

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
December 14, 2021**

OPEN SESSION – Elk Room

4:30 P.M.

NOTE: The recording and transcription of this meeting are available on the County website at www.ccgov.org/council.

PRESENT: Council Members: Robert Meffley, William Coutz, Al Miller, Donna Culberson and Jackie Gregory; James Massey, Council Manager; members of the administration, and members of the public.

Call to Order

Council President Meffley called the meeting to order at 4:30 pm, and announced that there were five Council Members present, which constitute a quorum.

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 December 7, 2021, as presented. The motion approved unanimously.

Library Update

Morgan Miller, Library Director, presented an update on the Cecil County Public Library, using the theme, "Signaling a new future". She stated that 60,000 visitors have gone to the new North East Branch, which opened in April 2021. She commented on the new "Teens Give Back" program that has established a teen board as a liaison to the library board. She stated that the Upper Shore Regional Council grant provided funding for a job help and mobile technology lab. She explained that the former Port Deposit Library has been moved to Community Connecting Us, a nonprofit organization housing multiple services for residents. She described the Tunnels to Tower 9/11 exhibit that was displayed in the library and its impact on visitors. She also stated that MACo awarded their Innovation Award for the library's business information center, which was nominated by Councilman Miller. She described the library's partnerships with the Health Department, Board of Education, and Small Business Administration.

Ms. Morgan provided statistics on library service in 2020 and the 2021. She stated that library hours and staffing has continued to be reduced because of the budget. She said that library employees have not received a COLA in two years.

Council questions and comments ensued. Councilman Coutz requested statistics on the business programs. Councilman Miller commended Laura Metzler, Senior Business Research Librarian, for her dedication and said that he liked the youth board idea. Councilwoman Culberson stated that more county residents should know about the library's programs. Council President Meffley stated that the small business programs are so helpful to people starting their own business. Councilman Coutz asked Ms. Morgan to provide how much the library needs to restore hours and be fully staffed.

Broadband Update

Lawrence Scott, County Attorney, provided a handout to update the Council on the county's broadband. He explained that the standard for broadband speed has increased dramatically. He stated that the acceptable standard is now 100 Mbps up and down. He stated that residents have the final responsibility to pay the cost of running broadband from the street to their house.

Mr. Scott reported that there are 47,438 address in Cecil County and only 2,350 lack broadband access. He stated that 95% of the county have broadband access. Currently, work is being done on 605 addresses and another grant will provide 1,650 households with broadband access, which will result in 99.7% broadband coverage in the county. He stated that 100 addresses cannot be provided with broadband access because of unique conditions. He stated that Cecil County will be within the top counties in Maryland for broadband access.

Council Members expressed their concerns of these broadband access figures. Mr. Scott asked Council Members to provide any addresses that broadband service was not available so he could verify their access.

Council President Meffley asked about Mark Wagner from Think Big Networks, who he met at the MACo conference. Councilman Miller stated that grants for broadband are available and should be sought to improve access for county residents. Vice President Gregory stated that no vendors cover the cost of running broadband from the street to the house. Council President Meffley asked that David Black or Dave Warnick make another presentation to the Council to clarify the issues raised about broadband coverage in the county.

Opioid Litigation Settlement Update

Lawrence Scott, County Attorney, provide an update on the opioid litigation settlement. He explained that Brian Frosh, Attorney General, had made a presentation at the MACo conference to discuss the settlement. Mr. Scott explained that Cecil County had hired Kemp and Kemp to represent the county in the Johnson and Johnson class action lawsuit. Kemp and Kemp joined a consortium of 3,000 other government entities that is represented by six law firms. He stated that McKesson (McKesson, AmeriSourceBergen and Cardinal Health) has allocated \$12M to Maryland. He stated that Johnson and Johnson will allocate \$600M to Maryland.

Mr. Scott explained that Attorney General Frosh is asking counties to agree to giving 15% to the State of Maryland, 15% to counties and municipalities, and 70% to grants to be offered to counties based on the state's criteria. Mr. Scott explained that this is a disadvantage to counties because the State will determine what opioid related services are to be funded.

Mr. Scott explained that MACo/MML is proposing another option to give more funding to counties. Their proposal is to allocate 2% to the State, 13% to State grants for nonprofits to apply, 15% to counties that filed litigation, 70% to local government for opioid related activities to allow reimbursement for previous expenses incurred by counties.

