

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

September 10, 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; Christine Palmer, Council Assistant, members of the administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

President Gregory called the meeting to order at 4:32 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 September 3, 2024, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations

1. Artesian Water Meadowview Tank Upgrade

Joseph DiNunzio of Artesian Water noted that Artesian Water will be performing renovations at the Meadowview tank and introduced the engineer for the project Jonathan Hawkes. Mr. Hawkes noted the work will include raising the tank 30 feet and providing an additional 280,000 gallons of water storage, improving the water pressure and increasing fire protection. He noted the project will run about 8 months and service should be restored in January 2025. He also noted that the interior and exterior of the tank will be painted in May of 2025.

Vice President Meffley inquired if the tower was going to be raised or are additional layers being added to the top and Mr. Hawkes noted the tower would be raised. Councilman Miller inquired if the age of the tank is a concern and Mr. Hawkes noted the tank is in good condition and can be upgraded based on the engineering study. Councilwoman Culberson inquired about the type of paint used in the interior of the tank and Mr. Hawkes noted it is a special paint that is approved for this use. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the timing of the painting and Mr. Hawkes noted the tower should be completed and in operation before they can paint so the tank will be taken back offline during this time. Mr. DiNunzio clarified that the tower can only be painted at certain times of the year but it can be put into service once completed without being painted until it is time to paint. Councilwoman Hamilton also inquired on the cost and if this will necessitate a rate increase. Mr. DiNunzio noted that since Artesian assumed control of the water system in 2011 they have not had a rate increase and have been evaluating the system. He noted any rate increase would need to go to the Maryland Public Service Commission, but at this time he does not anticipate an increase in the near future. Councilwoman Hamilton noted the large increase Elkton recently had and Mr. DiNunzio noted that if rates are increased they would come back to Council to review. President Gregory inquired on rate studies and Mr. DiNunzio noted they do studies and would propose rate increase only when necessary, because of the cost of going to the Maryland Public Service Commission and that any rate increase would most likely be done over time. He also noted the tank at the Cherry Hill Middle School will also be replaced and the line replacement to the Highlands area and these costs would also be in any rate study.

2. Cecil County Farm Museum

Mel Bacon, Executive Director of the Cecil County Farm Museum noted that the Charter for the Farm Museum states that it was organized exclusively for education and charitable purposes. Director Bacon noted that the project is being done in two phases and Phase I will provide permanent ADA-compliant restrooms so that it may be utilized for meetings, CCPS approved field trips, and other Farm Museum sponsored events. The project will also provide a commercial kitchen space and concession style kitchen for use by outside groups, such as local farmers and the CCST Culinary Arts students. Director Bacon outlined the timeline and noted that the project should be completed by Bay Country Associates by the end of November. He noted Phase II of the

project is to connect the building into the wastewater line when the EMS Station is built and that they are currently raising funds for this project.

Councilman Miller noted this has been an ongoing project and the Farm Museum Board and Director Bacon have been doing a fantastic job. Vice President Meffley noted that local contractors have been utilized and that some of them are former students from the School of Technology. Councilwoman Hamilton encourage everybody to attend Heritage Day at the Museum on October 19. Director Bacon noted the large turnout at last year's Heritage Day and also the apple butter making event. He also noted that the Teacher of the Year Brittany Rigdon has been a great help to the Farm Museum. Councilman Miller also noted Ms. Rigdon is one of the seven finalist for the State award. President Gregory noted that the ADA bathrooms will help for school trips and hopes that local farmers will utilize the commercial kitchen. Director Bacon noted the outreach they do with farmers on the kitchen and also thanked the Health Department for all the help on the kitchen. President Gregory inquired on the fund raising for the project and Director Bacon noted it is going well, but would like some County fees to be waived, such as the connection fee to the wastewater system. Director Bacon also noted that since 2014 over \$500,000 has been raised and spent on the site, which is still owned by the Cecil County Public Schools. He also thanked Upper Shore Regional Council for funding. President Gregory inquired on the bidding process for the project and Director Bacon noted they did go through the bidding process with the Maryland Department of General Services since State funds were used. He noted they were fortunate to be able to utilize a local contractor in Bay Country. Director Bacon did note that by using the Department of General Services that invoices paid by the State do have a delay time for the payment to the contractor.

3. Paris Foundation

Executive Director Michael Brandon introduced Bob Imperatrice who is working with The Paris Foundation on the project. Director Brandon noted that The Paris Foundation did receive a new lease from the Town of Elkton for the land in Hollingsworth Manor and that the groundbreaking is September 13. He noted the building will be a training center with a commercial kitchen, a community center for public use and the site will offer many after school programs. He noted that last year over 50,000 meals were served by the Paris Foundation. Mr. Imperatrice noted that the site contractor began site preparation last week and the foundation will be started in about four weeks.

Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the programs and Director Brandon noted they will continue to work with the homeless and other people in need. He noted they will do the food preparation training program to get people certified, provide meals to those in need, continue mobile medicine with screenings and education with the goal of expanding these services into the building, have after school programs, offer music and art programs and do outreach to all areas of Cecil County. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the community center aspect and Director Brandon noted that it will be available for all groups to meet. Mr. Imperatrice noted The Paris Foundation has over 760 volunteers and does more than meals and this building will allow them to grow programs in the community. Vice President Meffley noted that The Paris Foundation, as well as the Farm Museum, have economic development possibilities and assist people in learning skills. Councilwoman Culberson noted the programs seem to be helping and inquired about outreach in Hollingsworth Manor and Cecil County. Director Brandon noted they do outreach and they also have a Cecil Transit stop at the site to help bring in people outside Hollingsworth Manor. Councilwoman Culberson noted the safe food services training is a benefit for the community and Councilman Miller noted the great impact of having community meeting space in this area. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the project timeline and Director Brandon noted about nine months and they are also working with Bay Country. President Gregory inquired if all the funding is in place and the total cost of the project. Mr. Imperatrice noted that the total cost of the project is up from the original estimate of \$1,700,000 to about \$2,300,000. He also noted funds that have been raised, including funds from the Upper Shore Regional Council and the possibility of a bridge loan from Fulton Bank if they are unable to raise the rest of the needed funding. President Gregory inquired if all the engineering and permitting work is completed and what were the holdups on the project and Director Brandon noted McCrone did the engineering and the permits were granted, but it took longer than anticipated because of the various regulations. Vice President Meffley noted that this site was under MRDC control, but Elkton granted The Paris Foundation its own land lease on 1.7 acres of the site and that should help with fundraising.

4. AquaCon

County Attorney Lawrence Scott introduced Ryan D. Showalter of McAllister, DeTar, Showalter & Walker LLC, who is the representative of AquaCon. Mr. Showalter noted AquaCon is a Norwegian based company looking to construct an entirely land based production facility for Atlantic salmon at Bainbridge. He noted AquaCon is the leader in the Recirculatory Aquaculture System (RAS) which is a technology where water is recycled and reused after mechanical and biological filtration and removal of suspended matter and metabolites. He noted this facility will raise the fish from the egg stage to market. He noted most farm raised salmon is started in a facility then moved to the sea for growth and harvest in large, netted areas. He noted this is a two-year process and present risk to the fish in the pen from predators and parasites. Mr. Showalter also noted the cost and time to transport the fish to market and this location is great for them to reach the Boston to Richmond market faster to ensure fresh product. He noted this process is environmental sustainability, take the salmon welfare in account and is lowest possible carbon footprint. This process uses recycled water that is cleaned by the RAS process and produces the highest quality seafood that is 100% traceable. Mr. Showalter noted onshore fish farming offers substantial sustainability compared to sea-based farming. He also noted that the University of Maryland and the Baltimore Aquarium are leaders in research in fish farming and that a test facility in West Virginia will assist in this research. He noted that the water is returned to the Susquehanna River cleaner than it is taken in. He also noted that the site would provide well-paying and highly skilled jobs, have minimal traffic impact, would utilize every part of the fish, including making fish oil, fish meal for cat and dog food and the other by-products become soil enhancing fertilizer.

President Gregory inquired about the water that would be discharged and Mr. Showalter noted that they would need a MDE permit for that and that the RAS technology has been used for decades to clean the water. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on other facilities of this type and Mr. Showalter noted four other facilities that are in production and that this would be the first one in America of this prototype. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the tanks at the other sites being outside and Mr. Showalter noted they were under construction and all of the tanks are inside except at the Norwegian plant because of the weather patterns. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the water system and Mr. Showalter noted the water is constantly being filtered and the treatment facilities, several per tank, are redundant to ensure they can completely and properly clean the water for the fish. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the fish processing and Mr. Showalter noted it would be done on site and the fish sent to market. He also noted that this would not produce an odor and the byproducts would be processed here and sold to other companies. He noted at full capacity this plant would produce 20,000 metric tons of fish per year. President Gregory inquired on the construction timeline and Mr. Showalter noted it is still being determined but expects it to be next year and fully operational in three years, but it also depends on the final cleanup of the site by the Navy. He noted that fish production will begin sooner while it is still under construction. Councilman Miller inquired on the impact to the wastewater treatment facilities and water service and Mr. Showalter noted they are working on agreements for the wastewater with the County and for water from Artesian, both raw and treated. He noted most of the wastewater is not from the tanks but from the restrooms and fish cleaning areas. Councilman Miller also noted the fish waste as fertilizer and the possible of any gas being produce at the site as a fuel alternative and Mr. Showalter noted that the plant will use any gas generated for generators and will examine his suggestion as an alternative fuel source for farm vehicles. Councilman Miller also inquired on what the fish are fed and Mr. Showalter noted it depends on the stage, but mostly a soy meal. Councilman Miller noted that the local farmers do produce soy and that this area does have several grain operators that can be a resource. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if the cleanup by the Navy is an issue and Mr. Showalter noted not at this time. President Gregory noted this is a great project and will produce good jobs and Mr. Showalter noted that on full completion it may be up to 250 jobs and these jobs will require highly trained individuals in vet services, marine biology, chemistry and environmental health and hopes to work with the University of Maryland, Cecil College and the local schools on the job skills needed.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Culver noted the updated Council Manager report is in the packet. Manager Culver noted the upcoming Harvest Dinner, MACO President Visit and MDOT Tour dates.

Council Member Items

Councilwoman Culberson noted that the intel numbers were not completely up to date but did note we did have one overdose death last week.

Councilman Miller noted that if anyone notices low flying aircraft over the next several weeks it is farmers dropping seeds for cover crops. He also noted that a recent report showed American farmers have seen a 23% drop in income since 2022.

Vice President Meffley noted the presentations this evening were fantastic and that he hopes Bainbridge redevelopment continues to produce positive results.

Councilwoman Hamilton noted Cecil Care Days will be on October 5 and 11 this year and hopes everyone signs up to participate in this event.

President Gregory noted that a 9-11 Remembrance Event will be held at 6:30 at the Chesapeake City VFW on September 11. She also reminded Council that the CIP Projects that will assist in the Bainbridge redevelopment will be on next week's agenda.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Culberson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilman Miller. Council President Gregory adjourned the work session at 6:41 pm.

The next County Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at 4:30 pm in the Elk Room of the County Administrative Building. The session will be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage at www.ccgove.org/council.



David M. Culver
Council Manager

Approved:


Jackie Gregory, Council President