MINUTES

ON MONDAY JULY 20, 2020, AT 6:00 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 IS 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 IS AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC TO VIEW ON THE CITY OF CRISFIELD'S FACEBOOK PAGE. THE PUBLIC IS 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
Michael Sullivan, City Solicitor

Also in attendance; Valerie Swift, Secretary; Kristie Eberly, Grant Writer/Administrator; Senator Mary Beth Carozza; Commissioner Randy Laird; and Developer, Peck Miller.

Mayor Dize called the meeting to order. Council Vice President Banks opened with a brief word of prayer.

Council Vice President Banks introduced Mr. Miller and also recognized Senator Carozza and Commissioner Laird.

Mr. Miller advised that it is nice to be back in front of the Mayor and Council. He gave a brief summary of his background, noting that his projects include taking distressed properties, using mostly his own funding, to renovate and develop. He commented that the plan that Mr. Joe Corrado had for the City several years ago, made a lot of sense.

He advised that he had ideas to rejuvenate the City of Crisfield and came up with a 10 point plan. Mr. Miller advised that the first step would be to make a block downtown a memorial park and focal point for history. Then tie in different areas for a hotel conference center and parking garage which he feels should be a public/private partnership, taking no money from the City. He noted that this would give a place for island cars to park and the conference center would be a place to meet. He commented that the conference center should be a joint project of the State and the City and would provide opportunity to develop other properties. Mr. Miller advised that

developments would be kept at the lower level to prevent blocking the view of the water.

Mr. Miller advised that the next step would be to get the Maryland Stadium Authority to look at the project and do a study. He advised that the City would need to apply for the Study and allocate $12,500 and businesses were to put up the money for the City's portion. Mr. Miller made reference to plans to re-do the bulkhead to Matt Riggin and Steven Thomas' property to tie together with the boardwalk. He advised that the property was under contract with an LLC 1.5 years ago and he feels it still could be done. Mr. Miller stated that he feels the nucleus package is done, the rest will come. He commented that the project would not be done with tax money, but federal and state money and feels Secretary Holt is open to ideas to create jobs and partnership. Mr. Miller noted that he expects a 3-5 year build out after the hotel is constructed.

Commissioner Laird commented that the construction of the bulkhead through the county funds would be a struggle. Mr. Miller commented that there is grant money available.

Councilman Ford inquired as to whom would lead the charge to do the project and go to the grant funding agencies. Mr. Miller advised that this is a City of Crisfield project. He advised that he is not sure who we would want to lead the charge, but not the developer; the City of Crisfield has to drive the train. Mr. Miller advised that this needs to be a city decision and we need a project manager.

Councilman Ford inquired who would go to all of the agencies for funding. Mayor Dize advised that it would be the project manager.

Council Vice President Banks commented that the Mayor and Council must decide on the project manager; a year ago it was Mr. Miller, now we must find one. Mayor Dize commented that we would need to put out an RFP.

Councilman Ford inquired if we go with the results of the study, or what we want to do.

Mr. Miller advised that this should be a public/private partnership and we need the Maryland Stadium Authority to do the study.

A lengthy discussion followed concerning the properties to be involved in the proposed project.

Senator Corozza noted the Councilman Ford posed some good process questions. She advised that the City is in the driver seat and needs to convene to go back to the State. The City needs to have some skin in the game.

Mr. Ford commented that he was told Secretary Holt gave his word that he would not sign off on the hotel/conference center. Mr. Peck commented that it would have to be a private sector hotel. Senator Carozza advised that the State has been clear that there would be no public funds for the motel. She advised that the State needs to receive the local consensus and have the MSA look into the feasibility of the hotel conference center project.

Councilman Ford made reference to the location of the hotel being on the Captain Tyler

property. Mr. Miller advised that this was in the drafted plan. Mayor Dize made reference to the area on the proposal in yellow being a deal killer. Mr. Miller advised it would be if Captain Tyler said no.

Mayor Dize made reference to the Sage Study. Commissioner Laird commented that it was to have been available on line at the end of the month. Council Vice President Banks noted that the Sage Study was a big study, not just focusing on the hotel conference center, but the entire City. Commissioner Laird concurred.

Councilwoman Scott commented that she had met with Mr. Jay Tawes concerning the possible need for funding for the MSA study and he advised that he would be able to get the funding. Mr. Miller noted that the MSA study will look at the economic impact and whether or not the plan will work.

Councilman Atkins thanked Mr. Miller for his presentation. He made reference to the plans for the parking garage, conference center and hotel. He questioned going to the MSA about building a hotel conference center on DNR property and asked if the study would be needed if it was built on the Heath property or on City property. Dr. Atkins commented that we wouldn't need MSA's blessing unless we need DNR approval. Mr. Miller advised that it is hard to find private funding to build a hotel and this would be a plus for the Marina. He advised that we would need a public/private partnership. Councilman Atkins also made reference to making the Somers Cove Marina Commission aware of the proposal. He questioned whether the hotel, conference center and parking garage would be self-supporting if one was built without the other.

Mr. Miller commented that according to Memo Diriker, the Beacon study showed that occupancy of the hotel would be feasible, but he has not seen the study yet. Councilman Atkins noted that Pastor Phil Huber/Lutheran Church put money into the Beacon Study, but it was not available for the next few weeks.

Mr. Miller commented that he feels that the collective project will work and that the MSA needs to evaluate the entire project. Senator Carroza advised that she feels the MSA would look at the entire project as well as with different scenarios. Commissioner Laird added that the City has nothing to lose if the study is privately funded and the study may come back as not feasible. Councilman Atkins advised that he would like to have the results of the Sage and Beacon studies first. Mr. Miller reiterated that the MSA study would cost the City nothing and the Sage study is not current. He added that the City will not lose to get input from MSA and need to ask for the study to be done. Councilman Atkins also noted that there have been changes that have occurred since the first proposal from Mr. Miller with plans to put the Hotel Conference Center on State property and the corona virus. Mr. Miller advised that going to MSA is still the next step.

Councilman Ford inquired if the letter of request to MSA needs to come from the City. Mr. Miller advised that the City of Crisfield needs to send a letter of support for the study requesting a feasibility plan. He advised that the City can take money from private individuals for the purpose of funding the study. Mr. Sullivan advised that the City can take donations earmarked for this purpose.

Councilman Atkins stated that the Marina Commission can go to the State to request the study for the use of a hotel conference center on DNR property.

Senator Carozza advised that she had spoken with Secretary Haddaway-Riccio concerning renewed interest from the City for the hotel conference center project and Secretary Haddaway-Riccio advised that she was interested in the details, as DNR is making plans. Senator Carozza advised that Governor Hogan directs different departments to work together with a coordinated approach.

Commissioner Laird made reference to a meeting with Pastor Phil/Long Term Recovery, concerning a proposal for the hotel conference center as a Lutheran Retreat as a way to subsidize the building. Councilman Atkins commented that this is the only scenario that makes sense.

Councilwoman Scott advised that she had spoken with Pastor Phil who advised that the Beacon Study was done to show the feasibility of the hotel conference center. She commented that the MSA review would be done at a State level to give access to State funding. Councilwoman Scott commented that we need to strike while the iron is hot and we have a private group funding the study. She also noted that she would like to confirm the Sage study which didn't address all areas of the community and speak to many of the City's black population.

Mr. Miller urged the City to go to the MSA first as we need State level input and we need to make this development the heart of Crisfield; they can review if the plan will work and see what we want; it will provide jobs and infrastructure and help make the City financially sustainable. He commented that it's a no brainer.

Councilman Sheppard commented that he doesn't understand what the opposition is as the study is paid for. Mayor Dize noted that there is no opposition.

Senator Carozza made reference to having a conversation with MSA that the City would be flexible to suggestions about changing the plans. Mr. Miller commented that this is just the design concept phase and MSA would be able to make recommendations. He noted that the three major components and boardwalk are critical for development.

Councilman Atkins commented that $12,500 is a small amount of money for the study, but he is concerned about what he has read in the news about how the corona virus has impacted state funding. He stated that he is not hearing that anyone wants to put off moving forward with the project for another year. Councilman Atkins noted that he had spoken with Pastor Phil who has confirmed that the Beacon report will be out in the next few weeks and who also advised that City government should not be involved in this type of project. He commented that he feels if it happens, there will need to be dollars put into it constantly, and doesn't see State subsidies being available to pay for a hotel conference center/parking garage.

Council Vice President Banks stated that this is not a project of the Lutheran Church and it is not a project that addresses the Sage Study. He commented that this project was brought to the City of Crisfield and it is our job to create and sustain and we can either change or stay the same. He went on to comment that we have nothing to lose and the proposal will create at least 40-60

jobs. Council Vice President Banks commented that tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world and there is no place for people to stay when they come to Crisfield. He commented that the Mayor and Council need to be the catalyst for this project.

Mayor Dize inquired of Councilwoman Scott if she is sure we can get the $12,500. as this is not in the City budget. Councilwoman Scott advised that she would know by Wednesday but feels confident. Mayor Dize inquired if two studies are out, why do we need one more? Councilwoman Scott commented that the MSA Study is the only one that carries weight. Mr. Miller advised that it is the only study that will use the Marina property.

During further discussion, Commissioner Laird advised that if the Mayor and Council approve sending the letter for the study to MSA, he would ask the County Commissioners for a letter of support.

Mayor Dize asked the Council for a consensus concerning the letter. He advised that a vote is not needed. Mr. Sullivan advised they would be supporting moving forward with a letter for a feasibility study. Mayor Dize added contingent upon payment. He asked if there was anyone opposed to moving forward with the letter to MSA. Councilman Atkins requested that the Marina Commission be kept involved. He noted that he would like to see a hotel/conference center. Mayor Dize advised sending the letter pending the $12,500 received from the community, as step 1. Councilman Sheppard commented that we don't need the Marina Commission's permission to send the letter; if the finding is positive, then bring them in. Senator Carozza commented that she doesn't feel DNR has any objection.

Council Vice President Banks advised that he agrees we shouldn't bypass the Marina Commission, but does not feel that we are required to. He asked Senator Carozza to research this.

Councilwoman Scott suggested contacting the Chairman. Mayor Dize advised that he would call.

There being no further business for discussion, Councilman Atkins made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Sheppard and carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Prepared by Valerie Swift, Secretary