

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

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

Tuesday, September 29, 2020
2:00 p.m.

This meeting was held via Video-Conference

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey D. Rhodes, City Administrator; Michael S. Cohen, City Solicitor; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk, Bobby Smith, City Engineer; Kathy McKenney, Community Development Program Manager

I. PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA REVIEW – OCTOBER 6, 2020

Mayor Morriss asked if anyone had any changes to make to the Work Session Agenda. Councilwoman Marchini advised that she had concerns about numbers 3, 4 & 5, and asked that they be removed and put on a Closed Session. Motion to strike numbers 3, 4 & 5 from the Agenda and reschedule at a later date was made by Councilwoman Marchini, seconded by Councilman Cioni, and was passed on a vote of 4-0

Mr. Rhodes provided a review of the Public Agenda for October 6, 2020, and began with asking Ms. McKenney to speak on the Historic Preservation Economic Impacts presentation. She stated that the report from Place Economics is now complete, and the presentation will provide an overview of the findings of the evaluation. She added that she will email the report to M&CC for review, and can also provide them with a bound copy if needed.

Mayor Morriss mentioned the Proclamation for White Cane Awareness Day, October 15, 2020, and then moved to Reports, and reviewed all. He asked City Engineer Robert Smith if there was anything he wanted to add to the Engineering Report. Mr. Smith provided background on several items, and also advised that orders for the Fall Tree Removal and Fall Pruning may still be added to the Consent Agenda, but stated that they both fall under the Shade Tree Commission so they will have to be analyzed first to see if they can afford to do both.

Ms. McKenney reviewed the Resolution for approving the application and receipt of financing for 2020 Community Legacy projects, stating that six projects had been identified by the Cumberland Sustainable Communities work group. She also reviewed the Resolution for approving the application and receipt of financing for a 2020 Strategic

Demolition project entitled “Cumberland Main Street Sprinkler Tap Installation – Phase I, also identified by the Cumberland Sustainable Communities work group.

Ms. McKenney reviewed the six Community Legacy projects and advised on what the process entailed to select the projects.

Mr. Rhodes read and reviewed the items on the Consent Agenda. He turned the floor over to Ms. McKenney to provide background on Order 26,718, authorizing the execution of a contract with Cumberland Housing Alliance (CHA) for the use of \$149K in MD Community Parks and Playground (C&P) grant funds, for upgrades to the playground at 635 East First Street owned by CHA. Ms. McKenney advised that funding for this project was applied for in 2018 with the C&P program, and stated that project management was not directly done by City staff, but staff does manage the grants. She added that since the project is not being done on City-owned property, they want to enter into formal scopes of service with the other entity so that requirements placed on the City are transferred to the entity as well. Ms. McKenney added further that this project is within the Jane Frazier Village housing complex.

Ms. McKenney also advised on Order 26,720, which authorizes the Mayor to sign a letter of support for the City’s application to the MD Heritage Areas Emergency Capital Fund for critically needed work at the George Washington’s Headquarters cabin. She stated that the DAR were holding tours before Covid-19 and noticed conditions of deterioration at the cabin. Inspection was done by staff, and there were areas of concern. Ms. McKenney stated that they are in-between funding right now, but there was an option for an emergency request from which they could receive \$5K from the state towards the project which would run approximately \$10K. She also advised that the contractor is specialized in restoration of log cabins, and gave a brief summary of the deterioration that was assessed.

Mr. Smith spoke on Order 26,721, which will authorize the execution of an Easement Agreement with Cumberland Manor Associates, LP. He advised that this is an extension of the Decatur Street water line project, and that to facilitate putting in the new line they have to go outside of the current easement to allow the water to stay in service while they put in the new line. Mr. Smith added that the project will start in the spring. Mr. Rhodes advised that the last piece of funding fell into place for the City to replace the crosstown water main at Bedford and Decatur Streets. He added that this is a 24” water main that affects a lot of things when it goes out of service; it’s an old street, there are tons of things in the ground, and it will be a complex project. Mr. Smith gave more details on the project and the area that will be affected, and said it will be done in four phases. He added they are shooting for bidding in December, with construction beginning around April 1, 2021 hopefully, with a 5-month construction period.

Mr. Smith advised on the Sole Source purchase, Order No. 26,717, of the ammonium analyzers for the WWTP, and said that the vendor, Aerzen USA was also the supplier for the blowers installed last year, and that was the reason for the sole source.

Mr. Cohen advised on Ordinance 3876's First Reading, and said that water service provided through service lines to residents have on/off valves, and resident should have their own. He stated that many don't, due to the age of the structure, and said that this ordinance will address those issues where one service line serves two properties.

II. BOARDS & COMMISSIONS REPORTS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Morriss spoke on the Allegany County Museum, and stated that the coronavirus has dramatically affected the museum this year, and advised on cancellations for the year. He added that their revenue has decreased significantly, but said they are still open, with social distancing guidelines in place. He further added that the museum did receive a grant from Hotel/Motel tax funding, and said the board was very appreciative.

The Mayor stated that he would like to change the Blighted Property Committee name to the Neighborhood Revitalization Group, as the community development team has really been energized and have gone further than just blight removal. The Mayor mentioned the surplus property sale recently, stating that nine properties were sold, bringing in over \$20K and putting those properties back on the tax rolls. He added that most of those sold were adjacent lots. He further added that they are looking into the six homes that have been donated to City, most of which would be demos, and said they are now looking at lots that could be built on, or rehabbed. The Mayor stated that more information to Council will be coming soon, and said he had sent out the proposed tax sale legislation change.

Mayor Morriss spoke on the Canal Place Preservation Authority (CPPA) and stated that they're working on the river park, but work has been slowed by Covid-19. He said that the Canal Place Task Force committee will be coming soon, to figure out a way to divide the Heritage Area, with the Depot going to the County and the festival grounds going to the City to maintain, but cautioned that none of this is finalized. The Mayor added that there will be discussions on this further as it moves along.

The Mayor also advised on CACIF, the group that organizes the PACE reception each year, and stated that PACE has been cancelled, and added they are still looking for ways to do something virtually.

Councilman Frazier brought up the Scenic Railroad (WMSR) and asked if the Mayor had anything to add, since they are both on that Board. Mayor Morriss advised since Covid-19 they have ceased operations, as social distancing requirements can't be implemented on a passenger car and still operate on a level to be sustainable and make money. He added that donations have continued to come in for the 1309 engine, which is near completion, and stated that bodes well going forward. He stated that once the 1309 is in place that will get tremendous crowds and great ridership.

There was more discussion on the Canal Place Task Force, and the dividing of properties, with Mayor Morriss stating that it becomes more complicated when it comes to the actual shops at Canal Place and the Footer Building, and stated that Delegate Jason Buckel has been

tasked with this, and added that this in no way means they are doing away with the Heritage Area. He added further that this is an effort to make the shops independently more successful.

There was more discussion on neighborhood revitalization, and citizens talking about deteriorating properties. Mayor Morriss stated in an effort to get information out to the media, he has been going to WCBC after Tuesday meetings to talk about things and give people an idea of what the City is working on.

There was more discussion on the WMSR and the 1309 engine restoration. Ms. McKenney stated that they have applied for and received funds in the past through the MD Heritage Authority. Mayor Morriss stated that they have received money from the state twice under general funds, and talked about tourism attractions in Cumberland. Councilman Frazier advised that Chessie Federal Credit Union downtown offered part of their building to be used for ticket sales and displays for the Scenic Railroad, when it gets up and running.

Councilwoman Marchini advised on the Historic Preservation Commission, and said a residential façade grant opportunity for the Canal Preservation District was discussed recently, and stated that the National Trust Historic Preservation conference is coming up on October 27-30. The Councilwoman mentioned that at every meeting people ask for input on outside work, fixing things, etc., and said it seems to be moving along and they are adding a few new members. Ms. McKenney advised on Diversity Scholarships, stating that they were to encourage underrepresented community members to attend the Saving Places Conference, and stated that members of Council could also attend.

Councilwoman Marchini discussed the Downtown Development Commission (DDC), and advised on the Baltimore Street Project, which is at 90%, with Mr. Smith receiving remarks from the SHA the previous night and reviewing them.

The Councilwoman discussed the new Executive Director of the DDC, Melinda Kelleher, and said she has been reaching out to area business owners and meeting staff. She also mentioned that they are looking to replace Danny Glanzer, who is retiring on September 30th. She also mentioned the taps going in on Baltimore Street, funding for that project, and making sure business owners are aware and know how to apply for funding. Mr. Smith advised that the Engineering Department is going through the SHA comments and cross-referencing with the Cochran comments and other staff, so they can provide EADS with as few documents to go through as possible. He added that they hope to be able to provide EADS with that within a couple days. He advised that everyone has marching orders on the project, including City staff. Mr. Smith said they all want to have a tremendous street scape project delivered, but they need to work out some ADA issues. He stated that hopefully they can get everything to SHA as soon as possible for review.

Councilman Frazier commented on the Human Relations Commission, saying they haven't had a meeting in quite a while due to Covid-19. He also mentioned that the Tri-County Council has not had any recent meetings.

Councilman Cioni spoke on the Let's Beautify Cumberland (LBC) yearly event "Day of Caring and Sharing", and praised Ed Mullaney and Ginny Decker on their ongoing efforts towards beautifying the City. He added that the group has attracted some younger folks, which is vital for continuity. He added further that a group of younger people were also power washing at Liberty Park. Mayor Morriss agreed that LBC does excellent work year round, and stated that although they don't have a huge budget, they are great stewards of the money they do get. The Mayor added that former Council Member Butch Hendershot's widow and sons participated in the Day of Caring and Sharing, carrying on Hendershot's tradition.

Councilman Cioni advised that the Parks and Recreation Board has not been able to meet since the coronavirus pandemic, and stated that they tried with Zoom, which did not work due to technical problems. He stated that Diane Johnson, Director of Parks and Rec, has sent out information about Halloween, and is partnering with the DDC to do a virtual event, from October 5 – 26, with a costume contest, pumpkin carving contest, etc., but there will be no party at Constitution Park. The Councilman did advise, however, that there will be a drive-by candy distribution event at the Park, with the date of that event being published soon.

Councilman Cioni mentioned the Centre Street playground improvements, saying that City Reach has been central in that project. He stated that the next thing on the Board's agenda is to invest in the Pine Avenue playground. Mayor Morriss stated that he has spoken to David Smith of City Reach regarding the Pine Avenue and other playgrounds, and what City Reach wants to accomplish. He said it's critical as the City revitalizes its parks that it has activities and operations – maybe not handled by the City – but by outside groups organizing events for the City's young people. Councilman Frazier stated that when David Smith was running for Mayor, one thing he wanted to do was bring back playgrounds like they were when they were kids. He added that when the playgrounds do get cleaned up, maybe try to plan an event here and there to attract people.

There was more discussion on LBC and recruitment, and having more advertisements about clean-up events, with the suggestion that Allison Layton get with Ed Mullaney on updates and recruitment.

Mayor Morriss mentioned that these reports won't need to be done every work session, just maybe on the 4th Tuesday of the month. He stated that though the reports were a little long this time because they haven't been done in a while, they should get shorter in the future. He also stated that some of the vacancies in the Boards and Commissions have been filled, but said he will get with Ms. Woodring to review to see how many vacancies still need filled, and maybe do some recruitment.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie A. Woodring
City Clerk

Minutes approved October 20, 2020