MINUTES

The Mayor and City Council held their regular work session on Wednesday, July 14, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the meeting room in the Corbin A & E Gallery.

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

Also in attendance; Chief David Dalfonso, Code Enforcement Officer, Dean Bozman; Grant Writer/Administrator, Kate Finucan; Valerie Swift, Secretary; and Tyler Davidson, Omnitech Pro.

Invocation & Call to Order – Lord's Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance

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

Presentation Update Regarding the Somers Cove Marina via Zoom, by DNR Secretary Haddaway-Riccio and Members of her Staff

Mayor Dize thanked Secretary Haddaway-Riccio for the upcoming presentation.

At this time, Secretary Riccio introduced members of her staff; Bill Andrews, Assistant Secretary, DNR; Tom Schisler, Executive Director, Somers Cove Marina; Bunky Luffman, DNR, Mary Taylor, Marina Manager; and Christina Carlson, DNR.

Mr. Shchisler thanked Secretary Riccio and staff for their leadership. He went on to review slides regarding recent improvements at the Marina and plans for future improvement. He noted that Marina visitors in June were up 15% from 2019.

Secretary Riccio commended the Mayor and Council on infrastructure improvements, advising that she wants to continue to support the City. Mayor Dize inquired about the time frame for installation of the tide gates at the Marina.

Mr. Anderson advised that the bulkheading, tide gates, storm water system and parking lots are tied into a ten year implementation plan, with $10M to be spent over a 10 year span.

Councilman Atkins thanked Secretary Riccio for the update, noting that the City has always enjoyed an excellent relationship with the DNR in terms of the Somers Cove Marina, and it only got stronger with the establishment of the Somers Cove Marina Commission. He commented that what he is hearing tonight is, how we can help improve things at the Marina is by improving the overall infrastructure. He inquired if there was anything else in particular that we as a City could do to help out.

Secretary Riccio advised that the Marina does do a good job of marketing and also promotes businesses that are in the City. She asked that businesses also promote the Marina and noted that they are always open to ideas. She advised that the City could reach out to the team with any ideas we may have.

Councilman Atkins also thanked Mrs. Riccio, Mr. Schisler, Mrs. Taylor and others for their support of the Military Banner Program granting the City permission place some of them in the Marina.

More discussion continued about planned amenities and ways to encourage boaters to stay longer and continue to come back.

Council Vice President Banks made reference to the ten year plan's start date. Mr. Anderson advised that engineering work is underway, with a one year design cycle, followed by construction. Then it will be one step after another. Mayor Dize commented about the 10 year process and inquired if we will possibly see the tide gates in four or five years. Mr. Anderson advised that this is a Force Rank project, which is prioritized, based on need and the condition of the asset needing improvement, as well as the importance to the City.

Councilwoman Scott addressed Mr. Schisler about the extended list of amenities and inquired if we compare to the 300 marinas that Mr. Schisler has visited. Mr. Schisler advised that the Somers Cove Marina is a gem, in comparison, with its closeness to the Chesapeake Bay. Councilwoman Scott made reference to the events that Mr. Schisler had mentioned in his report, and their status. Mr. Schisler advised that he had 11 bands booked last year, but had to cancel due to Covid. He advised that he wants to promote them this fall and cross market with other events, but not compete with other events.

Councilwoman Scott inquired if the Red Shell Shanty is open to the public and sustainable. Mr. Schisler advised that it is open to the public, noting that they had staffing issues, so now it is open only Friday and Saturday, but no alcohol is served unless you are a member.

Councilwoman Scott verified that the Marina has 515 slips. Mr. Schisler advised that this is correct.

Councilwoman Scott made reference to the article in "Prop Talk" called "The Little Town That's Too Tough to Die". Mr. Schisler noted that they have substantial circulation.

Councilman Goldsborough thanked the group for their presentation. He made reference to the need for a transit link between the Janes Island State Park and the Somers Cover Marina. He noted that the

complaint is that the park is secluded so people will stay away. Mr. Schisler noted that there is a new park manager, so maybe there will be interest in a water taxi and another bicycle. Ms. Riccio noted that they are trying to enhance the public and private sector.

Council Vice President Banks noted that golf carts that could be used as transit from the Park and Marina, are not allowed on County Roads. Councilman Atkins added that they are also not allowed in the Park.

Councilman Ford made reference to the Marina's 10 year improvement plan but commented that Cove Street will be gone, due to flooding, in three years.

Councilman Atkins added that this ties into the Mayor's question about starting the tide gate installation. Councilman Ford added that ten years is too long to wait.

