

MINUTES

BEL AIR BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS RETREAT

April 2, 2022

The retreat of the Board of Town Commissioners was called to order on Saturday, April 2, 2022 at 8:00 a.m. at Town Hall, 39 Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin M. Bianca, Chair
Mary F. Chance
Erin S. Hughes
Donna L. Kahoe
Paula S. Etting

STAFF PRESENT: L. Jesse Bane, Town Administrator
Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Patti Parker, Community & Public Relations Manager
Charles Moore, Chief of Police
Rachel Deaner, Deputy Director of Finance
Charlie Dawson, Deputy Director of Public Works
Rowan Glidden, Senior Planner
Catherine Butrim, Recording Secretary

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT & PRIORITIZATION REVIEW & DISCUSSION:

Ms. Deaner presented the following proposals for the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, listed according to priority:

Priority 1 Proposals:

- **Premium pay for essential workers (Actual) (12/10/21) - \$149,500**
- **Renovation of Police Station (Estimate) (In Progress) - \$3,800,000**
- **Contractor/Consultant for ARPA tracking and reporting (Actual) (In Progress) - \$24,500**
- **Replace Legacy Fiber Optic Lines for HMAN (Actual) (In Progress) \$16,218**
- **Generator for English Country Manor Pump Station (Actual) (In Progress) - \$68,400**

Ms. Moody advised that this item has a change order against it.

- **Wireless access points and wireless controller nearing end of life (FY23) - \$10,800**
- **Improvements to Homestead Park (Estimate) (FY23) - \$165,000**

Mr. Small advised that this amount is being added to the existing grant based on a cost estimate.

- **Improve Courtland Street between Bond and Main (Phase 2-\$100K from State; PY encumbrance-\$124,949) (FY23) - \$175,261**
- **Improve security at DPW/Planning Building (FY23) - \$35,000**
- **Patrol vehicle replacements (FY23) - \$120,000**
- **DPW vehicle replacements (FY23) - \$442,580**
- **Patrol vehicle replacements (FY24) - \$126,000**
- **DPW vehicle replacements (FY24) - \$405,000**
- **Patrol vehicle replacements (FY25) - \$132,300**
- **DPW vehicle replacements (FY25) - \$325,000**
- **Gordon Street Sidewalk (FY23) - \$70,000**

Mr. Kline advised that this item is a sidewalk addition requested by the community due to speeding on Gordon Street. He advised that there are some right-of-way issues. A sidewalk will be built from Williams Street up to Atwood Road, and a small section will connect Gordon Street to Catherine, along Atwood. Mr. Kline advised that the cost may need to be adjusted due to inflation.

- **HVAC for Public Works & Planning Facility (FY23) - \$110,000**

Mr. Kline advised that this is a new request that would help improve the air quality at the DPW facility, particularly in the shop area.

- **2 Mini Split HVAC Units in Lower-Level Classrooms (Armory) (FY23) - \$25,000**

Mr. Kline advised that also is an air quality issue, and the plan is to eventually do away with the large steam boiler in the basement. There is no air conditioning in the lower units of the facility, and the heat is not dependable.

- **Replace rooftop HVAC system at DWP & Planning Facility (FY23) - \$35,000**
- **WW collection system rehab and replacement projects (FY23/24) - \$951,208**

Mr. Kline advised that this item includes two (2) pump station upgrades, but there also are many linear feet of clay terra cotta sanitary sewer pipes running through the streets that are about 50 years old and beginning to crack.

- **New playground surfaces for Shamrock Park (FY23) - \$190,000**

Mr. Small advised that the new surface would solve the problem of mulch from the playground ending up in the stream after bad storms. The new surface also is handicapped accessible and does not grow weeds.

- **Upgrades to Thomas Street & George Street (Ph. 1-Thomas St. \$600K) (Ph. 2-George St. \$110K) (Ph. 3-Commercial Bond/Hays & Thomas St. \$280K) - \$1,000,000**

Mr. Small advised that Phase 1 in particular will be a great benefit to Howard Park because it will allow a pedestrian access from Plumtree Park to what will be a future trail to connect with the Ma & Pa Trail.

- **Comfort Station at Williams Street trail head, Ma & Pa Trail (MOU with HC) - \$250,000**

Mr. Bane advised that members of the community surrounding the Ma & Pa Trail are not happy with the port-a-pots located there, and he is in negotiation with Harford County to have the County replace the port-a-pots with a comfort station. Mr. Bane advised that amenities are much greater with a comfort station, including a timer to close it from dusk to dawn. A grinder will need to be attached to the facility. Mr. Bane advised that he would like to complete this project in the next fiscal year.

- **One-time funding-BAVFC (FY23) - \$7,979**

- **One-time funding-BARC (FY23) - \$17,595**

- **One-time funding-Alliance (FY23) - \$6,500**

Ms. Moody advised that the three (3) items above are one-time expenditures, and the Town must have conversations with the above organizations to determine how they will spend this funding.

- **Improvements to Bond St. curbs and sidewalks (State Road)**

Mr. Kline advised that the Appearance and Beautification Committee (ABC) will discuss and try to find a funding source for electricity on street lights so the Town would have the ability to have receptacles on light poles for things such as Christmas lights.

- **Research stormwater issues in neighborhoods-investigate flooding in residential areas**
As there are stormwater management funds in reserve, Ms. Moody advised that this item be stricken from this worksheet.

Priority 2 Proposals:

- **Improvements to Burns Alley “Back Door Main Street” (pedestrian mall/eng./construction) - \$500,000**
Mr. Small advised that this funding would be for the engineering and construction.
- **New playground surfaces for Plumtree Park - \$300,000**
Mr. Bianca suggested that the Town choose pieces of playground equipment and ask the community in a survey to choose which they would like to have installed.
- **Install a low-maintenance filtering system at Chesapeake Sensory Playground - \$80,000**
Mr. Small advised that the water is not recirculating now because it is very expensive to implement a system to sanitize the water. He advised that this item needs more study to determine what the Town spends for water versus what the Town would spend to recirculate the water. Mr. Kline advised that there is liability in installing a treatment plant with chemicals for recirculating the water.
- **Design and construct a storm drain leading from Office/Main Street properties to outfall at Bond Street - \$170,000**
Mr. Small advised that the idea is to take some of the water that is sitting on the surface and infiltrating into the soil and into some basements and deliver it straight to a storm drain.
- **Install a fitness system (or series of stations) targeted to seniors - \$100,000**
Mr. Small advised that the right locations need to be found because many times these systems are installed and then rarely used. Ms. Etting advised that she is rethinking this item because these fitness systems are so often underutilized.

Priority 3 Proposals:

- **Placer .AI License for tracking COVID impact on businesses - \$11,000**

Ms. Heidenreich advised that this is a one-time license with a one-year commitment for a geofencing tool that will track consumer activity and track businesses that did not do well during the pandemic. She advised that this would be a tool to provide data when applying for State funding. Ms. Heidenreich advised that this tool will provide population tracking for the Town's parks as well. Mr. Dawson advised that Ms. Heidenreich check if the GIS system currently used by the Town would provide these tools.

- **Purchase property located in the floodplain (332 Baltimore Pike) (90/10-CPP/DNR) - \$150,000**

Mr. Small advised that there are two (2) properties next to Plumtree Run. The Town would like to purchase the one that was the nail salon (which is entirely in the floodplain) and create a buffer from the car wash and then later create a walking link between George Street and Baltimore Pike.

Ms. Deaner advised that the Town will need to announce when it will use ARPA funding for any projects.

Mr. Bianca advised that he would like to meet with Mr. Small and Mr. Kline on Monday to discuss some other options for playground equipment that would give some funding back to the ARPA pool for another use. The Commissioners agreed to strike the installation of fitness systems from the worksheet. The Commissioners agreed that upgrades to Thomas Street should be a priority and that purchasing property in the floodplain on Baltimore Pike should be a higher priority.

ZONING MATTERS:

Discuss Parking Requirements for Development

Mr. Small presented a package with information regarding the parking requirements for development. He advised that parking spaces must be a standard of 9 feet by 18 feet. Handicapped spaces must meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which is federally

mandated. Parking is not permitted in specific zones. In addition, there are stormwater management, landscape, lighting, and access requirements among other elements.

- The B-2 District does not require parking for retail or service uses unless the requirement goes over 50 spaces.
- Parking alternatives with Planning Commission approval:
 1. Properties in the B-2 may provide some or all required spaces offsite (within 500 feet), which can be accomplished with a lease with the parking garage or a lease with a property owner.
 2. Properties in the B-2 and B-3A may provide 50 percent of the parking offsite (within 500 feet).
 3. Parking may be shared with adjacent uses (within 500 feet) provided use of the spaces do not conflict.
 4. A fee-in-lieu of parking may be provided in the B-2, B-2A and B-3A. The cost is \$2,400.00 per space.
- There is a provision that allows the Board of Appeals to waive or reduce parking requirements if certain criteria are met.
- Accessory uses that do not operate more than six (6) months of the year are not required to provide parking.
- Temporary uses are not required to provide parking unless the Zoning Administrator requires it based on the proposed temporary use.
- Parking lots less than 15 spaces are not required to provide a hard surface unless it is for handicapped parking.
- Parking may be provided in a residentially zoned property for an adjacent commercial use with Board of Appeals approval.
- Parking on grass is prohibited (unless it is approved by the Town—pervious pavers).
- Commercial vehicles are not permitted in a residential neighborhood (unless part of an active construction project).
- Recreational vehicles/trailers are not permitted at a residence longer than seven (7) days. Storage of an RV/trailer may only be inside or rear yards.

Mr. Small presented the existing Town Code and calculations for Residential, Retail/Service, and Institutional/Industrial parking requirements. He advised that the requirement of 4 spaces/1,000 sf for a Shopping Center is low as the County requires 5 spaces/1,000 sf. Mr. Small advised that the Town is considering limiting the number of restaurants in a Shopping Center to a certain percentage to prevent the problems that arise in parking when a Shopping Center contains many of the same uses. Mr. Small advised that the Town calculates outdoor spaces by seat. He advised that the Town is considering reducing the number of spaces for retail services due to the impact of COVID.

Mr. Small advised that the Town would like to complete a Parking Study as the last Parking Study was completed in 2010. Ms. Parker noted that the Parking Study might be an appropriate use of ARPA funding.

Mr. Small advised that more entities are interested in putting in spaces with electric vehicle charging stations, but the Town will have to consider the issue of ticketing vehicles that are not electric if they are parked at a charging station.

Review and Discuss Height Restrictions

Mr. Small presented some background on building heights. Building height has changed over the last 10 years. For many years, buildings were regulated based on height and stories, whichever was less. In 2017, the Town removed the limitation on the number of floors, effectively adding a story to the B-2, B-2A, B-3, B-3A and M-1.

Mr. Small advised that the Town also added a 10 percent building height bonus for buildings that provide structured parking. Building height is measured from the average contact grade along the perimeter of the building to the roof; if the roof is sloped, then halfway between the eave and the ridge. Elevator towers, parapet walls, antennas, steeples, and other architectural fenestrations are not part of the calculation. A developer can receive a variance from building height based on the property, neighborhood, and its characteristics.

Mr. Small advised that to assist a developer in making the most of the property, the Town has reduced setbacks across the board. In several cases, there is no setback at all. Other things that impact yield are stormwater management, reforestation, and open space. Forest area and open spaces have options to pay a fee-in-lieu.

Review and Discuss MacPhail Road Connection

Mr. Small advised that he and Mr. Glidden had a conversation with some of the staff at Homestead-Wakefield, and they agreed in principle with what the Town has proposed; but that will be decided at the Planning Commission meeting on April 7.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY:

Chief Moore presented a PowerPoint regarding Pedestrian and Traffic Safety. He noted that complaints are tracked on a spreadsheet by Keith Smithson, Traffic Safety Officer, including the number of enforcement hours. When officers have some spare time, they also will “Take 30” and do some enforcement in that area.

Mr. Small advised that when a citizen wants to have a traffic calming device put in a certain area, he or she must propose it; and if the Town determines that the request is actionable, the Police Department will collect measurable data, and a points system will determine whether a traffic calming device is appropriate.

Chief Moore advised that there is a disparity between perception and reality regarding speeding on Main Street.

Chief Moore advised that, according to traffic laws, cars do not have to stop when a pedestrian is at a non-signalized crosswalk. The pedestrian is obligated to wait until it is safe to step out into the crosswalk. Vehicles in both lanes are required to stop when a pedestrian is within the crosswalk.

Ms. Etting inquired if the signs that post a vehicle’s speed also count the number of vehicles that pass through. Chief Moore advised that they do count the number of vehicles.

Mr. Glidden advised that he has had several calls about the crosswalk signal not working at Rock Spring Road. Chief Moore advised that he has personally tested the crosswalk signal eight or nine times, and it has worked every time.

Mr. Small advised that he has sent a request to SHA to have “Ped Xing” pavement markings put in the road.

Chief Moore advised that Officer Smithson has broken down the Town into five sectors, for traffic enforcement purposes. The officers do stop many cars on Main Street.

Chief Moore advised that the Police Department has received \$6,000.00 from the Maryland Highway Safety Office (MHSO), and \$2,000.00 each has been funded for pedestrian enforcement, traffic enforcement and distracted driving.

Chief Moore advised that special attention is placed on improper parking (12 inches from the curb).

Ms. Kahoe inquired if colorful "Ped Xing" markings could be used at crosswalks. Chief Moore advised that the State looks at those markings as a distraction.

Chief Moore advised that since October 2021, three (3) pedestrians have been cited for jaywalking, and four (4) drivers were cited for not stopping at crosswalks.

Chief Moore advised that Officer Graziano recently monitored Lee Street at Main for several mornings, and there were no violations.

Mr. Bianca inquired what the Town Board can do to support the Police Department and Town staff to promote pedestrian and traffic safety. Chief Moore advised that a "nuclear signal" should be at Independent Brewing and Office Street.

Mr. Kline advised that the best time for enforcement is when the Courthouse closes at the end of the day.

Chief Moore advised that Linwood Avenue and Main Street traffic concerns appear to be originating from school staff. In September 2018, concerns about "close calls" were reported originally from the Bel Air Middle School principal. Patrols and SROs are directed to perform enforcement and crossing assistance. In January 2022, there were concerns from school personnel for "close calls" and requests for pedestrian crossing. "Take 30s" and the Traffic Safety Officer have been utilized.

Chief Moore advised that the Police Department has had to direct resources to the Route 24 corridor for shoplifting complaints and traffic violations. He advised that the Police Department has a 52 percent closure rate on shoplifting complaints.

Chief Moore advised that parking at St. Margaret's obstructs the views at Hickory Avenue and Lee Way. He advised that the Har-co sign obstructs the view on the other side of Hickory.

Chief Moore advised that there were five (5) arrests on St. Patrick's Day.

Chief Moore advised that officers will be at First Fridays for education. Drivers will receive tickets for violations while pedestrians will receive warnings.

Chief Moore advised that accidents on Main Street have increased since 2021.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

APPROVED: May 2, 2022

Signature on file
Kevin M. Bianca, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk