

**PROCEEDINGS OF HARFORD COUNTY COUNCIL,
GOVERNMENT, AND MUNICIPAL WORK SESSION**

September 29, 2021

BEL AIR TOWN HALL

6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER – the Municipal Work Session was called to order at 6:00 PM by Mayor Amy Chmielewski. Attendees were, Donna Kahoe - Town Commissioner, Jesse Bane - Town Administrator, Patti Parker - Director, Community and Public Relations, all from the Town of Bel Air; Patrick Vincenti - Council President, Anthony Giangiordano – Councilman, Robert Wagner, Councilman, Chad Shrodes – Councilman, Charlie Kearney,- Council Attorney, all from the Harford County Council; David Glenn – Council President, Casi Boyer – Councilwoman, Carolyn Zinner – Councilwoman, David Martin – Councilman all from the City of Havre de Grace; Patrick McGrady – Mayor, Adam Hiob – Councilman, both from the City of Aberdeen and Billy Boniface – Chief Advisor to the County Executive.

OPENING REMARKS --- Mayor Chmielewski welcomed the attendees and discussed the history of the Municipal Meetings thus far in 2021. Brief introductions were made by all who were present.

TOWN OF BEL AIR---**TOWN UPDATES---**

Mayor Chmielewski informed the group that Town of Bel Air is moving forward with their renovations and expansions to Town Hall and Police Department. She stated that bids for the project were received today, September 29, 2021. She also mentioned several events coming up on the calendar for Bel Air including Trick or Treat on the weekend of October 30, 2021 and the Maryland State BBQ Bash October 14-15, 2021. The Winter Wonderland Committee will be working events in the Town at upcoming committee meetings.

PARKING---

Mayor Chmielewski stated the Town of Bel Air has been experiencing issues related to parking with local businesses, residents, and visitors. She told the group that Independent Brewing Company (IB) currently has a satellite parking lot, but it exceeds those spaces. The Town is actively looking into the parking issues and viable solutions at this time.

HARFORD MALL UPDATE---

Mayor Chmielewski discussed an update on the purchase and development of the Sears building within Harford Mall. She stated that the area is slated for development and the current Sears building will be demolished. The project will encompass the addition of a high-end grocery store.

COVID-19 FUNDING (ARPA) ---

Town Administrator, Jesse Bane and Mayor Chmielewski discussed their thoughts on the federal funding received by local governments in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic. They expressed their concerns for allocating the dollars to the correct projects as to not have to reconcile the expenditures with the federal government at a later date. They asked if there was a way to share information on what other jurisdictions are using their funding for and used an example of employee bonuses. Mr. Bane would like to have a better understanding of funding usage throughout the group. Mayor McGrady volunteered as a contact to work on setting up meetings for this topic in the future among the group.

Mayor McGrady provided the attendees with a summary of how the City of Aberdeen has applied their federal dollars. He stated that he does not believe the federal government will be as restrictive with the usage of funds.

Billy Boniface, Chief Advisor to the County Executive stated that Harford County has extensively tracked their spending of the COVID-19 funding and that treasurer, Robbie Sandlass was in a recent training regarding this matter. Mr. Boniface mentioned that the County has hired an outside firm to help them navigate the process. He said that more information sharing on what the County has used its funds for could be made available to the municipalities in the future.

Ideas were discussed among the group from Mr. Boniface, Mr. Bane and others in reference to using the funding for HVAC projects to free up money within the general fund for other uses and loss revenue projections.

Mayor Chmielewski asked for a committee specifically addressing this topic and inviting representatives from all levels of government to attend.

MA & PA TRAIL---

Mr. Bane updated the group on the Town concerns at the Ma & Pa Trail parking site located on the intersection of Ellendale and Williams Streets. He cited that the Town has fielded numerous concerns related to parking, vandalism and portable restrooms located at the parking lot. He then stated that she has had some conversations with the Harford County Parks and Recreation Department, Paul Magness on the issues and they are working to find a solution.

Members of the group including Mayor Chmielewski, Mr. Bane, Mr. Boniface and Mayor McGrady discussed the current state of the portable restrooms and the desire to have more permanent fixtures. They acknowledged that the responsibility of those permanent restroom sites will have to be determined as well as a funding source to be identified.

Mayor McGrady and Council President Glenn gave the group a summary of their experiences with restrooms at their park locations.

COLLECTIVE ACTION ON MANDATES/LEGISLATION---

Mr. Bane spoke to the group about the number of unfunded mandates and legislation that comes from the state legislature that impacts municipalities and local governments. He gave an example of a bill from the last legislative session that would require a municipality to pay their bills in 15 days rather than the established 30-day window that currently exists. He stated that while the legislation did not pass, it would have had a very negative effect on the Town of Bel Air and other jurisdictions.

Mr. Bane asked the group to provide collective support on bills and legislation proposed in Annapolis so that they can create a stronger voice. He stated that often times he is not made aware of the impact a bill will have on the Town until it is too late or public testimony is no longer accepted. Mayor McGrady added to this discussion.

Mr. Bane would like to have Police Chiefs for the municipalities attend along with elected officials when the Harford County Delegation schedules their Pre-Session Legislative Meeting in the Fall.

Councilman Martin added to this discussion, specifically speaking to policing and perspectives. He stated that he was on the Maryland Municipal League Legislative Committee (MML), who look at bills and legislation coming from Annapolis that effect the municipalities across the state. The next board meeting will be on October 10, 2021 and Councilman Martin asked for the support of Harford County municipalities with MML. The MML Conference will take place from October 10-12, 2021 and some group members will be in attendance.

Councilman Martin stated that he would keep the municipal leaders in the loop with potential state legislation as he learns of it.

Mr. Bane mentioned that he will be watching for legislation related to essential employees and pay. This legislation would require local governments to pay their essential employees an additional \$3.00 per hour during a declared State of Emergency in Maryland. He discussed the ramifications of such legislation in terms of costs and noted that the legislation did not pass but may come up again in future sessions.

Mayor McGrady asked the Town of Bel Air if they had given the state any priorities in terms of legislation. Mr. Bane replied with the discussion of Highway User Revenues. The Town and others in attendance discussed the history related to those revenues, the current rates in which they were receiving and the future of those revenues as it relates to electric vehicles.

HARFORD COUNTY COUNCIL---

Council President Vincenti addressed the group and thanked everyone for coming together and expressed gratitude to the Town of Bel Air for hosting the session.

COUNCILMANIC REDISTRICTING PROCESS---

Council President Vincenti gave the group an update on the Councilmanic Redistricting process that is currently underway with the Council. He stated that the Redistricting Commission will have their proposed plan to the Council on Friday, October 1, 2021. The Council will have 70 calendar days from that date to revise the plan and vote on final redistricting plan and maps. He stated that the Council will be having a Public Hearing on the plan on Tuesday, October 19, 2021 at 6:00PM in the Council Chambers.

Council President Vincenti mentioned he has had meetings with Harford County Department of Planning and Zoning to begin reviewing the map proposed by the commission.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSIONS---

Council President Vincenti discussed the support for law enforcement in Harford County. He stated that at the Maryland Association of Counties Conference in August of this year, members of the Harford County Council were in attendance at a breakfast meeting where the topic of discussion turned anti-police. He stated that Harford County members left this meeting.

Councilman Wagner addressed the group and discussed the current state of homelessness and mental illness throughout Harford County and municipalities. He stated that he has various workgroups on the these topics and asked if any one in the group had any solution to needing more shelters for the homeless.

Mayor McGrady continued the discussion on homelessness and its relation to a cycle.

Councilman Wagner discussed the current details of the Welcome One shelter in Belcamp, MD, their possible renovations and the hotel stays ending for homeless individuals soon. Mr. Boniface stated that Harford County Government is working on a possible expansion of the Bel Air Library to allow for the administrative offices located next to Welcome One, to be used for additional bed space. He also mentioned that Harford Community Action Agency (HCAA) is the lead agency in the County for homelessness resources.

Councilman Wagner commented that he believes a shelter location in Aberdeen or Havre de Grace would be ideal.

Mr. Bane stated that the Town of Bel Air is forecasting the homelessness situation into the near future. He said that they are exploring options with using ARPA funding for those who may be facing evictions. Mr. Bane stated that the Harford County Sheriff's Office would be a great resource to determine upcoming evictions as they are the ones who serve the paperwork.

Councilman Hiob discussed the Harford Community Action Agency's (HCAA) plan to have a satellite office in Aberdeen. This office would be located at the Voices of Hope Center in the Aberdeen Shopping Plaza.

Councilman Shrodes commented on the use of drugs and alcohol prohibiting some of the homeless population from entering shelter locations. He stated that there are not many shelters within the County that take single men, rather there are more for women and families with children.

Councilman Giangiordano asked a question of the group regarding Harford County residency requirements to receive assistance. Councilman Hiob stated that the primary group of people HCAA services are Harford County residents but have seen some individuals come from Baltimore County.

HARFORD COUNTY GOVERNMENT---

Mr. Boniface addressed the group with updates from the County Executive's Office.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT & GRANT FUNDING---

He stated that the County has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with municipalities now regarding storm water management and that Harford County has received a grant of \$100,000 to work

on biking improvements and will be using those funds in Aberdeen and Havre de Grace, along with Bel Air and the biking accessibility to Harford Community College (HCC).

ABERDEEN WATER TOWER & DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS---

Additionally, Mr. Boniface discussed an update on the state of Harford County's relations with the City of Aberdeen regarding the placement of a water tower in Aberdeen. He stated that the County Executive spoke with Jim Ports of MDTA and they have worked out a solution to the issues on the property in question.

Mr. Boniface stated that the Harford County Department of Public Works (DPW) would be working with the municipalities on Chapel Road project.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION---

Mr. Bane questioned connectivity issues in the County and Bel Air with regards to cellphone towers. He stated that he wanted to make the County aware of the dead zones that exist as a matter of public safety and that they have been in talks with St. Matthew's Church regarding additional tower placement from an outside company.

Councilman Shrodes discussed additional dead zones related to cellphone connectivity that he was aware of, as did Councilwoman Boyer and other members of the group.

CITY OF HAVRE DE GRACE---

HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS REDISTRICTING---

Council President David Glenn stated that the residents of Havre de Grace were waiting on updates for the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) redistricting process. Council President Vincenti advised Council President Glenn that they would have more information soon.

CODE ENFORCEMENT---

Council President Glenn asked a question to the County and County Council members present regarding code enforcement legislation and an update on that. Mr. Boniface answered this question relating to a particular property owner. He stated that County had cited the individual owner and is working with that business.

HARFORD MEMORIAL HOSPITAL---

Council President Glenn spoke to the repurposing of Harford Memorial Hospital once the relocation to the Aberdeen location is complete. He would like to know what will happen when that leaves Havre de Grace. Council President Vincenti asked Council President Glenn about what kind of control the City of Havre de Grace has with regards to zoning on that property.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION ITEMS---

Council President Glenn provided an update on the Living Shoreline project that the City has underway and expressed the need for emergency and first responders to have access at the CSX Crossing.

He also discussed the future of the old Havre de Grace High School gym and auditorium. He stated that the City has engaged in a feasibility study and will further engage with the County when that study is completed.

TRAFFIC CONCERNS---

Council President Glenn and other members of the Council in attendance discussed the City's priority with the Ostego Street intersection and the dangers of that for residents and visitors. Councilwoman Boyer stated the City recently met with State Highway Administration and were presented with four designs to enhance the intersection but none would solve the entirety of the problem. She would like to see them bring additional proposals.

Councilwoman Boyer expressed that the City needed the support of the County to prioritize this intersection as one of the County's largest traffic concerns.

Councilwoman Zinner asked about the return of the weigh stations for trucks once the construction on the Route 40 bridge was completed.

Councilman Shrodes stated that the City of Havre de Grace may be able to elevate the Ostego Street intersection within the state priority list if they invested some of their own money into the improvements.

Councilman Martin, Mayor McGrady, Councilman Shrodes, Councilwoman Boyer and Mr. Boniface discussed infrastructure funding sources with the group.

Mayor Chmielewski, Mayor McGrady and Councilwoman Boyer discussed truck traffic in residential neighborhoods during times of traffic backups and needing to take alternate routes.

CLEAN CHESAPEAKE COALITION MEETING---

Councilman Martin provided the group with an update and discussion on the Clean Chesapeake Coalition's recent meeting at the MACo Conference. He provided the group with handouts (attached).

CITY OF ABERDEEN---

MARC/AMTRAK TRAIN STATION UPDATE---

Mayor McGrady discussed the recent meeting in the City of Aberdeen regarding the Marc/Amtrak Station located in the City along Route 40. He informed the group of the current state of the station and the pedestrian overpass and underpass.

MAINTENANCE---

Mayor McGrady asked about the maintenance of roadways within the SHA jurisdiction. Council President Vincenti informed him that members of SHA, MDTA and MDOT will be attending the next

Route 40 Revitalization Commission Meeting scheduled for October 14, 2021 to address concerns with maintenance and grass cutting.

CLOSING COMMENTS---

City of Havre de Grace agreed to host the next joint session in the future. Mayor Chmielewski made closing comments.

Meeting adjourned at 8:07PM.