

**Board of County Commissioners
Worksession Minutes
January 25, 2011**

PRESENT: Commissioners Mullin, Moore, Dunn, Broomell and Hodge; County Administrator Al Wein, Public Works Director Scott Flanigan and staff; Planning and Zoning Director Eric Sennstrom; Economic Development Director Vernon Thompson and staff, Permits and Inspections Director Pat Conway, Emergency Services Director Richard Brooks; Budget Manager Craig Whiteford; Executive Office Administrator Vicky Rinkerman; Council Norman Wilson arrived at 10:30 a.m.; Former Charter Board Committee members; members of the press, and members of the public.

OPEN SESSION

9:00 a.m. – President Mullin called the meeting to order.

Charter Committee Presentation

County Administrator Wein introduced Chris Ann Szep from the former Charter Board Committee. Ms. Szep reviewed the timeline relative to the transition from Commissioner to Charter government, and the request from former Charter Board Chair Bowsbey for the appointment of a committee to facilitate the transition process.

Discussion ensued regarding department director appointments and dismissal relative to Charter government.

President Mullin stated that the Board would consider the request and asked that they submit an outline for the specific duties of the transition team.

West Cecil Health Center fast track request – Deputy Director Clough reviewed the fast track request for the land acquisition and building proposal to expand the services to meet the needs of the community. Staff recommended approval of the fast track request.

On motion made by Commissioner Hodge, seconded by Commissioner Moore, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the fast track designation for the West Cecil Health Center as presented.

Quarterly Revenue/Expense report – Budget Manager Whiteford reviewed the current revenue and expense projections relative to the current budget, and provided 2012 budget information. He stated that he would continue to monitor the State budget process as it proceeds and feels that no action by the Board is required at this time relative to budget adjustments.

Proposal to Amend Chapter 200 regarding fire sprinklers – County Administrator Wein stated that Commissioner Hodge has a proposal to Amend Chapter 200 regarding the fire sprinkler requirement in new construction.

Commissioner Hodge stated that the amendment proposal is for discussion purposes only. The proposed amendment would require homebuilders provide information and education on the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in new construction. Relative to duplex housing, automatic fire sprinklers would be mandated unless a fire rated wall is installed between the units, as per current building code requirements. As part of a new

process, a new homebuyer would be required to sign a form stating that they were provided sprinkler system information.

Commissioner Broomell stated that based on her research, she feels that duplex housing should be included in the requirement for automatic fire sprinklers.

Director Conway stated that department and State Fire Marshall's Office staff inspects the installation of the firewall in multi-family housing units (i.e., apartments, town homes, and duplex homes) as per State law. Construction plans must be certified by a licensed Maryland architect and routine inspections are performed throughout the building construction process.

Discussion ensued relative to County regulations and cost of fire sprinklers vs. firewall installation.

Director Conway stated that firewalls have been mandated by State law for years in multi-family housing units.

Commissioner Hodge stated that he feels there are too many variables relative to the cost of installing fire sprinkler systems for county officials to mandate this requirement. He would prefer to let citizens make their own decision.

President Mullin recommended that the Board members review the proposal presented and another meeting would be scheduled to continue the discussion.

Proposed Citizen Budget Advisory Committee – Commissioner Broomell stated that Harford County has had a budget advisory committee operating since 1974 with each Commissioner appointing one member to the committee. She recommended that the Board move forward with appointing this committee and request cooperation from the Treasurer relative to providing financial information.

Commissioner Hodge stated that he would support this initiative; however, he acknowledged that the Board would make the final budget decisions after considering input from the committee.

President Mullin stated that he would support this initiative provided each Commissioner has one appointment to the committee and the individual has a financial background.

Commissioner Broomell stated that the committee would have full access to all budget information.

Commissioner Moore agreed with the recommendation; however, she requested that the committee be provided a specific focus and operation parameters.

Commissioner Broomell stated that she feels it is critical that this initiative move forward immediately. She stated that she would prefer to let the group discuss and debate the budget and hesitates to set parameters for the committee.

Commissioner Hodge recommended that each Commissioner appoint two members to the committee.

The Board concurred to discuss establishing a citizen budget advisory committee at the next worksession meeting.

Commissioner Items

Commissioner Dunn requested an update on snow plowing for Colonial Way in Rising Sun. Director Flanigan stated that he would follow up with the Roads Department and report his findings.

Commissioner Hodge stated that he attended a budget hearing for the public school system. Discussion ensued relative to school funding. One item that will affect the local public school budget decision will be the State's decision on responsibility for funding the teachers' pensions. The Board concurred that they could not forward budget directives until this issue is resolved.

Commissioner Broomell stated that she discussed video recording Commissioner meetings with Information Technology Director Scott Mesneak. She would like this initiative to be considered by the Board using proceeds from video lottery revenue.

Commissioner Moore commented on attending the certificate presentation for the School of Technology scholarship award ceremony.

10:20 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION Motion made Commissioner Moore, seconded by Commissioner Broomell, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn to closed session pursuant to the Annotated Code of Maryland, State Government, Article 10-508 (a)(1) to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals; and (7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

The Board convened in closed session.

1:00 p.m.

Cecil College update

Cecil College President Stephen Pannill and staff provided updates on educational programs and general college information.

2:30 p.m.

Department Director Meeting

County Administrator Wein stated that the Board is scheduled to consider the Animal Care and Control and Collective Bargaining ordinances.

Housing Director Dave Mahaney stated that the department is still responding to the foreclosure issue and reverse mortgage requests have been on the rise. He reviewed a networking effort to combine a program with Senior Services to assist with housing for the homeless that extends Federal and State resources.

Parks and Recreation Director Clyde Van Dyke stated that the department is working on pending legislation at the state level. The department is very active with programs and finishing the spring program guide. The curatorship program is progressing and there is a link available from the department website for people to follow the progress of the restoration.

Commissioner Broomell requested a list of priorities from Parks and Recreation.

Chief Alcohol Inspector Earl Bradford stated that the department is working on license renewals and the annual calendar for disbursement to businesses. He advised the Board that there may be new liquor licenses available in the county.

Budget Manager Whiteford stated that he is reviewing budget submissions and has been following the budget information releases from the Governor's Office. He reviewed the budget savings realized from an evaluation of telephone service.

Information Technology Director Scott Mesneak stated that department staff is finalizing the content management project. Once this process is completed, the retention policy will become finalized. Staff will be revising the policy relative to email forwarding and instant messaging as it pertains to the retention policy. Additionally, staff is investigating adding electrical permit processing to the Hansen Program. He continued suggesting that a link be provided on our website through Web Monkey relative to collecting cost saving suggestions from employees and the public. The comments would be anonymous and only assigned staff would access and screen the raw information that is submitted.

Human Resources Director Donna Nichols stated that the risk of an anonymous comment means that there is no way to track how many people take the survey. She stated that the State has performed a similar exercise and she would forward a link to this example.

Commissioner Hodge stated that his intent was to have this as a one-way "suggestion box"; however, if the person wants a response, they must provide contact information and an email address.

Discussion ensued relative to the process of eliminating "spam" and/or threatening emails.

Commissioner Moore stated that the genesis of the project was to provide an avenue for employees and the public to provide suggestions anonymously.

The Board concurred to proceed with the recommendation from Director Mesneak with the survey program, which will be kicked off with a press release and ad in HR Focus.

DES Director Richard Brooks stated that there were four graduates of the paramedic program. Staff will be working on a solution for the employee notification system. He reviewed the housing project at the VA Center for homeless veterans. The Active Shooter Program awareness educational program will be provided for all county employees. The CAD system will be coming on line within the next sixty days.

Permits and Inspections Director Pat Conway reviewed the permits issued through the department for 2010. Staff is working on the fire sprinkler ordinance and updating the electrical permitting process. The number of inspections for each permit has not decreased and the numbers in the report includes permits for new, renovation, and change of use.

Planning and Zoning Director Eric Sennstrom stated that the county should not expect the local economy and housing market to rebound within the next several years.

Director Nichols reviewed the training schedule. She stated that the department is questioning scheduled sick leave use reported on time sheets that is multiple hours over a period, or an eight-hour period. The employee service and outstanding attendance award luncheon will be scheduled in the spring.

Commissioner Hodge suggested staff seek donations for the award luncheon from vendors used by the Human Resources department.

Economic Development Director Vernon Thompson stated that employees are transferring to Aberdeen relative to BRAC; eighteen percent chose to move to Cecil County. He reviewed economic opportunities being handled through the department.

Acting Senior Services Director Bob Dermott stated that the department is working with the Department of Emergency Services relative to education for paramedics and use of the weight room for employees. A United Way grant was used to purchase the fitness station equipment that was installed along the walking trail around the building.

Facilities Manager Stafford Torgesen stated that he would contact specific departments relative to grant funding for energy saving measures. He advised staff that use of space heaters is prohibited in the building. Staff should contact the department relative to heat issues.

Commissioner Hodge suggested that the block heaters for the diesel buses be placed on automated thermostat system for energy efficiency.

Public Work Director Scott Flanigan stated that the snow removal budget has been almost depleted. Potential funding for rural utility service through the US Department of Agriculture for the Seneca Point plant expansion project is in the federal budgeting process. The curbside recycling program went into effect and there has been a fifty percent increase of recyclable materials collected. He provided bridge project updates. The next hazardous household collection waste day will be scheduled in May. Two bridges were closed for renovations and LGIT has awarded the county an education/training simulator grant for snow removal.

Director Sennstrom stated that staff is processing change requests relative to the Comprehensive Plan revisions. He reviewed the Planning Commission and Commissioners schedule for rezoning hearings. The public hearing is scheduled in April for approval of the Comprehensive rezonings and maps, including approval of the new Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations. He reviewed the requests that have been submitted to date, and the zoning change request process. The deadline for rezoning requests was extended to February 15, 2011.

Commissioner Moore stated that she is looking forward to working with all the directors and commented on the budget challenges facing the county.

The Board concurred to schedule the next meeting in March.

ADJOURNMENT

4:00 p.m. – The meeting was adjourned.

>