

MINUTES
BUDGET WORK SESSION

April 22, 2021

IN ATTENDANCE: Amy Chmielewski, Town Commissioner
Kevin Bianca, Town Commissioner
Patrick Richards, Town Commissioner
Donna Kahoe, Town Commissioner
Erin Hughes, Town Commissioner
L. Jesse Bane, Town Administrator
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration
Steve Kline, Director of Public Works
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Richard Hicks, Bel Air Recreation Committee
Derek DeWitt, Boys & Girls Club
Elizabeth Janney, Bel Air Patch
Catherine Butrim, Recording Secretary

The Budget Work Session teleconference was called to order at 4:30 p.m. via GoToMeeting (614751925)

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion to approve the agenda for the Budget Work Session.

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

Nays: None

The motion carried.

PRESENTATIONS:

Bel Air Recreation Committee, Richard Hicks

Mr. Hicks thanked the Town for its continued support and reported that the Town does have a letter on file from the Bel Air Recreation Committee for the requested dollar amount, which is the same amount as requested last year.

Mr. Hicks reported that COVID-19 made it a difficult past year, but the Committee has managed to come through it well.

Chair Chmielewski inquired if the Bel Air Recreation Committee could forward a report to the Town with some details and numbers regarding the impact of the pandemic on the program. Mr. Hicks stated that the Committee could forward that report in the next couple of days.

Mr. Hicks reported that the Committee did cancel most of its spring sports last year as well as most of its winter sports. Mr. Hicks stated that they did reopen during the fall, and this spring has been the most normal in terms of operations. He reported that the Committee normally has approximately 10,000 registrants per year, but during the pandemic registration was down to a couple thousand. Mr. Hicks reported that the Festival for the Arts was cancelled in 2020, and they hope that the Festival for the Arts will take place this year. He reported that the Community Band has not restarted since last year, and the Chorus is just beginning to hold outdoor practices at Shamrock Park.

Commissioner Richards inquired if the Recreation Committee would be able to include the impact the cancellation of fundraisers has had in the report. Mr. Hicks advised that he will send a full synopsis and stated that the Committee was able to use reserve funds thanks to the Committee's officers.

Mr. Richards stated that, as a parent of two children who came up through the program, he appreciates all that the Bel Air Recreation Committee has done for the entire community.

Mr. Bane inquired if the Bel Air Recreation Committee will be applying for the latest round of grant funding being made available by Harford County. Mr. Hicks advised that he does not believe the Committee is eligible for the new round of funding since it accepted grant funding from the County in the fall. Mr. Bane advised that he will confer with Ms. Moody and inform Mr. Hicks if there is an opportunity for the Recreation Committee to obtain funds through the American Rescue Plan Act.

Boys & Girls Club, Derek DeWitt

Mr. Dewitt reported that despite the pandemic, the list of accomplishments of the Boys & Girls Club is plentiful. It includes the following:

- The first ever virtual Youth Celebration Dinner with over 1,500 views.
- Free childcare services to first responders and healthcare personnel, which began one week after the pandemic started.
- Engaging staff in the Mindful Morning program and incorporating trauma-informed approaches to bolster kids' resiliency as they try to navigate the virtual world.
- Hosted splatter paint activities for teens to express themselves artistically during the racial uprisings that were taking place throughout the country and the world.
- Participated in the formation of a Boys & Girls Club Maryland Alliance and a Boys & Girls Club Maryland Commission.
- Engaged in virtual mentoring programs and assisted with the development of a Boys & Girls Club-specific virtual format.
- Reopened clubs last summer for the Summer Program with limited capacity according to CDC guidelines.
- Entered into a formal agreement with Harford Community College (HCC) to offer credit and noncredit courses out of the Edgewood Boys & Girls Club.
- Launched Club on the Go, a revolutionary new approach to provide youth development directly where kids are. The Boys & Girls Club sent its fleet of mini-buses with meals, and then games, sports, socialization and trauma-informed care practices to neighborhoods in Harford and Cecil Counties. By the end of the summer, eight vehicles will be available.
- Started BGC Made, a campaign to reengage alumni. Approximately 60 alumni have been reengaged through this effort.
- A safe Halloween drive-through parade was held at Ripken Stadium with 300 vehicles cruising through.

- The first-ever Scavaganza fundraiser was held in November in Cecil County, which encouraged tourism, shopping small and fundraising for the Boys & Girls Club. A Scavaganza will be held in Harford County May 7-9. Teens are encouraged to participate.
- The Boys and Girls Club has been awarded funding from the Governor's Office on Crime Prevention, Youth & Victims Services. This is the first time in its 31-year history that BGC has received funding from the Governor's office.
- BGC has also received funding from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services for the first time in its history.
- Entered into agreements with Harford County Public Schools and Cecil County Public Schools to provide licensed school-based programs.

Mr. DeWitt reported on the following projects planned for the future:

- Launch school-based licensed programs, targeting Title I schools.
- Transition Club on the Go from school year into Club on the Go Summer Camp, with each vehicle seeing 100 kids per day.
- Establish a traditional/virtual club initiative.
- Launch the partnership with HCC this fall.
- Continue to grow the Maryland BGC Alliance and club advocacy.

Mr. Bane inquired if the Boys & Girls Club will apply for the next round of nonprofit funding being made available by Harford County. Mr. DeWitt advised that they will be applying.

Chair Chmielewski thanked the Boys & Girls Club for all they do and for adjusting its footprint to reach more kids during the pandemic. She stated that she has two alumni; one is a schoolteacher and the other is now in college.

BUDGET:

Continued Detailed Review of General Fund Expenditures:

Bel Air Armory

Mr. Kline directed those present to refer to page 20 of their books.

Mr. Kline reported that the FY22 budget to operate the Armory is \$278,542.00, including \$15,203.00 for maintenance and the utilities for the garages. The majority of expenses for the Armory are for the salary of the events manager, contractual cleaning of the facility, utilities and overall maintenance. One maintenance project, two capital projects and three FF&E projects were cut from the requested budget, totaling \$266,000.00 in cuts as shown on page 24. Gym ceiling repair and painting, the hot water storage tank removal and replacement, the garage door replacement, replacement of all existing overhead light fixtures to dimmable, professional sound system and professional stage lighting were cut from the budget.

Mr. Kline reported that the following projects are budgeted in FY22 at the Bel Air Armory:

- \$35,000.00 to seal the lower level mechanical and IT rooms for foundation problems.
- Place two mini-split units in the downstairs classrooms where the school system operates at a cost of \$25,000.

Commissioner Richards inquired about priority items that concern Mr. Kline. Mr. Kline advised that the items of concern are going to be completed.

Commissioner Richards inquired if this is the same account that all revenue from Armory Marketplace rent and the revenue from Armory events flows through. Ms. Moody advised that the revenues are associated with the expense department, so no revenue flows through any of these accounts. She advises that the Armory is separate from Armory Marketplace, and revenues are not co-mingled into expense accounts.

Commissioner Richards requested an updated P&L for the Armory. Ms. Moody advised that she will update the P&L for the Armory.

Commissioner Kahoe inquired if federal stimulus funds could be used for the mini-split units. Mr. Kline advised that DPW will look into that, but they are moving forward cautiously with the use of federal funds.

Ms. Moody advised that the Town should not fall behind with capital projects and that the Town should use federal stimulus funding for any of the capital projects that it can.

Chair Chmielewski inquired if grants for the Armory are being investigated. Ms. Moody advised that Trish Heidenreich spoke about a grant that is being looked into for lost revenues. She will report back on that on Tuesday.

Town Buildings/Hydrant Rentals

Mr. Kline directed those present to page 37.

Mr. Kline reported that the FY22 budget for Town buildings is \$273,242.00

On page 40, Mr. Kline advised that the major expense in the Town buildings budget is maintenance, including electrical, plumbing, HVAC, carpentry, masonry, fire safety, roofing and miscellaneous maintenance, which has been budgeted at \$65,000.00. The cost of utilities (gas, electric and water) for all the Town buildings has been budgeted at \$43,730.00.

Mr. Kline reported that \$103,000.00 in budgeted maintenance and capital projects were cut from the requested budget as shown on page 41. These include replacing generator for building maintenance at Rockfield, replace generator from DPW to Rockfield, Rockfield Manor house exterior lighting upgrade and other building maintenance.

Mr. Kline reported that DPW would like to replace the HVAC rooftop unit on the Planning Department in FY22.

Commissioner Richards inquired if the drop off in utilities is tied directly to the Johnson Controls contract. Mr. Kline advised that the Johnson Controls contract definitely reduced the utilities, but there also have been upgrades in mechanical systems.

Mr. Kline referred to page 129 and reported that there are 304 fire hydrants, which the Town rents from Maryland American Water for \$164.75/each. He advised that a new property tax surcharge from Maryland American was levied against the Town for \$10,010.00. The FY22 hydrant rental budget is now \$60,094.00.

Commissioner Bianca inquired if the Town has received any justification for the property tax surcharge. Ms. Moody advised that Maryland American Water informed the Town that the PSC approved that surcharge along with the 32 percent rate increase. She advised that no one from the Town who attended those meetings recollect that surcharge. Ms. Moody advised that Maryland American informed the Town that its property taxes were increased because of the impoundment, and it needs to bill for that. Ms. Moody advised that her research shows that its real property taxes have not increased, and she is gathering information on its personal property taxes. She advised that the surcharge will stay on until Maryland American goes back before the PSC in 2022. Commissioner Richards advised that the Town of Bel Air, on behalf of its citizens and Maryland American's billing area, obtain some calculations and have something on the record to show it has pushed back against this surcharge at the next PSC meeting. Mr. Bane advised that the next time the Town will testify at a PSC meeting is when Maryland American requests another rate increase. He advised that the Town should bring the People's Counsel into the discussion because it represents the Town when we testify before the PSC. Ms. Moody advised that there were no increases in Maryland American's property taxes associated with the impoundment according to all the research she has done. Commissioner Hughes advised that communication has been poor with Maryland American Water with the sewer billing as well as with this issue. She inquired if there was any improved communication as Maryland American transitioned customers from one meter type to the other. Ms. Moody advised that Maryland American will not give the Town a list, but the Town has done other things internally to rectify that. Chair Chmielewski suggested that the Town invite John Walker to a meeting for the sake of transparency. Mr. Kline suggested that the Town address the issue with the president of American Water.

Public Works Department

Mr. Kline referred to page 155 and reported that the Public Works administration FY22 budget is \$1,177,725.00. This budget funds the salaries of the administration department, the MS4 stormwater management program and the other everyday administration expenses. The next largest line item after salaries and benefits in the budget is MS4 stormwater management at \$145,000.00, which is funded by the stormwater funding MOU with Harford County. Phase III of the Plumtree stream bank restoration project was completed last year, and the Town is currently planning a new stream restoration project behind English Country Manor. A large study is being funded to assess watershed and identify potential projects and their concept design with project description, benefits and constraints and cost estimates that can be utilized for future capital funding. The Town currently is at 25 percent treatment of its baseline, which is above the 20 percent required by 2025 in the current permit. The mowing contract is budgeted at \$27,347.00, and next year is the last year of the renewal for the mowing contract.

Commissioner Richards commented that DPW has done a masterful job to be so far ahead with the stormwater management and inquired if MDE will continue to move the goalposts. Mr. Kline advised that this is occurring, and MDE is changing the five-year permit that ends in 2023, which he believes is not legal. Commissioner Richards advised that the Town Commissioners should know if MDE is continuing to move the goalposts, so they can address that with the State officials.

Mr. Kline referred to the following Public Works/Town shop FY22 budget expenditures:

- Page 167 – the overall budget covers the cost of maintaining nearly 70 vehicles and 60 pieces of equipment in the amount of \$372,913.00.
- Page 162 – gasoline in the amount of \$49,000/year, and supplies in the amount of \$35,000.
- Page 173 – public works streets in the amount of \$1,597,696.00. Line items include replacement of Construction Worker II with a starting salary of \$32,718.00 and a multi-year program for sidewalk repairs in Town in the amount of \$41,500.00.

- Page 179 - \$70,000.00 for new ADA-compliant curb ramps and \$285,000 for street construction. Streets to be resurfaced in FY22 are Jackson Boulevard, Gordon Street, Shamrock Road from Lee Way to Hemingway, Williams Street from Alice Ann to Gordon Street, Bedford Road, Deerbrook Road to Jackson Boulevard. Replace vehicle #109 at a cost of \$95,000.00 with \$10,000.00 expected from GovDeals auction. Replace vehicle #15 at a cost of \$50,000.00 with \$5,000.00 expected from GovDeals auction.
- The overall FY22 budget is \$1,597,000.00.

Chair Chmielewski advised that the Town utilize federal stimulus funding, if allowed, to fund sidewalk projects because more people are out walking in the town.

Mr. Kline referred to page 186 for the FY22 budget for refuse collection in the amount of \$1,022,069.00. The majority of the budget covers salaries and benefits in the amount of \$640,162.00. The condominium trash contract with Waste Industries is in the amount of \$168,607.00. The replacement of vehicle #11 in the amount of \$210,000.00 with \$15,000.00 expected from GovDeals auction.

Appearance and Beautification Committee

Mr. Kline referred to page 202 for the FY22 budget request for the ABC Committee in the amount of \$39,300.00, which is the same amount requested the last five years.

Commissioner Richards recommended that fundraising and/or sponsorships from businesses and corporations be considered to help fund ABC projects.

Discussion by Commissioners on Budget Issues

Ms. Moody reported that she emailed everyone the updated list on standing items this afternoon.

Ms. Moody reported that she received information from the Assessment Office, and they stressed that the information is an estimate. The total number of estimated assessments based on the constant yield calculation is a little over \$75.00 for residential and almost \$580.00 for commercial annually. Ms. Moody

advised that commercial assessments are difficult and could be skewed because larger retail stores are on one end while smaller establishments are on another end.

Ms. Moody advised that she will update the Armory and Armory Marketplace spreadsheets.

Ms. Moody advised that she will report back with grant options for the Armory and with updates regarding the property tax surcharge.

Commissioner Richards suggested that the Town consider saving the cost of a new vehicle for IT and other departments with a vehicle from DPW or the Police Department or vehicles shared among the fleet of the Town departments. Commissioner Bianca advised that it might be better to invest in personnel rather than vehicles, particularly in the IT department. Chair Chmielewski agreed that IT needs to be priority, especially during the pandemic and into the future.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

APPROVED: May 3, 2021

Signature on file

Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file

Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk