



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, May 2, 2023, 4:00 p.m.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; Mark Gandolfi, Comptroller; Ruth Davis-Rogers, Historic Planner/Preservation Coordinator; Chuck Ternent, Police Chief; Shannon Adams, Fire Chief; Representatives from The Lakota Group

Media: Teresa McMinn, Cumberland Times-News

Kathy Cornwell, WCBC Radio

I. LAKOTA GROUP

Ruth Davis-Rogers introduced the Lakota Group: Nick Kalogeresis, Associate Principal; Doug Kari, Senior Associate; and Josh Bloom, Economic Development and Revitalization. Each member spoke about their background and their area of expertise.

Mr. Kalogeresis advised that they will be here all week to engage and work with the community, and said that tomorrow they would hold a public workshop to outline strategies and goals. He asked M&CC how they see the City's preservation going forward, and things they'd like to see happen.

Mayor Morriss spoke about the work being done on Baltimore Street, and stated that the downtown area is the hub of the community, and said history is vitally important. He explained that they have concern for the neighborhoods, to want them to become communities where people want to live. He added that they are also concerned about the economic development side, and of building a community for the future. The Mayor talked about making historic preservation user-

friendly, as well as obtaining grants, and making it a good experience for homeowners. He added that he wants people to know they're going to be helped.

There was discussion about identifying historic places that are not obvious. Mr. Kalogeresis advised that's what they do for a living, and spoke about helping Albany, New York, one of the oldest cities in the US., with issues on a much larger scale. He said the thing about preservation is that it takes longer for success to happen, and talked about leveraging partnerships to educate property owners and provide benefits, tools, incentives, etc., to help them accomplish their goals.

Mr. Kalogeresis explained that preservation should be used to create a place where people want to have a business and live. He said stable neighborhoods are imperative. He talked about taking the fear/mystery out of preservation, saying the more the public understands it, the more buy-in they have. He discussed a yearly event in Dayton, Ohio that builds a festival around a newly rehabbed home, and said it builds awareness and pride in neighborhoods.

Mayor Morriss discussed the Home Rehab Grant Program and Development and Property Improvement Program. He said it's not as successful because contractors are too busy, and stated that these programs could be used to enhance preservation.

Mr. Silka stated that the way he looks at it is that historic preservation needs to be symbiotic with development, and said preservation can't drive everything the City does – there has to be population growth back in the area.

Council Member Furstenberg discussed the DC and Richmond areas, saying he travels a lot, and loves seeing modern homes with the historic mixed in. He explained that Cumberland is in major need of urban and modern buildings, and said it would be great if they can be mixed together. He went on to say that it's too cheap to live in Cumberland – it can't be too expensive – but it should not be so inexpensive, and over time home values need to increase.

Mayor Morriss stated that when US News and World Report states that Cumberland is a cheap place to live, it drives outside investment with no intention of living in the community – buy homes sight-unseen, hire a property manager, and accept a rent so low that it brings people from out of the area. He stated that this is not what Cumberland needs, and said developing a community means raising the standards, and added that people need to be invested in the community. He explained that he thinks now the property managers understand the point he was trying to make, and said the Home Rehab program has helped things to turn around.

Mr. Kalogeresis discussed the age homes need to be to be considered historic, or eligible for historic designation. He said mid-century homes and furniture are in demand now. It was noted that homes built in 1974 are considered new in Cumberland. Mr. Kalogeresis stated that when talking about preservation, you're talking about homes that have a remarkable quality, and said as those things disappear, you regret the losses and that they cannot be replaced. He explained that community is a mix of the best of each era over time.

There was discussion about the amount of federal preservation money available. Mr. Kalogeresis stated that the main pot of money at the federal level funds many activities, and is administered by the National Park Service. He stated that over the last 5 years, funds have gone up, and grant programs are well-funded – it's a good time for preservation.

Mr. Kalogeresis advised that Cumberland's entire downtown is an opportunity, and talked about upper story development. He mentioned 6 national registered historic districts that the City

doesn't deal with because they aren't locally designated. He stated that Decatur, Rolling Mill, and Chapel Hill all have character and potential – places with nice quality housing from the 20's. He also mentioned the White Oaks community being a nice little subdivision from the 50's – 60's. He stated that there is a lot to look at and consider.

Mayor Morriss and Council all thanked the Lakota Group for their time.

II. FY24 BUDGET UPDATES

Mr. Gandolfi provided a PowerPoint presentation and spoke about updates to the FY24 Budget. He gave a list of upcoming important dates:

Tonight:	Constant Yield Public Hearing
May 16 th :	Budget Ordinance First Reading
June 6 th :	Second and Third Reading.
Adoption:	Prior to July 1 st

Mr. Gandolfi advised on changes that were made to the budget, saying that slides 8 and 9 have been added, and said they have further reviewed and edited FY23 and FY24 figures, adding FY25 projections. Mr. Gandolfi touched on the highlights:

- ✚ Assessable Base expected to increase by 2.96%
- ✚ Budget maintains existing tax rate
- ✚ GF budget with \$2.6M unassigned fund balance surplus
- ✚ ARPA projects funds - \$2.3M expended out of \$9.6M
- ✚ In FY24 expect to utilize \$6.6M of ARPA funds
- ✚ 10% increase in trash and water rates. No increase in sewer or property taxes
- ✚ Built-in COLA for union and non-union
- ✚ Staying with same insurance provider

Mr. Gandolfi discussed staffing levels – full and part-time. He went over Capital Expenditures and said there is lots in action in FY24, and said they will continue to pursue grant funding. Mr. Tressler stressed grant funding as well, saying this is one of the most important notes of this presentation. Mr. Gandolfi reviewed the areas where grant funding is most needed.

Next, Mr. Gandolfi discussed GF Balance, saying it requires a \$4.8M cushion. He added that the City's bond rating went from A to A+. He noted that FY23 revenue was revised to \$29.8M, and said FY24 should see \$31.3M. He also mentioned that interest income has a \$100K improvement.

Mr. Gandolfi talked about expenditures, saying the City is looking at a \$450K increase over the revised increase, due to increased staffing, the new wage increase, and utility bills increase. He also talked about the Union Rescue Mission purchase.

There was discussion about how the City would be doing without the ARPA funds. Mr. Gandolfi advised that they could scrub the budget if needed, and said it's in really good shape, with a \$2.6M surplus.

Mr. Gandolfi went into details about the different funds – Proprietary, GF, Water, Sewer, Trash, MPA and DDC, providing information on their stability in FY24. He said that this is a budget M&CC can be proud of – all of us moving in the same direction. He added that it’s another good year in FY24.

Mayor Morris thanked Mr. Gandolfi for the presentation, and agreed that there is a critical need for more grant funding for future projects. There was a question about the DDC merging with the Main Street program. Mr. Gandolfi explained that the two won’t merge, saying that the DDC operates the Main Street program as an affiliate agency.

III. AGENDA REVIEW – MAY 2, 2023

Mayor Morriss went over the public meeting agenda and called for questions or comments. He made a note of mentioning the Public Hearing for property taxes, and reiterated there is no property rate tax increase.

There was discussion on Orders 27235 and 27236 regarding new Constitution Park picnic tables. Mr. Silka clarified that one Order accepts the grant, and the other one purchases the picnic tables.

IV. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Council Member Frazier discussed the HRDC senior prom, saying it was a very nice event.

Council Member Furstenberg advised that he had spoken with Dave Caporale again and asked him to talk to Council about a meeting regarding real estate and how to connect neighborhoods together. He also spoke about the parking rate special of the “first 2 hours free” at the George Street Garage, and said there’s no excuse not to fill that up with Friday After Five happening so near to the garage. Mr. Silka advised that they have had 21 new parkers at the garage since the incentive program started. The Mayor mentioned that local business owners and employees are taking some of the parking spaces on the streets, those that customers could have used.

Council Member Cioni advised that the Day of Caring and Sharing is May 19th, and encouraged people to sign up.

Mayor Morriss talked about Friday After Five on May 5th. He stated that the event is moving to Mezzo’s on Centre Street due to the downtown construction, and asked all to support local businesses. The Mayor also mentioned the Levitt Music Festival at Canal Place on Thursday, June 1st, and said there will be 10 Canal Place Thursday music events throughout the summer to enjoy.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:47 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: May 16, 2023