

COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
May 25, 2021

The County Council of Cecil County met in work session in an online virtual meeting because of the current health crisis and based on the Governor's orders to avoid public meetings. Council Members and presenters participated in the Elk Room of the County Administration Building while the public observed the meeting by connecting online at www.ccgov.org/council and selecting "livestream".

The following members of the Council were present:

Robert Meffley, Council President
Jackie Gregory, Vice President
William H. Coutz, Council Member
Al Miller, Council Member
George Patchell, Council Member

NOTE: The video and audio recording with transcription of this meeting is available on the County website at www.ccgov.org.

Call to Order

The meeting of the County Council of Cecil County of May 25, 2021 was called to order by Council President Meffley at 4:30 p.m.

Roll Call of Council Members

Council President Meffley asked for a roll call of attending Council Members. The Council Manager called the roll and recorded the following Council Members in attendance:

Roll Call Vote: Coutz-Present, Miller-Present, Gregory-Present, Meffley-Present. Councilman Patchell arrive at 6:10pm.

Council President Meffley announced that there were four Council Members present at the time of roll call, which constitute a quorum.

Suspension of Rules

Councilman Coutz made a motion to suspend the rules to allow Council Members to meet together in the Elk Room with presenters that were prescheduled; and provide the public with access to observe the Council's public business by livestreaming the meetings because of the current health crisis and the Governor's order to avoid public meetings. The motion was seconded by Vice President Gregory.

Roll Call Vote: Coutz-Y, Miller-Y, Gregory-Y, Meffley-Y

The motion was approved by a voice vote of 4 to 0. Councilman Patchell was not present at the time.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilman Coutz, seconded by Vice President Gregory, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of May 18, 2021, as presented. The motion was approved by a voice vote of 4 to 0. Councilman Patchell was not present at the time.

Cecil Land Trust

Alisa Webb, Executive Coordinator, of the Cecil Land Trust; introduced Maureen Danos, who is the attorney for the Cecil Land Trust. Ms. Webb explained that the Cecil Land Trust is concerned about the Town of Rising Sun's proposed annexation of property, east of the Town, along Route 273 because these properties are within the Rural Legacy Area. Ms. Danos stated that Rising Sun proposes to extend water and sewer to Wilson Road, where wells were contaminated by operations at Southern States. Ms. Danos and Ms. Webb stated that the Town of Rising Sun has not notified the Trust or Department of Natural Resources of their proposal. They stated that the Town is required to get approval for the easements by Cecil Land Trust. They further stated that most of the houses where wells were contaminated were purchased by Southern States; and that these private wells are no longer contaminated. They asked the Council to petition for referendum of those being affected by this expansion and stated that the deadline to file for a referendum is in the next two days. They also voiced concerns about the Albeck Farm and Meadows Farm that have applied for preservation.

Vice President Gregory left the session at 6:05 pm.

Update on COVID Pandemic

Lauren Levy, Health Officer, introduced Laurie Humphries, Deputy Health Officer. Ms. Levy provided an update on COVID conditions in Cecil County. She provided statistics on the number of COVID cases, deaths, positivity rate and trends. She stated that Cecil County is following the state's trend in seeing a decrease in COVID effects. She reviewed the current face covering requirements. She stated that the Health Department will stop COVID testing as of May 12, but will be offering self-test kits to the public. She reviewed COVID vaccination sites in the county and stated that more mobile sites were being used to reach populations that have not been vaccinated. She listed the number of sites offering vaccines but stated that public demand is down. She stated that a campaign will be launched to encourage the public to be vaccinated and additional outreach will be made. She stated that 42% of Cecil County residents have been vaccinated with at least one shot, 36% have both shots. She stated that a higher percentage of seniors have been vaccinated while younger populations (12-18) have a lower percentage. She stated that the Health Department will be focusing on outreach and mobile vaccination clinics.

Council Members clarified that herd immunity may be reached when 65% of the population has received their two vaccinations.

FY 2022 Budget Deliberation

Council President Meffley asked Council Members if they have any suggestions for budget amendments.

Vice President Gregory suggested that the consultant position within the Director of Administration budget be eliminated (\$50,000). Council discussion ensued.

Council President Meffley asked Lawrence Scott, County Attorney, to clarify the additional \$190,000 for Cecil County Public Library. Mr. Scott explained that the additional funds is not from the bonds to be sold, but from the savings when existing bonds are refinanced as a savings.

Councilman Miller expressed his concern for the moving of the I-95 toll plaza. Mr. Scott provided an explanation that the State would be more favorable to this project if the County would agree to pay for the NEPA study (\$500,000). Vice President Gregory stated that Congressman Andy Harris was supportive of this project and suggested that this project has been a transportation priority for Cecil County for many years.

Council President Meffley asked Council Members to submit any other proposals for amendment to the Council Manager by Friday so that they can be included in the Council packet.

Bond Legislation

Council President Meffley led discussion on the bond bills. He asked Council Manager Massey to summarize discussion on the role of the Council in bond sales and refinancing. Mr. Massey stated that an amendment to require that Executive to be authorized by Council resolution was not acceptable to the bond counsel, which stated that they could not sell the bonds with a "claw back clause". He contacted other Charter counties to discover their process and provided samples that indicate that the County Executive is given authority by the Council to sell the bonds under certain parameters such as price. The Executive conducts the sale and refinancing with the bond counsel. After the transactions are completed, the Executive comes back to the Council for approval. The Council determines that the Executive had adhered to all the parameters and has an opportunity to review all details of the sale such as interest rate and terms. If the Council discovers any irregularities or deviations, the Council would conduct an investigation to determine any maleficence.

Mr. Scott stated that the administration and bond counsel agreed that a section could be added to each of the legislation to require the Executive to come back to the Council to get final approval after the bond sale is completed. He also stated that the sunset date will be amended to June 30, 2022, rather than December 31, 2022.

The Council asked that the text of the administration's amendments be provided by Thursday, May 27 so this information can be distributed to Council Members.

Council discussion ensued. Councilman Coutz expressed concern that the Council's approval would come after the bond sale had been finalized.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Massey announced that Council Members are invited to a graduation open house for members of the Drug Free Youth Coalition on Friday, May 28 at 3pm.

Council Member Items

Council Members agreed to hold their comments in order to continue with the agenda items.

Adjournment

Council President Meffley asked for a motion to recess the work session in order to go into a closed session.

Councilman Coutz made a motion to recess the work session, which was seconded by Councilman Miller. Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0. Vice President Gregory had left the session at 6:05 pm. The work session was recessed at 6:37 pm.

CLOSED SESSION

6:38 P.M.

Councilman Coutz made a motion to go into closed session, which was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Roll Call Vote: Coutz-Y, Miller-Y, Patchell-Y, Gregory-absent, Meffley-Y.

Motion was approved by a vote of 4 to 0. Vice President Gregory left the session at 6:05pm.

Council Manager Massey stated for the record: Pursuant to the Maryland Annotated Code, General Provisions Section 3-305(b)(7) To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice on a legal matter.

The closed session began at 6:38 p.m.

The closed session was concluded at 7:01pm.

OPEN SESSION

7:01 P.M.

The Council went back into open session at 7:01pm. Councilman Miller moved to adjourn the work session, which was seconded by Councilman Patchell.

Council President Meffley adjourned the work session at 7:02 pm.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, June 1, 2021 at 4:30 pm as a virtual meetings because of the current health crisis. The session will be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage. Members of the public who do not have broadband access should contact the Council Office for instructions to be connected via telephone. Limited seating will be available on a first come basis. Attendees must wear masks and observe social distancing.


James Massey
Council Manager

Approved:


Robert Meffley, Council President