

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

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

Tuesday, September 13, 2022
5:30 p.m.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey Silka, City Administrator; Sherri Nicol, Assistant to the City Clerk; Matt Miller, Executive Director-CEDC; Stu Czapski, Economic Development Specialist

Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News

I. BALTIMORE STREET ACCESS UPDATE

Mr. Miller advised that the project went out to bid on August 10th, and said that bids are due by September 21st. He noted that the pre-bid meeting on August 31st was well attended. He added that as this process concludes, it will determine their next steps.

Mr. Miller provided an update on the Surveillance Project, advising that they received the grant from the DHCD to upgrade the downtown security system. He added that together with other organizations they drafted an RFP which will be available to the public September 16th, inviting all contractors. Mr. Miller stated that the bidding will end on October 14th, with the award of the project no later than October 31st. He advised if M&CC or staff want a copy of the RFP to email him after this Friday. He added that the project should be completed in April of 2023.

Mr. Miller turned to the upcoming Downtown Comprehensive Investment Program, which he stated involves several different funding sources that will be available to downtown businesses. He stated that having a better understanding of the project timeline now, it was decided to restructure the program into 3 separate phases, to coincide and not interfere with the construction of Baltimore Street. He advised that the 3 phases will be Façade Improvement, Residential Development and Infrastructure, and Business Attraction. He noted that all grants – except infrastructure - will be open to any business or building owner in the DDC Special Taxing District.

Mr. Miller advised that they have done a press release and a marketing flyer regarding all the available grants. He stated that although it's too soon to unveil everything, they are trying to get the word out about what's on the horizon, so more information will be out as soon as it's available.

There was discussion about funding amounts for the façade phase, which involves sprinkler systems and fiber. Mr. Miller explained there are different parameters, and added that the CEDC wants each building to take advantage of this opportunity whether they want to or not, because if the work is requested after the fact, the street would have to be torn up again.

The Mayor stated that it would surprise him if there's an owner that doesn't want this opportunity, and if there is he would like to have a conversation with them, to let them know the value that would be added to their business with fiber and a sprinkler system. Mr. Miller said any downtown owners that have already had fire suppression done will tell you how much it costs, and gave the example of Mezzo's, which he stated was a huge and costly undertaking to provide their establishment with fire suppression. It was also noted that 2nd and 3rd floors are required to have sprinkler systems.

II. CEDC GENERAL UPDATES

Mr. Miller provided general CEDC updates. He deferred to Mr. Czapski to explain about the Manufacturers Day event.

Mr. Czapski advised that October is Manufacturing Month, and said the CEDC is partnering with Allegany College at to put together a manufacturers round-table luncheon at Western Maryland Works Makerspace with a manufacturing job fair afterwards.

There was discussion about the makerspace, with Rebecca Rupert constantly looking at the needs of manufacturing, which has caught the attention of manufacturers outside of the region.

Mr. Miller talked about general constituent services, and advised that they have had a significant increase in new or expanding business requests in the City. He stated that they are working with 18 new or expanding business prospects looking to locate within the City limits, but said they cannot provide names at this time. He added that categories include industrial, hospitality, medical, retail, human resources, and residential.

There was discussion about the CEDC working with this many prospects, which Mr. Miller stated is a considerable increase. Mayor Morriss stated that people are looking at the community as a whole – outdoor recreation, nightlife entertainment, restaurants, etc., not to mention a new, remodeled downtown forthcoming. There was discussion about Covid having accelerated decisions in lifestyles, as well as the fact that several local businesses are huge success stories with some local manufacturers expanding. Mr. Miller added that there are some investors interested in buildings that are empty, but said two things can disqualify them for use: no raised loading dock, and ceilings too low.

There was discussion about businesses that may suffer during the downtown construction. Mr. Miller advised that the CEDC doesn't have any grant money set aside for that use, but stated that a mitigation plan we be unveiled very soon. He added that there may be times that it will difficult to get to a business during construction, but said it will be very minimal.

There was discussion about Melinda Kelleher planning a townhall meeting, and the CEDC doing a full buildout of a website/one-stop-shop regarding the Baltimore Street reconstruction – information, project updates, downtown happenings, etc. Councilwoman Marchini advised on the information classes they set up for business owners, saying that they were not hugely attended, even though everything regarding the downtown was covered. There was talk about downtown walk-in traffic being reduced, with a percentage of people that won't come downtown and deal with it.

Mr. Miller stated that they have put a ton of time and thought into this, with the biggest thing being to convey to people what's happening and when. He stated that Covid taught people how

to adapt – online, curbside, and delivery sales - and said there shouldn't be any lengthy closures of businesses.

III. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 6:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: January 3, 2023