

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

WORK SESSION – VIA TELECONFERENCE

January 26, 2021 5:15 P.M.

PRESENT: Commissioner Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Commissioner Kevin M. Bianca
Commissioner Erin S. Hughes
Commissioner Donna L. Kahoe
Commissioner Patrick T. Richards
L. Jesse Bane, Town Administrator
Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Charles Moore, Chief of Police
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager
Kevin Small, Director of Planning

OTHERS: Dr. David Bishai, Harford County Health Officer
Joan Suitt, Recording Secretary

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Chmielewski advised the objective of the teleconference is to conduct normal business of the Town of Bel Air during the COVID-19 pandemic we all are experiencing. A teleconference allows us to comply with social distancing, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

Chair Chmielewski informed of agenda items for the meeting.

Meeting Etiquette/Protocol

Chair Chmielewski reviewed the protocol for the meeting and reminded all participants to identify themselves before speaking.

Roll Call

Chair Chmielewski conducted the roll call. Those present are listed above. Joining the teleconference was E.J.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Chair Chmielewski called for approval of the Agenda.

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion to approve the Agenda as written.

Ayes: Commissioners Bianca, Hughes, Kahoe, Richards and Chmielewski

Nays: None

The motion carried.

PRESENTATION:

Dr. Bishai, Harford County Health Department

Dr. Bishai notified Harford County is holding its own when compared to other counties against the virus and the holiday plateau of COVID-19 is beginning to ease a little. Dr. Bishai advised the Health Department counted COVID-19 cases by zip code and Bel Air always had high numbers because of higher population. The website now computes the count per 1,000 population and vaccine data will be added soon.

Dr. Bishai reviewed the eligibility levels for the vaccine and advised elected government officials are in 1B but does not know what the continuity of government will be. To get the word out to the 75 and older population, the Health Department is using media and social media which is not always successful. The Health Department is beginning to work with volunteers to get the word out for neighbors and friends to help the elderly with the pre-registration process. This community volunteer group will also be available to answer questions and there is a volunteer portal on the Health Department's website.

The Community and Public Relations Manager advised the Town of Bel Air can share information on its website.

The Town Administrator has concern that the continuity of government is limited to elected officials. When looking at the continuity of operations for municipal governments in Harford County, the decision makers for any major catastrophe are not just elected officials but includes department heads in making decisions on how to continue with operations. In fact, it is the appointed officials or department heads who are going to be at meetings continuously.

The Town Administrator feels it is worth an attempt to impress upon the Governor or the State Health Department that when talking about continuity of government that department heads are just as important as elected officials when dealing with a catastrophe. The Town Administrator appreciates any consideration.

Dr. Bishai advised the continuity of government in 1B was not from the Federal Government but from Maryland State Government down to the counties. Dr. Bishai stated this is a work in progress and the County Executive has gone to Annapolis to express similar concerns.

Chair Chmielewski inquired about criteria for vaccination and if someone could give up their spot to another. Dr. Bishai stated it is not allowed and the criteria needs to be met for each level.

Chair Chmielewski welcomed Dr. Bishai to Harford County and expressed appreciation for the information.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

2021 Retreat

The Town Administrator reported the Commissioners' Retreat is scheduled Saturday, February 27th from 8:00 a.m. to 12 noon. The meeting will be live at the Armory unless the COVID-19 situation becomes worse. Mask and social distancing will be required. The Town Administrator asked for DPW staff to set up for the meeting. Subject matters to be discussed:

- Visioning exercise - outside facilitator is scheduled
- Commissioner priorities for budget
- Discussion on Armory
- Review of Police facility

COVID-19 Update

The Town Administrator advised availability of the vaccine will be months before a significant amount of the population is vaccinated. Deep cleaning of office areas will be treated as an emergency if staff comes in contact with COVID-19. Employees with the virus will have to self-quarantine. Town vehicles will also be cleaned.

Chair Chmielewski asked if Town staff are wiping surfaces to help keep the spread of the virus down. The Town Administrator feels this is being done frequently.

Social Media

The Town Administrator advised the Police Department and Town staff have social media policies. The Police Department policy was reviewed and brought up to date. The Town staff policy is now being reviewed.

The Director of Planning departed the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

TENATIVE AGENDA FOR TOWN MEETING TELECONFERENCE (Monday, February 1, 2021)

New Business:

Ordinance 797-21 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 50 Finance and Taxation to include Article VII Property Tax Credit for Active-Duty Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company Volunteer Members

Charter Resolution 134-21 Amending VII. Taxation Section 806. Tax Credit for Firemen Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. (BAVFC) Members

The Director of Administration informed both pieces of legislation go hand-in-hand and the Commissioners/Town staff expressed the desire to amend this legislation.

The current Charter for a tax credit for Fireman at BAVFC was last updated in 2001 and is currently out-of-date.

Two pieces of legislation being introduced:

- Charter Resolution 134-21 - remove the existing language from the Town Charter.
- Ordinance 797-21 - replace the old language with new and added into the Town Code allowing to amend/facilitate future administration of the tax credit.

The Director of Administration reviewed the changes under the authority of the Maryland Annotated Code. Each active BAVFC Fireman and Emergency Medical Technicians are eligible for an annual tax credit in the amount of \$500.00 with a maximum of \$1,000.00 effective July 1, 2021. Certification of being eligible is required; own the dwelling, primary residence for at least 12 months preceding the fiscal year for which tax credit is eligible, and no financial debt obligation to the Town of Bel Air. The Director of Administration informed if Town employees are members of BAVFC, they are only eligible to receive one tax credit, whichever amount is greatest.

The Public Hearing is scheduled for March 1, 2021.

Commissioner Richards asked for a summary of the financial change. The Director of Administration advised the tax credit changed from \$25.00 to \$500.00.

Commissioner Bianca inquired if feedback was received from BAVFC. The Director of Administration stated BAVFC supports the change and did ask if they should be part of this meeting tonight. The Director of Administration suggested they attend the Public Hearing on March 1st.

Commissioner Hughes wanted clarification that the Town is not extending the tax credit to the Auxiliary. The Director of Administration reported the Annotated Code only allows the credit to be extended to Firefighters and EMTs. Commissioner Hughes asked if this was also discussed with BAVFC. The Director of Administration advised this was discussed and feels it will be a topic for future discussions on how the Town can reward other volunteer members of BAVFC.

The Director of Finance stated this new tax credit cannot be made this Fiscal Year. The \$25.00 credit will be given and also go to the Auxiliary this year. Checks should be disbursed in February.

Chair Chmielewski asked about requirements for the tax credit and who verifies. The Director of Administration informed the BAVFC verifies the requirements and notifies the Town who passes the certification. Chair Chmielewski would like someone from BAVFC to inform specifics of earning the tax credit during the public hearing and for the Town to express gratitude.

Commissioner Hughes agrees with having a representative from BAVFC attend the meeting and wants citizens to know this tax credit brings the Town in line with other municipalities in the County.

The Director of Finance informed currently the Ordinance is written with the Town not verifying hours. If this is something the Commissioners want, it would have to be added in the new Ordinance. The Director of Finance advised BAVFC provides the information and could be asked to list the number of hours.

Policy II.B.01.a-g Amending Working Conditions Working Hours Exempt Employees

The Director of Administration reported this is an amendment to the policy to include the Community and Public Relations Manager position.

Rock Salt Purchase

The Director of Public Works stated this is our annual purchase of rock salt to treat roads for snow and ice. The purchase will piggy-back on the Harford County contract and the Director of Public Works requests approval from the Commissioners for the purchase and any subsequent addendums for the next three years.

Appointment to Historic Preservation Commission

Commissioner Hughes advised Jennifer Mainster Hanna has served on the Historic Preservation Commission and is interested in serving another term. The Historic Preservation Commission will begin reviewing all inventoried properties for accurate information and there are several properties that have been identified for possible inventory. These owners will be contacted.

Commissioner Hughes recommends the appointment of Jennifer Mainster Hanna.

STAFFING UPDATE:

The Director of Administration reported:

- Grant Coordinator will begin employment on February 8th
- DPW Laborers (2) - began employment this week
- Part-time Dispatcher - position to be posted

CALENDAR:

Calendars were emailed and additions or corrections should be sent to Ruth Seitler.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Commissioner Bianca informed Frank Lopez, a member of the Tree Committee, retired from the Maryland Forestry Service and will be moving to Maine in months to come. Commissioner Bianca reports two people may be interested in becoming members and encouraged names be sent to him.

Commissioner Bianca stated there are 13 street tree requests and any other requests need to be submitted as soon as possible.

The Director of Public Works informed Bartlett Tree Removal who has handled large trees at Rockfield Manor and Shamrock Park decided to move its office into the Town. This move will be an asset for the Town.

FY 2022 Priorities

The Director of Finance advised the process for FY2022 budget has begun and Department Heads submitted their budget requests. The Director of Finance and the Town Administrator requested the Commissioners email their FY22 priorities as the input is important at the beginning of the process.

The Director of Public Works stated if any Commissioner has an agenda and needs assistance with dollar amounts to contact him.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Chair Chmielewski encouraged visiting local restaurants for Restaurant Week. Send pictures to our Community & Public Relations Manager Ms. Parker.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 6:13 p.m.

Approved: February 1, 2021

Signature on file
Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk