

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall Council Chambers
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, February 9, 2021
4:30 p.m.

This meeting was held via Video-Conference

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Richard Cioni (via audio), Eugene Frazier, and Laurie Marchini. Council Member Seth Bernard was absent.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey D. Rhodes, City Administrator; Margie Woodring, City Clerk; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; Robert Smith, City Engineer; Matt Miller, CEDC Executive Director; Stu Czapski, Economic Development Specialist

I. PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA REVIEW – FEBRUARY 16, 2021

Mr. Rhodes reviewed the Reports and Minutes up for approval, then reviewed the one Consent Agenda item:

Order 26,757 - declaring 80 City-owned properties to be surplus and authorizing them for sale to the general public through a closed bid process.

Mr. Rhodes advised that this is Step 2 of the blighted properties that the City will be declaring surplus. Mr. Tressler advised that these properties won't be offered for sale all at the same time, and will probably be offered in lots of 20. He added that this is a continuation of the revitalization program that was put in place.

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE

Mr. Miller provided background on the Plan, and advised that it typically needs to be reassessed every so often, and it has been seven years since the last reassessment. He added that the CEDC uses the Plan as their direction. Mr. Czapski advised that the Plan was originally adopted in 2014 and they have a scope of work from RKG Associates who did the original. He advised that they have requested a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to help with funding, stated that they already have a formal commitment, and are about ready to get the written commitment. Mr. Czapski added that this will require a sole source order from M&CC for RKG Associates to do the update, and said all costs are being absorbed in the CEDC budget. Mayor Morriss said this re-evaluation is a good thing in checking progress and process, and approved of using RKG Associates. Mr. Czapski advised that \$10K will come from the ARC, with \$20K coming from the CEDC. In answer to a question from Council, Mr. Miller advised that RKG Associates are accessible

to the CEDC to a certain extent, they are very professional, and are knowledgeable with the area. He added that they were happy with their previous experience with the company. He said that hiring a new firm would require more money and more time, because they would be starting from scratch. Council all seemed in agreement to move ahead with RKG Associates. Mr. Rhodes agreed, saying that it's certainly natural to go with them, that they did a really good job first time around, and said in his experience they remain interested in the City.

III. MD AVENUE REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Mr. Miller advised that the ground breaking took place last month, and said he has gotten a lot of questions as to why nothing has happened yet. He stated that MDE required a certain permit, called a "MPDES" Permit, which states that impervious land of more than an acre requires a permit, so that resulted in the delay. He also advised that they had a meeting with the developer yesterday, and said he was very happy with the outcome. Mr. Rhodes stated that they just wanted to stay on the same page with the developer, and said it was a good discussion.

IV. BALTIMORE STREET ACCESS PROJECT UPDATE

Mr. Miller advised that they have received 95% of the drawings back from EADS, and said they are coming to the end with Cochran Studio. He added that they have been having regular meetings with the Design team. Mr. Smith advised that they have been working hard to get things wrapped up, and said there will have to be more discussion on paver selection and how to move forward on that. He advised that they'll need to have some add-alternates in the bid process so that they have the option to go from concurrence to award, rather than rethinking the design. Mr. Smith explained the add-alternate and the significance of it, saying it's anything from adding additional work to replacing items with alternatives. He added that the process allows for options to determine what's needed to move forward. He also explained total cost based on bid criteria.

Mr. Smith advised that they are requesting federal highway pay for some proprietary items, but stated that they won't have an answer until after the review period and comments are received. He added that there have been some preliminary discussions, but they have not received a definitive answer as yet.

In answer to a question from Council, Mr. Smith advised that there will be no clarity on fiber and sprinkler systems for business owners until they know the cost. He explained that these options will be the business owners' personal choice, and said the Engineering Department highly recommends they obtain a contractor (either the City's or someone else), to bring in a 6" water line inside the building. He added that this isn't something the City should be undertaking because of liability issues. Mr. Smith stated that fiber can be connected after the fact with minimal work, but explained what problems business owners would have if they want a sprinkler system installed later instead of during construction. He stated that the water line will already be installed within so many inches of the building, but the owners

will have to remove brick, bring the sprinkler line in, and re-install pavers to specifications, so he highly recommends they take care of this during construction, and suggested using the same general contractor.

Mr. Miller advised that coordination with property owners has been spearheaded by Downtown Manager Melinda Kelliher, and stated that they have all the information available so far. He further advised that they have another stakeholder meeting scheduled and added that an additional \$500K from the state capital grant has been tentatively awarded, but still has to go through the approval process. Mr. Miller wanted to thank the Western Maryland Delegation for their assistance and support of this project.

V. EAST SIDE SCHOOL SITE UPDATE

Mr. Cohen advised that the closing is pretty much ready to go, and the PILOT terms have been completely negotiated. He stated that he has the City's and Allegany Junction's paperwork in hand, and said Allegany County's is in the mail. He added that once he has everything he will forward all to Allegany Junction, and advised that the deed has been executed, as well as the real estate calculation completed. He stated that Allegany Junction's attorney has prepared a closing statement, and says everything is ready to go.

Mayor Morris stated the closing date will be set as soon as possible, and hopefully construction will be able to begin this spring.

VI. MEMORIAL HOSPITAL SITE MARKETING PLAN

Mayor Morriss advised that the Memorial Hospital site marketing plan is Mr. Miller's idea to help market and get interest from developers on the former hospital site. Mr. Miller advised that he had been looking at ways to help incentivize development, and basically create a program that helps partnerships. He explained that it's called the CREDITS program - Cumberland Real Estate Development Investment Tax Set-Aside - and explained how it works:

- City administered tax incentive program
- Private-public partnership agreement entered into prior to commercial or multi-residential development
- Allows developer to receive a percentage of tax revenue for a predetermined number of years after making significant financial improvements to land within City limits
- Details determined on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Miller advised that he will send M&CC a case study with actual numbers, and said he thinks it is a unique opportunity to help influence things the City needs and will assist marketing and help promote development. He said he met with the Mayor, Mr. Rhodes and Mr. Tressler last week about it and thought it was a really good discussion.

Mayor Morriss said it's a very good program, and allows incentives to entice developer to come here, and also gives the City a certain amount of control over that development. The Mayor stated this may attract developers to come to the City, who may have overlooked Cumberland in the past.

Mr. Miller wanted to add that a new barbecue place opened up at 49 North Centre Street recently, Lost Mountain Barbecue, and a ribbon cutting was held last Friday. He urged people to try them out, and said the response from everyone has been great. Mayor Morriss stated that the downtown has started to come alive as best as it can during the pandemic, and said everyone has done a good job of keeping the downtown vibrant.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie A. Woodring, City Clerk

Minutes approved March 2, 2021