

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

January 23, 2024

**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: Bob Meffley, Al Miller, Donna Culberson, Jackie Gregory; David Culver, Council Manager; Terry Hale, Council Assistant, members of the administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

President Gregory called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm and announced that there were four Council Members present which constitute a quorum. President Gregory also noted that the Work Session of January 9, 2024 was cancelled and January 16, 2024 was postponed because of inclement weather.

Revised Agenda

President Gregor asked for a motion to amend the agenda to move New Business to the first agenda item and to approve the revised agenda. On a motion by Councilman Miller, seconded by Councilwoman Culberson, Council moved to revise the agenda to move New Business to the first item and accept the revised agenda. The motion passed 4 to 0 with one absent.

New Business

1. Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #119

President Gregory noted that the Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #119 is for \$326,300 and was discussed at the last BOE Meeting. Denise Sopa from the Board of Education reviewed the requested Budget Amendment and noted this amendment included school activities fees, safe school grants, changes to restricted federal funds for Title I, II and IV programs. She also noted the community funds from donations and student activity funds for Leeds Elementary School. Councilman Miller inquired if these funds are from parents and boosters for such things as uniforms or school trips and Ms. Sopa noted that is the type of funds that will go into these line items. Ms. Sopa also reviewed the other categories, the description of the restricted and unrestricted funds and how the federal funds are allocated. She also noted the budget amendment does show the 3-year overall spending and how some categories will be higher, such as the mandate to fund the Susquehanna Work Force for student advisement and the increase in the cost of the North Bay Program.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilwoman Culberson, seconded by Vice President Meffley, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of January 2, 2024, as presented. The motion passed 4 to 0 with one absent.

Review of Legislative Agenda

a. Introduction of Bills

1. Bill 2024-01 - Establishment – Commission on Veterans

President Gregory noted that several counties have this type of Commission and noted how this commission functions in Harford County. This Commission would be made up of veteran organizations and would help veterans by providing information, outreach and assistance in all matters relating to the well-being of our veterans. She noted the goals for this commission is to help and honor veterans by advancing the general welfare of our veterans through advocacy and advisement for our veteran programs at the local, state and federal level. She noted these activities will help promote the health and wellness of our veterans as well as promote education, programs, how to get economic assistance to our veterans and spouses, help promote employment opportunities, encourage local businesses to hire and retain veterans and to educate businesses in workforce development initiatives intended to foster and develop gainful employment opportunities for all veterans of Cecil County. This will also provide a forum for the VFW and American Legions to review and advertise events for veterans and spouses. Councilman Miller inquired if they were going to be compensated and noted the bill allows for this commission to be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses associated with their duties. President Gregory noted that they would not be compensated but would be entitled for reimbursement and that this is the same language and procedure for other commissions. County Attorney Lawrence Scott noted the funding is part of the budget and all requests are reviewed prior to payments. Councilman Miller also inquired as to expenses for the Police Accountability Board and Attorney Scott noted he will ask the PAB to give Council a presentation.

2. Bill 2024-02 - Amendment – Zoning Ordinance – Critical Area – Definitions, and Official Critical Area Maps

Director of Land Use Stephen O'Connor noted that this would update the Zoning Ordinance to match the new Maryland Critical Area Commission maps. He noted that the maps would become the official maps for Cecil County for the Critical Areas. He noted this was part of the Critical Area legislation that was passed by the Council last year and the Critical Area Commission has now officially adopted these maps. He also noted the Planning Board recommended approval of this change.

3. Bill 2024-03 - Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation – Mary Ann Thompson and James K. MacDonald, and Meulenberg Enterprises, LLC

Director of Land Use Stephen O'Connor noted that these two farms located at 360 Joseph Biggs Highway and 2159 Principio Road that are requesting to sell the development rights to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) program. As part of this easement sale, the properties must have a public hearing and be part of an agricultural district. Director O'Connor noted that these two farms are first time participants in the program and this bill will serve as the needed public hearing for the application. Councilman Miller inquired if this is to just put a bid in on the district with MALPF or for the actual purchase of the easement and Director O'Conner noted it is to establish the district so the application for easement purchase may be considered by MALPF.

b. Introduction of Resolutions

1. Resolution 06-2024 - Budget Amendment - Fund Balance - Department of Emergency Services – Purchase of Used Ambulance

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this resolution would allow Emergency Services to purchase a used ambulance from the Chesapeake City Fire Company for \$25,000. The ambulance is six years old and has approximately 54,000 miles. This ambulance would be put into service at the Colora Station to serve western Cecil County. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if this was a surplus vehicle and Director Overbay noted that it is because Chesapeake City is in the process of purchasing a new ambulance. Councilman Miller inquired on the call volume to the Great Wolf Lodge and Director of Emergency Services Wayne Tome noted it is approximately one call per day and a 60/40 split on transport versus denied services for the call. Vice President Meffley inquired if the purchase of new ambulances was based on age, number of calls or milage and Director Tome noted it is currently based on the age of the vehicle and that protocol was established in 2006.

2. Resolution 07-2024 - Appointment—Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board – Nathan Stewart, Melissa Kinsler, and Robert Muller

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this board consists of 15 members and the three on this resolution are replacing members who are no longer able to serve. Councilman Miller noted one appointee lives in Bel Air and Director Overbay and Director Tome noted that person is a county employee and the position he holds within Emergency Services is what is being appointed to the board.

3. Resolution 08-2024- Tax Credit - Historic Property – Schoolhouse known as Town Point School

Director of Land Use Stephen O'Connor noted that this property owner is applying for the tax credit for this historical property at 19 Port Herman Road in Chesapeake City. He noted that this house is part of the historic district and that the owner has done extensive repairs to the façade of the house which qualifies them for this credit.

c. Consideration of Resolution

1. Resolution 01-2024 - Budget Amendment - Fund Balance - Department of Emergency Services

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that that these funds were in the FY23 Budget but because of supply chain issues, the equipment was not available. He noted in addition, along with the equipment being available, grant funding in the amount of \$29,490 is also available to offset the cost of \$84,866.

2. Resolution 02-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds - Office of Economic Development – MARBIDCO - Agriculture Microgrant Program

Director of Administration Steven Overbay thanked MARBIDCO and the farmers for participating in this program.

3. Resolution 03-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Office of Economic Development – Upper Shore Regional Council – Agricultural Microgrant Program

Director of Administration Steven Overbay again thanked Upper Shore Regional Council and the farmers for participating in this program.

4. Resolution 04-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Office of Economic Development –Marketing Costs

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this grant will help Cecil County promote our historical and cultural sites for tourism.

5. Resolution 05-2024 – Reappointment– Weed Control Advisory Board

Director of Administration Steven Overbay thanked the volunteers for serving on this board.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Culver noted the updated Council Manager report is in the packet. He also noted Council will be having a Work Session on January 30, 2024, which is a fifth Tuesday, to make up for the session of January 9, 2024 which was postponed because of inclement weather.

Council Member Items

Councilmembers deferred comments to the Legislative Session of January 23, 2024.

RECESS

President Gregory announced that the Council will go into recess until 6:00 PM and would then reconvene for the State of the Council and State of the County addresses.

Vice President Meffley made a motion to recess, which was seconded by Councilwoman Culberson. Council President Gregory recessed the work session at 5:18 pm. The motion passed 4 to 0 with one absent.

RECONVENE

Vice President Meffley made a motion to reconvene the session, which was seconded by Councilwoman Culberson. Council President Gregory reconvened the work session at 6:00 pm. The motion passed 4 to 0 with one absent.

STATE OF THE COUNCIL

President Jackie Gregory gave the State of the Council address. She introduced each Councilmember and noted the boards and commissions that they serve as well as the district boundaries. She noted that the Council interfaces with many local and statewide committees and organizations and serves many other roles in the community and that community is key to

Council's success. She noted the weekly public meetings where Council can meet with local organizations, listen to constituent concerns, and vote on legislation that impacts Cecil County. She noted Council attends numerous events supporting local organizations or volunteering with our local nonprofits. She noted during the past year Council met with our community partners, such as Christiana Care/Union Hospital, the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, the Cecil County Public Library, the Prevention and Overdose Response Team, the Fireman's Association, Voices of Hope, and the Health Department, among many others and that these meetings assist us in partnering with our community and enable the public to learn important information about current events in Cecil County.

She noted Council's role in confirming appointments to local committees and that over the past year, the Council confirmed over 80 citizens to serve on local boards that have a tremendous impact in shaping the direction of our community. She also noted the role of the Council in approving the county budget and that Council provides oversight. She also noted that in the last three years, Council has unanimously supported tax cuts, including both property tax and income tax cuts and these cuts are crucial to our constituents, many of whom are raising families or living on fixed incomes while struggling with the massive inflation over the past three years. She also noted the historic \$700-\$1500 property tax rebate which provided financial relief to our citizens in this time of economic uncertainty.

She noted Council also provides oversight of the budget throughout the year and last year Council approved additional local funding to CCPS for the increased costs of the Rising Sun Elementary and the Conowingo Elementary Safe and Secure entrances ensuring these projects would be completed. She noted Council approves various grants throughout the year that assisted the victims of domestic violence, victims of human trafficking, provided care to senior citizens, public safety grants for law enforcement, emergency services, and our firefighters, grant funds for our farmers, for tourism, and additional funding for our Department of Parks and Recreation. Council also partnered with Upper Shore Regional Council to gain additional funding to assist with the completion of the Belvidere Road improvements which are needed for the new interchange, as well as funding for the Paris Foundation to build a new community center in Hollingsworth Manor and bathrooms to be installed at the Cecil County Farm Museum. She noted the Council also unanimously approved much-needed increases in the salaries of our public safety professionals including law enforcement and detention officers as well as funding for a tactical vehicle to assist with law enforcement operations. She also noted she was pleased to be sponsor of Bill 2024-01 which will create a Veterans Commission to assist our brave veterans in Cecil County with services and assistance.

President Gregory noted the challenges we face in Cecil County cannot be solved by the government alone and the county can provide the support and tools necessary to those in our community who are serving every day. She noted the success of these community partnerships in fighting opioid use and addiction and in 2023 Cecil County continued the trajectory of declining overdoses, particularly fatal ones which decreased by 34% between 2022 and 2023. These impacts are a result of strong community partnerships and organizations working every day towards the same goal.

She noted that the Council is also active in lobbying for our constituents at the state level between January and April when the General Assembly is in session and Council works with the Executive to take positions on bills by submitting letters of support or opposition, or by going to Annapolis to

testify on bills. This past session, Council took positions on bills to support our farmers, first responders, the 2nd amendment rights of our constituents, and to keep school curriculum under local control.

She also noted the many new businesses and non-profits to the county including the Elkton Music Hall, the Grocery Outlet, Blessings Food Pantry and Great Wolf Lodge. Concerted Care recently opened filling a great need for additional mental health and addiction services locally. She also noted our partnership with other Eastern Shore counties to keep the Whitsitt Center's doors open so they could continue to provide addiction and counseling services to our residents. She also noted that in October, Cecil County hosted its 3rd and most successful 5 Star event which brought people from all over the world into Cecil County. In addition, 2023 saw the installation of our final two high school turf fields at Rising Sun and Elkton High Schools.

President Gregory noted that Cecil's 350th anniversary is this year and Council will build on our successes by continuing to implement prudent fiscal and tax policies, continuing to preserve our vital resources such as agriculture and waterways, and continuing to welcome new quality businesses and job opportunities to our county. She noted the soon-to-be-complete dredging of the North East River and looks forward to another successful Five-Star event. Finally, she noted Council is honored to continue to serve our citizens throughout 2024.

STATE OF THE COUNTY

County Executive Danielle Hornberger thanked Council for the opportunity to speak. She noted as Cecil County prepares to celebrate its 350th year, it is her great honor and privilege to serve Cecil County. She noted 2023 gave us much to be thankful for as we continued to set the standard for how conservative government can work within the great State of Maryland. She also noted that the future years indicate hard financial times in Maryland at the recent Maryland Association of Counties Conference the titled this time as the "Eye of the Storm." She noted that Cecil County is not immune to the effects of a downturn or state tax increases, but Cecil County is in the best position to meet whatever challenges may come. She noted the Governor is forecasting massive cuts to state budgets, leading many to believe that tax hikes are inevitable but in Cecil County we are continuing to lower taxes and invest in our local infrastructure at record levels. She noted the expensive Blueprint mandate for public education and the creation of the ten million dollar committed fund to ensure that we continue to fully fund our schools without being one of the many counties that will experience historic tax increases to cover the expenses.

Executive Hornberger thanked numerous county employees for the service they provide and how they have helped lower costs to the County. She offered her sincerest thanks to the more than 700 hundred county employees for their support and dedication. She noted that while programs and budget figures are certainly significant indicators of our success, our most valuable asset has, and will always be, our people. She also recognized the countless citizens who volunteer for our County boards and commissions, and who selflessly give their time and energy to make our community exceptional. She also noted her gratitude to the other partners in government including the Sheriff, State's Attorney, Delegates and Senators, the Mayor, Council and Commissioners of our 8 municipalities and County Council.

Executive Hornberger noted that 2024 marks Cecil County's 350th year and that the quality of life in Cecil County is what people love most about our community. She noted that her administration

is focused on how to maintain and even improve the quality of life in Cecil and noted that it comes down to three things: Affordability, Safety and Opportunity. She noted that on affordability she remains committed to cutting taxes and waste in government. For safety she noted the tremendous investments to address nearly every aspect of public safety within our community and the increases in salary for our first line responders and public safety officials. She noted the partnership with the State's Attorney Office. She also noted the additional funding for the volunteer fire companies, new paramedic stations and the Frank W. Muller Emergency Service Training Center. For opportunity she noted the creation of employment opportunities by building a robust and diverse economy that will provide generations of Cecil Countians with lucrative career prospects and high-paying, family-sustaining jobs. She noted jobs in areas like science and technology, as evidenced by the 250 new rocket scientist positions at Northrop Grumman and by innovative local companies like Fluoron in Elkton, which is making state-of-the-art products for Fortune 500 companies like Space-X. She noted providing resources to achieve academic success and pursue exciting opportunities is critical and the investments made in new school construction, libraries, Cecil College and workforce development programs to ensure continuing education. She also noted the new Marine Service Technician program at Cecil College. She also noted development needs to be responsible and the new interchange at Belvidere Road will promote economic development and remove traffic from local roads. She also noted that broad band internet service covers 99% of Cecil County. Finally, she noted the fiscal policy that has been implement allowed Cecil County to achieve it highest bond rating ever under Charter government.

Executive Hornberger concluded by noting that inflation is hitting every family in Cecil County and that she is committed to conservative budgeting and keeping Cecil County a place that is affordable, a place that is safe, and a place that has limitless opportunities for the present and future generations to come.

President Gregory announced that no further items are on the January 23, 2024 Work Session agenda.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Culberson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Vice President Meffley. Council President Gregory adjourned the work session at 6:42 pm.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, January 30, 2024, at 4:30 pm in the Elk Room of the County Administration Building. The session will also be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage at www.ccgov.org/council.

Approved:


Jackie Gregory, Council President



David M. Culver
Council Manager