



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, November 7, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Michael Cohen, City Solicitor; Ruth Davis-Rogers, Historic Preservation Planner and Grants Management; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police

Media: Teresa McMinn, Cumberland Times-News
Kathy Cornwell, WCBC Radio

I. REVOLVING LOAN FUND DISCUSSION

Mr. Silka discussed formalizing the micro revolving loan fund. He advised that there's \$100K in the fund for small business loans for \$2K to \$10K, for businesses under 100 employees, at an interest rate of 3%. He explained that this is not a grant program nor a forgivable loan program. He provided an information sheet with more details.

Mr. Silka discussed the application procedures, specifics, and went over the different applicable uses for the loan, such as for working capital, building upgrades and improvements, machinery and equipment, and business disruption, saying it cannot be used to purchase real property. He stated that applicants will be urged to contact and work with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Frostburg State to develop a business plan and financial information.

Mr. Silka discussed using the loan for business disruption funding (re: Baltimore Street), and went over what needs to be met to be eligible for the funding – first and foremost, the business has to be located within the footprint of the Baltimore Street Redevelopment Project. He also mentioned the applicant has to be in good standing with the City regarding taxes, utilities and code violations, as well as in good standing with the State.

Mr. Silka explained that there will be a Loan Review Committee (LRC) established to review and recommend approval, denial, or additional information, and discussed who the members of the committee will need to be. He noted that the Director of Administrative Services, will receive the applications and present them to the LRC, and the final approval of a loan will be by an Order of the Mayor and City Council.

Mr. Silka advised that a loan, if approved, will be disbursed within 30 days to the applicant, who shall make annual reports to the City detailing use of the funds, with a final report when the project is complete. He added that loans between \$2K and \$5K will be approved at a 24-month term, while loans between \$5K and \$10K will be approved at a 60-month term.

II. ARTS COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Ms. Davis-Rogers talked about the creation of a City of Cumberland Arts Commission, covering visual arts, painting, drawing, sculpture, performing arts, and literature. She explained that studies show that the presence of an arts district is important to a community, and creates jobs, investments, tax revenue, and stimulates the economy. She said the City is fortunate to have an Arts Council.

Ms. Davis-Rogers advised that the Arts and Entertainment district was created in 1972. She also mentioned that the City incorporated arts into the overall plan for Baltimore Street. She said having a City Arts Commission will be a sign the City is thriving. She also explained the difference between the Arts Council, and having an Arts Commission, with the commission being an advisory body to the council. She discussed who commission members would be and from what area, backgrounds, and said representation from arts-related fields would be encouraged. She advised M&CC that there was a packet they can review, and said they could meet in a few weeks to discuss further. She added that the commission will not be created until M&CC votes on it.

III. OPIOID RESTITUTION FUND UPDATE

Chief Ternent advised that they began getting distributions from the opioid restitution funds, and said he has some proposals for what to do with them, as it has become quite complicated. He explained out of the \$26B overall, the State of Maryland will receive \$529M, with there being 3 different pots of money. He explained some goes directly to municipalities, and said Comptroller Mark Gandolfi advised the City has \$44K right now in disbursements. He explained that the next pot of money is targeted abatement funds, which goes to the State, which then goes to the DHMH, which in turn distributes some portion to municipalities. He advised the City is supposed to get \$59K in 2023 from that, and around \$21K in 2024. He mentioned that the County and Frostburg are in on the agreement as well, and said the County is getting the biggest chunk of the money.

The Chief advised that the DHMH and the State put out a document explaining that it wants committees set up to say how these funds will be used, and said there are a lot of very specific parameters of how the money should be spent, kind of like how it worked with the ARPA funds. He said during a meeting with the County, the County offered to write the plan for the City for 5 years out, with the City staying in possession of their funds, and advised that a Council Member

and the Chief himself will sit on the committee. Chief Ternent asked for permission to do the plan jointly with the County, and said their deadline date is December 12, 2023.

Mr. Silka advised that this is the Administration's recommendation as well, as it's burdensome to get these funds in small chunks, what with all the administration work that has to be done.

Mayor Morriss stated this gives the City some input into the County plan, and said the County understands that the biggest issues are within the municipalities.

There was discussion on ideas of how to spend the funds. Chief Ternent mentioned Narcan; peer support; access to medications, heroin coordinator, crisis beds, mobile crisis teams as well as hotlines, education, enforcement, research, etc.

Mr. Silka stated that he would like this put on the next meeting and officially do it as an Order. Mayor Morriss advised to get a planned document in place, and said as they work through it, M&CC will update as necessary.

IV. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Mr. Silka discussed the new Parkmobile app, saying it is now fully deployed. He said he will wait 2 months and come up with a use report. He said there's been a soft opening and a hard opening, and said he hopes everybody uses it.

Mr. Silka discussed the Skatepark, saying he's had a couple of calls with the designer Rampage, and said after looking at the skatepark in Hagerstown, most people give a low ranking on the "bowl" for Cumberland users, which is a lot of money and will get minimal use. He stated that street features, steps, railings, and a pump track are priorities. He explained that the designer is trying to fit it in to the City's budget and space, and then we will commission a rendering. He added that the design is in progress, along with preliminary engineering, and they are on track for a Spring build, pending contractor availability.

V. AGENDA REVIEW NOVEMBER 7, 2023

Mr. Silka reviewed tonight's public agenda. He called for any questions or comments. Mr. Silka stated that items are mostly housekeeping, but mentioned the purchase of 2 pickup trucks for the CPD, which are unbudgeted, but is coming out of proceeds from 2 totaled vehicles.

IV. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Council Member Furstenberg advised that he did the Toys for Happiness Bingo with Mayor Morriss and Council Member Frazier.

Council Member Frazier also mentioned the Toys for Happiness Bingo, which was at the Fire Department, to raise money for the organization. He stated that they raised \$6700, plus received toy donations.

Council Member Frazier also mentioned attending the HRDC Annual Meeting at Rocky Gap, and said City Administrator Jeff Silka was the Keynote Speaker.

Council Member Marchini advised that they will have another Town Hall Meeting regarding Baltimore Street in December to iron out some issues. He mentioned that construction has started on the water feature on Liberty Plaza. The Councilwoman also noted that they are looking for volunteers for the 2-weekend Winter Festival in December, and reminded everyone of the tree lighting Friday after Thanksgiving – this year at Canal Place. She added that this is syncing with the Polar Express trains. She also mentioned the HPC article in last Saturday’s newspaper regarding urban renewal, and she said she met twice with the Local Government Advisory Workgroup with Ms. Kelleher, DDC, and the MD Comptroller. She said they discussed B filing coming out for businesses, with the hopes to go live in January 2024, and advised they are working on a webpage which will be more interactive. She said they also discussed tax differentials, and advised everyone to go online to see if you’re owed any money.

Mr. Cohen stated that it’s frustrating dealing with the Comptroller regarding trying to find phone numbers and email addresses, and said filling out an inquiry form and waiting for a call back is not helpful. Council Member Marchini said she will make mention of it.

Mayor Morriss also mentioned the Winter Festival on 12/2 and 12/9, and encouraged people to see Ms. Kelleher to sign up to volunteer. The Mayor discussed Shop Small Saturday and asked people to support local businesses. He also mentioned Veterans Day this Saturday the 11th, and said he and some of Council will be attending programs at the Legion and at Rocky Gap

The Mayor noted that tomorrow night is the MML ALGAR Chapter Dinner/Meeting at The Toasted Goat, which he and Council Member Frazier signed up for. He also advised that he will be going to Annapolis on 11/16 to meet with the Governor, during the National Guard’s State Partnership Reception. He added that the WMSR is in discussion with the Governor’s office to bring the Governor up for the Polar Express in December, and did mention that these train rides sell out quickly. He said if all rides sell out, that is 79K riders.

V. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: November 21, 2023