

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

WORK SESSION – VIA TELECONFERENCE

February 23, 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
Kevin Small, Director of Planning

OTHERS: Chris Lehman, SB & Company
Tobi Hollander, SB & Company
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 Matt Gullion.

APPROVAL OF 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:

FY20 Audit Presentation by SB & Company

Mr. Chris Lehman advised SB & Company was engaged to:

- Audit June 30, 2020, financial statements
- Review the Uniform Financial Report
- Assist with preparation of financial statements

Results of Audit:

- Issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements
- Discovered no instances of fraud
- Discovered no material weaknesses in internal controls
- Received full cooperation from management

Ms. Tobi Hollander reviewed the following:

- General Fund Balance Sheet
- General Fund Revenue
- General Fund Expenditures
- Special Revenue Fund
- Pension Trust
- OPED Trust
- Enterprise Fund - Parking
- Enterprise Fund - Sewer

Ms. Hollander further reviewed:

- Assessment of Control Environment
- Evaluation of Key Processes

Mr. Lehman stated there were no difficulties getting through the audit. This is a healthy report card and if the Commissioners have any questions/concerns the contact information is listed.

The Director of Public Works asked the Director of Finance if COVID-19 affected the Parking Fund the most. The Director of Finance stated COVID-19 did bring a loss and expects 2021 to be the same.

The Director of Finance thanked Mr. Lehman, Ms. Hollander and Ms. Deaner for all their efforts during the audit process.

Chair Chmielewski inquired about the Sewer Fund. The Director of Finance informed the increase is due to several projects budgeted that were not accomplished because of COVID-19. The Director of Public Works stated the Town plans to upgrade the sewer pumping stations.

Commissioner Kahoe asked about the Special Revenue Fund. The Director of Finance notified the Plumtree Stream Restoration project was completed and that the majority of the revenue for the project came from other agencies. The Director of Public Works informed that grant money received from the State of Maryland for the project.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

COVID-19 Update

The Town Administrator advised 30% of staff have signed up for the COVID-19 vaccine and a small number received the vaccine at other locations.

The Town Administrator informed House Bill 581 and Senate Bill 486 were introduced but there has not been much activity surrounding it. When talking to the Delegation in Annapolis, it appears there is a good possibility these Bills will pass. The Town Administrator stated the Bills if passed provide \$3.00 per hour to essential employees from the beginning of the Emergency Declaration until the end of the declared emergency. There is a move by some in the Legislature to get the Governor to lift the declaration. The Town Administrator stated if these Bills are passed, it will be a heavy hit to the budget.

The Town Administrator reported the MML Summer Conference will be in-person and virtual. Registration for the conference begins March 5th. If the number of registrants does not meet 400 by March 26th, it will open to

first come first serve. The Town Administrator recommends applying virtually and will keep everyone posted on openings of in-person.

The Town Administrator has placed the layout diagram of Alice Anne Park in the Conference Room for Commissioners to view.

The Town Administrator advised 16 people will be attending the Retreat on Saturday, February 27th at the Armory.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

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

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

The Director of Administration informed Charter Resolution 134-21 and Ordinance 797-21 go hand and hand and were introduced to the Commissioners on February 1, 2021.

The Director of Administration stated the Tax Credit is to help recruit and retain Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company members specifically Firefighters and EMT personnel. The current Tax Credit is \$25.00 per year and the new credit is proposed to be \$500.00 per year with a maximum of \$1,000.00 per household. The two legislations will remove the old Charter Resolution and pass an Ordinance with the new Tax Credit language into the Town Code. The current Tax Credit equates to \$875.00 and the new equates to \$17,500. The property must be owned and occupied by the BAVFC member and the credit does not include landlords and tenants.

Ordinance 798-21 - Chapter 145 Building Construction

Ordinance 799-21 - Plumbing and Gas Fitting Standards

Ordinance 800-21 - Electrical Standards

Ordinance 801-21 - Fire Prevention Code

The Director of Public Works advised the above Ordinances will rescind and reenact new building codes and contain National and International Codes pertaining to building construction; both commercial and residential.

