

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
March 16, 2021**

The County Council of Cecil County met in work session in an online virtual meeting because of the current health crisis and based on the Governor's orders to avoid public meetings. Council Members and presenters participated in this meeting; the public observed the meeting by connecting online at www.ccgov.org/council and selecting "livestream".

The following members of the Council were present:

Robert Meffley, Council President
Al Miller, Council Member
Jackie Gregory, Vice President
William H. Coutz, Council Member
George Patchell, Council Member

NOTE: The video and audio recording with transcription of this meeting is available on the County website at www.ccgov.org.

Call to Order

The meeting of the County Council of Cecil County of March 16, 2021 was called to order by Council President Meffley at 4:30 p.m.

Roll Call of Council Members

Council President Meffley asked for a roll call of attending Council Members. The Council Manager called the roll and recorded the following Council Members in attendance:
Roll Call Vote: Coutz-Present, Miller-Present, Patchell-Present, Gregory-Present, Meffley-Present.

Council President Meffley announced that there were five Council Members present, which constitute a quorum.

Suspension of Rules

Councilman Coutz made a motion to suspend the rules to allow Council Members who are connected to participate and vote in this work session, because of the current health crisis and orders by the Governor to avoid public meetings. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Roll Call Vote: Coutz-Y, Miller-Y, Patchell- Y, Gregory-Y, Meffley-Y
The motion was approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilman Coutz, seconded by Councilman Miller, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of March 9, 2021, as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

2020 Broadband Committee Report

Danny DeMarinis, chair of the Broadband Committee and David Black, GIS Coordinator, presented the committee's report to the Council. Mr. DeMarinis stated that members of the committee included: Melanie Mishra, Steve Overbay, Patrick Swoboda, Dave Warnick, Danny DeMarinis, and David Black. They provided the purpose and approach of the committee. They identified the needs for success as the importance of high speed internet, a willing broadband provider, and funding to make up the difference between the provider and customer.

Mr. Black defined their broadband baseline as: 80 unserved areas of county (6,000 residents in 23,000 homes); using 100% connection standard; consideration of special tax districts; getting funding from VLT (as used for Catswamp Road project). He stated that the committee conducted a SWOT analysis of the project. He stated that the committee identified that the county currently receives \$1M in cable franchise fees, two of the three franchises must be renewed in 2023, and the availability of the Governor's Office of Rural Broadband matching grants.

Mr. Black and Mr. DeMarinis reviewed the committee's seven recommendations:

- 1) Franchise fees received from the three cable franchise agreements should go into a fund dedicated to extending broadband service to unserved areas.
- 2) When cable franchise agreements require renewal, push for favorable changes to drop distances and line density extension provisions during renewal negotiations.
- 3) Treat broadband as critical infrastructure.
- 4) Ensure that new construction has adequate access to broadband.
- 5) Continue pursuing grant and low interest loan opportunities, especially those offered at the State level.
- 6) Take advantage of any underground construction projects (such as roads, water, sanitary sewer, electric, and gas) to install broadband infrastructure.
- 7) Broaden stakeholder participation to include other individuals, interest groups, nonprofit organizations, etc. impacted by broadband access issues.

Council questions and comments ensued.

State Legislation Review

Vice President Jackie Gregory, Council representative on the MACo Legislative Committee, reviewed actions on legislation that the Council had taken a position. She stated that SB 35 Procurement – Prevailing Wage- Applicability and HB 679 Police Reform and Accountability Act will likely pass, although the Council had opposed. She also addressed how the Kirwan Commission recommendations will be impacting counties. She attended a town hall virtual meeting with Senator Cardin about the American Rescue Plan and how the funds will be provided to counties and municipalities.

Review of Legislative Agenda

Bill No. 2021-03 Establishment – Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board, will be introduced at tonight’s session. Dan Schneckenburger, Director of Administration, provided comments. Councilman Coutz and Council President Meffley commented on their support of this legislation.

Resolution No. 21-2021 Appointment – Board of Library Trustees – Ravi Gupta, will be introduced at tonight’s session. Dan Schneckenburger, Director of Administration, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Resolution No. 22-2021 Appointment – Board of Parks and Recreation – Don Harmer, will be introduced at tonight’s session. Dan Schneckenburger, Director of Administration, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Resolution No. 20-2021 Establishment- Redistricting Commission- 2021, will be considered for final approval at tonight’s session. Council Manager Massey provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Under Old Business, Rezoning Case #2021-02 EJP, LLC, will be considered for approval at tonight’s session. There were no Council questions or comments.

Under New Business, Cecil County Public Schools budget amendment #84, in the amount of \$54,355 for February 2021, will be considered for approval at tonight’s session. There were no Council questions or comments.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Massey updated the Council on the COVID task force, Clean Chesapeake Coalition, and the Volunteer Office activities.

Council Member Items

Vice President Gregory announced that Cecil County Public Schools will begin opening four days per week on March 29. She attended the retirement for Mayor Robert McKnight and commended newly elected Mayor Kline. She expressed her condolences to the families of Michael Steele and Bill Manlove.

Councilman Miller expressed his condolences to the family of Bill Manlove and commented on Mr. Manlove’s support for a diesel program at the School of Technology. He attended the Farm Bureau meeting and commented about books being donated by the Farm Bureau to the Cecil County Public Schools about agriculture. He commented that Cecil County farmers donated 400 pounds of cheese to the homeless residents of the county.

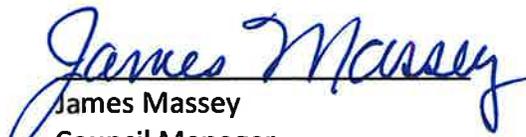
Councilman Patchell, Council Coutz and Council President Meffley will provide their comments at tonight’s legislative session.

Adjournment

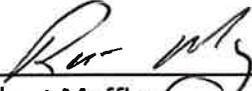
Council President Meffley asked for a motion to adjourn. Councilman Coutz made a motion for adjournment, which was seconded by Councilwoman Gregory. Motion was approved unanimously.

Council President Meffley adjourned the work session at 5:36 pm.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 4:30pm, which is planned as a virtual meeting because of the current health crisis. The session will be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage. Members of the public who do not have broadband access should contact the Council Office for instructions to be connected via telephone.


James Massey
Council Manager

Approved:



Robert Meffley
Council President