

WORK SESSION AND EXECUTIVE SESSION – March 10, 2020

EXECUTIVE SESSION – March 10, 2020

On a motion duly made by Councilmember A. Heffernan and seconded by Councilmember S. McIntire, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to meet in closed session to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto; #3 (Section 3-305(b)), to consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State; #4 (Section 3-305(b)), and to conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations; #9 (Section 3-305(b)), on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 3:03 p.m. in Room 407, 4th floor, City Hall, Hagerstown, Maryland.

The following people were in attendance: Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II, Councilmember K. B. Aleshire, Councilmember A. Heffernan, Councilmember E. Keller, Councilmember L. C. Metzner, Councilmember S. McIntire, City Administrator Scott Nicewarner, City Attorney Jennifer Keefer, Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, Doug Reaser, Business Development Specialist, Kaitlin Bell, Economic Development Specialist, Paul Fulk, Neighborhood Services Manager, Jonathan Kerns, Community Development Manager, and Donna K. Spickler, City Clerk.

The meeting was held to discuss specific, potential properties for inclusion in the Tax Sale Property Repurpose Program, two business proposals, and an update on bargaining unit contract negotiations. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m.

WORK SESSION – March 10, 2020

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II called this Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:08 p.m., Tuesday, March 10, 2020 in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Present with the Mayor were Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, A. Heffernan, E. Keller, L. C. Metzner, S. McIntire, City Administrator Scott A. Nicewarner, City Attorney Jason Morton, and City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

Proclamation: National Surveyors Week

Mayor Bruchey read a proclamation naming March 15-21, 2020 as National Surveyors Week in Hagerstown, Maryland. Bob Banzhoff, Past President and current Public Relations Committee Chair of the Maryland Society of Surveyors, accepted the proclamation. He also accepted the proclamation on behalf of the National Society of Professional Surveyors as a member.

Earl Stoner, Health Officer, and Vicky Sterling, Behavioral Services Director, Washington County Health Department, were present to provide information on the Health Department's Needle Exchange Program. Strategies being developed for prevention measures and general awareness regarding COVID-19 were also discussed.

Mr. Stoner stated that due to the opioid epidemic, there is an increase in transmission of infectious diseases specifically HIV, Hepatitis, and STIs. The solution of a Harm Reduction Program is two-fold in that it is an attempt to reduce opioid overdoses and fatalities, and prevent the spread of associated infectious diseases.

A recent vulnerability assessment indicated Berkeley and Morgan counties in West Virginia as vulnerable to at-risk outbreaks.

Harm Reduction is a set of practical strategies aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug use. Syringe Service Programs (SSPs) provide comprehensive harm reduction services. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) best practice guidance recommends SSPs. SSPs serve as a bridge to other health services and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment. SSPs meet people where they are and facilitate engagement. 44 states, and Washington, DC, have approved Harm Reduction programs including SSPs. People who inject drugs are five times as likely to enter treatment and are more likely to reduce or stop injecting when they are engaged with a SSP.

Components of the Washington County Harm Reduction Program include the following:

1. Education about overdose prevention and safer injection practices
2. Referral to SUD treatment
3. Referral to medical, mental health, and social services
4. Infectious disease testing, counseling and treatment referral
5. Sterile syringes, naloxone, and other equipment
6. Safe disposal containers

There are 455 participants in the Washington County program.

SSPs reduce overdoses deaths through education on how to prevent and respond to overdoses and Naloxone education and distribution. SSPs also reduce needle sticks and protect first responders and the public. Syringes distributed through SSPs are more likely to be disposed of utilizing a safe disposal method.

The Washington County Health Department was recognized for playing an important role in trying to bring drug use and services out in the open in a positive way. Health department efforts to incorporate the voices of people who use drugs into program design through a community advisory board and client surveys was noted by study participants.

Crisis and detox services are critical for getting people into treatment as soon as they are ready to seek help.

Councilmember Heffernan noted there have been recent articles about a Delegate opposing needle exchange programs. He asked what is in a packet that is given to participants.

Mr. Stoner clarified that the individuals they work with in the program are individuals who have severe addictions. The packet/kit is not a drug start up kit.

Health Department representatives discuss the types and size of needles used by the participants. They also discuss the possibility of treatment and if they are ready to seek treatment. Working with individuals through this type of intervention tends to be successful in getting people into a treatment program.

Councilmember McIntire pointed out the SSP is not a commissary. It is for an individual who is taking some sort of personal responsibility with their addiction

Councilmember Aleshire is surprised how aware his 7th grade daughter is of addiction. He asked if there are collection places to drop off needles. Mr. Stoner indicated there are sharps containers for needles.

Recent discussions and news reports have increased awareness of the program.

Mr. Stoner then provided an update on the COVID-19 disease. Everyone realizes the number of cases is increasing rapidly. The Health Department is taking the lead role for information and reporting. Globally, there are over 116,000 cases, with more than 4,000 deaths. In the United States, there are 647 confirmed cases, with 48 deaths. Maryland has 6 confirmed cases and no deaths.

He stated the disease causes mild illness in 80% of the people who have it. Approximately 20% progress to severe illness. The hardest hit seems to be those over 80 and others with underlying health conditions. The incubation period is 11.5 days, which is similar to other corona viruses.

Governor Larry Hogan has declared a State of Emergency and efforts continue to be on containment and to slow the spread of the virus. The next phase will include social distancing and cancellation of certain events, although that order has not been given yet.

The risk in Washington County is still low. Frequent conference calls are held with the Health Department. A unified Corona Virus Task Force has been established. The group is looking at coordinating information that goes out to the public. They are establishing plans to ensure the health and safety of first responders and health care individuals. The Health Department continues to work with all sectors of the community, including the Chamber of Commerce, higher education institutions, and the public school system.

Everyone needs to do their collective best to limit the spread of the virus. It is imperative that people take prevention seriously.

Councilmember Heffernan stated the directive has been that if you are sick to call ahead to the doctor or the emergency room. He asked if that is still valid. Mr. Stoner indicated it is. However, if someone is experiencing significant symptoms, such as shortness of breath, they should contact the emergency room right away.

Mr. Nicewarner stated City staff on the task force are himself, Chief Lohr, Chief Kifer and Don Francis, Human Resources Director. Mr. Nicewarner has sent an email to all City employees with prevention tips. The City Director team will be developing and reviewing a pandemic plan for the City which includes how City services will continue. There is a link on the City's website for more information.

Mayor Bruchey urged everyone to wash their hands often and to not their faces to help stop the spread of the virus.

Councilmember Metzner thanked everyone for their efforts. He stated at times like this, it is good to have reliable local resources and information.

Proposed Revision to the Hagerstown Code of Ethics

William Breichner, Chair of the City Ethics Commission, was present to discuss a proposed amendment to the Hagerstown Code of Ethics.

The Commission is requesting the Mayor and City Council's consideration of a previously proposed amendment to the Ethics Code that would allow for the Ethics Commission to have its own independent counsel in certain circumstances.

This revision was discussed during the November 13, 2018 Work Session. Following the Work Session, this revision was submitted to the State Ethics Commission (State) for their review. The State reviewed the proposed revision, and on February 7, 2019, Katherine Thompson, Assistant General Counsel, indicated the revision would likely be approved by the State. She noted other municipalities have adopted similar language which was approved by the State.

The proposed revision tracks the language governing the City's Human Relations Commission in Section 82-2 of the City Code, and provides for independent counsel in those rare instances when the City Attorney cannot advise both the Commission and the official or employee before it. The proposed revision would be new Section 35-5 of the City Code.

It was the general consensus to move forward with the proposed amendment to the City's Ethics Code.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Scott A. Nicewarner, City Administrator, apologized for the confusion last week on the letter of support for the House Bill regarding hotel/motel tax. He asked for clarification to either keep or withdraw the letter of support.

Councilmember McIntire recalled the consensus was to approach the Washington County Municipal League and then decide about City support.

Councilmember Aleshire thought the Council was going to look at the Convention and Visitor's Bureau's position and ask the Delegate to seek support from the Washington County Municipal League.

Mr. Nicewarner stated that was the consensus last Tuesday; however on Wednesday, a Councilmember stated they agreed to sending the letter of support as requested.

Councilmember Keller believes the question is whether or not the City is giving support or waiting until the local MML chapter reviews the bill and then decide.

Councilmember Aleshire wondered how it would show coordination if the CVB didn't support the bill and the City did. How would it appear if the City is the only entity who supports the bill and the City didn't request it and receive no benefit from it? He does not understand why the entities impacted by the bill have not taken a position.

It was the consensus to wait until the Delegate approaches the Washington County MML for support from all the municipalities.

Mr. Nicewarner reported the City has received a request from Horizon Goodwill for support of a Power Grant application. Brooke Grossman, Horizon Goodwill Director of Workforce Development, is willing to discuss this with the Mayor and City Council during a Work Session. This discussion will be scheduled for March 17, 2020.

Councilmember Heffernan noted that a number of requests for support have been submitted to the City recently. He thinks parties seeking letters of support should be on an agenda to discuss the request, rather than making requests through email. Mr. Nicewarner agreed it would be good to have the requests discussed in open session and citizens would be aware of what the Mayor and City Council are supporting.

Councilmember Aleshire stated the press should also see the letters.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember L. C. Metzner had no additional comments.

Councilmember S. McIntire had no additional comments.

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MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

Councilmember A. Heffernan had no additional comments.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire had no additional comments.

Councilmember E. Keller had no additional comments.

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II attended the Glitz and Glam Grand Opening. He is glad to report this is a family business that expects to expand.

Mr. Nicewarner congratulated Aaron Brooks for his recent Big 10 Win in wrestling.

There being no further business to come before the Mayor and City Council, on a motion duly made, seconded and passed, the meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: April 28, 2020