

MINUTES

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

April 17, 2023

The regular meeting of the Board of Town Commissioners was called to order on Monday, April 17, 2023, 5:30 p.m. at McFaul Activities Center, Bel Air, Maryland.

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

STAFF PRESENT: Edward Hopkins, Town Administrator
David Hughes, Deputy Chief of Police
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
David Anderson, Media & Public Relations Specialist
Charles Keenan, Town Counsel
Elizabeth Thompson, Town Counsel
Joan Suitt, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Charles Moore, Chief of Police

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

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

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Chance seconded the motion that the minutes of the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners' meetings held on March 28, 2023, and April 3, 2023, be approved as submitted.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

Abstained: Commissioner Etting - March 28, 2023 meeting.

The motion carried.

PRESENTATION:

Proclamation to Dispatchers for National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week

Emergencies happen at any time of day, any time of the year, so Bel Air's Police Communications Operators are on duty 24/7; and PCOs are the first and most important contact the public have with the Bel Air Police Department. The police officers in the field depend on accurate and timely information from PCOs to do their jobs properly and safely.

The Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners designated the week of April 9th - April 15th, 2023 as National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week in the Town of Bel Air.

Deputy Chief Hughes notified our PCOs are truly the unsung heroes of the Town and our lives are in their hands. On behalf of the Town of Bel Air and the Police Department, Deputy Chief Hughes stated, we are grateful for your outstanding work.

Jessica Price and Karla Melchior accepted the Proclamation on behalf of all the Bel Air Police Department's PCOs.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Resolution 1196-23 Town Administrator's Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Ms. Moody, Director of Finance advised Public Safety (34.8%), General Government (32.5%) and Public Works (24.2%) make up the majority of the General Fund Expenditures.

Total General Fund Expenditures

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGE
\$18,485,015	\$16,486,617	\$1,998,398 or 12.1%

Salaries/Benefits

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGE
\$11,349,587	\$10,772,956	\$576,631

- FY24 budget includes funding for a merit increase (\$246,383), and a 5% COLA (\$463,969)
- Environmental Engineering Tech's salary/benefits will be 70% funded by utilizing the stormwater management funds received from Harford County.
- Salaries/Benefits represent 70.4% of the total general fund expenditures (excluding ARPA) compared to 72.6% in fiscal year 2023.
- Worker's Compensation
 - o Town's modification rate decreased from a premium of 1.90 to a premium of 1.65. It is still fairly high, but the Town is moving in the right direction.

- o Base rates are set by the National Council of Compensation Insurance (NCCI), and each specific class decreased (.18% clerical, 4.48% other, and 6.55% sworn officers/Parking Enforcement).
- o Social Security - 7.65% of salaries, overtime, deferred compensation match, and resident rebate.
- Medical Insurance
 - o Town will continue to offer only a high-deductible health plan with HSA in FY24.
 - o There was no change in the HDHP rate from FY23.
 - o Town is proposing to continue to pay 100% of the premiums.
 - o Town is proposing to continue to contribute 35% of the deductible to the employee's HSA account.
- Pension
 - o Town has two separate Defined Benefits pension plans.
 - o Town contributes 8.7% and 9.4% of base pay to the civilian and sworn officer plans, respectively

Expenses

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGE
\$2,949,256	\$2,835,722	\$113,534

- Finance audits - \$32,830 (3 audits)
- Building maintenance - \$201,000 (all facilities)
- Utilities - \$122,000 (all buildings)
- Gas/Diesel Fuel - \$174,744 (police, shop, Town vehicles)
- Legal Services - \$78,100
- Marketing - \$69,300 (Economic Development, Armory, Public Relations)
- Technology - \$300,217 - all departments (except salary & benefits)
- General Insurance - \$162,000 (LGIT insurance) - property, vehicle, volunteers, public officials
- Red Light Camera Program - \$231,975
- Police Department - \$365,981 - operation expenses
- Public Works - \$768,102 - 4 different divisions
- Stormwater Management (MSA Program) - \$130,000

Capital Improvements

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGE
\$3,195,167	\$1,873,640	\$1,321,527

- Armory - **\$130,000 (Cap Res)**
 - o Lower level door replacement (\$10,000)
 - o Exterior concrete façade repairs/painting (\$45,000)
 - o Gym HVAC unit replacement (\$75,000)
- Town Buildings **\$377,000 (\$225K ARPA/\$152K Cap Res)**
 - o Secured fenced area seized vehicles (\$15,000)
 - o Comfort Station security cameras (\$30,000)

- o Equipment shed gutter/flooding work (\$25,000)
- o Ma & Pa Comfort Station (50/50 project) \$175,000
- o Public Works locker room renovation (\$50,000)
- o Rockfield barn door/fence repairs (\$32,000)
- o Facilities Manager vehicle (expect sell \$4K) (\$50,000)
- **Planning & Zoning \$1,828,167 (\$1,215,000 ARPA)**
 - o Homestead Park, a \$35,000 match for the CPP Grant is required as well as \$165,000 (ARPA) additional funding to complete the following improvements: upgrades to off-street parking, handicapped access, and provisions for a pickleball court. **\$200,000**
 - o Burns Alley funding for construction associated with improvements along Burns Alley based on a concept created in FY23. **\$500,000 (ARPA)**
 - o Plumtree Park funding to complete the renovation started several years ago. **\$50,000 (Cap Res)**
 - o Thomas/George Street funding for the improvement of Thomas Street between Bond and Kelly/upgrade of George Street between Kelly and Plumtree Park. **\$1,000,000 (ARPA)**
 - o Wayfinding Graphics funding for phase IV of the wayfinding study performed in 2016. **\$50,000 (Cap Res)**
 - o M&T Park Lot funding to address existing and potential drainage problems for buildings along S. Main Street and Office Street. **\$20,000 (Cap Res)**
- **Police Department \$150,000 (ARPA)**
 - o Three vehicle replacements (expect sell \$15K)
- **Miscellaneous \$20,000**
 - o Transfer to Capital Reserve
- **Streets & Highways \$690,000**
 - o 6 Street construction projects \$335,000
 - o 3 Curb ramp construction projects \$ 50,000
 - o Asst. Operations Chief veh. (expect sell \$3K) \$ 50,000 (ARPA)
 - o Dump Truck (expect sell \$20K) \$225,000 (ARPA)
 - o Industrial air compressor (expect sell \$3K) \$ 30,000 (Cap)

Debt Service

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGE
\$614,886	\$611,736	\$3,150

- \$134,180 represents P&I payments on vehicle/equipment purchases from FY20-FY21. Financings are made on a seven-year maturity with rates ranging from 1.08% - 1.89%. The proposed vehicles/equipment purchases in the budget will be funded with ARPA.
- \$75,927 represents P&I payments on the debt to finance the various energy savings projects related to the JCI contract. Financing is a 15 year term at 2.79%. The debt is guaranteed to be paid for by energy savings.
- \$404,779 represents P&I payments on the PD/TH renovations/expansion project. The financing is a 30 year term at 2.673%.

Community Support

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGE
\$376,119	\$392,563	(\$16,444)

- Bel Air Alliance (Marketing) \$ 15,000
- Bel Air Alliance (Christmas Parade) \$ 5,000
- Bel Air Volunteer Fire Company \$164,589
- Parks & Recreation Committee \$ 91,700
- Appearance & Beautification Committee \$ 39,300
- Independence Day Committee \$ 15,200
- Cultural Arts Committee \$ 8,350
- Boys & Girls Club \$ 12,500
- Other \$ 24,480
- In addition, Town provides a large amount of in-kind community support to the Alliance, Rockfield Foundation, Independence Day Committee and other non-profits

Total General Fund Revenues

Property Tax - 51.3%, Grants - 20.5%, State Shared Taxes - 14.7%

FY2024	FY2023	CHANGES
\$18,485,015	\$16,486,617	\$1,998,398 or 12.1%

General Fund Revenues

- Property Taxes **\$9,468,651**
 - o Real property tax rate proposed to remain the same at \$.54/\$100
 - o First Year of the triennial reassessment phase for real property which included an approximate 3.6% increase
 - o Personal property tax rate proposed to remain the same at \$1.20/\$100
- State Shared **\$2,714,230**
 - o Income taxes projected increase 2% (\$1,800,000)
 - o Highway user (amount provided by SHA) (\$614,666)
 - o Police Protection grant (no estimate from state) (\$234,564)
- Licenses and Permit **\$261,000**
 - o Cable TV Franchise - 3% franchise fee from Verizon and Comcast (\$140,000)
- Grants **\$3,796,319**
 - o Harford County Tax Rebate increased by \$9,691 based on Harford County formula (\$1,225,111)
 - o American Rescue Pan (ARPA) is based on projects currently under review for the current fiscal year (\$2,315,000)
 - o Harford County Stormwater Management is based on an MOU to distribute county funds to assist in stormwater management obligations (\$175,000)
- Miscellaneous/Interest/Fines **\$1,110,150**
 - o Armory rental fees (\$95,000)
 - o Red Light camera fines (\$581,200)

- o Reimbursable police/DPW overtime (\$60,000)
- o Interest on investments (\$250,000)
- Transfer from Unassigned **\$35,000**
 - o Proposed to fund match requirements for the CPP grant (\$115,000) received to fund the upgrades to Homestead Park (total project cost \$315,000)
- Transfer from Capital Reserve **\$432,000**
 - o Proposing to use capital reserve to fund capital projects in the Armory (\$130,000), Town Buildings (\$152,000), Planning (\$120,000), and DPW Streets (\$30,000)
- Transfer from Parking and Sewer Funds **\$669,665**
 - o Reimburse the General fund for employee salaries, benefits, and overhead attributable to operating those enterprise funds. These will be reviewed during the next public hearing.

Commissioner Etting recommended the PowerPoint presentation be posted on the Town's website for residents to be informed. Ms. Moody will post.

Chair Bianca called for public comments.

Mike Early, 513 Ponderosa Drive, Bel Air, Md., is the Vice President of the Ma & Pa Heritage Trail Foundation. Mr. Early supports the line item for approximately \$175,000 for the Williams Street Comfort Station. This area has become the centerpiece of the trail where a lot of events take place. Mr. Early stated this Comfort Station will be great for the Town's appearance and have electricity, water and an AED machine.

Steve Chizmar, 321 E. Broadway, Bel Air, Md. stated the FY24 budget seems very solid. Mr. Chizmar has concerns about spending funds on Burns Alley and would rather see the money used for Bond Street or Baltimore Pike that has more car and foot traffic.

Chair Bianca reminded if the Burns Alley project does not work out funds would be reallocated.

Fran Johnson, 124 Archer Street, Bel Air, Md. thanked Ms. Moody for her great work on budgets throughout the years. Ms. Johnson agrees with using the Capital Reserve Funds now because costs always go up. This is a responsible budget but Ms. Johnson would have liked to see a tax increase to continue building the Capital Reserve.

Mr. Hopkins, Town Administrator, stated the PowerPoint will be posted on the Town's website after the two slides are corrected.

As there were no further comments, Chair Bianca closed the Public Hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NEW BUSINESS ITEMS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution 1197-23 Historic Designation - 124 West Gordon Street

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Chance seconded the motion that Resolution No. 1197-23, a Resolution designating 124 West Gordon Street as a historic site in the Town of Bel Air, be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Commissioner Kahoe inquired about the 5% credit. Mr. Small, Director of Planning, informed additions made to a structure would need approval by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to receive the 5% tax rebate. Commissioner Hughes stated anything seen from the street would have to pass HPC standards with like materials and appearance. Chair Bianca inquired if this house is being recorded in the Land Records. Mr. Small advised that will be done.

Commissioner Etting informed Mr. Sauer died in 2004 and a Personal Representative was appointed but may not actually own the property. Commissioner Etting stated the property records state James Sauer is still the recorded owner.

Ms. Thompson, Town Counsel, reported Virginia Sauer is the Personal Representative of the estate of James Edward Sauer and was confirmed through on-line records. Mr. Small advised the Town was aware and revised the Resolution with Virginia Sauer, as Personal Representative who made the request.

Mr. Keenan informed there will be a deed of distribution from the estate after going through Orphans Court and Register of Wills. Ms. Thompson advised there was no deed of distribution from the estate and Virginia Sauer just assumed it was completed.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Resolution 1198-23 Fiscal Year 2024 Tentative Budget

Commissioner Hughes moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion that proposed Resolution No. 1198-23, providing for the adoption of a Tentative Budget for the Town of Bel Air for fiscal year 2024, be adopted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Ms. Moody, Director of Finance, notified if approved this will become the FY24 Tentative Budget or working budget. During the next Public Hearing, May 15th, 5:30 p.m. at the McFaul Activities Center, the vote will be on the Final Budget.

The next Budget Work Session is Wednesday, April 19th, at the Armory, 4:30 p.m.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Resolution 1199-23 Amending Civilian Pension Plan Beneficiary Definition

Commissioner Chance moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion that Resolution No. 1199-23, accepting the amended definition of beneficiary for the Town of Bel Air Maryland Civilian Employees Pension Plan, be accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Commissioner Etting wanted clarification that the change does not cost the Town any additional money and is only about changing beneficiaries. Mr. Krantz, Director of Administration, advised that is correct. Commissioner Etting stated this is a good change for the participants.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Resolution 1200-23 Amending Sworn Pension Plan Beneficiary Definition & Participant Contribution

Commissioner Chance moved and Commissioner Hughes seconded the motion that Resolution No. 1200-23, accepting the amended participant contribution and definition of beneficiary for the Town of Bel Air Maryland Sworn Officers Pension Plan, be accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Commissioner Etting asked to clarify the change in participants contribution will be less. Mr. Krantz advised that is correct. The Actuary meets on an annual basis and the performance of the plan was very positive and continues to proceed in the right direction. The Police Officer's contribution 11.62% was high and the Trustees decided to lower it to 10.00%.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Resolution No. 1201-23 Planning Commission 2022 Annual Report

Commissioner Hughes moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion that Resolution No. 1201-23, the Planning Commission 2022 Annual Report, be accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Commissioner Hughes asked where the public could access the Annual Report. Mr. Small notified there are three places on the Town's website and recommends going to the Planning Commission page.

Chair Bianca appreciates all the efforts of the volunteers on the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, and Historic Preservation Commission for their work.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe and Bianca

Nays: None

The motion carried.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Bianca notified:

- April 19th 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Blood Drive at the Armory. Appointments can be made on the Red Cross app.
- April 20th 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Bel Air Community Band Jazz at the Armory. Tickets are free and can request them on the Armory website.

Chair Bianca advised the Kite Festival was held Sunday because of inclement weather. There were many smiling children and parents who attended. Chair Bianca thanked Mr. Krantz and the many volunteers who helped.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Fran Johnson, 124 Archer Street, Bel Air, Md. stated the lawn signage around the Town, "Save Bel Air" and "No More Apartments" is disturbing and offensive. They do not have any place in the Town of Bel Air. Ms. Johnson advised the sign about apartments are shortsighted and unwise because the Town needs diversity in the community. The apartments are necessary for our young adults and seniors. Ms. Johnson commented this movement is unspecified and a kneejerk reaction to something.

Leroy Fleming, 2 N. Reed Street, Bel Air, Md. stated in the beginning of COVID a study was conducted for a stop sign at Reed and Thomas Street. The study showed there were not enough cars or accidents. Mr. Fleming informed of an accident last week and it could have been avoided with a stop sign. Mr. Fleming notified people will continue to get hurt and asked what it will take to get the stop sign.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

APPROVED: May 1, 2023

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

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk