

MINUTES

The Regular Work Session of the Mayor and City Council was held on Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. in the meeting room at the Corbin Gallery and Studio.

PRESENT

Mayor Barry Dize, via Zoom
Eric Banks, Council Vice President
Jimmy Ford, Councilman
Mike Atkins, Councilman
Charlotte Scott, Councilwoman
Casey Goldsborough, Councilman
Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer
Mac Baldwin, City Solicitor

Also in attendance; Chief David Dalfonso; Darlene Taylor; Nelson Sheppard; Elizabeth Van Dolah, Jackie Specht; Margo Green-Gale; Cathy Landon; Donn Bibb; Tracey Gordy; Mark Konapelsky; Richard Crumbacker; Jason Loar, via Zoom; and Valerie Swift, Secretary.

Presentation – Liz Van Dolah, NOAA

Ms. Liz Van Dolah, NOAA, presented the Mayor and Council with information regarding the Nature Conservancy Project. She advised that the project will assist with flooding issues in the City. She noted that this is a 2 year project funded by NOAA to provide the City with strategies through the Resilient Coast Program which addresses community resilience in the face of flooding. She advised that the funding through NOAA will link to projects now in place. She noted that members of the community had been interviewed concerning flooding issues in Crisfield.

Councilwoman Scott inquired how this project came to be. Councilman Atkins commented that we have been offered this project and we need to grab it. He advised that he wasn't aware of the Nature Conservancy Program. Councilwoman Scott inquired how we got selected. Ms. Specht advised that this is the first time the have had this project.

Councilwoman Scott advised that she welcomes the help and likes the tone and approach of the presentation, commending them on a great presentation.

Ms. Van Dolah advised that they want to be helpful partners here.

Council Vice President Banks advised that he had met and was interviewed by Ms. Van Dolah.

Mayor Dize noted that he and Ms. Van Dolah had spoken a while back.

Councilman Goldsborough advised that he appreciates being included in the interview process as well. He inquired if the local interviews were helpful. Ms. Van Dolah advised that the interviews were fruitful and she had gotten a pretty good understanding of the problems here.

Mayor Dize advised Councilman Goldsborough that he had talked to Ms. Van Dolah for hours and made her aware of all of our ditches.

Councilwoman Scott inquired how much money was available. Ms. Specht advised that it was \$200K. Ms. Tracey Gordy, MDOP, advised that they are in support of the project and her office had worked with them on how to differentiate it from the Drainage Study by identifying stakeholders.

Mr. Don Bibb, Director of the Crisfield Housing Authority presented the Mayor and City Council with an update regarding activity at the housing authority. He noted that he had sent out notices to the Mayor and Council for the dedication of 134 Somers Cove to be used as the new Police Substation.

Mr. Bibb noted that repairs are being made in the units on the half circle. He also noted that an RFP had gone out for renovation of the Community Center, including raising the concrete slab with foam injections and inside renovation. He also noted that an RFP had gone out for the basketball court with the Housing Authority funding a portion of that project. He also noted a new security camera contract.

Councilwoman Scott inquired about new construction or movement of the 50 units up front.

Mr. Bibb advised that there is an RFQ out for developing partners. Councilwoman Scott inquired if there will be any developments in City limits. Mr. Bibb advised that there no plans as of yet; but they are still looking and it won't be public housing rental units but home owners, but that is two to three years out. Councilwoman Scott commented that she would like to have seen a couple of projects underway or wait until they can be located in city limits. Mr. Bibb advised that they must also look at economic opportunities, job placement, etc. Councilwoman Scott commented that she feels there are ways that this can be done here, so people can stay here. Mr. Bibb advised that the Housing Authority Commission members make the decisions and there are concerns with flooding and sea level rise.

Ms. Gordy advised that MDOP is working on revolving home funds with Mr. Bibb. She advised that there are lots but no seed money. For areas in the flood zone, there are no funding sources.

Councilwoman Scott noted that during a meeting in 2020 with Mr. Bibb, she didn't dream that the plan was to relocate the Housing Authority residents to outside of the City, and she did not hear that said in the meeting, so she is baffled.

Council Vice President Banks commented that a follow-up meeting, Mr. Bibb advised that they were denied grant money. Mr. Bibb advised that an application for five houses in the County was denied.

Council Vice President commented that it is good to transition the residents into homeowners, but he understands the need for jobs.

Mayor Dize inquired of Mr. Bibb of the percentage local residents living in the Housing Authority versus the number of “come here’s” living there. Mr. Bibb advised that they are mostly long term residents. Mayor Dize noted that there would be 280 left of 330 if the 50 were relocated. He inquired how many are left vacant. Mr. Bibb advised that he would have to get a figure. He commented that he has to look at reality right now, commenting that they need something to renovate or add on to, as new construction costs have gone through the roof.

Councilman Atkins inquired what the City could do to help. Mr. Bibb advised that the City could prepare a letter of support for the next grant application. He also noted that they have 3 properties on East Pear Street. Mayor Dize advised that they had looked at 5 properties a few years ago and inquired of their status. Mr. Bibb advised that the County had agreed to sell the property, but Community Legacy was not funded. Mayor Dize inquired of Mr. Sheppard if the can be duplex units. Mr. Sheppard advised that they could, or another story could be added on. Ms. Gordy advised that with the Pear Street lots, we could partner with Salisbury Housing and if we could get the first one funded, we could move forward.

Presentation of Certificate of Appreciation to Pat Reese

At this time, Council Vice President Banks read aloud a Certificate of Appreciation for Mr. Pat Reese for his years of dedicated service on the Housing Authority Board.

At this time, Mayor Dize introduced Mrs. Cathy Landon who was the new Housing Authority Board member. He noted that they have a lot on their plates. Mrs. Landon advised that she is looking forward to serving on the Board.

Department Head Reports

Mrs. Morgan presented the financial report for the first 6 months of the budget year. She noted that the City had received the first allocation of the 1.2M in Cares Act money. She also noted that on the expense side, we are \$365K over budget, and advised that a lot of work has been done at the treatment plant. She reviewed the cost of repair and replacement and noted that back-up equipment is required. Mrs. Morgan advised that the water meter repair tech came in January, but the weather was not conducive to any work, and noted that he will be back this month. She also noted that she had two customers with large water bills and there are two leak policies that can help. Mrs. Morgan advised that one of the customers with the large bill insists that they have no water leak. Mrs. Morgan advised the Mayor and Council to stop by, email, or call, if they have any questions about her report.

Councilwoman Scott commented that the misread meters doubled from July. Mrs. Morgan advised that staff would begin training in February.

Council Vice President Banks commented that he feels many residents may not be aware of the increase in fee when over 4,000 gallons are used. He commented that with older homes, some residents leave their water dripping to prevent frozen pipes, which increases their bill.

Mrs. Morgan advised that Ms. LaFabian Marshall, department head of the water/sewer/tax department, will do a posting on Social Media.

Chief Dalfonso reviewed his department's activities for the 4th Quarter of 2021, reviewing its contents.

Ms. Kate Finucan, Grant Writer/Administrator, presented and highlighted her quarterly report.

Councilwoman Scott commented that settlement on Carvel Hall has past the first week in February. Mr. Baldwin noted that as of February 1st, information was sent to Mr. Biebart by the settlement Attorney, Mr. Simpkins, with the closing date to be between February 16th and 18th. Mrs. Morgan advised that she has put the tax department on alert to let her know when the settlement comes in and she will notify the Mayor and Council immediately.

Mayor Dize noted that settlement is crucial for any future grant funding.

Mayor Dize noted that the drainage work has finally started on South Somerset Avenue so we can move on to the bigger work.

Councilwoman Scott commended Ms. Finucan for all of the grant work she has done in the year that she has been here.

Councilman Atkins commented to Ms. Gordy that he hopes the Carvel Hall settlement goes through and inquired what to do if there is a continual delay.

Ms. Gordy advised that they don't have it anyway, so the issue is now with DHCD and there is no more grant money until it's sold. She noted that CDBG training begins on Monday. Mrs. Morgan noted that we need to sell Carvel Hall now. Ms. Gordy advised that this would allow the City to apply for the \$800K available this year through DHCD.

Councilman Atkins suggested asking Phoenix to pay the penalties so we can send that money to DHCD.

Mr. Jason Loar, Via Zoom reviewed a reporting letter to the Mayor and a recommendation about the well communication system. Mayor Dize commended Mr. Loar and Ms. Finucan on their reports and Ms. Finucan's attention to detail.

Mayor Dize commended Mr. Loar, Mr. Trejo and Mr. Cannon on their hard work at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. He noted that the City would finally be switching the telecommunication for the wells to radio and cellular. Mr. Loar advised that this is correct; from Verizon.

Councilman Atkins asked Mr. Loar for an update on the status of the turbine. Mr. Loar advised that there was an issue with the hydraulic pump and another contractor should be down to repair it next week. Councilman Ford inquired if the City will be getting any money back for the turbine being off line. Mr. Baldwin advised that a letter had been sent, and he would follow up. Councilman Ford inquired how much time was left on the maintenance contract. Mr. Loar advised that it ends in May or June of this year.

Nelson Sheppard, Assistant Inspector, reviewed rental fees that had been collected and not collected. Mr. Sheppard asked the Mayor and Council to consider billing the owners of these rental units a \$25.00 per month late fee until the rental registration fee is paid. He asked if Mr. Baldwin could prepare an Ordinance.

Councilwoman Scott inquired how it is that 80% are not paid. Mr. Sheppard advised that he feels they just are paying late, but a late fee will prompt them to pay on time. Councilwoman Scott inquired if people own multiple units. Mr. Sheppard advised that it is a mixture of owners.

Mr. Sheppard also made reference to addressing sewer jet fees, and suggested a \$50 fee if the stoppage is on the homeowner.

Council Vice President Banks noted that a lot of times, the cleanout can't be found and advised that we need to tread lightly, but he would be ok if the problem was determined to be on the property owner.

Mayor Dize noted that if a lateral has not been installed, it can't be determined who is at fault. He inquired of Mr. Baldwin if this is a Charter amendment and if we could do a Resolution to establish a fee. Mr. Baldwin advised that this is correct.

Council Vice President Banks advised that he would support a fee, once the lateral is installed.

Mr. Sheppard also noted that he had been receiving calls about Tiny Houses and is working with Mr. Baldwin concerning specifications, etc.

At this time, Mr. Sheppard reviewed the department's stats.

Council Vice President Banks inquired if all of the rental fees had now been collected. Mr. Sheppard advised that over \$4,000 had not been collected.

Mayor Dize inquired if this would be considered a lien. Mrs. Morgan advised that we need to make sure they are active rentals.

Mayor Dize advised Mr. Sheppard to obtain information regarding Tiny Houses before any legal consultation. Mr. Sheppard advised that he would have it within the next 2 weeks.

Council Vice President Banks commented about “squatters” as noted on Mr. Sheppard’s report and asked if they were privately owned or abandoned properties. Mr. Sheppard advised that one was and one wasn’t and noted that vacant properties should be boarded up because absent property owners don’t check on their properties. Council Vice President Banks commented that with squatters staying in such properties, something bad, such as a fire, can happen, so we need to enforce them being secured.

Councilman Goldsborough requested a list of blighted properties and information concerning Tiny Homes. Mr. Sheppard advised that he would have the information.

Mayor and Council Comments

Councilman Ford advised that he had nothing.

Councilman Atkins thanked Mr. Pat Reese for his years of service and hard work on the Housing Authority Board and the other Board Members. He also noted that Covid cases are on the decline.

Councilwoman Scott advised that she had nothing.

Councilman Goldsborough made reference to following up on the Youth Center and advised that he will contact Mr. Clint Sterling.

Council Vice President Banks thanked Mr. Bibb for the handling of the recent mishap at the Housing Authority. He also reiterated that Economic Development is the driving force for Crisfield and we need to encourage projects.

Council Vice President Banks thanked the Department Heads for their hard work and commended the Chief on his crime fighting.

Mayor Dize commended the Department Heads on their daily efforts, noting that he is proud of their work. He also thanked the Council for their support.

Mayor Dize noted that following this meeting, there will be a Closed Meeting concerning a Personnel Issue regarding the vacancy of Mr. Dean Bozman, filling a vacancy at the WWTP, Interview with the Circuit Rider/A&E, and filling the position of Director of Operations.

Mayor Dize noted that for upcoming Budget Discussion, we need to look at a dependable dump truck that a person without a CDL can drive.

Adjournment into Closed Session

At this time, Councilman Atkins read into record Closed Meeting Notice, and made a motion to adjourn the work session and convene into closed session. Motion seconded by Councilman Goldsborough and carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Prepared by Valerie Swift, Secretary