

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

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

Tuesday, January 4, 2022
5:00 p.m.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeff Silka, City Administrator; Marjorie A. Woodring, City Clerk; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; Lee Borrer, Senior Community Development Specialist; Terri Hast, Community Development Specialist; and Allison Layton, Citizen Services Representative

I. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM 2022-2026 APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION RENEWAL

Mr. Tressler advised that he was notified in October that this application was due, and contacted MD Historic Trust to ask for an extension. He said that Lee Borrer stepped up, and with the help of Terri Hast and Allison Layton, they got it done in time. Mr. Tressler also advised that Ms. Borrer sent the draft to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and their response was that the application was detailed and well thought out. Mayor and Council and staff thanked the team for putting this together with a tremendous amount of work involved.

Ms. Borrer provided a PowerPoint presentation, went over the background of the Sustainable Communities Maryland Initiative Act of 2010, which previously was called the Community Legacy Program, and reviewed each slide in detail. Some of the highlights were:

- Sustainable Communities Workgroup – required element - approval is needed to get Community Legacy grants and Strategic Demolition funds
- Sustainable Communities Plan Elements – Designated Sustainable Communities map area includes most of Cumberland – Priority Funding area has to be included within Sustainable Communities areas – area was not expanded – same as 2017 – plenty of work to do within those areas
- Major Revitalization Goals include Baltimore Street Redesign, Housing Stock Improvement, Historic Preservation, Parks and Recreation, Downtown and Small Business Development, and more
- Public input accepted through January 3, 2020 – draft available on City’s website, or hard copies in Community Development
- Positive response of draft from DHCD – a few tweaks suggested – already done
- Next Steps – January 18th – M&CC can act on the Resolution to approve renewal application for designation, with an additional opportunity for public input – January 26th – deadline to submit application to MD DHCD
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Ms. Borrer asked for any questions or comments. Mr. Tressler advised that he will include the draft document to Council, which is a working copy until the final is submitted. He advised that if they see anything in the document they have questions about, get with him or Ms. Borrer.

Ms. Borrer discussed Transportation in terms of what it means for the community. She stated that mostly it involves road improvements, traffic, signage, bridges, pedestrian safety, and investigations into bus routes to increase transportation. She added that it also includes working with Bridges to Opportunity. Ms. Borrer advised that this application is not set up in a project-based manner like CDBG, but more so with revitalization goals, and said there could be a host of projects or activities. She added that there is a huge assortment of grants and funding opportunities to take advantage of. Mr. Tressler advised that there are ten separate outcomes desired, and is defined further in the plan. He added that there is a wide variety of different things.

Councilwoman Marchini asked about the City's impact on the County bus service, and advised that there was a constant problem with that when she worked at Workforce Development at ACM, regarding people getting jobs but not having access to transportation to get to work. Ms. Borrer agreed that public transportation is a problem in Cumberland. Mr. Tressler advised that there are some transportation-related requests in ARPA funding, and said the City does have the ability to work with the County. Ms. Borrer stated that people living in the City and working outside the City is also an issue with public transportation, and said hopefully that is being addressed with some of the County plans.

Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News, asked about the City's first and second Certification as a Sustainable Community. Ms. Borrer advised that 2012 – 2017 was the first time, with 2017 – 2022 being the second time.

Mr. Larry asked about a response date after the mailing of the application on January 26th. Mr. Tressler advised that it will go through a review process with comments and questions, but should not take several months to get it done.

Mr. Larry inquired about how this certification helps the community. Ms. Borrer explained that it's required for Community Legacy funding and Strategic Demolition funds, and said it's available to other state departments that have funding sources, grants, loans, etc., so they can see ahead of time that a plan has been put in place. She added that instead of piecemeal funding, the funding can be concentrated where it will be the most effective. Mr. Tressler advised that it's also helpful in bringing all the different community agencies together to help generate a cohesive plan together on key topics for the next five years.

In answer to a question from Council, Ms. Borrer explained that through committees like Bridges for Opportunity, the community got together and tried to come up with some ideas, and mentioned programs that were in place before Covid, regarding medical transport, voucher programs, etc. She said everyone was doing it themselves and trying to come together to create something that each agency or organization would put funding into, and then Covid stopped it from going further. Ms. Borrer added that there was a group looking into the problem trying to find creative ways to address the issue, seeing what other communities were doing, how to re-design the routes, etc., and said this issue has been on the radar for a while.

Ms. Borrer gave examples of funding received. She advised that Riverside YMCA, downtown facade programs, Leasehold, upper story redevelopment, and Allegany College of Maryland. Ms. Hast advised that there is a list of projects funded in the plan that was provided to M&CC. In answer to a question from Councilwoman Marchini, Ms. Borrer explained that there are different phases of completion, and the ones that have been completed will have the year of completion shown. Ms. Hast advised that some of the funding was not received until later, and some projects are not closed out. Ms. Borrer added that funding recipients have two years to

spend the money once the MOU is signed with the State. Mr. Tressler added that the document goes back five years, so there a lot of things listed as completed and funding utilized.

II. PUBLIC AGENDA REVIEW

The Mayor reviewed the Quarterly Awards for employee milestones, the Administrative Services report , and the approval of Minutes the Agenda for the January 4, 2022 public meeting.

Mr. Silka asked if there were any specific Orders that M&CC needed more detail on. He reviewed **Order 26,938**, explaining the Change Order was due to the cost of parts going up.

There was discussion about **Order 26,940**, which approves the appointment of Shannon Adams as the new Fire Chief, with Mayor Morriss stating that they will vote on the first four Orders, vote on Order 26,940 separately, then do the Swearing-In.

There was discussion about **Order 26,937**, with Councilman George asking about plans for 804 Maryland Avenue after the deed is transferred. Mr. Silka advised that it's slated for demolition. Mr. Tressler stated that this was a neglected property and the City approached the property owner to ask about donation. He stated that 802 and 804 Maryland Avenue will be demoed together to save money, and added that the City already owns 800 and 802.

Mayor Morriss stated that Kevin Thacker and Code Enforcement are always working on the issue of properties not maintained by their owners, who are disconnected because they are out of town, or they simply don't want it anymore. He added that this is Code Enforcement's initiative, to get people to donate their homes to the City to save the cost of tax sale, foreclosure, etc. He said the City can obtain them at a minimal cost, then demo, or rehab if possible.

Councilwoman Marchini inquired why the HPC appointment was not listed along with other board and commission appointments on **Order 26,939**. Mr. Silka advised that there was no finalization from the closed meeting, so there is still some vetting of the candidate. Mr. Tressler advised that the replacement for Kathy McKenney, Ruth Davis-Rogers, will be starting this coming Monday, and said it will be a priority for her to get the committee members instituted.

III. M&CC UPDATES

Councilwoman Marchini advised that the New Year's Eve event downtown was a huge success, and gave kudos to Allison Layton and Melinda Kelleher, as well as the group of volunteers.

Councilman George advised that he completed the Certificate of Compliance for the MD Department of Planning, and the required three-plus-hour training course for the Planning Commission, and added that there will be a Planning Commission meeting on January 24th.

Mayor Morriss advised on the WMSR, and said the final number of tickets for the Polar Express was 25,722, and stated that their 2022 schedule is already up and on their website. He said they will continue doing the varied events.

The Mayor advised that he sent out the Doodle-Poll for the Carver Board Meeting, which is set for next week, if possible. He said there things that need addressed – funding from the City and the MD Historic Trust. He added that they want to get the board together and get direction on what their goals are for the Carver Center going forward.

Mayor Morriss also advised that the first priority will be a walk around the building by Robert Smith and Greg Snyder, to get information on electrical, plumbing and HVAC system, to give the Board an idea of what it will take to get the building operational again. He added that it may take a lot of funding.

Councilman Frazier advised that Wesley Heinz, Executive Director of the WMSR was named Person of the Year by WCBC Radio.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marjorie A. Woodring
City Clerk

Minutes approved May 17, 2022