Mrs. Riccio noted that the Marina has to work with the Department of General Services procurement process. Mr. Anderson added that he had met with City reps pre pandemic, and will continue to do so.

Councilwoman Scott advised Councilman Ford that she didn't recall the 3 year indication concerning Cove Street on the Davis, Bowen and Friedel report. Councilman Ford advised that this was from the Bayland study. Councilman Atkins commented that it was a decade.

Councilman Ford advised that he would like to review the report before commenting any further and because of concerns about surrounding streets.

Council Vice President Banks inquired of Mr. Anderson if he had seen the Bayland study. Mr. Anderson advised that he was aware but neither he, nor the team, had seen the study.

Council Vice President Banks advised that Somers Cove, Cove Street, and Somerset Avenue are all priorities in the Bayland study. Mr. Anderson advised that he would have their engineer contact the Bayland engineer. Mayor Dize made reference to a meeting three years ago with Perry Otwell, DNR, who was well aware of the tide gate issue. Mr. Anderson advised that at the time, tide gates were at the top of the list.

Mayor Dize commended Mr. Schisler, Mrs. Taylor and the Board members.

Councilwoman Scott noted that she could not see the television screen in the back of the room and it was important that they could be able to see the presentation. Mrs. Morgan advised that we would try to use the larger television that was in the 2nd meeting room to project on, at the next meeting.

<u>COUNCILWOMAN SCOTT – DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING</u>

Councilwoman Scott read an article from the Maryland Municipal Publication titled "Defining Quality of Life" concerning the quality of life we are all striving for, starting with 1) people/citizens, 2) vision – where we are going, and the five common threads; 1) transparency in government, 2) a strong economy, 3) safe and flourishing neighborhoods, 4) a sustainable environment and infrastructure, and 5) effective and efficient services.

Councilwoman Scott inquired of the Mayor and Council if they agree that tourism is the main focus for economy.

Councilman Atkins advised that along with manufacturing, farming, and seafood; so tourism is not the main focus. He advised that he can't give great weight to tourism.

Mayor Dize commented that tourism is very important.

Council Vice President Banks commented that at this time, Tourism is number one way to grow the economy. He noted that we should focus on Tourism, per the Lofton Study and agrees that it would be number one for him.

Councilman Goldsborough commented that he loves the idea of tourism, but tourism struggles to pay those who run business. Manufacturing jobs would pay more and we can grow our economy through manufacturing; anything that will pay higher than minimum wage. He advised that Tourism is a focal point, but not number one, adding that he wants residents to have jobs with good wages to be able to sustain their families.

Councilman Ford advised that he agrees with Councilman Goldsborough that we must take care of our own people or we are going to lose everything.

Councilwoman Scott advised that the Sage study emphasizes on Tourism, since manufacturing has been on the decline, so it sounds like we agree that it should be a part of our economy. She then inquired of the Mayor and Council if they think Marketing is a big piece of tourism.

Council Vice President Banks advised that Marketing is very important from a business perspective, and has to lead the way to be sustainable.

Councilwoman Scott reiterated the question; does the City agree that Marketing is an important aspect of Tourism? She asked Councilman Atkins to comment on the question.

Councilman Atkins advised that yes, just focusing on Tourism alone, absolutely it's important and I guess that's true of most retail businesses, and when thinking about the various sectors of the economy where marketing isn't important, the only sector of the economy that it would not be important is in Government work. DNR doesn't market their enforcement division, but DNR does seem to market their tourism division which is their marinas, so anything related to retail or tourism, marketing is important.

Mayor Dize advised that he agrees with Councilman Atkins; market what you have, but have what you market. He noted that he has battled this for three years; marketing something that is inconsistent. He emphasized that businesses must be open evenings and weekends and when their sign says they are open, but taking into account emergencies, but a lot of retail in the City are open 8-5, when people are working, but no when people shop and tourists can't be beating on doors.

Councilman Atkins noted a recent example that on July 3, at the Independence Day celebration at the depot, there were about 400 to 500 people at the City dock, most of whom he did not recognize, they were all from out of town, and he was disappointed at the businesses that were closed, and people were looking for places to shop, but many businesses were closed, though some were open and took advantage of the marketing of this event, hopefully more will be open July 3rd of next year.

Councilman Goldsborough inquired what aspect of tourism we will be marketing; is it events, specific businesses, or just living in Crisfield? He noted that the City has a wonderful Chamber of Commerce and that's their mission; to advertise Crisfield. He advised that we need to start working with their partners rather than saying we need to start doing this; who are we going to be Marketing? Is it businesses? He commented that he feels the question is too broad and needs to be broken down. Councilwoman Scott advised that she was thinking about foot traffic, how do we get foot traffic in town, but businesses have to be open, but she understands him wanting to be more specific on the topic of tourism. Councilman Goldsborough advised that he doesn't feel that it's right to market a business with tax dollars for an event, but maybe a non-profit entity that gives back, i.e. American Legion.

Councilwoman Scott made reference to the most popular marketing tool we have had; the Crisfield Brochure, started by a small group in 2013, noting that it is currently being updated, but it is late in the season, which starts around Memorial Day and questioned why it wasn't updated until now.

Councilman Atkins noted that Covid was still in play in May and some people were afraid to go out and it was a different kind of a year.

Councilwoman Scott advised that this is one of the most popular brochures and that the Chamber did not donate to the cost of the brochures. Councilman Goldsborough commented that he believed the Chamber had offered to donate at the Round Table meeting. Council Vice President Banks commented that the Chamber didn't do what they said, it was through Explore Crisfield funds, it wasn't ready by Memorial Day weekend because there was no marketing team in charge of the brochure, and if it's not, we need to identify what is broke and fix it and find out who and what we are marketing, but there is no marketing team in place.

Councilman Ford inquired if the City has a Marketing Team and noted that it should be done by some-one outside of government and past events have come and gone because people are tired of being involved and younger people don't participate.

Council Vice President Banks commented that Somerset County Tourism Markets tourism for the County and asked if the City sees tourism as number one. Councilman Ford advised that he does not see it as number one. Council Vice President Banks advised that statistics say that it is. He commented that old manufacturing is gone and any new manufacturing is not happening, so studies show that tourism is our best bet to drive the economy. He concurred with Councilman Goldsborough that jobs are needed, but it's not always the case.

Councilman Goldsborough commented that a Marketing Team in Crisfield is a great idea, but having City government represent it is a horrible idea; it should be an outlying entity that reports back to the City for support in their endeavors. He noted that it is mainly run by Danny Thompson, EDC Director. We need to harness them as our Marketing Committee. He advised he feels it needs to stay at the private sector, let them come to us, for example, with the maps that were put around the City.

Councilman Atkins commented concerning the maps, that when he was chairman of the Marina Commission, the Marina did the same thing, they had rack cards and brochures, but it would be nice if it was a coordinated effort, so we need to coordinate all efforts in the City, but he feels that it is not the Mayor and Council's role to be the Marketing Committee. He advised that County Commissioners are not the Marketing Committee for Somerset County, they have Somerset County EDC headed by Danny Thompson, who is also the President of the State of Maryland EDC. He noted that the City has the legislation for a Crisfield Economic Development Commission and it's time to get some members and put them to work coordinating efforts between businesses, and charitable organizations.

Councilwoman Scott in asked what marketing efforts had come from the Economic Development Commission in the past 17 years.

Councilman Atkins noted that through them, the City got Carvel Hall and now Element LLC. Councilwoman Scott countered that there have been many repair issues and headaches created and pressure from the State. Councilman Atkins advised that he was not in favor of that type of business, but it is not a bad deal that we got Carvel Hall.

Councilwoman Scott advised that teams were formed within the City Council to help the Mayor, who was doing all of the work; consisting of an Uptown Development Commission, Downtown Development Commission, Carvel Hall liaison, and Housing Authority liaison. She advised that on October of 14, 2020, she proposed a marketing team consisting of people with marketing skills; Greg Cain, Clint Sterling, Linda Singh, Jennifer Merritt, Eric Banks, and herself, and wanted to come before the Mayor and Council but were refused a meeting. Mayor Dize commented that no one was refused a meeting, the meeting was cancelled. Councilwoman Scott advised that she thinks this was another meeting.

Councilman Goldsborough commented that in his opinion, the people on that team do not represent our City at all. It needs to be extremely inclusive and needs to represent every sector of business included. We are here to represent our tax payers.

Councilwoman Scott noted that as stated in the October 14, 2020 minutes, it said the Marketing Team would report to the Mayor and Council. Mayor Dize advised that the representative should come to the Mayor and Council with you have a specific need. He doesn't want to hear a report at every meeting.

Councilwoman Scott also noted that it was discussed that there should be small teams to get more done. Councilman Goldsborough advised that all businesses are not represented with this group. He in quired if the group was voted on. Mr. Sullivan advised that each member of Council found their own people, in order to take items off of the Mayor's plate, i.e. Councilman Atkins did his own research with matters relating to the Housing Authority, but Councilman Banks sought input from others. They were not authorized teams. If the Mayor and Council appoint a committee, they are subject to Maryland Open Meeting laws and each and every document produced becomes subject to the Maryland Information Act. He advised that to move forward with a Marketing Committee we would need to get a Resolution, qualifications, and set standards if marketing for and on behalf of businesses.

Councilwoman Scott commented than when she proposed this originally she proposed that we form teams and pick the most qualified for the desired strength and interest, and it wasn't objected to and the teams were not voted on. Mayor Dize noted that nobody was in opposition to their team. Councilwoman Scott advised that she is hearing opposition.

Councilman Atkins advised Councilwoman Scott that nobody had asked that they disband the marketing team she had put together with Greg and Council Vice President Banks, but inquired if anyone had any objections to putting together a Crisfield Economic Development Commission dedicated to marketing and developing the economy of Crisfield for the better and subject to all the public information act transparency laws. There was no objection.

Councilwoman Scott commented that this was a big question and not the purpose of this work session, and questioned if they would get anything done.

Mayor Dize advised that they would work together with the teams.

Mr. Sullivan advised that CEDC was adopted by Ordinance and is a codified position.

Council Vice President Banks made reference to the Lofton report says that tourism is our number one priority for growing our economy. It also says the city staff is under capacity. He advised that nobody was marketing the City, so the team went to work. He also advised that people on the teams are highly qualified and are helping the City for free. He commented that marketing tourism will help every City business. He went on to read an article entitled Direct Economic Impact of Travel and Spending.

Mayor Dize advised them to market Crisfield.

Councilman Goldsborough advised that people had been marketing Crisfield, the Chamber, A & E District, were marketing, and he does not feel the team that was mentioned represents everyone.

Mayor Dize inquired what the Marketing team wants from the City. Councilwoman Scott advised that they wanted to come before the Mayor and Council with their ideas for marketing Crisfield and foot traffic at the depot and improvements to the dock and new businesses around that area. Councilman Atkins inquired if this had something to do with the reason she and Council Vice President Banks went to Senator Carozza and Delegate Otto for a Bond Bill. Council Vice President Banks advised that Senator Carozza contacted him and advised that she heard that he was downtown waterfront chairman, and that they were working on a project for the City Dock development, and she offered to support a bond bill for the project. He noted that the team was working on the development of enhancing the depot area, and Mr. Cain had reached out to an engineer with ideas. He noted that they wanted to be transparent and bring the Mayor and Council up to speed. Senator Carozza spoke to him about the bond bill and sent him information, and he forwarded it to the Mayor and Council, and he did not go ahead of anyone to try and get a bond bill, he was only doing the leg work. A month later, Senator Carozza contacted him about getting the Bond Bill through and it was awarded.

Councilman Goldsborough noted that this was approved for the marketing team's project, but nobody else knew about it and the Council did not vote on it.

Council Vice President Banks inquired why the City would oppose something that would help Crisfield grow. Councilman Goldsborough advised that this is because if would change the entire structure of the depot and requires input. Council Vice President Banks commented that the group wanted to appear before the Mayor and Council, but was denied. Councilman Goldsborough advised that they needed to appear before the Crisfield EDC.

Councilman Atkins made reference to the terms of the Bond Bill, noting Council Woman Scott's earlier mention about transparency, and advised that the Bill includes a clause about property acquisition. He inquired which property they were planning to acquire. Councilwoman Scott advised that there was no clause about acquisition of property. Council Vice President Banks concurred with her that there was no clause for property acquisition. Councilman Atkins inquired as to why Senator Carozza only worked through Council Vice President Banks, rather than City administration. Council Vice President Banks advised that they had a good relationship; she didn't give a reason, other than he was Vice President of the Council and was chairman of the downtown waterfront development project.

Councilman Atkins noted to Councilwoman Scott that her son Greg Cain, had mentioned several times, and also through his spokesperson, that he is interested in acquiring the depot and privatizing it for his business. Councilwoman Scott advised that this is not true and has never been said, not once.

Councilwoman Scott went on to say that there are three questions that remain as to what the majority wants regarding marketing, the City's role, and how we want to proceed. She advised that she would resend the information to everyone.

Mr. Sullivan inquired of Councilwoman Scott what legislative action she is requesting. Councilwoman Scott advised that there was none, just further discussion and how to proceed with a marketing effort.

Mayor Dize commented that the “Explore Crisfield” line item keeps the City “out of the breeze” as far as marketing sector, in case someone was left out. It should be private.

Following further discussion regarding keeping teams to themselves, or being officially appointed. Mr. Sullivan suggested to Councilwoman Scott follow rules of procedure to get something on the Agenda for review and a vote.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce L. Morgan, Clerk-Treasurer

Prepared by Valerie Swift, Secretary