merit to warrant them matching our future investments and becoming a partner. The Mayor and City

Council and the Allegany County Commissioners endorsed the project and each agreed to provide \$200K in funding. The City notified property owners to let them know of their intent to acquire the properties and invited them to a public meeting to discuss the purchase. Eight of the current properties have structures on them, but only three are currently occupied. Once the project is funded, the City of Cumberland would like to move forward with the purchase or transfer of remaining properties. If the property has a structure the City will demolish, grade and seed the lot to be used for green space until the best use is determined at a later date.

The second project is the Virginia Avenue Facade grant for \$200K for the retail district. The program would offer funding to property owners interested in redeveloping the facades of their commercial properties. With the help of Maryland Housing and Community Development, we would like to expand the program in Midtown to Southside. With the request, we can provide grants to 13-20 commercial building owners, depending on the cost of the projects, and owners must provide matching funds. The owner would provide half and the grant would provide the other half. Ruth updated that it has been 12-15 years since any investments have been made in the Virginia Avenue area.

The third is the Roof Replacement program and the requested amount was for \$100K, this program would be in continuation of the program awarded in 2021 & 2024. The program allows us to help low-income families, elderly and disabled individuals as well as Veterans. No matching funds are required with this program. Ruth stated that the program is very popular as there is a stack of applications at this time. She went on to explain that the applicants have to qualify for the program and that it is for low income only, they must be up to date on their taxes and the condition of the structure is taken into consideration as well. The cost of a roof right now is about \$12-15K, so we are unsure how many people we can help.

The last program we are applying for is the Age in Place Home Modification grant with a requested amount of \$100K. This program is to help low-income seniors with modifications so they can remain in their home. A 2020 US Census reported that by 2030 we will be at 73 million people that will be at least age 65+. 55% of Baby Boomers that were surveyed, plan to remain in their homes as they age and less than ¼ of those surveyed have not made any modifications to accommodate changes that come with aging. Cumberland has a high population of elderly residents so this program would greatly benefit their needs. The modifications would include stairlifts, ramps, handrails, non-slip flooring, comfort height toilets, replacing bathtubs with walk in showers, the program does not require matching funds. Councilwoman Marchini asked Ruth how the projects were selected, and Ruth explained that it was based on the need and phone calls they received. They researched how much funding other communities have received and what programs they have used that Maryland prefers to work with. Councilman Cioni asked about the demand for roof replacement and Ruth confirmed that she receives calls daily.

II. HOTEL/MOTEL GRANT DISCUSSION

Mr. Silka began the discussion by addressing the list of projects that the M&CC was asked for their input on. \$45K is budgeted for this project. Michael Cohen asked if the list had taken into account the Boards that council members serve on. Mr. Silka advised that when the time comes to approve the funds, there would need to be two orders in place. Mayor Morriss asked the council members if they are all good with everything, and all members agreed they were good.

III. REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA OF JUNE 18, 2024

Mr. Silka began the discussion by updating that Lee Borrer has provided an action plan for the 2024 Community Development Block Grant. He continued that for the Outdoor dining leases, the estimated space was put into place that the restaurant would have, which will be subject to the final design. Because we are unsure when everything will be completed, the City has extended the leases through October of 2025 in order to provide the restaurant operators extra time. The encroachment agreement is for accessibility issues in which a person would not be able to access their home, so we are allowing them to encroach upon the City's right of way to put in a chair lift. Mr. Silka continued with surplus property and equipment such as weed eaters. And the authority to do the seasonal and part time employment agreement. Rock highlighted that the City is trying with Gothe Street, Jeff added that it is a part of the revitalization program we just do not have the money to do it all at once.

IV. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Councilman Frazier mentioned worldatlas.com and stated that the website mentions towns to visit in Maryland and Cumberland was one of them, so Cumberland is getting noticed. He also shared that he will be attending the upcoming Maryland Municipal League Conference (MML).

Mayor Morriss stated that Let's Beautify Cumberland (LBC!) is taking nominations for their Blue-Ribbon awards and if anyone sees an outstanding property, they should reach out to Ed Mullany so LBC! can do their due diligence to rank the properties. He continued that LBC! is also continuing to raise funds for the town clock and they had a yard sale on June 1, 2024 at Times News with a great turnout.

Mayor Morriss shared that the Farmer's Market would be on Thursday morning and later that evening would be the Levitt AMP music series, with gates opening at 6:30 p.m. and music starting at 7:00 p.m. He also updated that he and Ruth Davis-Rogers participated in a meeting with the Maryland Department of Planning and had a good group of people from Washington, Allegany and Garrett counties expressing their concerns. Most of the discussion was on housing so it was nice to hear what other communities are doing in their efforts. The department has changed their processes and the Secretary and her staff now visit regions. This allows each region the opportunity to have a good discussion and to hear what is going on in other communities in the surrounding area.

Next, Mayor Morriss updated on the progress that Teabow was making and stated that we can really see the improvements on Arch Street and for the first time in a long time, we are seeing spec homes being built. Mayor Morriss noted how professional the company is, mentioning the boards they provide that display their permits, designs and plans.

Mayor Morriss added that MML is next week and is a great educational experience for elected officials and staff to learn how everything in a municipal government works. It provides the opportunity what is going on in other communities.

Councilwoman Marchini updated the search is on for a smaller Christmas tree for Baltimore Street this year, and if anyone knows of where to obtain one, to please contact Melinda Kelleher. The quarterly Town Hall meeting will be June 27, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

She shared that the ribbon cutting at Madison Paige was last Saturday and with the addition of Lefty's the first floor of the Rosenbaum building will be full. Marchini continued sharing that granite was placed on the waterfall side and concrete was poured on Baltimore Street. Also, the Allegany Museum opening was Friday for the Allegany High School Project showing the history of Baltimore Street and will be up until September. She reminded all that meetings are held regularly to discuss the reopening of Baltimore Street and the weekend plans that follow and also asked everyone to remind residents who live in Historic districts to please contact Ruth Davis-Rogers before beginning any exterior projects as Ruth can assist them in getting the correct materials, applying for grants and helping with tax credits.

Ms. Davis-Rogers added it would just be a conversation to help guide residents and pointed out that it is only local Historic districts that have strict guidelines that have to be followed. The guidelines are not for policing structures but instead about protecting so as not to compromise them. Washington Street, for example, is known for being one of the most special historic streets in Maryland. When someone is not following the guidelines, they are not only hurting themselves but also their neighbors as well. The Historic Preservation Commission is here to help and Ruth can provide products and people to connect them with what can help them as well.

Marchini continued that 11 proposals had been received for the Wayfinding plan that will be used to create comprehensive Wayfinding planning using technology and signage, for travel by car, bike, walking to connect people to restaurants and other sites in the area to encourage them to stay longer and revisit. Also, the Garden Club tours are this weekend with the focus being on the City.

Mayor Morriss reminded all that City Hall is closed for Juneteenth and will remain closed to the public for the next two weeks for HVAC construction. The Tax and Utility Department will be relocated to the Willetts building on 446 Mechanic Street. Some staff will be working from home while others will be out for MML. Jeff updated that all staff is available through phone and email, everything is operational outside of the building. Councilman Furstenberg asked if the mail slot was still open for utility payments, Mayor Morriss confirming that it is still available for payments but anyone needing assistance will need to go to 446 Mechanic Street.

V. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:42 p.m.
Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: July 2, 2024