

# Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

## WORK SESSION

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

Tuesday, June 9, 2020  
4:30 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Seth Bernard, Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, and Laurie Marchini.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Jeffrey D. Rhodes, City Administrator; Michael S. Cohen, City Solicitor; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk; Paul Kelly, Executive Director CEDC; Matt Miller, Economic Development Specialist

### I. CEDC

#### A. UPDATES ON COVID-19 RELIEF FUND

Matt Miller advised that there was \$73,500 still available out of the \$106,000 that was originally set up for the COVID-19 Relief Fund for small businesses. He stated that the program was in week three with eleven applications received. Seven were approved, three were denied and one is still being processed. Miller discussed that the program was set up to provide 0% interest loans with a 6-month grace period before a 36-month payment terms begins. He felt the number of applications may be low because it was being offered as a loan and was competing with other state and local programs that were providing grants with no requirement for the funding to be paid back. Miller noted that many businesses were seeing that some employees were not wanting to return to work because of the extended unemployment benefits they were receiving.

#### B. UPDATE ON BALTIMORE ST. ACCESS PROJECT

Paul Kelly discussed that the new expected start date for the project was March of 2021 with opening expected in summer of 2022. Delays in the design process were causing the project to be set back. Had the project started in October as planned, delays would probably have been inevitable due to the winter weather. The estimated cost of the project is \$9.6M.

#### C. UPDATE ON DDC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/MAIN STREET MANAGER

Mr. Rhodes discussed the position of Main Street Manager, and advised that there is room in the City Hall basement area for that person to work from. He said that he had talked with the DDC and, since they are funding the position, they want that person reporting to their board for right now. Mayor Morriss stated that where the person is placed now isn't

necessarily where they will always be. He mentioned that eliminating the Special Tax for downtown would make another funding source for the Downtown Manager position.

Councilwoman Marchini said she felt pretty strongly that the DDC should serve as an advisory board rather than a supervisory body, and didn't think volunteers shouldn't supervise a City employee. Mayor Morriss agreed, saying that they need to make sure that the supervision the DDC Board is doing is in the direction of what the M&CC wants for the citizens of Cumberland.

Mr. Rhodes discussed the history of the downtown manager position, saying that in the past, there was a supervisor that the downtown maintenance personnel reported to. He said when the City decided to seek the "Main Street" designation for benefits of the program, that's when the "Downtown Manager" position really took hold, and for many years there were co-managers who reported to the DDC Board. He added that the point that was made to him was that the DDC feels that since the special tax is generated from their membership, then the manager should report to them.

Mr. Kelly stated that during conversations with the boards he has been told by many people that what happened on the last "shift" wasn't acceptable and they weren't satisfied with the level of service received. He said one of the topics that came up was whether it would be better if the person in that position was working out of the CEDC office so they could get the latest economic development data and be supervised by the CEDC. He added that if the M&CC decided that they wanted that person to be supervised by someone at the City and be located in City Hall, he would be fine with that as well.

Councilwoman Marchini stated that Mr. Kelly brought up a good point and said they should discuss it at the next meeting of the DDC on the following Thursday.

#### **D. UPDATE ON LSA CONSULTANTS COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING ANALYSIS**

Mr. Kelly advised that the housing analysis had slowed down a bit, but was still continuing. He stated that the consultants' second part, "Impediments to Fair Housing," is being worked on. He added that the housing citizen survey has been completed and there have been multiple workgroups with contractors, landlords, City staff, etc., and comparable cities have been looked at. He advised that he had been provided with a draft report and said he will look it over to make sure it's in compliance with the scope of work. Mr. Kelly also advised that he will be scheduling another Advisory Committee meeting to look at the draft report.

Mr. Kelly stated they are working on coordinating input from local residential contractors to get a handle on the market. He added that he and Mr. Miller are coordinating a survey that is going out to Human Resource people, and generally all employers, and said they are contemplating a perception survey to find out what people think about the housing in Cumberland. He stated that the goal is to have all this completed in the next 90 days, deliver it to the Mayor and Council for review, and then sit down with the consultants.

#### **E. UPDATE ON CEDC CORPORATE DATABASE & UTILIZATION FOR BUSINESS RETENTION EFFORTS**

Mr. Kelly advised that they are finalizing their database that tries to capture all City businesses as well as combining information from the County, the Chamber of Commerce, the DDC, the DCBA, and is being supplemented by a national database subscription that they have purchased. He stated this will ultimately give out information on new programs, new incentives, and can be used as tool for smaller groups, City staff, etc.

Mr. Miller provided an update on constituent services, saying that many local businesses have dealt directly with Covid-19. He has helped businesses interpret what resources are available to them and what they qualify for. He added that he's working closely with two local manufacturers that are looking to expand their operations to other facilities, and said he is also working with a local land owner to do some property promotion for him.

#### **F. UPDATE ON CEDC BUSINESS ATTRACTION PROGRAM**

Mr. Kelly advised that the CEDC continues to get solicitations both from private entities and from the Department of Commerce. He added they are doing their due diligence and trying to learn more about the site-selection industry every day, as well as more about giant, national-brand companies. Mr. Kelly also advised that they get calls from private citizens looking for properties for manufacturing.

Mr. Kelly stated that down the road, it would be nice to have a plot of land that the City owns that is ready for development, have engineering drawings for buildings of different sizes available, and have City permitting already pre-approved. He advised that he and Matt get so many inquiries for 30-50K square-foot buildings that are not readily available in the City or immediate surroundings. He also mentioned having a marketing brochure available for inquiries.

The Mayor stated that he liked this idea and wanted Mr. Kelly to get a list of available lots owned by the City that would fit for this type of development and determine which locations would work best. Mr. Rhodes stated that the City has done some work like this in the past that may be worth looking at.

## **II. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business at hand, the Work Session adjourned at 5:55 p.m., and on a motion made by Councilman Bernard, and seconded by Councilman Cioni, the meeting moved into Closed Session.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie A. Woodring  
City Clerk

Minutes approved July 21, 2020