

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
January 8, 2019**

PRESENT: Council Members: Robert Meffley, William Coutz, Al Miller, George Patchell and Jackie Gregory; James Massey, Council Manager; Terry Hale, Council Assistant; members of the press; and members of the public.

OPEN SESSION – Elk Room

9:00 A.M. –Council President Meffley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and determined a quorum.

NOTE: Audio and video recording and transcription of this meeting are available on the County website www.ccgov.org.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilwoman Gregory, seconded by Councilman Coutz, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of December 18, 2018, as presented. Motion was approved unanimously.

Broadband Update

County Executive McCarthy and David Black, Project Manager and GIS Coordinator, provided an overview of the county's proposed broadband expansion project. Mr. Black reviewed the history of the county's broadband efforts, which included the Council's Broadband Committee recommendations in 2014. He explained the critical importance of broadband access to county residents and businesses for education, home offices, and connecting residents to the outside world.

Mr. Black provided several myths associated with the administration's broadband proposal. He stated that a thorough study was conducted to identify the locations of existing broadband and the residents without broadband service. He explained that gaps in broadband services has been identified where broadband expansion is profitable in 106 of 2,500 unserved locations in the county.

The goal of the project is to provide broadband access to unserved businesses and residents using a "customer contribution model". He explained that the broadband provider will determine the cost to provide service to an area. The provider will also determine how much they can spend on the expansion. The difference between the total cost and what the provider can pay would be the cost to the customers.

In order to use special taxation districts, the State law must be amended to require 2/3rd of property owners and permit special taxation districts countywide. Currently, special taxation districts in Cecil County are limited to the growth corridor and requires 100% approval by property owners.

He explained that the administration proposes to use "special taxation districts". Citizens interested in obtaining broadband service must have at least 2/3rd of property owners' support to petition the

County Council to establish a special taxation district. If the Council approves the petition, the County will front fund the citizens' share of the project over multiple years, and add the additional charge to the taxpayer's property tax bill. After the debt is repaid by customers, the special taxation district ends.

He stated that special taxation districts have been used in other areas of Cecil County including Crystal Beach, Octoraro Lakes and Winding Brook. Mr. Black provided an example of a special taxation district funding for Sunset Pointe, which showed the customers' total cost of \$45,570, 16 lots, a total cost of \$2,848 per property owner, financed over 5 years at \$569 annually, or over 10 years at \$284 annually.

Questions and comments ensued. Councilman Patchell confirmed that the customers determine the number of years to be financed. Councilman Coutz confirmed that the costs vary because of the uniqueness of each area such as access points to existing fiber. Council President Meffley confirmed that the costs can vary because of distance to residence, use of existing poles, and other geographical issues. Councilwoman Gregory confirmed that the county's initial investment is limited to staff time.

County Executive McCarthy stated that this program is based entirely on volunteers. He stated that there are at least 2,000 residents who have no access to broadband in Cecil County. He stated that he believes that offering access to broadband will significantly benefit the County and residents.

Cecil County Public Schools Update

Dr. Jeff Lawson, School Superintendent, provided an update on Cecil County Public Schools. He stated that staff have submitted their budget requests to his office. He invited Council Members to attend the Board of Education meeting on January 30, 2019 at 6pm where he will be presenting his budget request to the board members. He stated that the board is scheduled to approve the budget request on February 20, 2019.

Dr. Lawson explained a new program, Conversations with the Superintendent, where the public can register to meet with him. He has held four programs where twelve individuals have talked about anything that they wish.

He stated that he is not optimistic about the Kirwan Commission's recommendation, which includes expanding 4 and 5 years old programs, raising teacher salaries, creating a career ladder and changing college and career readiness pathways. He also indicated that the cost estimate had climbed to \$7M.

Dr. Lawson is proposing to arrange for a combined lunch with school and officials once or twice a year. He suggested that the agenda could include items from both groups. He also proposed to arrange for individual Council Members to have lunch with individual board members and the Superintendent.

Dr. Lawson reported that bid solicitations for a new Chesapeake City Elementary School will be released in April 2019, based on a budget of \$4M from the State and \$6M from the County. He stated that there has been a significant reduction in behavior problems since the students moved to the new Gilpin Manor Elementary building.

He also reported on the number of school safety projects that are being bid this month. He commented on the difficulty of securing portables. He said that a possible solution to reducing the use of portable classrooms is school redistricting, which is very controversial. Council questions and comments ensued.