Unfinished Business:

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

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

Ordinance 798-21 - Chapter 145 Building Construction

Ordinance 799-21 - Plumbing and Gas Fitting Standards

Ordinance 800-21 - Electrical Standards

Ordinance 801-21 - Fire Prevention Code

The above will come before the Bel Air Town Commissioners for approval.

New Business:

Growth Report

The Director of Planning notified the actual Growth Report was issued in July and this amends the report with new enrollments from the beginning of the school year. There are three schools in the Town that are either over capacity or will be within the next 3 years:

- Bel Air Middle - 116%
- Homestead/Wakefield Elementary
- Bel Air Elementary

FY20 Audit Acceptance

The Director of Finance informed:

- Financial statements are on the website.
- Revenues were greater than expenses in the General Fund.
- Income taxes were up.
- Stormwater Management distributions from Harford County. This was not anticipated for FY20.
- Red-light Cameras - more than budgeted.
- Expenditures - more than budgeted. Commissioners, Police Department, Public Works and Committees had unspent funds mostly due to COVID-19. Departments also had savings in salaries and benefits.
- Capital Reserve - enough savings of unspent expenditures and did not utilize the Capital Reserve for the schematic design.

- Capital Reserve end of June, 2020 - increased. Town Administrator, per policy, gave the authority to transfer up to 50% of revenues over expenditures to the Capital Reserve.
- Stormwater Management Reserve - per policy, when monies from Harford County are not spent it is transferred to SWM Reserve.
- Stabilization Reserve - per policy, June 30, 2020 was equal to 10% of the operating expenses for the audit. Strict requirements when using the funds.

The Director of Finance commented the Town is in a good place. The 2020 Audit is for acceptance at the March 1st meeting.

Resolution 1160 - 21 Redesignation of the Arts and Entertainment District

The Director of Economic Development advised it has been 10 years since the Arts and Entertainment District was first designated. A public hearing will be held on March 15, 2021.

Reappointment to the Cultural Arts Commission

Commissioner Kahoe notified Kristien Foss and Carole Milan have been on the Cultural Arts Commission for many years and are interested in reappointments. Commissioner Kahoe stated both are invaluable assets to the Commission and she is pleased they are interested in another term.

Reappointment to the Economic & Community Development Commission

The Director of Economic Development informed William Kelly wants to serve another term on ECDC and that he brings good critical thinking skills to the committee. Commissioner Richards has extended the invitation for reappointment.

STAFFING UPDATE:

The Director of Administration reported the following vacancies:

- Part-time Dispatcher - going through process for hiring.

The Director of Administration advised there can be a need to post overtime to cover Armory events. Recently, two temporary part-time staff were hired at a substantial savings to cover events.

CALENDAR:

Calendars were sent out. Contact Ruth Seitler for additions or corrections.

MISCELLANEOUS:Future Public Meetings Venue Discussion - Virtual or In-Person

The Town Administrator advised questions are beginning to surface of whether to continue virtual meetings or in-person meetings. The recommendations from the CDC and the Maryland Health Department have not changed but does not prevent open meetings if safeguards are in place.

Chair Chmielewski asked for capacity of the Town Hall for meetings. The Town Administrator advised under the present guidelines the seating would have to be rearranged for Commissioners at the dais and for staff. It would only allow 5-6 of the public to come inside. The Town Administrator informed if using the Armory, most likely attendance would be limited to 100 people.

Chair Chmielewski remembers the discussion of putting a speaker outside the Rotunda for people to listen. The Town Administrator reminded social distancing would be required outside. Chair Chmielewski stated the decision could be Work Sessions in-person and Commissioner meetings continue virtually. The Town Administrator stated certain types of meetings could be held in-person in keeping of requirements.

Commissioner Hughes knows the CDC recommendations have not been changed much but the COVID-19 metrics have decreased for several weeks. Commissioner Hughes is in favor of going back to in-person Work Sessions and to use other locations for high-profile meetings because virtually it would be difficult to conduct those meetings.

Commissioner Bianca stated 14 days after getting the second dose of the vaccine you are immune and cannot spread the virus. Commissioner Bianca recommends waiting for the vaccine to have the full effect and suggested to begin in-person meetings during the budget sessions.

The Director of Finance informed the budget schedule was sent out and the first meeting is April 8th. The Commissioners were asked to look at the schedule and advise of any conflicts.

The Director of Public Works concurs with Commissioner Bianca about waiting until vaccinated. Commissioner Richards agrees and is also concerned with alternate strains. Commissioner Richards stated that we

wait until April when there will be more understanding of the restrictions at that time.

Commissioner Kahoe hopes everyone will have both vaccines by the end of March to begin in-person Work Sessions; and we will then decide on Commissioner meetings.

The Town Administrator wanted clarification that the majority is in favor of having in-person Work Sessions beginning in April. Chair Chmielewski reminded Budget Sessions are lengthy and may not be the time to go in-person since people could be uncomfortable with taking off a mask should food be served at the meetings.

Commissioner Richards asked is there some external group suggesting we meet more publicly. The Town Administrator stated it was internal conversations with staff and Commissioners.

Commissioner Hughes informed the two other municipalities in the County are trying to get back to in-person meetings.

Commissioner Richards does not want to put anyone at risk and suggested to hold off.

The Director of Administration reminded public meeting notices are put out in advance and published on the website and shared. It is easy to access and comply with the Open Meetings Act. The Director of Administration believes the virtual meeting should continue for the next few months and we could do in-person on an as needed basis.

Commissioner Richards recommends continuing the discussion in late March. The Town Administrator wants safety first and agrees this conversation can continue before the Budget meetings.

The Commissioners were in favor.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Hughes thanked DPW staff for outdoing themselves again during the recent snow event. Commissioner Hughes notified of a post on Facebook by a Town resident whose County friends complained about trash pick-up and

roads. The resident had nice things to say about the Town's DPW and Commissioner Hughes is glad people are noticing.

The Director of Public Works stated there have been several storms requiring salt and lots of work hours. Last winter there were no snow events with no salt or extra gas consumption.

The Town Administrator also acknowledged the Police Department whose officers are out there in these conditions. The Police Department was recently called upon to provide security at the McFaul Center where people are coming for vaccinations. The Town Administrator has not heard a complaint from the Police Department regarding working in weather conditions or dealing with COVID-19.

Chair Chmielewski inquired about the plan for bagged meters for carryout and allowing the tents. Commissioner Hughes stated nothing has changed regarding capacity and is in favor of continuing the bagged meters that help businesses who do not have dedicated lots. Commissioner Hughes agrees using the tents if a permit has been established with the Planning Department.

The Chief of Police informed the Bar and Tavern meeting is March 26th and suggested that he would continue to communicate the message of maintaining the current position for bagging and tents.

The Community and Public Relations Manager recommends laying the groundwork of what our intentions are and that once restaurants are at 100% capacity the bags will be removed after 30 days.

The Director of Economic Development has not received any negative feedback from other businesses regarding the bags and agrees with the strategy.

The Director of Public Works advised the tents are permitted while under the State of Emergency and when the emergency is lifted businesses will have 30 days to remove the tents. The Director of Planning stated it also includes signage.

The Community and Public Relations Manager stated some business owners on Main Street are working from home and there may be more complaints to come regarding parking when they return to work. Chair Chmielewski noted there is plenty of space available in the garage for public parking.

Commissioner Bianca informed the Courts assume regular operations March 15th and Main Street parking and hopefully the garage will be busier.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Approved: March 1, 2021

Signature on file

Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file

Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk