

MINUTES

The Mayor and Council met in a regular work session on Wednesday, August 12, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. in the meeting room at the Corbin Studio and Gallery.

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, Grant Writer/Administrator; Dean Bozman, Code Enforcement Officer; David Dalfonso, Chief of Police; Richard Crumbacker; Don Bibb, Director of the Crisfield Housing Authority; and Carlene Phoenix, Housing Authority Deputy Director.

Mayor Dize called the work session to order and noted that Mr. Don Bibb, Director of the Crisfield Housing Authority was there to give a presentation. He added that this is going to be a great meeting. The Mayor commented that housing issues in Crisfield and the need for new homes can all be tied together. Mayor Dize advised that Mr. Bibb has some great ideas and noted that he met with him in Easton and looked at various homes that have been renovated and constructed for the housing program there.

Mayor Dize introduced Mr. Bibb and Ms. Carlene Phoenix, Deputy Director, Housing Authority. Mr. Bibb noted that Mr. Mark Konapelsky, Chairman of the Housing Authority Board, had planned to attend, but had not yet arrived due to rescheduling of this meeting.

Mr. Bibb advised that he met with Mayor Dize in Easton concerning the housing development program there, which utilizes tax credit developments, infill of properties, and historic preservation. He noted that there are tax credit developments up and down the Shore, for example Slippery Hill in Queen Anne's County, Galloway Meadows, as well as Net Zero group of multifamily homes. Also nine apartments being built with a \$2.6M loan from the State that are 40% complete, and should be done by the end of December.

Mr. Bibb also made reference to plans to tear down 50 units in Crisfield and replace them with 62 new apartments. He also made reference to Stone Brook Crossing that was just completed in Salisbury.

Mr. Bibb advised that he wants to Crisfield Housing Authority go further with infill revitalization and home ownership possibilities by getting enough contiguous property for 40 units.

Mr. Bibb advised that repositioning of the asset (Housing Authority Units) must be addressed as the current units are antiquated and not energy efficient, therefore there is no point in putting money into them. He advised that they are looking at properties in Crisfield first, to relocate the 50 units in front of the Marina, to develop a mixed income community.

Mr. Bibb went on to review the power point slides of the renovated historic homes in Easton and the Hill Community.

Ms. Phoenix noted that when the Hill Community was renovated, the focus was on preserving history and they partnered with Morgan State and UMBC to perform digs and deed research. She advised that the Buffalo Soldier house was preserved, along with five others.

Mayor Dize noted that only quality equipment has been installed in these homes. Mr. Bibb added that only quality products are used for construction. He made reference to the creation of a non-for-profit re-development corporation in Crisfield.

Councilwoman Scott asked Mr. Bibb to explain the tax credit project. Mr. Bibb advised that this is a resource for building equity for a project by matching bonds. He noted that this is a very competitive program and there may be 25-35 applicants that follow a scoring process, with a 75-90 day review.

Mr. Bibb advised that HUD is eager to help with the repositioning of assets (units), and this is an opportunity for a new housing market. He advised that residents pay 30% of their adjusted household income and the balance is paid with a voucher.

Mayor Dize clarified that due to the State and Federal concern about global warming and sea-level rise, the new buildings won't be constructed in the current housing authority area. Mr. Bibb commented that Hurricane Sandy affected this designation. He also noted that the units were not designed to withstand long-term tenant abuse.

Mr. Sullivan noted that when HUD looks at financing a re-development, they are looking for access to public transportation and workforce development.

Mr. Bibb noted that the developer would be a For-Profit who submits a tax credit application to the State. The property must be viable with access to public transportation and available places of employment. He added that we have to make the change together as there are too many “pit-bulls and parolees” Housing Authority residents. Mr. Bibb advised that we need to change the mindset of those staying in substandard housing.

Mayor Dize inquired about 15 families being homeowners. Mr. Bibb advised that this is correct, but there needs to be education regarding transition.

Councilwoman Scott asked Mr. Bibb about a partnership proposal. Mr. Bibb advised that the City would partner with, and allow the Housing Authority to purchase blighted properties from the City. He advised that he knows how to make the deal work. Mayor Dize advised that Mr. Bibb would answer all of the questions concerning the partnership. He commented that the City cannot enforce repairs on blighted properties because property values are so low; we need to get our tax base built up and get pride back in our community, with Crisfield Housing Authority as a partner.

Councilwoman Scott inquired how many blighted properties and buildable lots we have. Mr. Bozman advised that all of the lots have been sold, but there are many blighted properties.

Mr. Sullivan commented that the City Code is written to prevent blight, but properties lose value; houses are in code violation, but this ham-strings Code compliance as there is no property value for equity to make necessary improvements. So you demolish and place a lien on the property, but there is no way to recoup the cost.

Councilwoman Scott commented that she wants to get this partnership going today, as soon as possible.

Mayor Dize noted that we sold 5 lots, but the blighted houses may not be in the City’s hands right now, and if they are torn down, there will be no taxes, but it will cost us \$40K for demolition; a partnership could fix the problem.

Mr. Sullivan also made reference to how the City handled the demolition on Cove Street. He commented that the Easton Development Corporation is composed of Administration and Operation.

Mr. Bibb commented that this would be a component of the Housing Authority and would act as an extension of the Housing Authority, but would be a different body. Mr. Bibb also noted that once units are repositioned, the vouchers would go where ever the homeowners go. He advised that there are many ways to leverage resources.

Council Vice President Banks thanked Mr. Bibb and Ms. Phoenix for their presentation. He noted that there are 13 properties in the City owned by the County. He also noted that one of GCAC's action plans was to address how Housing Authority residents could be homeowners. Council Vice President Banks also advised Mr. Bibb and Ms. Phoenix to address the County as well. Mr. Bibb advised that they will be attending the County Commissioner meeting next Tuesday.

Mr. Bibb commented that the public housing community needs to be addressed to concerning better housing, but 30% of the residents are not interested. Council Vice President Banks commented that they fall into this mentality, but education is the key to having a vision.

Councilman Ford inquired how the State and Federal building codes would be met, as well as floodplain and historical requirements and sprinkler requirements. Mr. Bozman advised that if you are spending 50% more than the value of the property, you must elevate and install sprinklers. Mr. Bibb added that this is governed by the funding source and FEMA must also weigh in. The State will require us to meet building standards and the City and County will issue the permits.

Councilman Ford inquired if the State requires sprinklers and elevation. Mr. Bibb advised that this requirement was enacted in 2015, statewide. Mr. Bozman added that this requirement can't be changed. Mayor Dize added that elevation gives peace of mind.

Mayor Dize advised that tonight's meeting is step one and we don't want any "What if's?". He added that this is a tremendous opportunity.

Mr. Bibb advised that he wants a serious discussion about relocating the 50 units across from the Marina and needs a partnership with the City of Crisfield. He noted that the OIG investigation is clearing out and the final report from HUD is coming. He advised that he still has to deal with residents and structural issues adding that this will be a tough transition for some. Mr. Bibb also thanked Chief Dalfonso for his help with residents that need to be removed and addressing the crime factor.

Council Vice President Banks commented that the first 50 units are antiquated and millions of dollars have been spent on them over the years. He added that we don't just want to tear them down, we want better living conditions for the residents.

Mr. Bibb commented that none of the units have central heat and air, and when residents install window units, leaks ruin the apartments; you can't control the environment so you need a new product. Council Vice President Banks commented that with the concrete floors, it makes the units extremely cold in the winter.

Mayor Dize noted that having a nice place for people to live has always been the City's goal. Ms. Phoenix added that people need to know that the City cares and should be included in discussions.

Councilman Atkins inquired what the next step is for the Mayor and Council. Mr. Bibb advised that the first step is to obtain a list of available property and get a preliminary estimate for demolition. Then prepare a Strategic Demolition application to purchase the properties for demolition and infrastructure improvements. Councilman Atkins reiterated the steps; 1) get a list of properties; 2) get an estimated demo cost; and 3) he asked Mr. Bibb to explain the Easton Development Council. Mr. Bibb advised that we would create a Development Council in the City of Crisfield, apply for funds through various agencies, and obtain a 501c3. Councilman Atkins noted that this is a necessary step. Mr. Bibb advised that it is a Cooperative Agreement with the Housing Authority. Mayor Dize noted that it is hard to find members to serve on any Board, so a Cooperative Agreement is better and we need to get moving.

Mr. Bibb also made reference to re-naming the Housing Authority and re-doing the Cooperative Agreement with the City of Crisfield. Mayor Dize inquired if all of this can be done simultaneously. Mr. Bibb advised that it could. He advised that there are a few minor adjustments need with the Cooperative Agreement with CPD.

Mayor Dize inquired if anyone was opposed to the partnership with the Housing Authority, noting that as this is a work session, no vote can be taken.

Councilman Atkins commented that he sees only positives and wants to see some action ASAP.

Councilwoman Scott suggested setting a goal to have the list of properties for the next meeting. Council Vice President Banks advised that he has a list and David Barone also has four properties available.

Councilwoman Scott advised putting the property list on Agenda Items for the next meeting.

Councilman Sheppard commented that he had seen the Hagerstown project first hand and everything changed for the best. Mayor Dize commented that everyone there takes pride in their properties.

Council Vice President Banks made reference to the previous Self Help Housing Project, but advised that homeowners didn't take care of the property, but maybe we could look at it again. Mayor Dize commented that the pictures presented tonight are proof that the project works.

Mr. Bibb also made reference to plans to re-vamp the Housing Authority basketball and tennis courts. He advised that there is a monetary gap of \$41K to accomplish this. Mr. Bibb advised that this is needed and he is working with Open Space and the Arts Council. He added that this is an opportunity for good community service and asked for the Mayor and Council's support.

Mayor Dize inquired as to where donations could be made. Mr. Bibb advised that people could contact Mrs. Jennifer Merritt/Crisfield A & E. Mayor Dize commented that this would give kids an opportunity to have a place to play and urged people to make donations.

Mr. Bibb thanked the Mayor and City Council and advised that he looks forward to a positive future with the City and the Housing Authority. He also thanked the Chief for all of his help.

There being no further discussion, Council Vice President Banks made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Atkins and carried unanimously, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Prepared by Valerie Swift, Secretary