Review of Legislative Agenda

Al Wein, Director of Administration, stated that there will be a public hearing at tonight's session to invite public comments on the County Executive's proposal to request the state delegation to alter the existing Special Taxing District statute to support broadband expansion in Cecil County. He stated that the changes would permit the formation of special taxing districts in the entirety of the unincorporated portion of the County and require at least two-thirds of the property owners in the area affected to request the district.

Mr. Wein stated that the administration will request a joint letter of support from the Council and Executive to the delegation for the special taxation district revisions.

Eric Sennstrom, Director of Land Use and Development Services, provided an overview of the Council's role in rezoning cases. He explained that the Council must base its approval or disapproval on whether the evidence proves that there was a change in the character of the neighborhood since the last comprehensive rezoning or that there was a mistake in the zoning classification of the property during the last comprehensive rezoning. Steve O'Connor, Zoning Administrator, provided introductory remarks about Rezoning Case #2018-04 Dawn and Gregory Hartzell. There were no Council questions or comments.

A public hearing on Bill No. 2018-18 Budget Transfer – Wastewater Capital Budget – Replace Port Deposit Wastewater Treatment Plant Project, is scheduled at tonight's session. Al Wein, Director of Administration, provided comments on this legislation. Scott Flanigan, Public Works Director, provided a presentation on the details of the project. The county will solicit bids for this project as a design-build concept. Mr. Flanigan stated that the cost estimate is \$4M to \$7M. He stated that the plant will have a capacity of 65,000 GPD with the ability to expand to 130,000 GPD at the Enhanced Nutrient Removal treatment level. He stated that Port Deposit uses 31,000 GPD so that the unused capacity will be 34,000 GPD, which can be applied to future use for the Bainbridge site. He also provided the timeframe that shows completion by the fall of 2020.

A public hearing on Bill No. 2018-19 Budget Transfer – Roads and Bridges Capital Budget – Upgrade Nottingham Roads Facility Project, is scheduled at tonight's session. Al Wein, Director of Administration, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

A public hearing on Bill No. 2018-20 Supplemental Appropriation – Facilities Maintenance Capital Budget – Courthouse Holding Cell Renovation Project, is scheduled for tonight’s session. There were no Council questions or comments.

Resolution No. 01-2019 Appointment – Commission on Aging – Joyce Bowsbey, is scheduled for introduction at tonight’s session. There were no questions or comments.

Resolution No. 02-2019 Appointment – Property Tax Assessment Appeal Board – Robert R. Reed, is scheduled for introduction at tonight’s session. There were no questions or comments.

Al Wein, Director of Administration, provided introductory comments on Resolution No. 03-2019 Support – Grant Application – Clene Nanomedicine. Christopher Moyer, Economic Development Director, provided additional information about this legislation. Council questions and comments ensued.

Council Manager Report

Mr. Massey updated Council Members about upcoming meetings and events.

Council Member Comments

Councilman Patchell commented on a new Lidl store opening in Aberdeen and expressed hope that Lidl will soon open their distribution center and store in Elkton. He commented on Harford County Public Schools’ \$135M budget shortfall. He attended Cecil College Seahawks basketball games this weekend and encouraged others to attend.

Councilman Miller attended the MACo winter conference and commented on what he learned. He stated that he met many elected officials and attended a variety of programs. He plans to take classes to be certified in the Academy for Excellence.

Councilman Coutz attended Comptroller Franchot’s round table that focused on economic development successes.

Councilwoman Gregory wished everyone a Happy New Year. She attended the MACo winter conference and commented on the Kirwan Commission’s recommendations. She also attended the Upper Shore Regional Council meeting and commented on Cecil County’s grant in support of expansion of broadband. She also attended the Rural County Coalition meeting. The Councilwoman also stated that Councilman Coutz and she will be attending weekly MACo Legislative Committee sessions.

Council President Meffley also attended the MACo winter conference. He attended the Upper Shore Regional Council and commented on Cecil County receiving a grant to support broadband expansion. He attended the Clean Chesapeake Coalition and provided an update of the lawsuit against Exelon. He attended the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council and commented on a grants received to support education in the middle and high schools, and North Bay. He attended the

Voices of Hope meeting and commented on their service to those in recovery and the homeless. He stated that he participated in serving meals to the homeless on New Year's Eve.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Gregory made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Councilman Coutz. Council President Meffley adjourned the Council work session at 10:21 a.m.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, January 15, 2019 at 9 am.

Attest:


James Massey
Council Manager

Approved:


Robert Meffley,
Council President

