



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, February 20, 2024, 5:00 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; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police; Greg Kerr, Representative of the Cumberland Skatepark Committee

Media: Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News
Kathy Cornwell, WCBC Radio

I. CUMBERLAND SKATEPARK UPDATE

Mr. Silka began the discussion with an update on the Skatepark – he’s been working with Mr. Greg Kerr and the Skatepark Committee and have a rendering of what the Skatepark would look like to show to the Mayor and Council. A community analysis was done to determine what community members wanted in a skatepark and the resulting rendering is where they landed. Mr. Silka reminded Council that this is a \$575,000 project, with \$325,000 coming from the City, \$250,000 coming from the County and with some of these funds being ARPA money, we need to get this under contract soon. To date, they have contracted with SPECS Engineering to do the site work and permit work, which will begin at about the end of March or Early April.

Mr. Silka shared the rendering with the Mayor and Council stating that what it shows is about \$494,000 in cost and invited Mr. Greg Kerr to speak about the rendering. Mr. Kerr explained that a lot of the features chosen were “street features” and were selected based on community desires/needs. They took the bowl out as it was a significant cost savings to go without it - it just wasn’t in the budget and they’d rather have a larger park than one large feature. Mr. Kerr continued that to make up for the loss of vertical by taking out the bowl, a half pipe was added at the bottom, running over 100 ft long. It would be about 10 feet at its highest spot going down to 5-6 feet and would work with skateboards, bikes and would be as accessible as possible.

Pump track ran perimeter. The pump track is large, roughly 20 feet from beginning to end of transition. Doing well in terms of square foot price 30-35 per sq ft, better than the 70 per sq ft range. Been discussion that we are missing out on things, but we are getting more for our dollar.

Rampage Skate shop out of CT did the rendering.

Cioni: how do we get on their waiting list?

Silka; upon approval of engineering, get permits and form contract with Rampage contingent on engineering approval. Have to commit the ARPA money from the County.

Greg Larry: do you have a contractor?

Silka: yes, Ramapge is the designer and builder of the project

Greg Kerr: they are a sole source provider.

Silka: the momentum is building, funding in place, design is done. Gray area on design is not being built, budget dependent, future build out.

Kerr: plan is during construction to start on tip and move down. If the gray part is in the budget, will proceed, if not, will find a good stopping point in design.

Cioni: does site work include ability to add on?

Silka: yes, not consuming the entire site, so there will be room for expansion. Getting the pad ready to accept the concrete.

Kerr: floodplain is the biggest hurdle.

Greg Larry: could see construction this summer?

Silka: early Fall, depending on flood plain

Cioni: kids have seen the rendering?

Greg Kerr: no one has seen it yet Was consulting with people – Rampage did a good job

Mayor: not claiming knowledge, but listening to discussions, I think we are getting what the young people really want. Good that we were able to get input from the community. Looks like a very nice rendering. Thank you, Greg.

Cioni: it is as nice as the Hagerstown one

Kerr; every aspect was getting the biggest bang for our buck

Silka: this is an end user vision, not an architect's vision.

It can be used and we can afford it – functional

Kerr: it's what the user wants. Kind of industrial, throwback to early days, vintage

Silka: Greg and his group have been great to work with. We are on the right track.

Discussion with Greg and others offering background, he's been the force behind the project thus far.

Have a passion for the community, more than a passion for the skatepark. Want to see good things happen here.

AGENDA REVIEW 1/16/24

Mayor Morriss went over the public meeting agenda. There was discussion about Columbia Street surplus sales, and about the HVAC system for City Hall. Mr. Silka talked about the price coming in twice the amount that was estimated, and said they would move funds around. There were other random discussions going on at the same time.

II. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Council Member Frazier talked about the HRDC and provided some background on the organization. He said they also help people (that qualify) with their taxes, and added that the HRDC has four senior centers in the County - meals they provide are wonderful – they do a lot of good in the area.

Frazier also discussed several members of Council and the Chief of Police attending an MLK Day event yesterday, and said ACM is having an MLK Day event tomorrow (provided print-outs), with two diversity training sessions regarding internal biases, morning and afternoon.

Council Member Furstenberg talked about Groundhog Day on February 2nd, 7:00 AM at City Hall, and mentioned the kids' coloring contest, hot cocoa, and cookies from M&M Bakery. The Councilman also mentioned the Barathon is looking for sponsorships, and said Friday After 5 has four events planned so far, with June 7th being the first one.

Council Member Cioni talked about the Town Hall last Friday where construction on N. Centre Street was discussed. He also mentioned that there is 2-hour free parking at the George Street Garage, with free parking after 5:00 PM and weekends. He encouraged everyone to shop local and shop often.

Council Member Marchini advised that she attended the West Side Neighborhood meeting, and said it was a good group – people were very energetic. She also mentioned that she met with the Comptroller's work group for the State of the Economy, and said it was a good meeting, with six legislative priorities.

Mayor Morriss discussed Groundhog Day, Barathon, and PACE. He stated that PACE is a good opportunity to meet with legislature in Annapolis, and said the Greater Cumberland Committee has set up meetings for Thursday. He discussed local tourism zones, an MML bill, and the hearing on Thursday.

The Mayor mentioned that he judged the robotics competition last Saturday, and said it was a wonderful event at ACM, - it's truly impressive what the programs offer to the kids. He said not only are they learning STEM and robotics, but also team building and working with others. He said the young kids' enthusiasm was great.

Mayor Morriss talked about the WMSR, saying they are in a long-term lease agreement with Georges Creek Railroad – mostly a freight-type operation, with the bulk of tourism staying with the Cumberland/Frostburg train. He discussed the Allegany Museum's annual meeting happening this weekend, Shop Small, and Baltimore Street Grill's plea for help on social media. He said the community responded and came to show their support. He stated that the ongoing

construction downtown will affect different areas, but urged the community to come out, saying local businesses have earned and deserve our support during construction.

III. PERCY PUBLIC AFFAIRS VIRTUAL UPDATE – RICHARD REINHARDT

Mr. Reinhardt discussed everything that has happened since the last time he's been together with M&CC. He advised that he will send an agenda and written comments tomorrow.

Mr. Reinhardt advised that there have been a lot of strides made since last year, and mentioned policy legislation that was put forward, tax sales and revisions to state law, and said he and some of Council spent a lot of time determining what priorities will be for this year, which will be mostly budget necessities primarily around Cumberland's infrastructure. He discussed the engineering package that was presented to the Governor during the summer, and said through that meeting they presented requests for the year, which included five capital projects. Mr. Reinhardt stated that helped continue the dialog through the fall months, and it put ourselves in a positive posture. He mentioned that he put in a series of requests that he said he knows will not be attainable due to the scale, size, and costs related. He explained they have prioritized the projects presented, and said he feels confident some of them will be on the governor's budget; however, he said we won't see a lot of priorities on the budget list, but some will be partially funded. He did mention that they are in a position to work on leveraging relationships with federal partners. He stated that the Governor and staff have been amenable, and said they are willing to help leverage their office and relationships to bring those federal dollars to Cumberland.

Mr. Reinhardt discussed the 2024 legislative session, and said he expects a very busy schedule throughout the next 90 days. He talked about the Mayor being in Annapolis this week for PACE, and advised that he will be testifying about some legislation on behalf of the MML. He stated that they have seen a strong start in Annapolis, and as of today, the MD General Assembly has introduced nearly 600 bills – over 300 pre-filed in the Senate; over 256 in the House. He explained they've already been reviewing them and flagging those which will have an impact on Cumberland, such as issues around transportation, education, and state budget.

Mr. Reinhardt advised that we are currently looking at a structural gap of \$322M, with projections showing that the deficit for this year will be substantial, and the out-years are just as bad. He said the continuing gap of growth for both FY26 and FY27 puts Maryland up to millions of dollars in deficit, and explained that gap could grow to \$1.8B in 2028 followed by \$2.1B in 2029, so the state has lots of decisions to be made.

Mr. Reinhardt advised that the Governor will be releasing his capital and operational budgets to the General Assembly, and reminded M&CC that the General Assembly this past term passed a constitutional amendment that gives unfettered power to them, where they can add and subtract from the Governor's budget. He explained that what is projected in the Governor's budget may change drastically, and said they are looking at capital impacts for Cumberland.

Mr. Reinhardt discussed revenues, saying they are continuing to grow 3.5% annually, which he said is a modest increase when compared with other Mid-Atlantic states, but said spending is just over 5% annually. He advised that through discussions, they have made several recommendations on how to reduce the gap, which is nice patchwork, but doesn't address the long-term problem. He said a recommendation was approved that will allow the state legislature to tap into the state Rainy-Day fund, which stands at about 10% of current revenues. He explained that the Affordability Committee proposal is to pump \$375M into the budget to reduce

the gap, but stated he's not sure if lawmakers will do that – with the Senate having the budget first, and once passed, will go over to the House for consideration.

Mr. Reinhardt also discussed potential proposals about state-wide tax increases, which are not fully-vetted or tangibly proposed yet. He also mentioned some conjecture around I-gaming, with the money generated offsetting financial burdens.

Mr. Reinhardt opened the floor for questions.

Council Member Marchini questioned talk going around about the deficit being based off miscalculations – she asked if it's true, or is it overspending? Mr. Reinhardt stated that it's due to overspending, and said prior to Hogan's administration leaving, we had a \$5M surplus. He said the last session took the surplus and put it towards public education funding and transportation. He said there are going to be sacrifices in other areas of the budget. He added that the Comptroller released a report talking about MD's growth – we are growing at a modest pace, but spending more. He advised that he will send the report tomorrow.

Mr. Reinhardt discussed continued dedicated and mandated spending in education, with sacrifices having been made in transportation. He stated that it is a substantial amount – a lot to be cut over the next several years. He explained there were recent recommendations on ways to build revenue, including charging fees on owners of electric and hybrid vehicles, increasing tolls, and overhauling the process of prioritizing road and transit projects.

Mr. Reinhardt stated that there is a large surge of legislators talking with the Governor, letting him know they can't handle those cuts in their jurisdictions. He said the Governor had a press conference restoring \$100M in the proposed transportation cuts, with Highway User funds to be fully funded. He also mentioned that there will be a \$26M restoration of local operating transit systems, and \$28M restored in commuter bus funding to maintain service to the highest ridership routes in the state. He discussed other areas that will be getting some funding restored. He said the lingering questions is, where is that money coming from?

Mr. Reinhardt said there have been discussions about creating a Millionaire's Tax, and explained that it had been introduced previously, but didn't go anywhere. It will raise the tax 7% for those earning over a million dollars.

The discussion continued, with Mr. Reinhardt talking about watching lots of bills about tax increase, budget cuts, fees – increases across the board - if not this year, then definitely next year. He also discussed several major projects they are watching closely in the Governor's budget, particularly Evitts Creek, and said they are looking at potential money coming into that project. He said the intersection of Mechanic and Harrison is another priority that needs dedicated capital funding, and said he has already submitted paperwork requesting \$300K.

Mr. Reinhardt discussed bond bills, which he said are typically decided at the end of a 90-day session, so around March/April they will have a better assessment. He also mentioned that tomorrow they will find out where they stand with Evitts Creek, and said if successful, he will seek written letters of support in protecting and preserving that money.

Mr. Reinhardt moved on to public safety, saying there are concerns, especially around the Baltimore area, and said there will be a resurgence around re-evaluating some bills passed last year around juvenile crime. He mentioned that Governor Moore held a press conference last week naming public safety one of his top priorities.

Mr. Reinhardt discussed one of the bills that the Governor will be putting forward, which is the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, and another bill the Governor is proposing that will increase apprenticeships to public safety. Also, he will be introducing a measure to help compensate victims of crime. Mr. Reinhardt said these are all laudable proposals, but said they have not seen any of these bills introduced yet.

Mayor Morriss thanked Mr. Reinhardt, and said the analysis of the budget will be interesting once it's released. He stated that the public safety part is critical to Cumberland as well – something that is on the top of the list. He said it's the same concerns – people more interested in reducing arrests, not necessarily reducing crime.

In answer to a question from Council, Mr. Reinhardt stated he has not heard of any discussions about layoffs or hiring freezes in agencies. He did say, however, that he would not be surprised if there is some level of cuts across the board in state agencies, which will depend on how the Governor will prioritize his budget. He said public education will be top priority, along with restoring transportation funding, public housing, and the DHCD.

Mr. Reinhardt advised that he will be happy to come back to Cumberland around the halfway point in the session and do the final review.

Mayor Morriss stated that it's a lot to absorb in a short period of time, and he and Council thanked Mr. Reinhardt for doing a good job of advocating for Cumberland.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.
Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: February 6, 2024