

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

WORK SESSION – VIA TELECONFERENCE

March 30, 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: 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. Monica Worrell and Joan Michel from Discovery Center at Water's Edge joined the teleconference.

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:

Discovery Center at Water's Edge

Joan Michel has been a consultant to the project for approximately 5 years. The Discovery Center at Water's Edge plans to be a major science center located on the Rt. 40 corridor to inspire the next generation. The center will attract over 100,000 visitors each year contributing millions into the economy. The vision is a freestanding center with hands on experiences with science and play technology; and will meet gaps in education.

The PowerPoint displayed a map of Water's Edge and Ms. Michel advised the developer is planning to build a hotel on the property to include recreational areas.

Ms. Michel advised the Discovery Center area is approximately 2.7 acres that fronts the water and has an existing building on-site. Initially, the center would move into the existing facility and there are plans to eventually construct the freestanding building.

Timeline:

- 2021 - opening of Discovery Preview Center in the Fall
- 2023 - vision of opening a small scale operational Discovery Center
- 2026 - start construction on the permanent facility

The outdoor space will be utilized for outdoor classrooms doing environmental experiments, walking trails and will utilize a science focused playground.

Ms. Michel informed the Discovery Center will also be an economic driver to the County with tax benefit and jobs.

Sources of Revenue:

- Contributed - grants and donations
- Earned - programmatic funds
- Operational - includes admission fees, facility rentals
- Capital Campaign - looking to raise \$3 million in first campaign and \$30 million in second campaign

Events planned:

1. Magic of Science Fair and Family Festival May, 2022
2. Magic of Car Show, exploring the science of cars September 12, 2022

The PowerPoint included a list of Board members, advisors and organizations.

Ms. Worrell, from APG Federal Credit Union, has been involved with this project from the beginning. Ms. Worrell thanked the Town of Bel Air for giving the opportunity to hear about the Discovery Center and stated the project is gaining speed at rapid fire and will make an impact. Ms. Worrell encouraged going to the website for lots of good information; and she is available for questions.

Ms. Michel advised the Discovery Center is looking for partnerships and wants this project to be integrated with the community. Plans are to work with Bel Air High School.

Chair Chmielewski is glad to hear about working with Bel Air High School. Commissioner Bianca stated this is also exciting for the County where parents will not have to drive far to give their children this experience.

Chair Chmielewski informed Mr. Lewis sent an email to Town and has joined the meeting.

Mr. Lewis advised his background is in transportation/planning and has worked with several local governments. Mr. Lewis is proud to live in this County and enjoys walking in downtown Bel Air. During those walks, Mr. Lewis found the incubator shops behind the Armory and would like to see them involved in a better network. Mr. Lewis has some ideas for a downtown walking loop tying it into the Ma & Pa Trail and the Art Walk to market more activity in downtown Bel Air. Mr. Lewis appreciates the Town reaching out to him and is interested in participating in committees that support the Town.

The Director of Economic Development advised the Town likes to receive feedback on projects created. The Marketplace came about because of wanting a more walkable Town; and the Town, started about 10 years ago, thinking what attracts people. The Armory building and incubators were designed to be the nucleus and then spread out to create some walkability and end at an event held at the Armory.

Mr. Lewis likes the concept of the business incubators and loves the plant shop. Chair Chmielewski shared the Garden Mart is Friday, May 14th, 9:00 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at the Armory.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

COVID-19 Report

The Town Administrator entertained the idea of bringing employees who telework back to working in-house and to begin holding meetings in-person in April. The Town Administrator advised Maryland is still in a State of Emergency and numbers are rising again. The Town Administrator will make an assessment after receiving the April report from the Health Department.

MOA with Bel Air Downtown Alliance

The Town Administrator recognized Commissioner Richards who initially worked with the Bel Air Downtown Alliance on the agreement. The MOA addresses the Alliance occupying the Armory the first quarter of this year. Plans to vacate the premises any time after the first quarter would be done in writing with 60-days' notice to vacate.

The Alliance occupies an office on the first floor of the Armory and wants to continue for another quarter. Alliance staff also requested to continue using a storage area in the lower level. The Town Administrator advised the agreement has been discussed with the Alliance prior to the draft of the MOA.

Commissioner Richards has no issues and is supportive in sending out the agreement to the Downtown Alliance.

Commissioner Kahoe is also in agreement.

Chair Chmielewski wanted clarification that this MOA is separate from the Music on Main MOU. The Town Administrator agreed that they are separate agreements.

The Director of Administration informed the initial draft for the Music on Main MOU has been completed and sent to the Alliance for feedback.

Harford County Council Meeting

The Town Administrator sent emails to Commissioners and staff indicating that the Harford County Council wants to meet again with municipalities and elected officials regarding what is going on in each jurisdiction. The Town will participate April 13th at 6:30 p.m. There will be an abbreviated agenda for the Town's Budget/Work Sessions that evening so staff and Commissioners will be able to attend the County Council meeting.

The Town Administrator advised the email listed agenda items forwarded to the County for discussion and the County Council will send their items for discussion to the Town in the near future.

Harford Community College Meeting

The Town Administrator and Chair Chmielewski will meet with the new President of Harford Community College to discuss possible partnerships. The Town has partnerships within the College in the area of Law Enforcement and Public Safety and Harford Leadership Academy. In the past, discussion has been on student housing in the Town of Bel Air. The Town Administrator requested suggestions on items to be discussed.

The Director of Public Works knows the Lacrosse Coach at Harford Community is recruiting students outside Harford County and there will be a need for housing.

Policy - Street/Building/Properties Names

The Town Administrator notified there is a request to rename a street in Town and a member of the Harford County Sheriff's Office will make a presentation during the April 5th Town Board meeting. The request is to change Courtland Street from Main Street to Hickory Avenue to Deputy Frank Bateman Way, after the first Deputy Sheriff killed in the line of duty in the Town of Bel Air. Per the Charter, it is the responsibility of the Commissioners to determine street names in the Town.

The Town Administrator informed renaming requests have come to the Town in the past but there are no set policies to address this. The Town Administrator feels it is time to start thinking about a policy that relates to naming streets, buildings and properties.

Chair Chmielewski wanted to know more on the process of renaming a street. The Director of Planning stated when renaming a street or adding a ceremonial name a Resolution would need to pass. The Director of Planning stated there is no process the name change needs to go through. The Department of Emergency Services has issues in renaming because of not knowing locations for emergencies. The Chief of Police stated it is important to also know how many addresses will be affected by the name change. The Town Administrator further mentioned issues with the Post Office.

Commissioner Richards is happy to continue the discussion and consider a policy but asked where do you stop writing the policy. This will be cumbersome and an administrative hassle to update things that were not drafted originally. Commissioner Richards feels this is a slippery slope and the Town might want to consider not changing names going forward.

Commissioner Bianca did some research and emailed information on policies from other municipalities regarding naming streets. Commissioner Bianca agrees with Commissioner Richards but is willing to discuss further.

The Community & Public Relations Coordinator suggested having a policy that the Town does not rename streets. Commissioner Richards agreed and stated if someone wants to make a request, the Town Board would consider. The Community & Public Relations Coordinator has concerns about the street names already changed.

The Director of Planning noted the public street signs are green, private streets are blue and recommends the ceremonial streets go away. A list of memorials and their locations will be sent out.

The Town Administrator notified a request was received to close a section of Courtland Street in May for a Sheriff's Office ceremony for Fallen Heroes. The Chief of Police advised this has been done in the past and he is prepared to do so again.

TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR TOWN MEETING TELECONFERENCE (April 5, 2021)

Public Hearing:

Resolution 1163-21 Fiscal Year 2021 Budget Amendment

The Director of Finance reported another amendment to expenditures is being added which does not change the amount; that amendment being

- Armory Project - security door scanners, approximately \$19,000

There were savings in the Finance Department from the Procurement position to make this amendment possible.

Unfinished Business:

Resolution 1163-21 Fiscal year 2021 Budget Amendment

The Resolution will come before the Town Commissioners for approval.

New Business:

Introduction and Receipt of Resolution 1164-21 Fiscal Year 2022 Town Administrator's Budget

The Town Administration informed this is a tough year financially and the budget has not been totally completed. The FY 2022 budget will be presented during the April 5th meeting.

Commissioner Richards asked are we considering the tax increase to pay for the Police/Town Hall extension. The Town Administrator responded yes.

Chair Chmielewski advised the tax increase is not exclusively to pay for the extension but is needed to provide services. The Director of Finance advised the Town of Bel Air has not increased taxes since FY 2004.

The Town Administrator has stated, in the past, without an increase of taxes the Town has been able to pay personnel costs and provide necessary services, but it gets more difficult to do so every year because of the increases in demand of services, costs of doing business and increases of material costs. The Town Administrator advised the tax increase is not just for the Police Station. The Town cannot continue to provide the quality of services that has been provided in the past, without an increase in revenues. The Town Administrator knows businesses are hurting; that there are issues on rent/mortgages, and jobs being cut, in the

private sector. The budget being presented was done with as little impact as possible for citizens. The Town Administrator stated the presentation will show heavy hits taken from things we cannot control in terms of price increases.

The Town Administrator notified, as a result of the American Rescue Plan Act, the Town is on record to receive approximately \$8.4 million from the Federal Government that must be spent on whatever is COVID related by 2024. The Deputy Director of Finance will be dealing with this and a number of discussions will be held as time goes on. The Town Administrator asked staff to be thinking about what can qualify for compensation. Some of this money has nothing to do with COVID and is infrastructure related. More information will be coming regarding what the funds can be spent on. The Town Administrator noted there are a lot of uncertainties, but these funds may impact the revenue stream.

Commissioner Richards wanted clarification that, during the meeting on April 5th, the Commissioners will receive the Town's draft budget and then will go through a process of understanding details of the budget. During May/June the final approval of the budget will take place.

The Director of Finance informed of several Work Sessions and two Public Hearings with final approval at the May 17th Town Board meeting.

The Town Administrator notified there is no proposal for a huge tax increase and does not want anyone to panic. The Town Administrator stated even if not looking at the Police Station extension, a tax increase would still be requested in order to continue to provide the same level of services to the Town as has been provided in the past.

2nd Annexation Petition for Catherine Street Property by Liriod, LLC

The Director of Planning advised the Commissioners will be accepting an application from a property owner outside of Town who wants property to be annexed into Town. This is not an approval of any development or approval of the annexation and is only verifying that the signatures on the petition are valid and reflective of the property owner who is drafting the petition. The Director of Planning stated this is something the Town is required to do by State law. When accepting the petition by the Commissioners, a Resolution and an annexation plan is created through staff who then comes back before the Commissioners with the recommendation to receive or not receive.

Commissioner Richards wanted clarification on the process after the annexation petition is addressed. The Director of Planning reported:

- Petition for annexation - before the Commissioners April 5th
- Resolution and Annexation Plan - Commissioners receive it and hold public hearings to review details

Purchase of F550 Dump Truck

The Director of Public Works stated this purchase of the Dump Truck will help improve the snow and ice operations in the Town. The Director of Public Works had expressed concern about being a little slow in responding to some areas specifically near the hospital and Home Depot during recent snowstorms. Concerns were also raised near the Mall and Weimer Eye Clinic on Bolton Street and from the new condominiums on Gateway Drive. The Director of Public Works advised there are currently 4 dump trucks that service the quadrants in Town and this new dump truck will help to provide greater service. The Director of Public Works advised the Town Administrator found funds left in the mid-year adjustment and would appreciate approval of the purchase to provide better service to citizens and businesses. This purchase will piggyback on a Baltimore County contract for \$101,000.

Commissioner Richards appreciates the commitment to service.

Bel Air Police Department Lease Vehicle Contract

The Chief of Police informed an Investigator is assigned to the Harford County Drug Task Force and the Town recently had to return his covert vehicle that was leased through Enterprise Fleet Management. The Town's Procurement Officer, Mr. Miller, has solicited requests from other companies to get the best value. This contract is for another leased covert vehicle through Enterprise for 36 months with a cost around \$38,000.

STAFFING UPDATE:

The Director of Administration reported:

- Part-time Dispatchers - background process continues

CALENDAR:

Calendars for March, April and May were sent out. Contact Ruth Seitler with any additions or corrections.

MISCELLANEOUS:Comprehensive Plan Update

The Director of Planning advised this process was delayed because of thinking the Census data would be available but it is not. The PowerPoint on the Comprehensive Plan was presented and the following reviewed:

State Requirements - items Town required to adhere to.

Plan Elements - all of the elements will be subject to a focus group.

Methodology - starting with stakeholder group feedback. Working towards creating a concept to combine with data from Census. Conduct public meetings and web surveys. There will be a connection with GIS for interaction with Town residents.

Other Studies Utilized - Bel Air Market Study (2021). The Director of Economic Development is waiting on the data. Other studies were also listed.

Tentative Schedule -

- Stakeholder groups will be put together and meet in May.

All data currently available will be put together over the next 2 months.

- June, 2021 - hoping Census will be available. Will assemble discussion notes and additional data.
- July, 2021 - Planning Commission members to review process and decide what changes they want to see moving forward. The Town Board will also review the same data.
- August/September, 2021 - assemble input and prepare draft of goals and objectives.

The Director of Planning noted this will be a 10 year plan. The State allows for a 10-year plan with revisiting the plan after 5 years; the timeline - New Comprehensive Plan for 2021, revisit the plan in 2026, and another new plan proposed for 2031.

- September, 2021 - Planning Commission to review draft of goals and objectives. Public meetings and surveys will be conducted during the Fall.
- October, 2021 - goals to be revised and a draft narrative prepared.
- November, 2021 - Planning Commission to review public input and staff to refine narrative.
- December, 2021 - Planning Commission to make recommendation to the Town Board.
- January, 2022 - Town Board to conduct public meeting and review Comprehensive Plan.
- February, 2022 - Possible second public meeting and approval of the Comprehensive Plan.
- March, 2022 - Publication of plan.

Commissioner Richards asked does the Comprehensive Rezoning come on the heels of this. The Director of Planning informed any changes of the Development Regulations would be completed first and at the same time open up a window to allow people to apply for rezoning.

Colleen West, 411 West Gordon Street, asked if there is a steering committee for the Comprehensive Plan update and who serves on that. The Director of Planning informed the Planning Commission is the steering committee and that follows State law. Ms. West asked about a citizen advisory committee. The Director of Planning informed of 4 focus groups and public input. Ms. West wanted the demographics of the focus groups. The Director of Planning advised that has not yet been established.

Commissioner Richards asked if any citizen had interest in participating in focus groups should they contact the Planning Department. The Director of Planning responded yes and stated throughout the process there will be multiple opportunities for citizen input.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Colleen West, 411 W. Gordon Street has concern with just hearing about the Comprehensive update at this meeting and having no outreach.

The Director of Planning advised this is the first the Commissioners have heard about the Comprehensive Plan and is the beginning of the process. The Focus groups will be assembled in April and meet in May.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

None.

The Director of Planning notified the Farmers Market begins Saturday, April 10th from 7:00 - 11:00 a.m. April 10 is Arbor Day where trees will be given away at the Farmers Market as well.

ADJOURNMENT:

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Approved: April 5, 2021

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

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk