MINUTES

ON WEDNESDAY JULY 15, 2020, AT 5:00 P.M., THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CRISFIELD HELD A WORK SESSION IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE STRATTON-CORBIN LIBRARY, LOCATED AT 4 EAST MAIN STREET, CRISFIELD, MARYLAND 21817. THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORK SESSION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

1. DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF THE DOWNTOWN WATERFRONT.

DUE TO COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS, THE PUBLIC WAS NOT PERMITTED TO ATTEND THE WORK SESSION IN-PERSON. VIDEO OF THIS WORK SESSION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WAS SIMULCAST ON THE CITY OF CRISFIELD'S FACEBOOK PAGE AND WAS AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC TO VIEW ON THE CITY OF CRISFIELD'S FACEBOOK PAGE. THE PUBLIC WAS INVITED TO VIEW THE VIDEO OF THE WORK SESSION.

PRESENT

Barry Dize, Mayor
Eric Banks, Council Vice President
Nelson Sheppard, Councilman
Jimmy Ford, Councilman
Mike Atkins, Councilman
Charlotte Scott, Councilwoman
Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer
Michael Sullivan, City Solicitor

Also in attendance; Valerie Swift, Secretary: Kristie Eberly, Grants Writer/Administrator; LaFabian Marshall, Circuit Rider; Richard Crumbacker, County Times.

Mayor Dize called the work session to order. Council Vice President Banks opened with the word of prayer.

Council Vice President Banks noted that he had requested this work session for the discussion of the development of the downtown waterfront. He noted that GCAC had previously worked on downtown development with Mr. Peck Miller, Architect/Developer. He advised that the goal is to create a great waterfront development and to come together as a body to implement this plan.

Council Vice President Banks presented a handout outlining the steps to creating a great waterfront and highlighted and reviewed the eight steps. Council Vice President Banks noted that he would like to have Mr. Miller come in to do a presentation, noting that we need to start now to get something done.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL INPUT

Councilwoman Scott stated that she wants the Hotel/Conference Center back on the table and noted that we must find some common ground to unite around. She noted that studies show that our waterfront is our number one asset, but she feels that people are our number one asset and the water front is another big asset. We must work together for the City, as this is a new day and time.

Councilwoman Scott noted that she would also like to look at data showing owner occupied and rental occupied properties. She added that she is hopeful and flexible.

Councilman Sheppard commented that he feels a hotel conference center and town green is a good idea that we can't afford to pass up.

Councilman Atkins commented that he appreciates the presentation but inquired as to what GCAC and Mr. Peck Miller want from the Mayor and City Council.

Councilman Sheppard advised that they want the consensus from the Council that the letter be submitted to Mr. Kelso of the Maryland Stadium Authority, to open up the gold standard of review for the project. Councilman Atkins commented that everyone wants improvements and great ideas and success, but what does GCAC specifically want.

Council Vice President Banks stated that the hotel conference center is the catalyst to rebuild the City of Crisfield. It's not about GCAC but about elected officials finding a way to rebuild the City and he feels that the construction of the hotel conference center is a favorable development and the developer may want tax abatements.

Councilman Atkins commented that with any development, two parties come together to form a mutual agreement, so what are we being asked to agree to?

Councilwoman Scott commented that this meeting was to see what we are all thinking as far as waterfront development. She noted that she is no longer on the GCAC board. She stated that we must have a plan to break even, and abatements are traditional and we have to create a catalyst in distressed areas, as private individuals are not going to put down large sums of money. She made reference to abatements and commented that there would have been no taxes anyway without this development. Councilwoman Scott advised that we need to take the step to send the letter to Mr. Kelso of the Maryland Stadium Authority.

Mayor Dize inquired if tonight's meeting is to get the consensus for the steps. Council Vice President Banks advised that it was. Mayor Dize noted that nobody here is against the hotel conference center, but we need to give consideration to financing. Mayor Dize inquired if the next step would to meet with Peck Miller. Council Vice President Banks advised that this was correct.

Mayor Dize commented that he doesn't feel that anyone here is against development, but we have a lot of questions and need to make sure it doesn't cost the City a ton of money; what is the next work session – having Mr. Miller come back in?

Councilman Atkins commented that this project has been in the works for a while and should be moved along further if there is an actionable plan. He noted that the City has already completed a number of projects, and he feels that someone knows more about what they are asking for than he does. He commented that if someone like Peck Miller came in with the funding for this project, we would start the negotiations tonight. Councilman Atkins asked if Mr. Miller has investors lined up for this project. Council VP Banks advised he certainly hopes so, Councilwoman Scott advised he has private investors for the hotel, Councilman Sheppard advised he has investors, some from Ocean City. Councilman Atkins asked why, after so much time, we don't know what these investors are asking for, Councilman Shepard advised that would need to be answered by Peck Miller.

Council Vice President Banks noted that he wanted to bring Mr. Miller back in tonight, but with Council consensus, called a work session with him for Monday night, but there is more than a hotel conference center; the development would include stores and a park, but he wants to get everything on the table to build consensus to get to the next step.

Councilman Atkins inquired if Mr. Miller has investors. Councilman Sheppard advised that he has investors and some are from Ocean City. Councilman Atkins inquired if they are looking for special considerations like tax abatements, etc. Councilman Sheppard advised that Mr. Miller would have to address this.

Council Vice President Banks noted that he supports the Mayor and the consensus concerning the improvement of infrastructure through Secretary Holt helping the City over the next 5-6 years. Mayor Dize added that Secretary Holt said a hotel conference center was a "want" not a "need" and infrastructure is a need. He also noted plans for drainage improvement, mosquito ditching, etc. and added that he would like to eventually see waterfront development.

Councilwoman Scott commented that she hopes we find a way to get this done. She noted that the City Hall renovation was done with determination. She advised that all are concerned about the cost and we can't come to a big investor to ask for money, but we can do abatements and roll up our sleeves.

Councilman Ford made reference to the properties downtown that the owners won't sell. Councilwoman Scott commented that we would have to work around them. Councilman Ford inquired where the hotel conference center would be located. Councilwoman Scott advised that the property has to be purchased, but there are plans from a year ago.

Mayor Dize commented that we all want to work together and requested that people not mistake the questions being asked as being against the project. He advised that it the Mayor and Council's job to ask questions; we need common goals and answers to these questions.

Council Vice President Banks the City needs the catalyst, which is the hotel conference center. Mayor Dize inquired about scheduling a work session with Peck Miller. Council Vice President Banks advised that he would like to hold it at 5:00 p.m. on July 20th.

Councilman Sheppard noted that some towns have one meeting of the mayor and council and one work session per month.

After further discussion, it was concurred that the meeting with Peck Miller would be held on Monday, July 20th at 6:00 p.m.

During further discussion, it was determined that after this round of meetings in July, the first meeting in the month would be for work sessions only, the second meeting in the month would be the regular meeting.

Council Vice President Banks also noted that County Commissioners Randy Laird and Charles Laird as well as Senator Mary Beth Carroza would be invited to the work session on Monday, July20th at 6:00 p.m.

Councilwoman Scott commented that we must respect each other and there are no "dumb" questions. We have to understand the process to get anywhere.

There being no further business for discussion, Councilman Sheppard made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting. Motion seconded by Council Vice President Banks and carried unanimously 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Prepared by Valerie Swift, Secretary