

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

December 17, 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 Dawn Branch; David Culver, Council Manager; Christine Palmer, Council Assistant, members of the administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

President Miller 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 Councilwoman Culberson, seconded by Councilwoman Hamilton, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council work session of December 10, 2024, as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Review of Legislative Agenda

a. Old Business

1. Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #128

President Miller noted that the Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #128 is for \$512,543. Denise Sopa from the Board of Education noted that this amendment moved restricted revenue from MABE for upgrades at Cherry Hill and a grant for transportation from the Susquehanna Workforce. She also noted it moved restricted Leads federal funds for science and reading, staff support and retention. The amendment also moved unrestricted funds for various repairs and furniture for classrooms. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on some of the repairs and Ms. Sopa noted it was for sidewalks and a canopy repair at Cherry Hill. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the community services line-item changes and Ms. Sopa noted it was for use of the school buildings or other services. Councilwoman Culberson also inquired on the poverty and equity grants and Ms. Sopa noted these are cost associated with the realignment of those programs.

2. Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #129

President Miller noted that the Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #129 is for \$1,275,342. Ms. Sopa reviewed the changes in the restricted revenue funds that included grants from various corporations and charitable organizations and the purchase of equipment. Ms. Sopa reviewed the restricted State revenue and noted that a \$1,741,060 reduction in FY25 Pre K expansions grant from the State caused many of the other changes in this budget amendment. Ms. Sopa also reviewed the restricted federal funds. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the Pre-K expansion grant reduction and Ms. Sopa noted that this grant was reduced while the Board of Education worked on the accreditation for the program. Councilwoman Hamilton asked what part of the program was deleted because of this decline and Ms. Sopa noted it was classroom construction. President Miller noted the numerous grants and donations to the school and thanked those organization who do contribute. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the use of metal detectors and Ms. Sopa noted all five high schools have this technology and it is used, in cooperation with the Sheriff's Office, as various events.

b. New Business

1. Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #130

President Miller noted that the Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #130 is for \$308,466. Ms. Sopa reviewed the restricted revenue and noted the grants and donations to the school system. She also reviewed the restricted state revenue that was part of the youth program. She also reviewed the reduction of the restricted federal revenue of \$535,133 for Title I funding and noted that no explanation was given for this reduction. She also reviewed the use of other unrestricted revenue to hire an additional staff member to support cybersecurity. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the cybersecurity for the Board and Ms. Sopa noted several staff members

work on cybersecurity for the school systems programs. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the Blueprint funding for private schools and Ms. Sopa noted this was a pass through but will now be paid directly to those schools. Councilwoman Hamilton also noted at the recent MACO Conference the States Superintendent Association position on changes needed for the Blueprint was discussed and requested a presentation from the Board of Education so the County can potentially assist with some of the changes and Superintendent of Cecil County Schools, Dr. Jeff Lawson, noted he would coordinate with Council for a presentation date.

c. Introduction of Bills

1. Bill No. 2024-24 - Expedited Legislation - Public Safety Pension Plan – Amendment 10 – Deferred Retirement Option Plan

Cecil County Sheriff Scott Adams noted this bill is for Amendment 10 to the Public Safety Pension Plan to implement a Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) option. Captain Steve Brownhill reviewed the DROP program and noted this program is utilized by many agencies to keep qualified personnel who are eligible for retirement up to an additional 5 years. He noted that an actuarial study was done and it indicated minimal liability to the pension program. The amendment was approved on May 9, 2024, but has not been enacted. Councilwoman Branch inquired if Cecil was only 1 of 2 Sheriff's Department that did not have the DROP program and Sheriff Adams noted that was correct, however, other municipal agencies do not have the program. Sheriff Adams also noted that the DROP program requires that the employee is eligible for full retirement, currently at 25 years of service, and will stay up to an addition 5 years in the program. If the employee enters the program, the pension is frozen, however, the contribution by the employee is placed in a deferred account and released as a lump sum payment upon retirement. Sheriff Adams also noted that an employee does not have to stay the full five years but may not stay longer. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if you get the pension and accrual, and Sheriff Adams noted that you receive both. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if you could enter the DROP program any time after 25 years and Sheriff Adams noted that you can, but once you enter the five-year clock begins towards retirement. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if this would be helpful for planning for recruitment and training and Sheriff Adams noted this would help them in every aspect of recruitment, promotions and training. Vice President Meffley inquired if people who have already left could come back under this program and Sheriff Adams noted they could not. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if the Sheriff's Office had an estimate on who would utilize this program and Sheriff Adams noted that once passed this would be an incentive to stay. Tom Vicente, Senior Consulting Actuary for Bolton, who is the consultant with Pension Board, noted that this program is very effective in other jurisdictions to retain the knowledge base of senior employees and is a valuable tool for workforce planning. He noted the pension plan is very solid and this program will have a minimal impact on the pension plan.