Mr. Scott explained that the two options are under discussion, but Attorney General Frosh has not agreed to follow MACo/MML's proposal. He stated that the county cannot spend these funds without Council approval. He clarified that funding will be allocated over ten years and that \$600,000 is allocated to Cecil County municipalities.

Council questions and comments ensued. Councilman Coutz was in favor of the MACo/MML proposal so that the counties could decide on programs to receive funding. Councilman Miller stated that Cecil County has many opioid related problems and there are many programs currently serving the community. Councilwoman Culberson stated that funds should also be considered to stop the infiltration of drugs in the county. Council President Meffley stated that we need a comprehensive solution to the opioid epidemic. He commended New Castle County for their use of a former hotel as a treatment center.

Council Budget FY 2023

Council Manager Massey reviewed the proposed Council departmental budget and explained the details of each budget line. The proposed budget is \$460,086.

Councilman Coutz made a motion to approve the proposed budget, which was seconded by Vice President Gregory, and approved unanimously.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Massey reported on the Watershed Stewards Academy graduation to be held on Wednesday, December 15 at 5:30pm in the Elk Room. Council President Meffley, Vice President Gregory and Councilman Coutz agreed to attend and present the certificates to graduates. He also reminded Council Members that the Residential Noise Committee will be meeting tonight at 6:30 pm in the Elk Room.

Council Member Items

Councilman Coutz commented on attending the MACo conference and commended Dave Trolio, Community Services Director, for his outstanding presentation. He attended the Eat, Drink and Be Giving event for Youth Empowerment Services and applauded this organization for their effective programs for youth. He attended the funeral service for former County Commission Cole. He participated in the Shop with a Cop program that sponsored 70 children to be escorted by law enforcement officers to buy clothes and gifts. He reported on the Sheriff's Office intel meeting on statistics for the week. He commended the Elkton Police Department and Maryland State Police for capturing the murderer of an Elkton 7-11 clerk.

Vice President Gregory commented on the Maryland Climate Change Commission's recommendations to ban fossil fuel in new commercial buildings and eventually residential construction. She also commented on the State's proposed redistricting plan that was passed by the General Assembly, vetoed by the Governor, veto overridden by the legislature, and the Governor's intention to go to court over it. She attended the MACo conference and the Clean Chesapeake Coalition meeting. She stated that the State is moving ahead with dredging the spoils at Conowingo Dam and has discovered that the sediment is not as toxic as suspected. She stated her concerns about a plan to make the Chesapeake Bay a national park because of this impact to

watermen and the bay itself. She also commented on the gap in learning because of COVID and the impact of inflation on Kirwan Commission recommendations. She reminded Council that the General Assembly plans to conduct committee hearings as virtual meetings. She attended the Perryville Christmas parade and plans to attend Elkton's old fashioned Christmas this coming weekend.

Councilwoman Culberson participated in the Perryville Christmas market and commented on its success.

Councilman Miller thanked the audience for attending. He attended the MACo conference and commented on meeting officials from other counties. He attended the Local Management Board and expressed his concern that the state's Health Department website has been down and the hospitals are nearly full. He commented on a proposed new span of the Bay Bridge, which was originally built in 1952, second span added in 1972, while Conowingo Dam was built in 1928. He stated he would like to see Cecil and Harford Counties work together to move the sediment out of the dam's reservoir.

Council President Meffley attended the Chesapeake City Christmas parade and market. He commented on the Town's display of the carriage and Olympic medals of Allaire Dupont, performance by Dylan Zangwill, an America's Got Talent winner, bagpipers, and Delaware State Police Mounted Patrol Unit. He attended the MACo conference and learned about a career technology liaison position who recruits students for Kent and Queen Anne's Counties vocational training programs. He stated that Cecil County should have a position to recruit students for the School of Technology. He expressed his enthusiasm for the Shop with a Cop program and how meaningful his experience was to him. He also visited the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree in New York City, which had been donated by a family living in Elkton.

Adjournment

Vice President Gregory made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilman Coutz. Council President Meffley adjourned the session at 6:15 pm.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 at 4:30 pm in the Elk Room of the County Administration Building. The session will also be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage at www.ccgov.org/council. Members of the public who do not have broadband access should contact the Council Office for instructions to be connected via telephone.


James Massey
Council Manager

Approved:


Robert Meffley, Council President