

Mayor E. Keller called this Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 24, 2020, in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Participating with the Mayor were Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, R. E. Bruchey, II, T. Burnett, T. Martinez, and S. McIntire, City Administrator Scott A. Nicewarner, City Attorney Jennifer Keefer, and City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

Proclamation – Small Business Saturday

Mayor Keller read a proclamation naming Saturday, November 28, 2020 as Small Business Saturday in Hagerstown, Maryland. Small Business Saturday is a way to cultivate business for merchants of small businesses on the Saturday following Thanksgiving. Kaitlin Bell, Economic Development Specialist, accepted the proclamation on behalf of Hagerstown merchants. She stated shopping on Small Business Saturday will be different this year but everyone will adapt. She encouraged people to participate in Small Business Saturday as they are able.

Establish Meeting Dates and Times

It was the consensus of the Mayor and City Council to continue to hold meetings on Tuesdays. The Regular Session will typically be on the fourth Tuesday of each month, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Work Sessions will be held on the first, second, and third Tuesdays, beginning at 4:00 p.m. A meeting schedule will be distributed based on this consensus. It was agreed no meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 5, 2021.

Boards and Commissions – Council Representation

The City of Hagerstown has several Boards and Commissions that include Council representation. The following is the list of Mayor and Council representation on the Boards and Commissions during this administration:

Mayor Keller:	USMH Advisory Board Hagerstown-Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO)
Councilmember Aleshire:	Hagerstown Housing Authority, Washington County Economic Development Coalition
Councilmember Bruchey:	Board of Traffic and Parking, Police and Fire Retirement Committee, Washington County Economic Development Coalition
Councilmember Burnett:	Community Rescue Service, Washington County Diversity and Inclusion Committee

Councilmember Martinez: Bicycle Advisory Committee, Hagerstown  
Neighborhood Development Partnership (HNDP),  
Washington County Economic Development  
Coalition

Councilmember McIntire: Hagerstown Planning Commission  
Washington County Economic Development  
Coalition

### Rules of Procedure Discussion

Per the City Charter, the Mayor and Council determines its own rules of procedure for meetings. Rules pertaining to open meetings are in accordance with the provision of the Annotated Code of Maryland State Government Article, Section 10-507(b).

A copy of the current Rules of Procedure was provided to the Mayor and City Council. It was agreed no changes are needed. The Rules of Procedure will be formally adopted at the December 15, 2020 Regular Session.

Councilmember Aleshire asked if there has been discussion of returning to remote meetings for the Mayor and City Council due to the increase in the positivity rate for COVID-19. Mr. Nicewarner stated nothing has been discussed at this point. City Hall is currently closed to the public, with staff available by appointment. He stated only people with items on the Mayor and City Council agendas will be permitted to attend meetings until further notice. He stated staff is prepared to go to a remote meeting format at any time the Mayor and City Council wish to do so.

### Budget Discussion

Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, was present to provide an overview of the City's budget. She stated FY 2020-21 Budget Books have been provided to all Mayor and City Council members. The CAFR was distributed to each elected official as well. S B and Company (auditors) are scheduled to review the FY 2019-20 audit in December.

Ms. Hepburn reported a deficit of approximately \$ 1.2 million is anticipated for FY21. Plans for addressing the deficit will be discussed with the Mayor and City Council in a few weeks. City staff spoke with the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) this week about anticipated tax assessment adjustments. As the City of Hagerstown is in the second year of the tri-ennial reassessment, no assessment adjustments are anticipated. However, SDAT staff indicated there are large numbers of appeals being submitted for reassessment of properties. The initial filing may be good news overall; however appeals are expected to show a decrease in overall tax revenue.

Ms. Hepburn reported that utility and tax payments are being accepted by Customer Service staff even though City Hall is currently closed to the public. Customers can

make payments online, by mail, by phone (when staff is on site), or by using the drop box located outside City Hall.

Per Governor Hogan's executive orders, service terminations and evictions were prohibited during an extended period due to the pandemic. The termination order has been lifted; however, the Public Service Commission implemented a moratorium that lasted through November 15, 2020. The impact of a second surge of COVID-19 is not known. Other unknowns include whether or not local government agencies will receive any federal stimulus or when that may occur.

Councilmember McIntire thanked Ms. Hepburn for the update. She hopes another Public Service Announcement (PSA) notice can be aired for utility payments. Repeating the message on all platforms is important. The PSA also includes information about assistance that is available to customers.

