MINUTES

The Mayor and City Council met in regular session on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 6:00 P.M. in the Corbin Studio and Gallery.

PRESENT

Darlene Taylor, Mayor
Ivan Lankford, Council Vice President
Eric Banks, Councilman
Charlotte Scott, Councilwoman
Casey Goldsborough, Councilman
LaVerne Johnson, Councilwoman
Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk Treasurer
Andrew Illuminati, City Solicitor

Also in attendance; Valerie Swift, Secretary; Rick Taylor, Chief of Police; John Wunder, Kyle Tyler, Reverend Bob Daniels, and wife Janice, Richard Crumbacker, Heather Ross, and several members of Rev. Daniels family and congregation.

INVOCATION, LORD'S PRAYER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order, opening with the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATION OF PROCLAMATION TO REV. BOB DANIELS – CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE WESLYAN CHURCH – Councilwoman Johnson

Rev. Daniels commented that he loves the community and the people and has made many friends. Mayor Taylor advised that it is an honor to have Rev. Daniels in the community and she is glad to have a momentous occasion such as this to celebrate.

EDUCATION HIGHWAY – AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY – KARMIN-TIA GREER & ELLEN GOLDICH, via zoom

Ms. Greer reviewed the power point concerning the program which provides free internet service for schools and families. She advised that this is a pro-bono service and to qualify you would already be participating in many subsidy programs. Ms. Goldich advised that there are many barriers to enrollment such as trust of programs and the application process being too difficult.

Councilwoman Johnson thanked Ms. Greer and Ms. Goldich for their presentation. Ms. Goldich advised that she would be contacting internet companies. She noted that the contact information is getacp.org.

Mayor Taylor noted that this is a great program. She inquired who sponsors the program. Ms. Goldich advised that it is sponsored by the FCC.

Mayor Taylor inquired if you would qualify for the program if you are already connected to internet. Ms. Goldich advised that you would qualify but may have to change your plan or upgrade.

Councilwoman Johnson noted that Somerset Intermediate is not on the list of schools, but has students from Crisfield in attendance. Ms. Greer advised that they would also qualify.

During further discussion, Councilman Banks inquired about the length of the program. Ms. Goldich advised that it is covered through the end of 2024, with a call for renewal.

Council Vice President Lankford inquired if churches are eligible. Ms. Goldich advised that it is only for individual households.

Councilwoman Johnson noted that she does not currently have internet tethered to her computer and is receiving poor service. She encouraged people to check this service out.

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL FOR THE 10% MATCH FOR THE CITY DOCK EARMARK – Jennifer Merritt, Grant Writer

Mrs. Merritt reviewed power point slides. She noted that there is fierce competition for Earmark funding, and this is a $2.5M grant request with a $250K match required from the City of Crisfield. She noted that the timeline would be released in August and if funded, we would get it in early 2024. Mrs. Merritt advised that she is asking the City for approval of $250k.

Mayor Taylor noted that Senators Cardin and Vanhollen assisted with this Earmark. Mrs. Merritt advised that the application was through FEMA. Mayor Taylor noted that this type of work must be resiliency related.

Mrs. Morgan noted that the award is in the 24-25 Budget Year; if a match is required before the grant, we would get a short-term loan.

Councilwoman Scott commented that this is a much-needed repair for a location that is so important. She urged everyone to go to the City's link to support repairs.

At this time, Councilwoman Scott made a motion to approve the 10% matching fund required for the Earmark. Motion seconded by Councilman Banks and carried unanimously 5-0.

Councilman Goldsborough inquired if we can use ARF rather than a loan. Mayor Taylor noted that this is worth discussion another time.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS –

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer, presented her quarterly report, highlighting the first six months of the fiscal year. She commented that the police department is on target, water and sewer is struggling.

Mayor Taylor noted that we have two licensed operators at this time. Mrs. Morgan noted that this would save the City some money. Councilwoman Scott inquired what percentage of the budget is water and sewer. Mrs. Morgan advised that it is $1M total.

Chief Rick Taylor presented his quarterly report, highlighting its contents.

John Wunder, Director of Public Works, Utilities and Airport Manager, reviewed his quarterly report. He also commented about the generator issue in December, noting that there is now a schedule for checking it. Mayor Taylor reiterated that employees have a procedure in place.

Mr. Wunder also reviewed information concerning non-read water meters.

Councilwoman Scott inquired about the ditch cleaning progress. Mr. Wunder advised that there are a couple of projects going on now; Alfred Bradford is digging a retention pond at the end of Line Drive and ditching at the end of Gandy Lane.

Mayor Taylor made reference to the stormwater on Maryland Avenue. Mr. Wunder advised that new pipes, pump, and grates have been installed.

Kyle Tyler, Building Inspector, reviewed his quarterly report highlighting its contents.

Mayor Taylor referred to any plan for blighted buildings. Mr. Illuminati advised that he had renewed the Code and it is vague. Mr. Tyler advised that he found 3 houses that fit code requirements for demolition, but the issue is with finding contacts for them, and we would have to go to court.

Mayor Taylor commented that if the property owner does not respond, we then tear it down.

Mr. Illuminati noted that we need the money to demolish and need property with a clear violation for court. He also noted that we can order abatement if it is not done by the property owner. The City can tear the building down and add the fee to the taxes.

Councilman Goldsborough commented that property owners never reclaim their properties.

Councilman Banks suggested sending a letter to the property owner to see what their plans are.

Jennifer Merritt, Grant Writer/Administrator, reviewed her quarterly report. Mayor Taylor noted that there are plans for Mrs. Merritt to be a Department Head.

Mrs. Merritt also introduced the new Circuit Rider, Heather Ross.

Mayor Taylor reviewed Mr. Jason Loar's report in his absence.

Councilwoman Scott inquired about long it would be before we phased DB & F from the Treatment Plant. Mayor Taylor advised that she had no idea yet.

<u>VOTE TO APPROVE THE TOP 10 PRIORITY PROJECTS ESTABLISHED AT THE LAST MEETING</u>

Mayor Taylor reviewed the top 10 priority project list and requested a vote for approval.

Approval so moved by Councilman Banks, seconded by Councilwoman Johnson and carried unanimously, 5-0.

VOTE TO APPROVE THE DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT – Mayor Taylor

Mayor Taylor advised that she needs a vote from the Council for this to start the process.

Approval so moved by Councilman Banks, seconded by Councilwoman Scott and carried unanimously, 5-0.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY AGREEMENT – Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Mrs. Morgan advised that APPI has shopped electric rates for the City of Crisfield and we have been with them for 10 years. She advised that they need authority from the City Council to accept the bid from the Company that they have provided for the Mayor to sign the contract, as there is a quick turnaround time.

Approval so moved by Councilwoman Johnson, for Mayor Taylor to sign the contract seconded by Councilwoman Scott and carried unanimously, 5-0.

PUBLIC UNPUT

George Friedley made reference to a blockage in the ditch behind his property. He also noted that the pole light is out at 29 W. Ches. Avenue. Also, at 39 W. Ches. Avenue, the manhole cover is off. He also commented that in reference to the façade grant, selection should be made in order of need, not submission. He also commented that the flood gates need a filter system.

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REPORT

Councilwoman Scott three companies had responded to the Ferry RFP, and they are being vetted.

Councilwoman Johnson advised that she would provide Council with zoom links for the Education Highway training.

Councilman Banks thanked all the Department Heads, commending them on the excellent jobs that they do. He commented that we are moving in the right direction.

Councilman Goldsborough thanked all of the City employees, commenting that this was a long report, but significant. He also congratulated Rev. Daniels on his 50 years of service.

Council Vice President Lankford thanked the Department Heads, noting that we are moving forward.

With no further discussion, Councilwoman Johnson made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Goldsborough, and carried unanimously, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Prepared by Valerie Swift, Secretary