

**COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

March 28, 2023

OPEN SESSION – Elk Room

3:30 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, Rebecca Hamilton, Al Miller, Donna Culberson, and Jackie Gregory; David Culver, Council Manager; Terry Hale, Council Assistant, members of the administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

Council President Gregory called the meeting to order at 3:30 pm and announced that there were five Council Members present, which constitute a quorum.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilwoman Culberson, seconded by Vice President Meffley, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of March 21, 2023, as presented. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Presentations

- a. Sage Report on Cecil County Compensation Analysis – Public Safety

County Executive Danielle Hornberger introduced Dr. Anirban Basu of the Sage Group who presented the findings of the Cecil County Compensation Analysis for Public Safety. Dr. Basu outlined the study parameters and indicated that comparisons are not always able to be directly made and other issues, such as quality of life, cannot be directly valued. He noted that, in general, Cecil County pay for entry level public safety personnel is low relative to neighboring jurisdictions and is low across the spectrum of ranks including sergeants and lieutenants. He also noted the gaps do lessen once overtime is taken into account. He noted that other benefits, such as take-home vehicles, tuition reimbursement, signing bonuses and other health care wellness programs also add value to the position but is not reflected in the pay scale. When all items are considered, Cecil County is generally comparable to other jurisdictions, but is low on the pay scale. He noted that a raise in the pay scale should help to achieve the goal of recruitment, hiring and retaining a fully staff department. He also noted that a fully staff department should have lower overtime costs.

President Gregory asked if overtime was considered across all jurisdictions and Dr. Basu indicated it was taken into account when the information was available. President Gregory also inquired if the per capita number of officers based on population was taken into account and Dr. Basu indicated that it was not, the study was only based on compensation. President Gregory also inquired as to why Kent County hours were highlighted, and Dr. Basu indicated Kent County utilizes a 44-hour work week. Councilman Miller indicated that overtime should not be taken into consideration when studying base pay. Dr. Basu noted that this is standard practice, and many agencies and police unions negotiate overtime as part of the contract.

County Executive Hornberger again emphasized the importance of all first responder and public safety employees including the Deputies, Correctional Officers, Dispatchers, EMS, Paramedics and

the States Attorney Office. She noted that in the FY24 Budget she is proposing an increase of \$10,000 for all employees in the public safety realm pending Council adoption of the budget and approval by the unions. She emphasized that we would remain committed to our workforce and to provide a safe environment for our citizens.

b. Flood Awareness Month - Flood Program Update

Director of Land Use and Development Service Stephen O'Connell noted that April is Flood Awareness Month. Director O'Connell noted that the 5-year community review was just completed and is waiting for the new rating. He also noted that they continue to monitor all permits for compliance with the flood program regulations for new construction as well as substantial improvements to properties in the floodplain. He also reviewed the updated provisions of the regulations as well as the various flood zones.

Vice President Meffley inquired as to how would a constituent determine if they are in a flood zone. Director Overbay noted it can be found on the FEMA website maps and also on the County's GIS system.

c. Monthly Review of County Contacts (Section 516)

Director of Finance Shon McCollum reviewed the five contracts over \$100,000 for February. Director McCollum noted that two of the contracts were for engineering services, two for Parks and Recreation and one for food services for Community Services. He also noted the bidding and procurement process for these items and that they reviewed multiple vendors to get the best contracted price.

Councilman Miller inquired if the engineering firm for the Elk Mills culvert project was the same firm used for the Wheatly Road projects and Director McCollum noted it was the same firm. Councilman Miller also inquired if the food program was for prepared meals or food delivery and Director McCollum noted it was for food deliveries. Councilman Miller also inquired as to the location of the portable restrooms and Councilwoman Hamilton noted it was discussed at the last Parks and Recreation Meeting that it was for Calvert Park.

Legislative Update

President Gregory noted the following status of the MACo initiatives:

SB0040/HB0332 – Public Information Act - Inspection of Records from Body-Worn Digital Recording Devices is still being reviewed but the State Police indicated Counties may be able to use its contract for camera review. Issues are still being resolved on the "shall be redacted" language included in the bill with various parties at the State level.

HB0556/SB0516 – Cannabis Reform is still being reviewed but the opt out options for Counties have been removed and the allowance to zone for the sale of cannabis is being clarified. MACo is also pursuing an amendment to allocate 30% of the total tax revenue to counties instead of the currently proposed 1.5%.

MACo is supporting the creation of a study group to examine the issue of retention for volunteer firefighters.

MACo and the State Board of Education are also supporting the creation of a study group to examine the transparency in education spending issues.

Councilman Miller noted that everyone should still be cautious and watch bills that did not meet the crossover date because they still could be revived by the Rules Committee and taken to a vote. Councilwoman Hamilton noted SB0555/HB0549 – Fair Wage Act of 2023 is still being reviewed but has been amended to become effective in January of 2024 and amended to remove the CPI multiplier. Councilman Miller and Councilwoman Hamilton also discussed the impact of the Fair Wage Act on small business as well as changes to the FMLA. Councilwoman Hamilton also noted she attended the conference call on HB0849 – School Bus Stops and noted that the Senate will be hearing the bill. The bill is now being heavily opposed and may either be defeated or revised only to include Montgomery County.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Culver noted the updated Council Manager report is in the packet. He also noted the Bainbridge tour is scheduled for April 26 but the MACo visit is still pending. He also noted the Council Budget Meeting schedule and meetings will begin on April 4.

Council Member Items

Councilman Miller noted he attended the Farm Bureau banquet on March 25 and congratulated the Haines Farm for being named Outstanding Farm Operation of the Year. He also noted the gospel singing event at Janes Church the same evening. On March 27 he noted the State Department of Agriculture farm trailer was at the North East Library and had a great turnout.

Councilwoman Culberson gave the intel report for the previous week. She noted that she will be participating in the Principal for the Day event at two of the elementary schools.

Vice President Meffley noted he also attended the Farm Bureau banquet. He also will be participating in the Principal of the Day at Cecilton Elementary. He noted the upcoming Youth Prevention Rally on April 3rd at Elkton High School, and all 5 high schools will be presenting. He noted he will be attending the Cecilton Fire Company banquet on April 1 as well as the CASA Kickball fundraiser. He also noted that the Cecilton Bed Race in Cecilton is on April 1.

Councilwoman Hamilton noted on March 23 she attended the GRC Chamber call and Senator Hershey and Gallion gave an update on Kirwan funding and noted the large increase in the number of bills introduced to the legislature this year. On March 24 she attended the GOP Women Fundraiser to help raise money for the American Legion to purchase flagpoles. She also attended the Farm Bureau banquet and noted how wonderful it was that the farm community helped the Haines family during a family crisis to keep the farm going.

President Gregory also noted she attended the Farm Bureau banquet. She noted she attended the in person MACo legislative meeting on March 22. She also noted the flagpole fundraiser the American Legion is having and that it is a great organization and cause.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Culberson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilwoman Hamilton. Council President Gregory adjourned the work session at 5:07 pm.

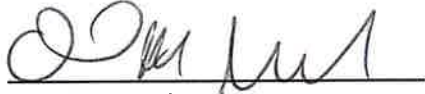
Next County Council Work Session - TBD

A Council Budget Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 4:30 PM in the Elk Room of the County Administration Bldg., 200 Chesapeake Blvd., Elkton, MD 21921.

Public Hearing on FY 2024 County Budget is scheduled for Thursday, May 18, 2023 at Elkton High School, 110 James Street, Elkton, MD.

Approved:


Jackie Gregory, Council President



David M. Culver
Council Manager