

COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES
February 15, 2022

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; Terry Hale, Council Assistant, Charles MacLeod, Council Attorney, 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 February 8, 2022, as presented. The motion approved unanimously.

EMS Advisory Board Update

Wayne Tome, Emergency Services Director, and Jeff Hennemuth, EMS Board President, reviewed the history of the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board and its reestablishment last year. Mr. Tome stated that the board advances the partnership between Emergency Medical Services staff and the volunteer fire companies. He explained that the board addressed emergency response time in the southern portion of Cecil County by placing a County ambulance in this region that will be the responsibility of the EMS staffing. He also stated that the board is identifying hot spots in the county for future planning.

Council questions and comments ensued. The Council clarified that the EMT and paramedic will be a new resource for the southern county region to serve as a backup to fire companies in Chesapeake City, Cecilton, and Hacks Point. Council President Meffley stated that the volunteer fire companies have been pleased with the board and the recent improvements in communication.

Mr. Tome stated that the board will be analyzing statistics to determine hot spots and service needs.

CASA of Cecil County and Cecil Pregnancy Center

Guilia Hodge, CASA Director, reviewed the mission of CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates, who advocate for children in court, help the child understand court proceedings, recommend services, and monitor plans and court orders in the best interest of the child. Ms. Hodge gave a history of the CASA office being moved and the disruptions that it has caused. She stated that

the present location at 126 East High Street in Elkton is ideal because of its proximity to the courthouse and other social services.

Terry McCullogh, mobile CASA worker, explained that the advocacy for older children is provided, which includes childcare, family events and programs in the summer. Lucy McCallister, introduced herself as the first Cecil child that CASA served and explained how the organization benefited her.

Ms. Hodge asked the Council to help CASA, if displaced, find another location. She also asked if the County would provide a facility for CASA at no charge because of their services to the children of the county.

Jennifer Russell, Assistant Director of the Cecil Pregnancy Center and Family Resource Center, stated that her organization works with families who are in need of support related to having children. She stated that they help families with immediate needs of food and shelter, in addition, to helping expectant mothers with training and unplanned pregnancies. She asked the Council if they could help the Center stay in the same location.

Ms. Hodge stated her concern that the County is interested in buying the building and her organization cannot lease space from government because they receive State funding.

Steve Overbay, Acting Director of Administration, stated that the County Executive is not interested in buying the facility and does not plan to move the State's Attorney's office to this building. He stated that the administration has no plans to move the State's Attorney's office from the courthouse for the next five years.

Councilman Miller stated that he appreciated the presentation and recognized the importance of their missions for county families.

State Legislative Update

Vice President Gregory, MACo legislative committee representation, reviewed State legislation that had been discussed by the committee. She stated that the public hearing on SB 295 Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Emergency Service Transporters – Reimbursement, had gone well.

She reviewed legislation that had been discussed by MACo.

She reviewed SB 567 Property Tax – Agricultural Use Assessment – Improvements, which was opposed by MACo. After discussion, the Council took no action.

She reviewed HB 596/SB783 Constitutional Amendment – Environmental Rights, which was opposed by MACo. After discussion, the Council took no action.

She reviewed HB 794 Public Health – Opioid Restitution Fund Advisory Board, which was supported by MACo with amendment. Councilman Miller requested to see the amendments. After discussion, the Council took no action.

She reviewed HB 935/SB 637 Health and Health Insurance – Behavioral Health Services – Expansion (Behavior Health System), which was supported by MACo. After discussion, the Council agreed to send a letter of support.

She reviewed HB 736 Correctional Services – Inmate Release, which was supported by MACo with amendment. After discussion, the Council took no position.

She reviewed SB 295/HB 611 Procurement – Prevailing Wage – Applicability, which was opposed by MACo. After discussion, the Council agreed to send a letter of opposition to both bills.

She reviewed HB 584 Video Lottery Operator – Reconciliation of Proceeds – Uncollectible Debt, which MACo took no position. After discussion, the Council agreed to send a letter of opposition.

She reviewed SB 528 Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022, which was supported by MACo with amendment. After discussion, the Council agreed to send a letter of opposition.

Council President Meffley cited that the chart of State legislation provided in the Council's packet, has been updated to show any actions by the legislature.

Charter Amendments

The Council reviewed the proposed charter amendments. Council Manager Massey read each amendment. Council Attorney MacLeod provided a legal opinion as requested.

In Section 209(c) Council vacancy, the amendment proposes to give the Council 30 days to appoint a new Council Member, after the central committee provides the list of three names. The Council agreed to support this amendment without change on February 8.

In Section 213 Council Attorney, the amendment proposes to add "Council Attorney" to the list of assistance. The Council agreed to withdraw this charter amendment as unnecessary on February 8.

In Section 214 Redistricting, the amendment proposes to require the Council to appoint a Redistricting Commission within one month of receiving the official Census statistics and that current members of central committees are not eligible to be appointed to the Redistricting Commission. The Council agreed to support this amendment by consensus on February 8. Vice President Gregory proposed to leave the April 1 deadline as is. The majority of Council Member disagreed with her suggestion and agreed to leave the charter amendment as originally stated.

In Section 401 Vacancy in office of County Executive, the amendment proposes to give the Council 30 days to appoint a new Executive, after the central committee provides the list of three names. The Council requested that this amendment be reworded using the same verbiage as Section 209(c) amendment. The Council agreed with the edited text as presented today.

In Section 411 County Attorney, the amendment proposes to delete that County Attorney to be a legal advisor to the Council. The Council agreed that this amendment should be rejected so that the Council could ask for County Attorney legal advice if needed. The Council agreed to withdraw this charter amendment on February 8.

In Section 607 Ethics Commission, the amendment proposes that Ethics Commission be composed of five voting members who are appointed to staggered four-year terms. Two members appointed by Council and three members appointed by the Executive. A non-voting chair would be an independent legal counsel selected by Council and Administration. This edited version was approved by consensus at today's session.

In Section 507(a) Action on the Budget by the Council, the amendment proposes to allow Council to propose amendments to the Executive's proposed budget that could restore funding that had been reduced by the Executive, as long as the Council reduced funding at the equal amount. The Council agreed to withdraw this amendment on February 8.

In Section 608 Board of Estimates, the amendment proposes to create a Board of Estimates that would include the County Executive, Council President, Council Member, one citizen appointed by Executive, one citizen appointed by Council, Purchasing Manager, Director of Administration and the Finance Director. The Board of Estimates will approve all purchases over \$50,000, and all consultant contracts over \$25,000, and all real estate purchases, sales and leases. Council President Meffley stated that the thresholds should be increased to \$100,000 and \$50,000. Council discussed removing the thresholds and referring to the Code for the actual amounts. This charter amendment will be edited to specify that purchases and consultant contracts above an amount will be specified in the Code. The Council indicated that more discussion on this threshold should be held. Vice President Gregory asked about other counties with a board of estimates process.

Review of Legislative Agenda

Council President Meffley led a review of the legislative agenda.

Bill No. 2022-01 Supplemental Appropriation – Fund Balance – Health Department-Roof Replacement, will be introduced at tonight's session. James Appel, Finance Director, provided comments. Council President Meffley clarified that the roof estimate is \$318,000, but the project was budgeted at \$290,000.

Resolution No. 04-2022 Supplemental Appropriation – Fund Balance – DPW Roads Division – Road Maintenance and Repair, will be introduced at tonight’s session. James Appel, Finance Director, provided comments. Councilman Miller commented that there is a serious need for road repair in the county.

Resolution No. 05-2022 Supplemental Appropriation–Grant Funds– Community Services – The Bridge and Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Center, will be introduced at tonight’s session. James Appel, Finance Director, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Resolution No. 06-2022 Supplemental Appropriation–Grant Funds–Community Services – Trauma and Substance Use, will be introduced at tonight’s session. James Appel, Finance Director, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Resolution No. 07-2022 Approval – Application – Enterprise Zone Expansion, will be introduced at tonight’s session. Steve Overbay, Director of Administration, provided comments. Councilman Coutz clarified that the seven properties are already owned by Northrop Grumman.

Resolution No. 02-2022 Appointment- Board of Library Trustees-Tanya Area, will be considered for approval at tonight’s session. Steve Overbay, Acting Director of Administration, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Resolution No. 03-2022 Appointment- Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board- Dr. Morganne Castiglione. Steve Overbay, Acting Director of Administration, provided comments. There were no Council questions or comments.

Under New Business, Cecil County Public Schools budget amendment #95, in the amount of \$764,939 for January 2022, will be considered for approval at tonight’s session. There were no Council questions or comments.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Massey announced that the Elkton Colored School Museum and Cultural Center will hold a celebration on Wednesday, February 23 at 10am in front of the Elkton Colored School Building in recognition of the conveyance of the school facility to become a historic landmark, museum and cultural center.

Council Member Items

Due to time, Council Members agreed to hold their comments until the legislative session.

Adjournment

Vice President Gregory made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilwoman Culberson. Council President Meffley adjourned the session at 6:48 pm.


James Massey
Council Manager

Approved:


Robert Meffley, Council President