

MINUTES

BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS

TELECONFERENCE

May 17, 2021

The regular meeting of the Board of Town Commissioners was called to order on Monday, May 17, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. via teleconference.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Amy G. Chmielewski, Chair
Kevin M. Bianca
Erin S. Hughes
Donna L. Kahoe
Patrick T. Richards

STAFF PRESENT: 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 Manager
Charles Keenan, Town Counsel
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
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.

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 were Kyle Benfield, Tracy Waite, Leroy Fleming, Colleen West and Justus Eapen. Another caller did not identify themselves.

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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion that the minutes of the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners' meetings held on May 3, 2021, May 6, 2021, and May 11, 2021 be approved as submitted.

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

Nays: None

Abstained: Commissioner Kahoe - May 3, 2021 meeting

The motion carried.

PRESENTATIONS:

Student Achievement Award - Kyle Benfield, Harford Day School

Kyle Benfield has demonstrated an abiding interest in Harford Day School's community and values, as well as the history, traditions, and events of the world at large. Kyle contributes to the Harford Day School environment as a role model for compassion, perseverance, and integrity, there is little doubt that he will continue to be an exemplary student and citizen of Bel Air and Maryland.

On behalf of the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners, Kyle Benfield was presented a Student Achievement Award. Chair Chmielewski encouraged Kyle to continue his commitment to excellence.

Tracy Waite - Harford County Climate Action

Ms. Waite, President of the Harford County Climate Action, informed last September the Town approved the proposal for a native pollinator garden and the following weekend volunteers showed up cutting out weeds, covering the garden with cardboard and placing a layer of compost on top. Mr. Kline, Department of Public Works, delivered a huge pile of leaves in November to protect the soil over the winter.

Last Saturday, 46 volunteers that included 20 high school students and Commissioner Bianca and family, planted \$600 worth of donated pollinator plants in several locations at Rockfield Manor. Ms. Waite thanked Cavano's Nursery in Kingsville, Kollar Nursery in Street, Putnam Hill Nursery in Fallston, and Emory Farm Nursery in Forest Hill for the donations. Ms. Waite advised the engraved plant labels are ordered and will be placed in the gardens when they arrive. Ms. Waite thanked the Town of Bel Air for partnering with Harford County Climate Action to have the opportunity to educate the public.

Ms. Waite spoke about the decline of several species and recommends books by Dr. Doug Tallamy who would like to see suburban yards turn into "a home grown national park" by providing pollinator and butterfly host plants to expand wildlife. This can be accomplished in a small area of the yard or in patio containers.

Ms. Waite advised Harford County Climate Action would like to develop an educational program with the goal of inspiring Town residents to increase the number of native host plants. Residents would plant the host plants for butterflies and moths and learn how to use the free naturalist phone

app to identify them. Photos of butterflies will be added to the official Maryland Biodiversity Project. Ms. Waite informed of a brochure Climate Action is proposing that shares the project. Harford County Climate Action could handle local advertising and set up a display at the Bel Air Library. During this Fall, the program can be combined with a native pollinator plant sale.

Ms. Waite presented the program to the Appearance and Beautification Committee and the Bel Air Tree Committee. The Tree Committee approved the project along with the Greater Baltimore Sierra Club. Ms. Waite continues to confer with the Maryland Master Gardeners Program.

Mr. Kline, Director of Public Works, notified the Appearance and Beautification Committee is interested in the initiative and approved moving forward. Mr. Kline advised that DPW staff will bring the water truck to the planting areas tomorrow.

Commissioner Bianca appreciates Ms. Waite and the Harford County Climate Action for what has been accomplished.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Resolution 1165-21 Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2022

Ms. Moody, Director of Finance, reported the FY22 budget was introduced on April 5, 2021 at a Town Board meeting. This evening's public hearing, as well as the one held on April 19, 2021, is to provide the public with an opportunity to provide input during the budget process. The Board can then use this input before it approves the final budget. Six public work sessions were also held during which the budget was reviewed in great detail.

