

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

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

Tuesday, October 4, 2022, 4:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Joe George, and Laurie Marchini.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey Silka, City Administrator; Michael Cohen, City Solicitor; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk; Allison Layton, Citizen Services Representative; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police; Shannon Adams, Fire Chief; Steve Grogg, Deputy Fire Chief

I. PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA REVIEW-OCTOBER 4, 2022

Mr. Silka opened the floor for items that anyone wanted to review. Mayor Morriss went through each topic on the public meeting agenda. It was noted that for the Resolution for the WMSR, Council Member Frazier and Mayor Morriss will recuse themselves from the vote, as they both have seats on the Board of Directors for the scenic railroad.

II. UNION RESCUE MISSION RELOCATION – PASTOR ZILER

Pastor Ziler advised that he is under contract with Lenny Kline for the property at 710 N. Centre Street, and said they are pursuing AARP funding for the move, with a closing date of October 31st. He said he has been working since 2019 on this project, when the first public notice was put in the Times-News regarding the relocation. The Pastor stated they have looked at many alternate locations, and said they have done feasibility studies on remodeling their current location, but stated it was recommended not to proceed based on their financial resources.

Pastor Ziler stated that he came here today to say they want to move forward with the purchase of 710 N. Mechanic Street, and said he hopes M&CC agree. He advised that they have raised \$500K to complete the purchase of the building, on top of the ARPA funding, which would make a debt-free move-in. He asked M&CC to move forward with the URM in this partnership, while saying they have enough funds to purchase any of the other buildings they have looked at, if need be, to move in debt-free. The Pastor advised that the total budget for 710 N. Mechanic is \$3.8M for the project, and said he has a funding campaign ready to go. He asked M&CC for the \$750K to purchase the building, as he is unwilling to do a funding campaign for the remodel unless they purchase the building first. Pastor Ziler reminded M&CC about the feasibility study done on their current building at the beginning of the year, that showed 3-5 years left before it would be deemed unsafe to use.

The Pastor explained that there would be a new concept for the mission. He explained that it would not be a homeless shelter as would be traditionally thought of. He stated that they would give folks a few nights to test their program, and if they sign up they have to work 20 hours per week, working in a job detail gaining experience. He advised they will have a fitness room, a library with broadband, a recreation area, and said they are hoping to expand their dining area to 150 – enough room to stop the loitering in front of the building because of no room to go inside. Pastor Ziler also mentioned networking with the YMCA to be able to provide meals out in the community. He added that he has asked the County to give them 3 bus stops a day to lessen foot traffic into the downtown, with a cold-weather shelter, to pick up folks downtown and take them back downtown.

Pastor Ziler addressed the issue brought up about children walking to school past the new location. He stated they have never had issues with kids, as they house kids in their building as well, who walk to Braddock MS with no issue. He said he understands the concern, but said he thinks the picture isn't what the reality is.

Mayor Morriss asked if the sale includes the lot across the street. Pastor Ziler explained it includes 5 other building lots in addition to the furniture building. He discussed fencing the area in so as not to be seen by the public, as a place for his people to hang out, and mentioned putting in a playground and basketball court. He added that with the move he can have 150 beds instead of the 62 he has now.

Pastor Ziler explained that he had a conversation with UPMC to maintain their clinic, with a goal of having 10 beds that the hospital can automatically discharge people to. The Pastor reiterated that the homeless seen downtown are not his people in the mission, and added that if people would see their mission firsthand, they would see that it's not unsafe.

Mayor Morris stated that the vast majority of children at Braddock are bussed or picked up by their parents – he said after watching a couple days, he only saw 2 children walk past the furniture store – and said it's an unfounded concern.

There was discussion about the Pastor's plan for their current building. He advised that it's up for negotiation, and said they have no plans for it at this point.

There was discussion about the mission's contingency plan if this new relocation doesn't pan out, and discussed a new security system planned for 710 N. Centre, for the building; metal detectors, security cams for walkways, and playground areas, all monitored 24 hours a day.

There was discussion about Cumberland police officers needing to be located at the new building. Chief Ternent advised that response is all that's required for now, saying they have a good relationship with the mission. The Chief stated he would discuss the privacy fence with the Pastor at a later date. He also mentioned that they have an SRO positioned at Braddock MS.

Council Member George thanked Pastor Ziler and his organization and volunteers for what they do for the community, and said it's much appreciated and well-needed.

There was discussion on financing the additional resources if doubling or tripling the amount of people served. Pastor Ziler explained that there are a lot of job opportunity grants out there, and said he plans on applying for those, which will ultimately allow them to hire extra staff. He added that he believes that the capital campaign of the new building will allow them to bring new volunteers in.

There was discussion about housing families out of town, since meal delivery will be happening anyway. Pastor Ziler said they looked at that, and said the pros were being isolated from foot traffic, which would be a benefit in being able to control what's around their building. He said the cons are time on the road, money to get back and forth, and a lack of transportation to his people, which he stated is a big hindrance.

Pastor Ziler advised that they are 2 years away from getting in the door, and said he is willing to sit down with anyone to adjust the planning if need be. He stated they are here for the community, not just for the poor. He provided stats on how many meals served and beds provided for men, women and children since August 2022.

There was talk about having routine meetings with the neighborhood, with Pastor Ziler saying he would be on-board with that, and stated that to solve generational poverty, they need community buy-in. Mayor Morriss discussed the homeless people downtown and on the police log. The Pastor advised that this new location will separate the mission from those folks, and said the homeless will always be in a business area. He stated that the misconception is that those people are attestable to the mission. Chief Ternent concurred, saying they usually don't have to respond to the mission for anything, and said the people downtown are the people the CPD has been dealing with generationally for a long time here, that are not a part of the mission's program.

There was discussion about getting with homeowners and businesses at the new location to address their concerns and questions. Pastor Ziler said they have not had a chance to do that yet, but stated that it's something he wants to do. He mentioned, however, that no one has come to him to offer assistance, even though the relocation project idea has been out in the public since 2019. He said it kind of works both ways, and explained that community and businesses need more education on how to help the poor, and what they deal with daily. He said the mission is now dealing with individuals in their early 20s – children of heroin addicts that don't know how to do anything, and the elderly with dementia – not as many in the middle of those 2 demographics.

Pastor Ziler discussed the plight of the homeless, and how they think in their daily lives. He discussed work programs, the DSS, and how to build relationships with the homeless population. He stated that his program has to be safe for everyone, and said they work every day to make it a safe place for people to get help.

Mayor Morriss asked the Pastor if this is the location that best meets their needs. Pastor Ziler said yes, and said they can buy it debt-free, it has a green space, and parking spaces that are safe to get in and out.

III. HOTEL/MOTEL FUNDING

Mr. Silka discussed the allocation of Hotel/Motel funds they have been working through last month. He advised that M&CC have submitted their preference sheets but said the final allocation needs completed.

There was discussion about the \$45K allocated each year and that the tally of requests was much higher. It was recommended for next year to make Hotel/Motel funding part of the annual budget appropriation, which would be cleaner and simpler. Mayor Morriss stated that when \$45K is looked at as part of the budget, they need to stick to the budget.

There was discussion about considering new requests, and if they aren't budgeted, perhaps allocate some ARPA money, or if not, tell new folks it's not in the budget. There was discussion how \$45K became the magic number, and how it was put forth in budget discussions.

There was discussion about changing the name of the funding, due to some organizations not necessarily having people stay in hotels for a specific event. Mayor Morriss stated that there's always going to be an outlier that you want to help. He said they need to discuss the goals of the fund, and if the amount needs to be raised going forward. He added that when it comes to ARPA funding, they need to watch that very closely, as it can go quickly. Mr. Silka explained how the ARPA funding that the Mayor is talking about using is actually unrestricted fund balance now.

There was more discussion about the total allocation and whether or not to raise the limit using ARPA funding that is unrestricted fund balance..

There was a consensus to stay at \$45K.

IV. FIRE DEPARTMENT EQUIPMENT

Chief Adams provided a handout showing the Fire Department's current and future fleet needs. He advised that he had stated coming into the position of Chief that he wanted to get back the position of Deputy Chief in charge of maintenance that was lost in 2003 due to a budget crunch. He stated that it's a missed asset, and said it creates a gap in trying to keep up with vehicle maintenance. He said that now with that position back, they can catch up on maintenance.

Chief Adams explained that over the last 2 weeks they have been doing annual DOT inspections, and said that during the process a third-party mechanic found 1 ambulance with an issue and 1 engine with significant problems with the frame rails, which was redlined and not driven back to the station. He stated that it's out of service unless costly repairs are done.

Chief Adams went through the rest of the fleet, and advised on the different vehicles and equipment that should have been retired or put in reserve. His proposed solution is to purchase a new engine as soon as possible that meets the City's needs, and said it should be smaller than current units. He discussed other attributes needed for the engine, all of which is on the handout.

He also stated that a new squad unit should be purchased as soon as possible, and said getting this unit will be a new operational procedure for the FD, and said it will carry all rescue equipment for vehicle accidents and other special emergency responses.

The Chief discussed future fleet considerations, saying they currently have an ambulance budgeted for this FY, and proposed a second one to be budgeted next year using ARPA funds.

Chief Adams shared his thoughts to consider, saying the FD has units that are high in years of service and mileage, and said past Chiefs have limited ladder truck responses to cut down on maintenance issues. He also stated that various manufacturers concur with this, and have said the way the FD responds to calls with the ladder truck will decrease its useful life. He advised that NFPA states frontline engines should be replaced every 10 years, then placed in reserve, then retired and 25 years. He also advised on the proposed ambulance purchase from District 16, for \$50K, said the staff has looked it over, and said it meets all of their criteria.

Chief Adams noted that for future purchases of engines, they need to be smaller to fit the City streets better. He also said they don't want to make engines dual-purpose apparatuses anymore because it will mean less weight on the engines, and they will last longer. He said that because of this, they will need a squad vehicle to carry the special rescue equipment.

Chief Adams reviewed all the issues on the handout. He stated that vehicle build time is, as of now, 30 months out if they're lucky, so they need to plan far ahead.

Mayor Morriss confirmed with the Chief what their immediate need is, which is the District 16 ambulance, and what would come next in line. Chief Adams said the engine along with the squad vehicle would be ballpark \$1.2M - \$1.4M. Deputy Chief Grogg stated that the manufacturer has both in stock right now and offered a package deal.

Mr. Silka stated that with the cash flow, if the engine and squad vehicle were available now, they could put a deposit down then pay at delivery. He said the City is at a critical point and said they are asking for consideration to find this opportunity to purchase and lock it in. He stated that the CFD is running on 1997 engines, and if they are lost, the CFD loses the ability to professionally fight fires. He added that if the CFD's mission is to continue, they need the ability to put their reservation in. He further added that this would go under the unassigned fund balance, but said they may be looking at another capital bond issue.

Mayor Morriss said he appreciated the evaluation of the fleet and long-term usage.

Consensus to move forward

Deputy Grogg gave a shout-out to the City Vehicle staff who have worked tirelessly to keep their fleet running, and said that M&CC need to be proud of Brian Broadwater and his staff.

V. M&CC UPDATES

Council Member Cioni discussed the topic of naming facilities. He stated that the P&R board would appreciate minimal criteria, for future naming, but for now they want to leave the names as they are.

Council Member George advised that there was a public hearing on September 26th of the Municipal Planning Commission, which approved a petition by Andrea Emerick to rezone Seton

Drive and Pinecrest from Suburban Residential to Local Business, with plans for a multi-floor office complex. He also advised that he had received calls from S. Cumberland residents regarding the Fort Hill baseball field being overlooked for funding by Project Open Space. He suggested asking the BoE and the County to consider that field in the future.

Council Member Marchini advised that the HPC meetings are moving from the second to the third Wednesday of the month. She also stated that the DDC October public meeting will be in-person. Ms. Marchini said that they have had the bid opening for the Baltimore Street Access project, and said bids have been opened. She also mentioned that next Friday Butterscotch Blonde will be playing at Friday After Five.

Mayor Morriss stated that this Saturday October 8th is the August Baker Memorial Monument unveiling at 2 PM at Greenmount Cemetery. He also stated that the LBC board meeting was last night, and said they're making plans for next year. The Mayor also mentioned the N. Centre Street Festival this weekend, and the Italian Festival, which will mark Ristorante Ottaviani's 17th year anniversary.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved February 7, 2023