### Strategic Planning Discussion

Mayor Keller would like to schedule an all-day planning session to discuss this administration's vision and mission statement and goals. She asked if any day during the week of December 14, 2020 is better than another.

Councilmember Aleshire asked if the results of a Community Survey would be back by that time. He does not think he would have a lot to offer without the community input and his thoughts and ideas may be different than what is noted in the survey. Mayor Keller stated she anticipated the first planning session would be a high level discussion of a mission and division statement and goals. She stated a second planning session could be held after the results of the survey are known.

Councilmember Bruchey suggested each Councilmember provide Mayor Keller with their individual large goals while the results of the survey are being completed. When a planning session is held, everyone could be prepared to discuss the goals in detail. Councilmember Aleshire would rather share his goals with the public.

It was agreed to hold a strategic planning session after the Community Survey is completed.

### Community Survey Overview

Mayor Keller has met with Police Chief Kifer and Captain Alexander to discuss the appropriate process for a community survey. In order for the Community Survey to be effective and ensure a legitimate sample, they suggested a targeted survey request with the goal of obtaining a minimum of 400 responses. A total of 1,200 surveys would be mailed to each area of the City with the intent of having equal representation throughout the community. This would be done geographically, utilizing the police department maps. Once a specific timeframe passes (30-45 days) and the results from the targeted survey are received, it will be opened to everyone through Survey Monkey.

Mayor Keller provided the following list of things to consider for the survey:

What demographic questions are we going to ask?

- How long you have lived in Hagerstown?
- Do you work in the City?
- Age Range?
- Income Range?
- Race?
- Gender you identify as?

What does this Council want to learn from the survey?

What questions are we going to ask? Examples:

- How often do you patronize a locally owned restaurant or business? Never, Less than once a Month, More than once a Month, Weekly
- What is Hagerstown's biggest strength? Safety/Security, Parks and Recreation, Access to Restaurants, Availability of Public Art, Types of Housing, Affordability of Housing, Employment Opportunities, Walkability, Other
- What do you see as Hagerstown's biggest issue? Housing, Safety/Security, Drug Addiction, Blighted/Vacant Buildings, Employment Opportunities,
- How would you like to receive updates and event notifications from the City? Facebook, Instagram, Website, Television, Newspaper, Other
- What initiative or service would you like to see Hagerstown implement?
- What large scale project would you like to have in Hagerstown? Multiuse Baseball Stadium, Indoor Sports Complex, Amphitheater, Other
- What type of community events would you like to see? Neighborhood Block Parties, Music Events, Arts Festivals,
- How safe do you feel in your neighborhood? Safe, Somewhat Safe, Somewhat Unsafe, Unsafe
- How often do you shop or eat downtown? Never, Less than once a month, More than once a month, weekly

Councilmember Aleshire stated knowing the household structure (size and type of structure) is important to him, especially as it relates to the targeted areas.

Chief Kifer stated the City will be divided into four areas. Surveys will be sent out proportionately by population of those quadrants. A good result of any survey is an approximate 80% rate of response. Receiving 400 responses will help validate the survey.

Councilmember McIntire asked if a self-addressed, stamped envelope will be included. Chief Kifer stated it will be. This will make it easier for everyone to respond. Each survey will be numbered to track which quadrant the person lives in.

Councilmember McIntire suggested adding a question to the online version that will be open for anyone to respond about where they live.

Councilmember Aleshire asked why 1,200 is the number of surveys being sent out. Chief Kifer stated Captain Alexander (who was not able to attend this meeting) has formal education and experience with surveys and 1,200 was chosen in order to hopefully receive 400 back. Councilmember Aleshire noted that is only a 2% return of the total number of households. However, 1,200 seems like a measurable amount.

Chief Kifer stated there is no cost associated with the process. Based on Captain Alexander's teaching and statistics experience, the 400 responses will provided the random information that can be quantified.

Mayor Keller indicated more surveys could be sent. Once the targeted surveys are returned, the survey will be opened on-line to anyone. Councilmember Aleshire asked if on-line surveys could be linked to an account, such as a utility bill, which would limit responses from people outside the city limits or who aren't customers.

Mayor Keller stated the survey needs to be easy to complete. If there are too many steps, people won't complete it.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he thinks more than 1,200 surveys should be sent. Councilmember Bruchey suggested sending 2,000 surveys. Chief Kifer stated this body can decide how many they would like to send.

Councilmember Burnett stated residents should be notified that a survey is coming so they will be looking for it. Notices should also be placed on social media.

Councilmember Martinez would like to include a question about the education of each person in a household, in addition to size of the household.

Mayor Keller stated the questions should reflect what the Mayor and City Council wish to learn from the results.

Councilmember McIntire suggested defining what a locally owned restaurant or business is. She suggested removing the word baseball or stadium from the large scale project question.

Councilmember Aleshire stated the questions should focus on what the government can influence such as services, amenities, infrastructure, etc. If examples are listed for each question, it may seem the answers are being directed to those examples. He would prefer that the person responding has the opportunity to provide their thoughts without the examples.

Councilmember McIntire understands asking questions in this manner as it keeps it as simple as possible and as easy as possible to respond. She thinks incorporating Councilmember Aleshire's suggestions will create a nice hybrid of the original questions. If a large scale project is going to be listed, she would like to include a splashpad as an example.

Councilmember McIntire noted the first and last question seem identical. Mayor Keller indicated one is about downtown and the other is about Hagerstown in general.

Councilmember Aleshire stated asking what things a resident would like to see in their neighborhood would be more helpful for him instead of having a checkmark in a box. He realizes this would take more effort to generate a response.

Chief Kifer stated Mayor Keller intended these questions, which are from another city's survey, to be the start of a discussion. Input from the Mayor and City Council will be incorporated into the final questions. Questions will be created that don't try to influence the response. Mayor Keller stated she did not intend that every question she presented would be on the survey.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he believes all the Mayor and City Councilmembers are anxious to get this survey out to the public so they can start getting to work and making the changes citizens want.

Councilmember Martinez thinks there should be a reference to the impact of the pandemic on the survey. She suggested asking what services residents need related to the pandemic. She also suggested adding a question about homelessness.

Councilmember McIntire would like to include a question about what family friendly activities the community wants.

Mayor Keller would like to include questions about services, safety in neighborhoods, Hagerstown strengths, Hagerstown's opportunities, impact of COVID-19, and family-friendly activities. She noted every question will have an option to provide additional comments.

Councilmember Burnett stated asking for public feedback will be crucial in this administration's efforts. This is a great way to start.

A draft survey will be provided to the Mayor and City Council for further review.

### **CITY ADMINISTRATOR COMMENTS**

*Scott Nicewarner, City Administrator*, stated this type of input in a strategic plan provides a foundation for the plan. This information will also be important in creating the budget. The information will help the Mayor and City Council determine where the limited resources will be best used. This information will help him provide a proposed budget that assists the Mayor and City Council to do what they want to do. He thinks this is long overdue in providing the opportunity to provide input to the community. Limiting the trolling factor on social media is importation. He believes Chief Kifer, Captain Alexander, and Paul Fulk, Neighborhood Services Manager, will be able to create a survey that asks for the information the Mayor and City Council want, as they are all familiar with creating and reviewing surveys. This is a worthwhile effort and sets the City up for the future and will provide a matrix for determining if the goals and objectives are being met.

Mr. Nicewarner reiterated that City offices are currently closed to the public as staff tries to mitigate any potential exposure within City buildings. The increase in positive cases of COVID-19 are affecting the City more than in March and April, 2020. A communication providing recourse for non-compliance with the pandemic safeguards and directives in place was sent to all City employees today. He anticipates a similar statement from the Washington County Government. Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, trash collections will be delayed one day for Thursday and Friday collections.

### **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS**

*Councilmember K. B. Aleshire* wished everyone a safe and healthy Thanksgiving. He and other Councilmembers had the opportunity for informal conversations during the last few weeks. He appreciated that opportunity at the beginning of this administration.

*Councilmember R. E. Bruchey, II* had no additional comments.

*Councilmember T. Burnett* thanked City staff for welcoming the new administration. She is excited to be part of this group. She thanked the voters for putting this diverse group in office.

*Councilmember T. Martinez* wished everyone a safe Thanksgiving. She thanked City staff for being so welcoming and helpful.

*Councilmember S. McIntire* congratulated Mayor Keller for being elected as Hagerstown's first female Mayor. She is always thankful for City staff. She asked

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everyone to keep medical personnel in their thoughts as they continue to fight the pandemic. She asked people to reach out to police officers and firefighters as well, as they often work on holidays.

*Mayor Keller* noted the media coverage for this administration has been about gender so far, and that is appropriate as there are many firsts. But she wants everyone to know that no matter who you are, everyone is welcome here in Hagerstown.

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 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Original signed by D. K. Spickler*

Donna K. Spickler  
City Clerk

Approved: December 15, 2020