

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
February 8, 2022**

**OPEN SESSION – Elk Room
4:30 P.M.**

NOTE: The recording and transcription of this meeting are available on the County website at www.ccgov.org/council.

PRESENT: Council Members: Robert Meffley, William Coutz, Al Miller, Donna Culberson and Jackie Gregory; James Massey, Council Manager; Terry Hale, Council Assistant, Charles MacLeod, Council Attorney, members of the administration, and members of the public.

Call to Order

Council President Meffley called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm, and announced that there were five Council Members present, which constitute a quorum.

Council President Meffley led a moment of silence for Al Reasin, a community activist and a well respected patriot and citizen.

**CLOSED SESSION
January 25, 2022**

6:45 P.M.

Council Manager Massey stated for the record:

Pursuant to the Maryland Annotated Code, General Provisions § 3-305 (b)(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; Maryland Annotated Code, General Provisions § 3-305 (b)(3) to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto; and Maryland Annotated Code, General Provisions § 3-305 (b)(7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

Roll Call Vote: Coutz-Y, Miller-Y, Gregory-Y, Culberson-Y, Meffley-Y
The motion was approved unanimously by a vote of 5 to 0.

PRESENT: Council Members: President Meffley, Vice President Gregory, Councilman Coutz, Councilman Miller, Councilwoman Culberson; James Massey, Council Manager; Charles MacLeod, Council Attorney.

Mr. MacLeod provided legal advice about Rezoning Case #2021-06, 07, and 08: 109-111 Providence Road LLC.

Mr. MacLeod provided legal advice on Charter Amendments for consideration.

Council President Meffley led discussion of acquisition of real property under consideration.

On motion made by Councilman Coutz, seconded by Councilman Miller, the Council concluded the work session at 8:35 p.m.

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 February 1, 2022, as presented. The motion approved unanimously.

Sheriff's Office Update

Sheriff Scott Adams summarized the state of public safety in Cecil County. He stated that there is a national problem in recruiting and retaining law enforcement officers. He illustrated how the county's current salaries for law enforcement and correction officers are less than other counties and states, which has caused the Sheriff's Office to lose trained officers. He also stated that other counties offer better sign-up bonuses and have accepted lateral transfers without requiring agility and written testing. Sheriff Adams stated that the staff shortage has put more work and stress on his staff.

Council questions and comments ensued. Sheriff Adams stated that the county should increase the salaries of law enforcement and correction officers by 20%.

State Legislative Update

Vice President Gregory presented legislation reviewed by the MACo legislative committee. After her presentation, the Council agreed to send a letter of support for HB410/SB400, which proposes to increase highway user funds to counties.

The Council agreed to request the local election office to provide comments on the impact of HB329/SB352, which proposes to allow the tabulation of absentee ballots before Election Day.

The Council agreed to send a letter of support for SB337/HB144, which proposes to repeal the fuel tax rate based on CPI.

The Council agreed to send a letter of support for HB 633, which proposes to add four additional members to the Accounting and Implementation Board that will represent regions of the state.

The Council agreed to send a letter of support for HB644/SB900, which proposes to allow Cecil County commercial fishermen to use nets along the Susquehanna River.

Councilman Coutz asked the Council to review HB584, which proposes to reduce the video lottery proceeds for uncollectible counter checks.

Vice President Gregory stated that she is arranging for a representative from the Maryland Environmental Services to update the Council on pending legislation regarding Conowingo WIP.

Council Manager Massey provided an update from the Clean Chesapeake Coalition on the Governor's proposed \$31M in state funding for dredging and material reuse at Conowingo Dam and the development of the Conowingo WIP.

Council President Meffley discussed how Cecil County can continue to be involved with the Clean Chesapeake Coalition.

FY 2023 Proposed Council Department Budget

Council Manager Massey reviewed his proposal to increase the Council's FY 2023 budget because of inflation and current factors. The Council agreed by consensus to increase professional services to \$15,000, legal services to \$50,000, and advertising to \$25,000.

Charter Amendments

The Council reviewed the proposed charter amendments. Council Manager Massey read each amendment. Council Attorney MacLeod provided a legal opinion as requested.

In Section 209(c) Council vacancy, the amendment proposes to give the Council 30 days to appoint a new Council Member, after the central committee provides the list of three names. The Council agreed to support this amendment by consensus.

In Section 213 Council Attorney, the amendment proposes to add "Council Attorney" to the list of assistance. The Council agreed that this amendment is unnecessary so the amendment was rejected by consensus.

In Section 214 Redistricting, the amendment proposes to require the Council to appoint a Redistricting Commission within one month of receiving the official Census statistics and that current members of central committees are not eligible to be appointed to the Redistricting Commission. The Council agreed to support this amendment by consensus.

In Section 407 Vacancy in office of County Executive, the amendment proposes to give the Council 30 days to appoint a new Executive, after the central committee provides the list of three names. The Council requested that this amendment be reworded using the same verbiage as Section 209(c) amendment. The Council will review this amendment at the next session.

In Section 411 County Attorney, the amendment proposes to delete that County Attorney to be a legal advisor to the Council. The Council agreed that this amendment should be rejected so that the Council could ask for County Attorney legal advice if needed.

In Section 607 Ethics Commission, the amendment (option A) proposes that Ethics Commission be composed of three members appointed by Council and three members appointed by the Executive. The chair would be an independent legal counsel selected by Council and Administration. Option B proposed that the Ethics Commission be composed of three members, including chair, appointed by Executive and two members appointed by Council. Councilman Miller stated that either option should specify that the members' terms should be staggered. There was considerable debate on this amendment. The Council did not reach consensus, but the discussion suggested that there should be three members, including chair, appointed by Executive and two members appointed by Council, and the Executive and Council will select an independent legal counsel as a non-voting advisor. The Council will review this amendment at the next session.

In Section 507(a) Action on the Budget by the Council, the amendment proposes to allow Council to propose amendments to the Executive's proposed budget that could restore funding that had been reduced by the Executive, as long as the Council reduced funding at the equal amount. After discussion, the Council agreed to reject this amendment by a vote of 3 to 2. Council President Meffley and Councilman Coutz were opposed.

In Section 608 Board of Estimates, the amendment proposes to create a Board of Estimates that would include the County Executive, Council President, Council Member, one citizen appointed by Executive, one citizen appointed by Council, Purchasing Manager, Director of Administration and the Finance Director. The Board of Estimates will approve all purchases over \$50,000, and all consultant contracts over \$25,000, and all real estate purchases, sales and leases. Council President Meffley stated that the thresholds should be increased to \$100,000 and \$50,000. Vice President Gregory suggested that the thresholds should not be included in the charter amendment so that they could be approved in the Code for easier adjustments in the future. The Council agreed to support this amendment but asked for additional discussion at the next session.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Massey gave no oral report.

Council Member Items

Due to time, Council President Meffley, Councilman Miller and Councilwoman Culberson had no comments

Vice President Gregory attended the Freedom Hills Therapeutic Center's Anniversary Gala and remarked on the value of horse riding for children.

Adjournment

Councilman Miller made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilwoman Culberson. Council President Meffley adjourned the session at 7:07 pm.


James Massey
Council Manager

Approved:


Robert Meffley, Council President