d. Introduction of Resolutions

1. Resolution 60-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Office of Economic Development – MARBIDCO – Agriculture Microgrant Program.

Director of Economic Development Sandra Edwards noted this is the 5th year for this grant and program. This program is funded by MARBIDCO, Upper Shore Regional Council, and Cecil County utilizing Video Lottery Terminal funding. This specific grant requires the applicant to also participate financially. Director Edwards also noted that since the inception of this program 71 grants have been given for farming projects and marketing. President Miller inquired if the MARBIDCO is the only one that requires the financial match and Director Edwards noted it is but they encourage the applicants to participate financially when possible. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if the listing of the 71 grants is available and Director Edwards noted she will make the list available. President Miller noted the value of this program and also other programs done by the Soil Conservation District.

2. Resolution 61-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Office of Economic Development – Upper Shore Regional Council – Agricultural Microgrant Program

Director of Economic Development Sandra Edwards noted this is the Upper Shore Regional Council grant to the microgrant programs and this does not require the applicant to participate financially.

3. Resolution 62-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grants – Economic Development – Supplement Marketing Costs

Director of Economic Development Sandra Edwards noted that this grant goes to the Office of Tourism for marketing and economic development opportunities.

4. Resolution 63-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Department of Information Technology – State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program

Director of Information Technology David Warnick noted this is the second grant received to help implement the Maryland standards that were adopted. Councilwoman Culberson inquired as to what technology is being implemented and Director Warnick noted it is several software programs that protects all programs and hardware. Vice President Meffley inquired if this would bring us into compliance with the State code and Director Warnick noted once these programs are installed the State would perform an audit to verify compliance.

5. Resolution 64 -2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Community Services – Opioid Affected Youth Initiative Grant

Director of Community Services David Trolio noted this grant is for the Department of Justice and will run for three years. He noted these funds are utilized in many ways including parenting classes, support, youth prevention programs and staff amongst other items. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired how Youth Empowerment Services is involved in the parenting classes and Director Trolio noted that is one program they offer through contracted services. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired what the parenting classes involved and Director Trolio noted it could be a referral to assist parents with trouble youth or other issues with communication.

6. Resolution 65-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Motor Vehicle Fund – Cecil Transit

Director of Community Services David Trolio noted this appropriation is to correct an error in the FY25 Budget that omitted the carryover funds for the purchase of four vehicles, three small busses and a utility vehicle for Cecil Transit. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if additional funds were added to the FY25 budget for these vehicle and Director Trolio noted additional funding was allocated but did not cover the costs since the carryover funds were not added. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the allocation and encumbrance of funds from fiscal year to fiscal year and Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish noted the funds were allocated for carried over but not added in the budget and this amendment would correct that oversight.

7. Resolution 66-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Community Services – Cecil Transit Division – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Director of Community Services David Trolio noted this will add the remaining ARPA funds to this year's transit funding. Director Trolio noted they do have until 2029 to spend these funds for operating costs but is requesting to excel the expenditure to avoid any potential "claw back" from the federal government of these funds. Councilwoman Branch inquired if a "claw back" was forthcoming and Director Trolio noted that he does not have any specific information if it is however, in the past other programs that were not expended did see this removal of funding when administrations changed. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if this would replace general fund money or was this a restricted account and Director Trolio noted to was restricted. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if this funding will now be used before County funding and Director Trolio noted it cannot supplant County funding but can be used to cover costs. President Miller noted it is prudent and sound budgeting to expel grant money first and Vice President Meffley noted that unspent County funds go back to the fund balance at the end of the fiscal year.

8. Resolution 67-2024 - Grant Application – Community Development Block Grant – Recovery Housing Program – Voices of Hope, Inc.

Director of Community Services David Trolio noted this resolution is seeking permission to apply for a CDBG grant to purchase a house for Voices of Hope recovery program for women and children who are recovering from addiction. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if Voices of Hope will run the program and Director Trolio noted they will have an agreement to do so as part of the grant. Councilwoman Hamilton confirmed that if the grant is approved, they will need to come back to Council to accept the grant and then purchase the property and Director Trolio noted that is correct. Director Trolio noted that a property has already been identified and they are working

with owner to hold the property until the grant is determined. Councilwoman Culberson inquired when the application is due, and Director Trolio noted January 10, 2025, and hopes for a quick response. Councilwoman Culberson inquired what would happen if the grant were not received and Director Trolio noted they hope to get the total amount and the property owner understands that an appraisal would need to be done prior to purchase. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired how would the property be transferred to Voices of Hope and Director Trolio noted the process and that a contract on the operation would need to be signed with Voices of Hope in accordance with the grant agreement.

9. Resolution 68-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Sheriff's Office – Medication Supported Recovery Project

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenberger noted this grant to the Sheriff's Office Correctional Facility for the recovery program. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if this is the continuation of the previous grant and Director Schneckenberger noted that it was.

10. Resolution 69-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Sheriff's Office – MOUD in Detention Centers

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenberger noted this grant to the Sheriff's Office Correctional Facility is also for the recovery program but relates to the opioid settlement and focuses more on programs. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if this is for medication or just programs and Director Schneckenberger noted that it was for recovery programs. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on the difference in the total grant and what is being sent to the Sheriff's Office and it was noted the grant was to the Health Department and this resolution shows the portion the Health Department is granting to the Sheriff's Office.

e. Consideration of Resolutions

1. Resolution 56-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Sheriff Office- Warrant Apprehension

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger noted this is an annual grant to the Sheriff's office and helps offset overtime costs and new equipment.

2. Resolution 57-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Department of Information Technology – State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger noted this grant is for Information Technology to help with cyber security with Emergency Management and the 911 system.

3. Resolution 58-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – General Fund Balance – Department of Economic Development - Economic Development Study

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger noted this request is being made as part of the transition with the County Executive to help create a strategic plan for Economic Development. He noted that the last study was done over 10 years ago and the data needs to be updated to reflect the current economic conditions in the Cecil County market area. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired how the \$100,000 fee was established and Director Schneckenberger noted it was based on recent studies done in other counties. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if the scope of work was done and will the study include our municipal partners and the Chamber. Director Schneckenberger noted the EDC would work on the scope and should include the municipalities and Chamber. Councilwoman Hamilton noted that the scope should be done first before the funding is allocated and the funds will probably be spent in FY25 and FY26. President Miller noted that the last study was done in 2013 and needs to be updated to reflect the current economic conditions. Councilwoman Branch thanked the Chamber for the letter of support for the study.

4. Resolution 59-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – General Fund Balance – Development of a new County Website

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger noted this amendment will be for the County to upgrade the website to provide more data, better customer service and be compliant with all applicable regulations. Councilwoman Hamilton again noted the scope should be done first before

requesting funding. Vice President Meffley noted the current website is difficult to navigate and needs to be updated. Director of Information Technology David Warnick noted IT is already meeting with potential website companies and the various stakeholders on the redesign of the site. Director Warnick noted this will be an entirely new website not just a transfer of the existing website. He noted the website will need to be completed by April of 2026 to be in compliance with the applicable State and federal mandates on ADA. Director Warnick also noted the inclusion of more data on the website as well as better branding on the County pages. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if this will be outsourced or done in house and Director Warnick noted both. Councilwoman Culberson noted if additional funding in FY26 would be needed and Director Warnick noted it would be for full implementation.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Culver noted the updated Council Manager report is in the packet.

Council Member Items

Council members deferred comments to the Legislative Session of December 17, 2024.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Culberson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilwoman Hamilton. President Miller adjourned the work session at 6:09 pm.

The next County Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2025 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.ccgov.org/council.

Approved:



Al Miller
Council President



David M. Culver
Council Manager