

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
June 25, 2019**

PRESENT: Council Members: Robert Meffley, William Coutz, Al Miller, George Patchell and Jackie Gregory; James Massey, Council Manager; Terry Hale, Council Assistant, John Downs, Council Attorney; 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: Due to technical difficulties only Audio of this meeting is available on the County website www.ccgov.org.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilman Coutz, seconded by Vice President Gregory, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of June 18, 2019, as presented. Motion was approved unanimously.

Opportunity Zones

Frank Dickson, Director, Strategic Business Initiatives, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, stated that Opportunity Zones (OZs) are defined as economically-distressed communities where new investments, under certain conditions, may be eligible for preferential tax treatment. Maryland has designated 149 census tracts as qualified Opportunity Zones for the next 10 years, through 2026. Opportunity Zones are more likely located in higher population areas. There are three Census Tracts in Cecil County that qualify include: Town of Elkton (0400), SE of Elkton (0505) and Charlestown and W of North East (0906).

Mr. Dickson explained that Governor Hogan created a Maryland Opportunity Zone Leadership Task Force that recently sponsored a summit in Havre de Grace. The Governor has proposed funding for Opportunity Zone grants of \$56M to support tax credits for new jobs, workforce training, and housing grants and loans. The Opportunity Zone program strives to incentivize investment in low income areas that have not received investment in years. He explained that this program allows investors to dedicate all or a portion of their capital gains to supporting the enterprises in distressed communities in exchange for a graduated series of federal tax incentives tied to long-term holdings. He illustrated the benefits to business and real estate.

Mr. Dickson explained that the state has created an information exchange to bring investors, fund managers, property developers, businesses and local stakeholders together. Currently, there are 99 projects on the exchange, which represent \$12B in investments. Council questions and comments ensued.

Andy Fish, Senior Director, Office of Finance Programs, Maryland Department of Commerce, described his departments' programs to support Opportunity Zones. He stated that businesses,

consultants and local officials can contact the Commerce Department to determine what programs are available and the benefits.

He described the prequalifying process and the various project support offered, which includes workforce development, incentive tax credit programs, financial needs, and program resources.

Mr. Dickson stated that there are particularly favorable incentives for bio-technology related projects.

Compensation Review Commission

Council President Meffley led discussion on establishing a Compensation Review Commission, which is required by the Charter of Cecil County every four years. He stated that this commission must review the compensation and allowances for the County Executive and Council Members in order to make a recommendation to the Council. He also stated that any increase or reduction in their compensation cannot occur during their current term. Any change in compensation for Council Member in Districts 1 and 5, and the County Executive, would occur after the November 2020 General Election. Any change in compensation for Council Member Districts 2, 3 and 4 would occur after the November 2022 General Election.

Council President Meffley suggested that each Council Member nominate two members for consideration on the Commission and submit to the Council Manager so that the Council can consider these nominees at the next Council work session on July 2, 2019.

Councilman Coutz asked if there are any qualifications for Commission members. Council Manager Massey stated that board members are generally residents of the county who have experience or knowledge in Cecil County Government; and that the board members should represent a cross section of the community. He also stated that Council Members may nominate any resident, regardless of their councilman district.

COUNCIL MANAGER REPORT

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

COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS

Councilman Patchell commented on the number of small businesses opening in Perryville, including Lee's Landing Tiki Bar and a microbrewery. He stated that small businesses are an economic driver for this community and for new jobs. Councilman Miller attended the farewell event for General Randy Taylor and Lucas, and expressed his hope that they will return to the area after retirement. He attended and spoke at the NAACP Symposium in Northeast and made a terrarium during the program.

Councilman Coutz thanked Councilman Patchell for his comments about the importance of small business to our nation's economy. He attended the farewell dinner for General Taylor and stated that he was looking forward to working with General Kilgo, his successor at Aberdeen Proving Ground.

Vice President Gregory attended the farewell dinner for General Taylor and wished him well as they go to his next assignment in Nebraska. She congratulated Union Hospital for their partnership with Christiana Hospital.

Council President Meffley attended the farewell dinner for General Taylor where they presented a goose decoy, created by a local Cecil County carver from the 1800s. He stated that he was pleased that Council Members made this presentation together as a team. He attended the change of command ceremony for General Kilgo at Aberdeen Proving Ground and commented that the event was impressive. He reminded the public of the 5K run/walk being held in Chesapeake City on June 29, 2019.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilman Coutz made a motion for adjournment, which was seconded by Vice President Gregory and approved by unanimous consent. Council President Meffley adjourned the work session at 10:00 a.m.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, July 2, 2019 at 9am in the Elk Room of the County Administration Building.

Approved:



Robert Meffley
Council President



James Massey
Council Manager