

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

January 2, 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: Bob Meffley, Rebecca Hamilton, Al Miller, Donna Culberson, Jackie Gregory; David Culver, Council Manager; Terry Hale, Council Assistant, members of the administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

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 Councilwoman Culberson, seconded by Vice President Meffley, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of December 19, 2023, as presented. The motion passed 5 to 0.

Review of Legislative Agenda

a. Introduction of Resolutions

- 1. Resolution 01-2024 - Budget Amendment - Fund Balance - Department of Emergency Services.**

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that that these funds were in the FY23 Budget but because of supply chain issues, the equipment was not available. He noted in addition, along with the equipment being available, grant funding in the amount of \$29,490 is also available to offset the cost of \$84,866. Director of Emergency Services Wayne Tome noted one grant was from the Maryland Institute of Emergency Services for \$10,000 and the other was from Homeland Security for \$19,490. Councilman Miller inquired when the grants would be received and what type of equipment was being purchased. Director Tome noted the grant requests are being processed and that the equipment included radios, defibrillators and parts. Vice President Meffley inquired on how the radios were doing and who replaced lost or damaged radios. Director Tome answered that the radios were holding up and they repurpose older units to Fire Companies in the northern part of the County since Pennsylvania still uses the lower frequency models. He also noted that depending on who lost or broke the radio they would be responsible. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired if the full amount was in the FY23 Budget and Director Overbay noted it was, but since that time grant funds became available to help offset the costs.

- 2. Resolution 02-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds - Office of Economic Development – MARBIDCO - Agriculture Microgrant Program.**

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this will be the 4th year of this grant program and appreciates the cooperation between MARBIDCO, Upper Shore Regional Council, Cecil County and the farmers. He noted this grant helps farmers with new business opportunities and help grow existing businesses. He noted this grant is matched with Cecil County funds and funding from the farmers in the program and last year Cecil County did 48 grants and over 140 total grants so far during the first three years of the program. Director of Economic Development William Sorenson noted the grants can be as much as \$7,500. Councilman Miller noted the MARBIDCO grant required farmers to also contribute.

3. Resolution 03-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Office of Economic Development – Upper Shore Regional Council – Agricultural Microgrant Program.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this is also Upper Shore Regional Council 4th year in this program and thanked them for the grant. He noted this grant is different from the MARBIDCO since the County is not required to match the grant amount. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on how the grants are awarded and Director Overbay noted the requests are reviewed and the farmers receive the funding directly once awarded.

4. Resolution 04-2024 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Office of Economic Development –Marketing Costs.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this grant will help Cecil County promote our historical and cultural sites for tourism. He noted the many sites including the underground railroad and Harriot Tubman trails, the C&D Canal, Turkey Point light station, the AME Churches in Conowingo and Cecilton and the Perryville railroad ferry and station and other sites will be promoted as part of this grant. President Gregoy inquired if Snow Hill is included and Director Overbay noted that they will try to include all sites. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if the Historical Society is involved in this grant and Director of Economic Development William Sorenson noted he would check on who participated and Director Overbay noted they had many partners in this grant. Councilman Miller noted that the Fair Hill Races and Willie DuPont's contribution should be included and he hopes that the Fair Hill Races will return in the near future. Director Overbay noted discussions are ongoing as it relates to the Fair Hill Races.

5. Resolution 05-2024 – Reappointment– Weed Control Advisory Board.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that the noxious weed control program is important to Cecil County and this Board has helped implement the new technologies and contracts to control these weeds. He noted this Board is now being appointed to a 3-year term. He also noted changes with the agreement with State Highway and the use of private contractors. Councilman Miller thanked the administration for making this a three-year term instead of one year so they can remain vigilant on noxious weeds.

b. Consideration of Resolutions

1. Resolution 65-2023 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Cecil County Liquor Board – Inspection and Enforcement Activities.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this grant was from the Cecil County Drug Free Communities Coalition and will help with enforcement of the liquor laws.

2. Resolution 66-2023 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Community Services – Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use Program Grant.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this is a Department of Justice grant and the funds will be used for staffing support, contracted trauma therapy services for children, family members and public safety personnel, equipment, and other targeted services to address opioid, stimulant and substance use in the community. Councilman Miller inquired on the length of the grant and Director Overbay noted it was for three years. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on who are the contractors for the mental health services since we have limited providers in Cecil County and Director Overbay noted he would research and let Council know the contractors. President Gregory inquired if the school systems participate in this program and Director Overbay noted he would research this issue also.

3. Resolution 67-2023 - Supplemental Appropriation – Grant Funds – Community Services – Human Services Division – Domestic Violence Rape Crisis Program/The Bridge.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted that this is for two programs, \$50,000 for the rape crises center and \$36,667 for emergency transitional housing for people that have pets. He noted that this is also a three-year grant program. Councilwoman Culberson inquired on the Cecil County Animal Shelter being at capacity and Director Overbay noted this grant helps people find shelters or hotels that are pet friendly, but the County will also shelter the pet if capacity exists at the County shelter or find a foster care home for the pet, if needed.

c. Call for Final Reading of Bills

1. Bill 2023-10 – Supplemental Appropriation – Amendment to the 2024 Capital Improvement Program – Replacement of Wheatley Road Bridge.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted this was a funded FY23 CIP project, project number 52695, but needed additional funding since the bids came in higher than expected. This bill would add this project back to the FY24 CIP Budget and add the additional funding needed.

2. Bill 2023-11 - Amendment – Zoning Ordinance – Cannabis – Definitions, Permissible Uses, Home Occupation, Prohibited Signs and General Loading Specifications.

Director of Administration Steven Overbay noted this legislation is in response to the State's legalization of cannabis and this bill should provide safeguards for the cultivation, processing and sales of cannabis in Cecil County. President Gregory noted that several amendments are being proposed and discussed Amendment 1 that would place the 1,000 foot buffer around municipal corporate limits and Director of Land Use Stephen O'Connor noted this would address the Town of North East concern. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if we had any of the Town's amendment and, if so, were they the same as the County and Director O'Connor noted he heard from a few of the towns and they may use our ordinance as a model. County Attorney Lawrence Scott noted the towns set the regulations within the town limits. Vice President Meffley noted these regulations are similar to liquor store regulations. Councilwoman Culberson, Vice President Meffley and Councilwoman Hamilton opined that the while the towns can set its own regulations, separation should be considered by the Towns for the uses as enumerated in the County proposal.

Vice President Meffley noted he is proposing Amendment 2 that would remove the prohibition on the sale of accessory items such as apparel, paraphernalia, souvenirs and other items since this could put these businesses at a disadvantage to those that can sell these items like smoke shops and retail stores. Attorney Scott noted this prohibition was added to discourage underage individuals from visiting these dispensaries and others, including out of state buyers, from using cannabis in the parking area or vehicle. Vice President Meffley noted that smoke shops sell these items and this could lead to more of these businesses. President Gregory noted that we should discourage underage individuals from visiting these establishments to buy apparel. Councilman Miller inquired as to what items are not regulated by the Maryland Cannabis Administration and Director O'Connor noted they only regulated cannabis and its byproducts. Councilwoman Hamilton inquired on how smoke shops are regulated and Director O'Connor noted that the new definition of dispensaries and if they sell hemp derived product or any other product that is created by a chemical reaction that changes molecular structure of any chemical substance derived from cannabis sativa and intended for human consumption they will be subject to these regulations. Attorney Scott noted this is an ongoing discussion at the State level. Councilwoman Culberson inquired if this would prohibit the sale of apparel and other goods at a smoke shop and what about the existing smoke shops and Director O'Connor noted that the existing shops would become non-conforming. Councilwoman Culberson and President Gregory noted that these smoke shops are not regulated by the Maryland Cannabis Commission and do not need to get license so how will they be monitored. Attorney Scott noted this is also an ongoing discussion with the State.

Councilman Miller inquired on the testimony from the Public Hearing on the need for medical cannabis users having access to the dispensaries and also on the use of agriculture land for growing and Director O'Connor noted over 100 sites, and up to 160 sites, may be available for dispensaries not counting what the towns may allow. Attorney Scott noted that the State legislation was to encourage distribution of these dispensaries, not for them to be in a cluster. Councilman Miller inquired if the 1,500 separation between dispensaries was added for that purpose and Attorney Scott noted that it was. Councilman Miller noted that this may need to be tabled for further review and Attorney Scott noted it needs to be passed or the dispensaries could go anywhere. Director O'Connor noted that when medical cannabis was first allowed it was treated as a retail use, however, with the recreation law going into effect last July 1, 2023, Land Use noted the need for these additional regulations. Vice President Meffley requested the maps showing the potential location be sent to Council and Director O'Connor noted he would send them. Councilwoman Culberson and President Gregory discussed the grandfathered sites and the need for new sites to conform to the regulations, including smoke shops and Director O'Connor reviewed the non-conforming regulations.

Director Overbay also discussed a potential amendment to address the Planning Boards recommendation and President Gregory requested it be prepared for discussion and a vote at the Legislative Session. It was noted that these changes were minor word changes from "may" to "shall" for the growers and processors in the NAR and SAR zones.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Culver noted the updated Council Manager report is in the packet. He noted that numerous event invitations are being received and please respond to them as soon as possible so we can send notice on attendance.

Council Member Items

Councilmembers deferred comments to the Legislative Session of January 2, 2024.

President Gregory announced that no further items are on the January 2, 2024 Work Session agenda.

Adjournment

Councilwoman Culberson made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councilwoman Hamilton. Council President Gregory adjourned the work session at 5:37 pm.

The next Council work session will be held on Tuesday, January 9, 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.

Approved:


Jackie Gregory, Council President

David M. Culver
Council Manager