Ms. Moody advised the public hearing this evening is on the tentative budget, which was adopted on April 19, 2021. Even though changes were discussed and tentatively approved at the final budget work session on May 11, those changes are not reflected in the tentative budget.

During this public hearing, the two Enterprise Funds and the Special Revenue fund will be presented this evening. It is recommended the Commissioners approve the final budget under New Business.

Ms. Moody reviewed:

Sewer Fund Revenues

The proposed FY2022 Sewer Fund budget is \$2,472,810 and is a reduction of \$89,885 from the FY2021. The base charge depends upon the meter size, and the rate per 1,000 gallons includes a 1.2% increase. The increase is based on the December, 2020 consumer price index. The rate would increase from \$6.12 to \$6.19 per 1000 Gallons effective July 1, 2021.

Sewer Fund Expenses

Ms. Moody advised this is a balanced budget and we will see the same numbers.

- \$590,452 funds the routine expenses to operate/maintain the sewer system (salaries, utilities, supplies, maintenance/repairs, and outsourcing of sewer bills).
- \$1,509,144 will fund the payment to Harford County who transports and treats the Town's sewage.
- \$355,733 will reimburse the General Fund for its pro-rata share of salaries, benefits and overhead that are attributed to the fund's operations. The Sewer Fund is an enterprise fund and should be self-sustaining. There are two Town employees where 100% of their time is within the Sewer Fund but many other employees within the Town have part of their job within the Sewer Fund as well as other things.
- \$17,481 will fund interest only Debt Service payments for existing bonds.

Parking Fund Revenues

The proposed FY22 Parking Fund budget is \$501,576 and is a reduction of \$131,825.

- The Town owns 1/3 of the Parking Garage and Harford County 2/3. Harford County reimburses the fund 2/3 of the operating cost (proposed \$104,582).
- Harford County also reimburses the fund 2/3 of an annual contribution to the Capital Improvement Reserve account (\$10,080).
- Three main sources of revenue:
 1. Meter collections - Town's meters, parking garage vouchers, smartcards, and Parkmobile (proposed \$182,000).
 2. Parking fines - based on history (proposed \$125,000).
 3. Lease fees - actual monthly leases for 3 lots and Parking Garage (proposed \$70,064).

Parking Fund Expenses

Ms. Moody advised this is a balanced budget and we will see the same numbers.

- Lots - \$165,595 for operations including monies owed to the General Fund for its pro-rata share of salaries/benefits/overhead attributed to the fund's operation.
- Parking Garage - \$173,683 for operations including monies owed to the General Fund and funds to pay for interest-only Debt Service payments.
- Parking Garage - \$15,000 to transfer to the Capital Improvement Reserve for future capital work.
- Other - \$162,298 mainly for depreciation costs on capital expenses and a 20% collection fee paid to the vendor who processes the majority of the Town's parking tickets.

Special Revenue Fund

Ms. Moody advised the proposed FY 22 Special Revenue Fund is \$555,539 and a change of \$440,137.

- Purpose is to account for grants/special projects that do not lend themselves to the normal FY budgeting. Every account within this fund has a corresponding expense account. Many grants are multiple years and can roll into future years until the project is complete.
- CDBG Project - \$91,984 represents the remaining FY19 and the entire FY20-FY22 allotment grant years. The funds have been allocated to several Public Works streets projects.
- Community Legacy Grant - \$280,000. Unfortunately, this will later be removed from the budget through an amendment since the grant request was not approved.
- Community Parks & Playground Grant - \$115,000. Will provide for new recreational activities, provide off-street parking and handicapped access to Homestead Park. This requires a \$35,000 match which is budgeted in the General Fund.

Ms. Moody stated this concludes the entire budget for FY2022 and thanked Mr. Bane, Staff, and Commissioners for another budget year.

Chair Chmielewski called for public comments.

Justus Eapen, 210 Wellington Court, apologized for his attitude displayed in the last Town Hall meeting. Mr. Eapen realized after much reflection and prayer; he was perhaps offensive in an uncalled tone of voice. Mr. Eapen stated if the tax hike is passed, he will pay it begrudgingly but you are public servants and called to serve. Mr. Eapen stated this tax plan is immoral and the building plan the taxes will fund is not attractive to the eye and an offense of good taste. It should be built to inspire and uplift the public and the government is dead set on scarring the landscape with ugly structures. Mr. Eapen did state there are good architects in Bel Air but it appears those drawing up the plans for this building do not live in the state of Maryland. Mr. Eapen is not happy with the tax hike and it would not be immoral if the Town were building a beautiful structure. This is an assault on senses and good taste. Mr. Eapen stated the Commissioners have the opportunity to repent from this wayward course and encouraged them to do so.

There were no further public comments. Chair Chmielewski called for Commissioner comments. As there were none, the public hearing was closed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Resolution 1166-21 Fiscal Year 2022 Final Budget

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded that proposed Resolution No. 1166-21, providing for the adoption of a Final Budget for the Town of Bel Air for fiscal year 2022, be adopted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners with the following amendments:

GENERAL FUND

1. Decreased "Public Utilities" by \$45,000 based on an FY21 adjustment.
2. Decreased "Governor's Office Crime Prevention Grant" by \$10,000 based on a clarification for the LEAD Executive position.
3. Added "Miscellaneous Grants - MD" in the amount of \$14,848 based on a recent grant award from MSAC.
4. Added "Miscellaneous Grants - Harford County" in the amount of \$15,000 based on a recent grant award from CPP. A partial match was committed by the County.
5. Increased "Armory Fees" by \$10,000 based on a better projection.
6. Reduced "Vehicle/Equipment Sale Proceeds" by \$1,000 since the existing IT van will not be sold.
7. Reduced "Vehicle/Equipment Proceeds" by \$30,000 since the IT van purchase was removed.
8. Increased "Salaries/Benefits" in the various departments for monies "stored" in the "Other" account within the Miscellaneous Department for the new civilian/sworn pay scales and a merit increase for a total of \$611,054.
9. Increased "Benefits" in the various departments by \$60,900 to reinstate the Town funding of the HSA (35% of the deductible).
10. Reduced "Capital Improvements" in the Armory Department by \$25,000 for the two HVAC mini split units.
11. Reduced "Expenses" in the Town Administrator Department by \$1,700.
12. Increased "Expenses" in the Town Buildings Department by \$2,500 to fund a temporary fix for the HVAC rooftop unit over the Planning Department. Reduced "Capital Improvements" in the Town Buildings Department by \$25,000 for the replacement of the HVAC rooftop unit over the Planning Department.
13. Reduced "Salaries/Benefits" in the Human Resources Department by \$8,853 reducing the hours per pay for the File Clerk back to the FY21 level (20hrs/pay).
14. Reduced "Expenses" in the Finance Department by \$1,000.
15. Reduced "Expenses" in the Planning Department by \$12,000 for the town boundary plan. Increased "Capital Improvements" in the Planning Department by \$15,000 for a 50% match for the CPP grant related to the Office Street Pocket Park project.
16. Reduced "Expenses" in the Economic Development Department by \$43,000 for the market study.

17. Reduced "Expenses" in the Commissioners Department by \$2,000.
18. Increased "Salaries/Benefits" in the Technology Department by \$34,899 to fund a new Desktop/Computer User Support Specialist position to be filled approximately Jan 10 and by \$12,335 for benefit coverage changes. Decreased "Vehicle, Capital" in the Technology Department by \$30,000 for the IT van.
19. Decreased "Contingency" in the Miscellaneous Department by \$611,054 to transfer the monies for the new civilian/sworn pay scales and a merit increase to the applicable salary and benefit accounts in the various departments.
20. Decreased "Debt Service-Equipment/Vehicles" in the Debt Service Department by \$2,300 due to the removal of the IT van.
21. Increased "Salaries/Benefits" in the DPW Streets Department by \$6,015. This is the net result of adding medical/dental/vision benefits for the new Construction Worker II position (\$15,314) and postponing the hiring until approximately Oct 4 (\$9,299).

SEWER FUND

1. Increased "Salaries/Benefits" for the monies "stored" in the "Other" account for the new civilian pay scale and a merit increase and reinstated the Town's HSA contribution for a total of \$11,887.
2. Decreased "Town Operation Expenses" for the monies "stored in the "Other" account by \$10,094 to transfer the monies for the new civilian pay scale and a merit increase to the applicable salary and benefits accounts.
3. Decreased "Harford County Charges" by \$1,793 to balance the fund.

SPECIAL REVENUE FUND

1. Increased "Community Parks & Playground Grant" by \$60,464 based on a recent grant award for the Office Street Pocket Park.
2. Removed "Community Legacy Grant" in the amount of \$280,000 based on not being awarded the grant.

The amendments to the tentative budget were previously discussed at the May 11, 2021 budget session and are reflected in the seven-page Final Budget.

Mr. Bane, Town Administrator, thanked Ms. Moody for the many hours put into working on this budget and for the many hours spent meeting with Mr. Krantz and himself. Mr. Bane thanked the Department Heads for their input and for their pitching in to take cuts in their budgets to fund projects important to the Town that would not have been funded without a substantial tax increase. Mr. Bane expressed appreciation to the Commissioners for their input during the last budget session to figure out how to fund these projects and remain within the limits of the proposed tax increase.

Ms. Moody thanked everyone and stated this budget was a challenge.

Commissioner Bianca made the comment that it was Mr. Bane and Ms. Moody who did all the legwork and did a wonderful job. Commissioner Bianca stated we have a budget to be proud of and can now get it across the finish line.

Commissioner Hughes thanked Town staff for the hard work on a difficult year to do the budget. Commissioner Hughes stated the fact of still moving forward on capital projects and reinvesting in our personnel who keep the Town running makes her feel good.

Commissioner Richards stated none of us take a tax increase lightly and have not throughout all of our discussions. This is not a tax increase to pay for the Town Hall project but to reinvest in capital projects and HR initiatives. Commissioner Richards stated this was a difficult process but the leadership/cooperation across all Departments was amazing and with not increasing revenue for 14-15 years, the Town was able to offer the quality services that our Town citizens have come to expect. Commissioner Richards advised Town Hall has led us up to this point and the new facility for our Town employees, both Police Department and Administrative functions are deserved. Commissioner Richards stated revenue has to accommodate additional expense and the Town has seen expense structure ratchet up in the last number of years without any consideration to increase the tax rate. Commissioner Richards commented this is not what any of us want to do, but for the long term benefit of the Town and citizen services it is necessary.

Commissioner Kahoe thanked the entire staff, especially Ms. Moody for being patient and helpful. Commissioner Kahoe stated everybody gave something no matter how small their budget. Everyone worked hard to accommodate what is needed for the Town to properly service residents and visitors while trying to maintain a minimal impact. Commissioner Kahoe stated this was a difficult decision and not everyone will be happy but is glad we could work together.

Chair Chmielewski stated this is the hardest decisions to make since becoming a Town Commissioner. Chair Chmielewski advised the Town needs to move forward and it costs money to do things for employees and residents. Chair Chmielewski mentioned the outstanding service from DPW staff in keeping the Town beautiful during the difficult times with the pandemic.

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

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Street Resurfacing Contract

Commissioner Bianca moved and Commissioner Kahoe seconded the motion that the proposal of Frank J. Goettner Construction Co., Inc, to resurface Idlewild Road, Maxwell Place, Hawley Court, Crocker Street, Jackson Boulevard, Shamrock Road, and Old Orchard Alley all in accordance with contract specifications for an amount not to exceed \$302,000.00 be accepted by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

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

Nays: None

The motion carried.

Reappointment to the Cultural Arts Commission - Patricia Fielder

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Bianca seconded the motion that the reappointment of Patricia Fielder to the Bel Air Cultural Arts Commission for a term of three (3) years, effective immediately, be approved by the Bel Air Board of Town Commissioners.

