



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, July 18, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Robert Smith, Director of Engineering and Utilities; Matt Idleman, Deputy Director of Engineering; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police; Melinda Kelleher, Executive Director, DDC; Greg Kerr, Skatepark Committee

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

I. BALTIMORE STREET CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ACCESS HOURS DISCUSSION

Mr. Smith discussed allowing contractors to begin work at 6:00 a.m. He advised that heavy equipment needs to warm up, start the sawing and jackhammering at 7:00 a.m. in accordance with the noise ordinance; weekends at 8:00 a.m. He discussed the complaints the City has been getting, but said the decibel readings have been monitored and are at the allowable level. Mr. Smith asked to have authority to adjust times for the next 15 months to allow the contractor to begin earlier, and said he is trying to balance both sides. He stated that if they can't start early, they can't avoid shutting down water and sewer during prime hours. He said the earlier the contractor can start, the faster this project will go. He advised that they will continue to follow the ordinance pertaining to 90 decibels, with monitoring, but said that the project cannot be done without going over 90 decibels, due to the jackhammering. He stated that they will strive to not be jackhammering and sawing so early, but allowing some activity early. He asked to amend the noise ordinance for this specific project, for a finite amount of time.

Mayor Morriss clarified Monday – Friday, begin work at 6:00 a.m.; Saturday or Sunday at 6:00 a.m., with permission. Mr. Smith stated that by starting at 6:00 a.m. on the weekends, they can be out of there by 2:00 p.m. so that the downtown is can be available for businesses and events.

There was discussion clarifying that all work will begin at 6:00 a.m., including sawing and jackhammering, but heavy equipment will not start up at 5:00 a.m. They discussed communicating all this, starting at 6:00 a.m., and especially water outages, so there aren't a lot of complaints. Council Member Marchini stated that there should be communication from Triton to Engineering, and from Engineering to those affected. Mr. Smith stated that 3 different people talk to Triton every day about their schedule, and said the valve issue just wasn't communicated properly. He assured M&CC that the contractors aren't just running loose through the downtown. Mayor Morriss said he is all for giving them an hour earlier, and explained that giving them more time, an extra hour a day, and weekends when needed, they are running close to schedule and we don't know what the winter will bring. He explained that they want them to stay on or ahead of schedule in case of unexpected weather issues, and said people will need to understand that this is for the best.

Melinda Kelleher stated that they have done a good job of building trust in the downtown area, and said people have been overall positive about Triton. She stated it's the residents complaining, not the businesses. She said any changes need to be communicated along with the "why" behind what is happening. She stated that she and Mr. Idleman talk every day and said if they she can just relay the basic information – water, electricity, blocking of buildings – it would be helpful. She stated that with last Saturday's work there were no complaints coming in, and said people are not being unreasonable, they just need to know.

There was discussion about what the best form of communication is. Ms. Kelleher stated that she has emailed, printed, and taken the list door to door, and left it on the door if they were not there. She added that it's also put on Facebook and other social media. There was discussion about communicating to the people most affected in advance, but it was noted that it's never going to be 100%. Mr. Smith explained that he personally knocks on doors, as have Matt Miller and Triton Construction, and said they are going to continue to be as respectful as possible, to get this done and move on to other projects. He said there's a lot happening, and he will need to have another discussion about a building on Baltimore Street. He said he's happy with the construction work so far, and said he sees no reason to expect things to fall behind. He added that once they get to the George Street block there will be fewer things on the road.

There was discussion about needing an Order for the next meeting. It was stated that Triton will not deviate from the current noise ordinance until the Order is approved on August 2nd. Ms. Kelleher stated that a press release should be distributed.

II. PARKING (MPA) DISCUSSION

Mr. Silka discussed the presentation he did in March about the state of parking, and taking a 3-prong approach with hardware, enforcement, and fees. He stated that Mr. Gandolfi outlined some of the financial impacts, especially as ARPA funding dissipates.

Mr. Silka went through the highlights, saying that the MPA expenses have exceeded revenue for many years, and said GF assistance is predicting a deficit for the next 3 years. He stated that they are faced with increased personnel cost, debt service cost, operations and maintenance, and added that as debt service goes down, it will need to be reissued due to needing more funds.

Mr. Silka advised that they have 78,000 hours of paid parking through the kiosks annually, and stated there are 362 parking leases available in garages and lots. He discussed the policy in place that allows for 2 warnings before a citation is issued, discussed how much revenue was lost by the double warning policy, and said it's not a good picture.

Mr. Silka discussed increasing the usage of parking meters, and talked about parking apps. He advised that they have looked extensively at 2 of them – Passport – multi-faceted and robust, but \$30K annual cost in software. ParkMobile – probably deployed the most throughout the country. He said Frostburg uses it, and he has used it himself in Annapolis. He said you just download the app and it works anywhere, and explained how the app works, saying it allows for kiosk usage as well for people who haven't loaded the app. He advised that there is a .45c fee charged per session to the user, and the City is charged .20c per transaction and 3% for credit card processing. He stated that this allows ease of parking, and said there is not up-front cost to the City. He added that there is no cost if no one uses it. He recommended the City allows a contract with ParkMobile to get Phase I started.

Mr. Silka discussed the City's 2-warning policy, and recommended the City drops that courtesy, but said he wants M&CC input on this. He added that he believes this is leaving revenue on the table, and said it's people choosing not to pay a dollar to park, but in the long run choosing to pay \$25 for a citation. Mayor Morriss stated that he doesn't want to fine the person for not paying to park, he wants to modify people's behavior. He said fines should not be a revenue source.

There was discussion about being lenient if someone goes 1 minute past their parking time limit. Mayor Morriss questioned where the line can be drawn, asking if the first 2 free hours parking at the George Street garage will turn into 2 hours 15 minutes, or maybe 2 and a half hours? Mr. Silka advised that once a meter hits zero, it isn't automatic that enforcement is going to know – they would have to be there - so they may get a break, but said it's a gamble. He stated that ParkMobile gives out text alerts to let you know time is running out.

Mayor Morriss asked if M&CC were in agreement on removing the 2-warning policy. There seemed to be agreement by M&CC.

Mr. Silka then discussed raising parking fees because the City is running a deficit. He proposed leases to be raised an additional \$5 per month, and meters by .25c per hour, to bring in an additional \$19K. He said this would not affect the George Street leases that are under the new incentive program. He said small increases are advised, and said they will need to look at it each year.

Mayor Morriss discussed the new parking spaces that will be on Baltimore Street once the project is finished, and advised that those are going to be the most premium spots, so it may be worth looking at a premium price.

There was consensus to proceed with Mr. Silka's recommendations.

Mr. Silka advised that they will have the ordinance prepared for the next regular meeting. The Mayor stated that there needs to be a limit to how many tickets someone can get before they get booted or towed. He added if it isn't an issue now, it will reach the point where it becomes one. It was suggested that Ms. Kelleher be in the loop on this so she can advise the downtown area. Mr. Silka stated that he will make known that these are his recommendations.

III. SKATEPARK DISCUSSION

Mr. Silka advised that they have been discussing the skatepark since March of 2022, and said they are now at a critical juncture. He noted that ARPA funding of \$250K has been earmarked by the County, and advised that if they want to get this park built, they have to commit to it. He stated that the design cost has come down, taking \$100K off the project, and said they need outside engineering involved. He stated that the project is approximately \$550K, with \$250K promised with ARPA, and said they need a yes or no to commit \$325K in funding so they can use the ARPA funding. He stated that they don't want to hold the ARPA funding at the County level, they need to make a decision. He handed it off to M&CC to make a plan and/or give direction.

Mayor Morriss stated that without question they've had good community interest in this project, and said while \$325K is a lot of money, this is something different and unique. He stated that the young people are overlooked that don't join teams, or are not that kind of athlete. He said this will give them a sense of community, and they need that. He added that his perspective is the City should look at it and do it. Most of Council stated that they are on board. Mr. Silka added that they have a hard-core commitment from the County, and a certified copy of the motion.

There was discussion about when the project preparation would start. Mr. Silka replied that it would begin in the Spring, and Mr. Kerr stated that he spoke to the guys in preparation and said they can work through the winter here.

Mr. Silka stated that he will be the project manager on this endeavor, and will coordinate everyone together. He said this will happen, and said they will do an order in the next meeting to authorize the funding. He added that he's hopeful grant funding will materialize since this is now an actual project.

Mayor Morriss stated that this has come a long way since the initial meetings, and said he appreciates Mr. Kerr and Stephanie taking the lead on this.

IV. AGENDA REVIEW – JULY 18, 2023

Mr. Silka advised that Ordinance 3964 will be pulled, delayed until next month, and said the attorney has not reviewed the deed.

Council Member Marchini advised that she will be recusing herself from Orders 27,278 and 27,281. Mr. Silka mentioned Order 27,284 which will rescind Order 27,152 for the cost of the truck.

V. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Council Member Cioni gave a reminder about Friends of the Park, said they have had meetings, and have an event coming up in August. He discussed working with Ryan Mackey, said communication was good and no problem with volunteers. He mentioned that Sue Rudd is spearheading the project.

Council Member Marchini passed along a thank-you note from Miss Cumberland for sponsorship. She stated that Merchant's Alley has new lights, sandwich boards, and a bike rack.

She discussed Friday After Five moving to N. Centre Street, and said there have been email updates regarding downtown progress. Ms. Marchini discussed the submission of 5 grant applications for Community Legacy funding, and said the Lakota Group is right on target. She mentioned that HPC has established an arts commission for outside art, and said the Main Street Committee continues to meet, with good conversations happening. She stated that chargers are needed for e-bikes. She mentioned some public comments about weed-control at City entrances. She also stated that they are hoping to have a Face-Time session with the Governor in early August.

Mayor Morriss also mentioned the Governor and working with Mr. Rhinehardt from Percy & Associates, to outline needs for next year, which will be based on infrastructure needs, sewer lines widening of Harrison and Mechanic Streets to accommodate the crosstown bridge work in 2026.

Council Member Furstenberg discussed at meeting at the Allegany Museum, and said it was good to listen to other groups' perspectives. He noted that with all the construction, people can still get around to shops, businesses and restaurants.

Council Member Frazier discussed the meeting at the museum as well, and said it was a good event. He also mentioned that the concerts in the area have been great.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: August 15, 2023