

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

February 13, 2024

**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, 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 4:30 pm and announced that there were five Council Members present, which constitute a quorum.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Vice President Meffley, seconded by Councilwoman Culberson, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of February 6, 2024, as presented. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Presentations

a. Board of Elections Update

The Cecil County Board of Elections Director Gary Holmes introduced himself and Deputy Director Karen Benecewicz and also noted a new office supervisor was hired. Director Holmes noted he became Director in December. He noted that the last day to register for the upcoming elections was on Friday and that early voting is May 2 through 9 and the primary election is on May 14. Councilwoman Culberson inquired who was the office supervisor and Director Holmes noted it was Sheri Woodruff. Vice President Meffley inquired if they had enough election judges and Deputy Director Benecewicz noted they have 225 which is enough but would like 300 judges. Vice President Meffley inquired how to apply and Deputy Director Benecewicz noted in person or on line. Councilman Miller inquired on when the training begins and Deputy Director Benecewicz noted on February 26. Vice President Gregory inquired if the election judges needed to be trained both for the primary and general election and Deputy Director Benecewicz noted they get trained twice and training is ongoing over a 4 to 6 week period. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the voting locations for the primary and general election and Director Holmes noted the primary is in the Elk Room at the County Administration Building and at Rising Sun Church of the Nazarene and for the general election they have 19 locations and they are the same as in the past. President Gregory inquired if any changes are taking place this year and Director Holmes noted no major changes and also discussed the drop boxes for ballots. County Attorney Lawrence Scott inquired about mail in ballots and voter verification and Director Holmes and Deputy Director Benecewicz reviewed the guidelines. Councilwoman Culberson and Councilwoman Hamilton reviewed the guidelines and inquired about how the voter roles are updated. Deputy Director Benecewicz noted that they do confirm residency for mail in voting and they also update the voting rolls as information becomes available. Vice President Meffley inquired on how the ballots are done if someone requests an absentee ballot but also comes to the polling place and Deputy Director Benecewicz discussed how this situation is addressed with provisional ballots. Director Holmes also

indicated the Election Board is on several social media sites to help voters during the election process.

b. Update on Septic Review

Director of Land Use and Development Services Stephen O'Connor noted that the FY24 budget allocated funds to take this program over from the Health Department. He noted they began the changeover on July 1 but the official delegation agreement with the Maryland Department of the Environment was not signed until August 21, 2023. He noted that three sections of COMAR applies to this delegation including COMAR 26.04.02 for Sewage Disposal and Certain Water Systems, COMAR 26.04.03 for Water Supply and Sewage Systems and COMAR 26.04.04 for Well Construction. Director O'Connor noted that MDE was, and is continuing, transitional oversight on the implementation. He noted this included being present for perc tests, required MDE to cosign plats, attended training session, submit weekly and monthly reports, conducted weekly site visits with a regional consultant and review all potential denial of systems with them. Director O'Connor also noted that the permits have been added to the online platform OpenGov as well as the request for information. He also noted the number of permits and request that have been processed since the program began until December including 81 septic permits requested and 64 issues, 80 well permits requested and 79 issued, 37 storm water management plans reviewed and 21 approved. He also noted in this time frame over 525 requests for well and septic information records were submitted. Director O'Connor noted for 2024 they added one part time staff member, are preparing for seasonal perc test, partnering with Public Works on wastewater septic hauler permits for haulers, training for the LEHS education requirements and working with other Divisions to assist in permit review. Councilwoman Culberson noted that it was great that Land Use was able to quickly catch up the permits and to get the information request processed quickly. Councilman Miller noted that the Community College is offering environmental health majors and encouraged Land Use to work with the College on student placement. Vice President Meffley noted that since MDE is not as involved the timing has become better and he inquired on the survey requirements. Director O'Connor noted the different types of surveys and noted that unless a survey is on record, then a survey is required for septic permits. He also noted the type of information that is required on the survey and what is acceptable.

State Legislative Update

Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if the Farm Bureau reviewed the cannabis growing bill and solar array on farm buildings and Councilman Miller noted they did and took no position. She noted HB 1407 which is on the Counties ability to regulate solar arrays was discussed by the Rural Counties Coalition on the last call and they oppose this bill. Council agreed to send a letter of opposition. She also noted HB 1022 on election laws and Council agreed not to take a position at this time.

Vice President Meffley did not have any new legislation to review but requested an update on SB 0484 as it relates to affordable housing and President Gregory noted this was one of the Governor's Office initiatives, MACJO is supporting with amendments and Land Use did not note any concerns with that position.

Councilman Miller noted the Farm Bureau did discuss several bills but did not have any new bills for action. He did note they were carefully watching the new diesel tax on trucks and will report back if Council needs to act.

Councilwoman Culberson noted HB 785/SB 738 - Freedom to Read Act has some ambiguous language and this may allow the State to have oversight on materials in school and public libraries. Council agreed to send a letter of opposition. She also noted HB 0722 which would not allow health care workers to perform procedures on minors without parental consent and Council agreed to send a letter of support. She also reviewed HB 0691/SB 0119 that allows health care workers to provide treatment to minors without parental consent and Council agreed to send a letter of opposition.

President Gregory noted she discussed several bills with Sheriff Scott Adams. SB0052/HB 0318 was part of the juvenile justice reform that helps officers interview minors with consent from the parents and Council agreed to send a letter of support. She also discussed some of the cannabis bills and Council did not take any positions at this time. She also discussed SB 0751 on the grants for opioid settlement funds and noted MACO opposes and Council agreed to also send a letter of opposition. She also noted HB 0899/SB 0691 which assist firefighters and EMS employees with attaining degrees and MACO supports. Council also agreed to send a letter of support. She also discussed SB 0783 on the storage of lithium-ion batteries and that MACO was supporting with amendments. She also discussed HB 0760 on the BOE annual audit and requiring them to take action on the findings. She noted MACO support and Council agreed to send a letter to support.

Councilwoman Culberson also noted Council discussed SB 0056 on composting of food waste at the last meeting and Council agreed to send a letter of support.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Culver noted the updated Council Manager report is in the packet. He noted that the Arts Council was requesting any other responses on attending the February 15 event. He also noted that the draft budget hearing schedule was distributed and to let him know if they have any questions prior to it being sent out to the Departments and agencies.

Council Member Items

Councilwoman Culberson noted the intel numbers for the previous week.

Councilman Miller noted Sheriff Scott Adams addressed the last Chambers GRC meeting and also reviewed the challenges in upcoming state legislation. He noted at the February 8 Fair Board meeting the Board became a gold sponsor of Ag Day at Fair Hill for the Middle School students. He also noted at the February 12 Farm Bureau meeting that they also became a gold sponsor for this event. He also noted he attended the Local Management Board Meeting on February 12.

Councilwoman Hamilton noted she attended the Taste of the Eastern Shore on February 8 and noted it was well attended. She noted they did get a presentation on the engineering program they do with children and that it is a great program.

Vice President Meffley noted he attended the BOE Meeting on February 7 and they discussed the upcoming budget. He attended the Chesapeake City Lions Club Meeting on February 8 and the BOE did a presentation on the budget at this meeting also. He also noted at the February 12 Elkton Rotary Club meeting they voted to allocate \$10,000 in grants to non-profits. He also wished everybody a Happy Valentines Day.

President Gregory noted she attended the Freedom Hills Banquet with Councilwomen Hamilton and Culberson and County Executive Hornberger on February 9 and that the event was well attended.

President Gregory announced that no further items are on the February 13, 2024 Work Session agenda.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Culberson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Vice President Meffley. Council President Gregory adjourned the work session at 5:51 pm.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 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.



David M. Culver
Council Manager

Approved:


Jackie Gregory, Council President