Commissioner Kahoe informed Ms. Fielder was first appointed to the Cultural Arts Commission in 2015 and has extensive background in marketing and art. Ms. Fielder has been involved with the Bel Air community for many years and understands how art impacts our local economy. Commissioner Kahoe stated Ms. Fielder is a great gem for the Commission.

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

Nays: None

The motion carried.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chair Chmielewski reported:

- Mask mandates - the Town will not require mask to be worn in our buildings and advised visitors and employees to make their best decision based upon their vaccination and health status.
- Events are coming back to the Town. Follow the Town's Facebook page and calendar on the website to plan ahead.
- Memorial Day Ceremony - May 31st at 10:45 a.m. at Shamrock Park.
- Town Cleanup - June 6th at 10:00 a.m. in front of the Armory. Contact Patti Parker at pparker@belairmd.org with questions.
- First Friday's - June 4th from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. at the parking lot next to Black Eyed Suzie's. The Bel Air Downtown Alliance is looking for volunteers.
- Summer Concerts - first concert is June 6th at 7:00 p.m. with the Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra. List of the free concerts are on the Town's website.

Mr. Krantz announced the Board of Commissioners meetings beginning June 1st will be in-person and this will be posted on the website.

PUBLIC COMMENTS :

Leroy Fleming notified the DPW staff doing trash and snow removal go above and beyond.

Mr. Fleming noticed the Town placed a speed recording sign near Plumtree Park and about April 25th a traffic violation enforcement effort was set up at the corner of Thomas Street and S. Kelly Avenue. Mr. Fleming informed two people ran the stop sign within 30 minutes. Mr. Fleming advised the speeding is not only increasing since people began going back to work; he noticed police using Thomas Street as a high speed run to the other side of Town with sometimes lights on and others not. Mr. Fleming advised everyone knows this is a speedway across Town and told his son and a little girl who recently moved to the area about crossing the street. Mr. Fleming wants the area to be a safer place to live and asked the Town Commissioners when is Bel Air going to do something about the speed and running stop signs in this tranquil area?

Colleen West, 411 W. Gordon Street, Bel Air, Md. followed-up on Ms. Waite's presentation by saying we should do all we can to preserve our natural habitats and the Town can start with the Liriodendron and Heavenly Waters Park that are "home grown national parks".

Ms. West asked if the Comprehensive Plan update started in April and how the public is being involved and informed of the process. Mr. Small, Director of Planning, advised the first stakeholder group met tonight and other stakeholder groups will be meeting in the next few weeks. The Town will take the comments from the groups and begin a general structure of the plan. Mr. Small stated the public will not see anything for the next couple of months because we are waiting on Census data which might arrive in August.

Ms. West inquired how people get involved to be a stakeholder and if there is information on the website. Mr. Small advised the stakeholders are representatives of various associations/organizations in Town and also representatives of those who have been a part of committees/commissions in the past. Mr. Small offered to contact Ms. West to talk about this further. Ms. West wants to make sure there is public input during the process. Mr. Small informed there will be public input as this moves forward but the Census data from the Federal Government is needed first for the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Chmielewski asked if the Commissioners could attend these meetings to listen. Mr. Small advised the focus groups are residents and have intentionally not included any Commissioners so their presence is not an intimidating factor; but if the Commissioners would like to attend that can be accommodated.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Commissioner Bianca informed May is Mental Health Awareness Month and gave a shoutout to Patti Parker and the VolunTeen group who helped put signs out along Main Street. Commissioner Bianca has heard a lot of positive feedback on the messages and commented that we need to look out for each other and ourselves.

Commissioner Kahoe advised the Garden Mart was fun and it was great to see many people inside and outside the Armory buying plants.

Mr. Kline stated it was a nice event and Lorraine Miller from the Appearance & Beautification Committee helped to organize the event.

Chair Chmielewski thanked everyone for their time during the long budget sessions and looks forward to the in-person meetings.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Approved: June 7, 2021

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

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk