

SPECIAL SESSION (9TH VOTING SESSION)
EXECUTIVE SESSION AND WORK SESSION
2021
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

APRIL 13,

HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

SPECIAL SESSION (9TH VOTING SESSION), EXECUTIVE SESSION AND WORK
SESSION – APRIL 13, 2021

EXECUTIVE SESSION – April 13, 2021

On a motion duly made by Councilmember S. McIntire and seconded by Councilmember T. Martinez, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to meet in closed session to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, #7 (Section 3-305(b)), on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 at 3:04 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 2nd floor, City Hall, Hagerstown, Maryland.

The following people were in attendance: Mayor E. Keller, Councilmember K. B. Aleshire, Councilmember R. E. Bruchey, II, Councilmember T. Burnett, Councilmember T. Martinez, Councilmember S. McIntire, City Administrator Scott Nicewarner, City Attorney Jason Morton, Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officers, Police Chief Paul “Joey” Kifer, Fire Chief Steven Lohr, Captain Thomas Alexander, Adam Hopkins, Battalion Chief, Mark Cleck, Battalion Chief, Wes Decker, Communications Manager, and Donna K. Spickler, City Clerk.

The meeting was held to consult with the City Attorney. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

SPECIAL SESSION (9TH VOTING SESSION) AND WORK SESSION – April 13, 2021

Mayor E. Keller called this Special Session (9th Voting Session) and Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:27 p.m., Tuesday, April 13, 2021 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, and City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

SPECIAL SESSION (9TH VOTING SESSION) – April 13, 2021

On a motion duly made by Councilmember R. E. Bruchey, II and seconded by Councilmember T. Burnett, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to meet in Special Session at 4:28 p.m.

Introduction of an Ordinance: Authorizing the Sale of Property Located at 36-40 North Potomac Street

Action: On a motion duly made by Councilmember K. B. Aleshire and seconded by Councilmember S. McIntire, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to introduce an ordinance authorizing the sale of City-owned property located at 36-40 N. Potomac Street to 339 Antietam LLC for a purchase price of \$ 414,000. The sale will provide the

opportunity for ongoing redevelopment and private investment at 36-40 N. Potomac Street. The sale will be in accordance with all terms and conditions outlined in the Purchase Agreement.

Approval of a Resolution: 2021 Summer Camp Grant Program

Action: On a motion duly made by Councilmember T. Martinez and seconded by Councilmember R. E. Bruchey, II, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to approve a resolution to authorize the execution of contracts with the Hagerstown YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, R. W. Johnson Community Center, Girls, In., and Beacon House to operate summer play camps for the 2021 season. Funding amounts for each camp shall be per the "staff recommended funding levels" in the attached April 13, 2021 memo. Funding is from the Parks and Recreation operating budget.

The Special Session was closed at 4:20 p.m.

WORK SESSION – April 13, 2021

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Mayor Keller read a proclamation recognizing April, 2021 as Sexual Assault Awareness Month in Hagerstown, Maryland. All citizens are encouraged to join anti-sexual violence advocates and support service programs in the belief that all community members must be part of the solution to end sexual violence. Lisa Dougherty and Kelly Clopper, CASA, Inc., accepted the proclamation.

FY22 Budget Review

Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, and Brooke Garver, Accounting and Budget Manager, were present to continue review of the FY22 Proposed Budget with the Mayor and City Council.

The proposed FY22 budget includes no change in the real estate tax rates from FY21, which is \$ 1.002 per \$ 100 assessed value (excluding Apartments) and \$ 1.032 per \$ 100 assessed value for Apartments. There is no change in corporate personal property tax rates from FY21, which is \$ 2.505 per \$ 100 assessed value. Assessed value growth rate is anticipated at 4.0 %. The total amount reflected by SDAT as the constant yield tax rate is lower than the current real estate tax charge charged. This means that the current estimates reflect a growth of 2.71% in assessed values will occur which would generate approximately \$ 742,000 more in revenue than the current fiscal year if the tax rate remains the same. FY22 is the second year of the triennial assessment period which means that real estate market values will not be reassessed again until December, 2022. In addition, there have been some new developments as well as renovation within the

City's Enterprise Zone area. Based on the current data available from SDAT, the City anticipates that there will be overall growth of 3.8% in total property tax revenue dollars.

The majority of property tax dollars will be spent to maintain existing City services at current levels; provide salary enhancements as approved in collective bargaining union contracts; cover increasing costs of employer paid benefits; invest in capital infrastructure improvements that have been deferred; and accommodate annual debt service requirements. Any funding a department receives, for example grants, is utilized first before any tax dollars are used. Employee costs are 53% of the total budget. A pie chart showing the spending breakdown for each tax dollar received is included in Section 1, page 7, of the proposed budget. Ms. Hepburn noted that the Public Safety designation includes police, fire, streets, and code functions.

The City has a Fund Balance/Retained Earnings policy and adheres to and remains within key guidelines of this policy. The City does not utilize fund balance reserves for recurring operating type of expenditures. However, the City may utilize General Fund balance reserves when balances exceed the policy limits for capital infrastructure needs.

A chart showing the five year history of Unassigned Fund Balance is included in the budget at Section 1, page 9.

As a result of prior General Fund surplus and approved capital utilization, the FY22 Proposed Budget does include the appropriation and reallocation of General Fund reserves as a means to reduce General Fund direct transfers to CIP (Pay-go) and to help balance the budget. The balance of previously approved fund balance utilization included is \$ 937,000 to fund a variety of needs across General Fund departments. Reallocation of FY19 and prior surplus funds were used for Market House improvements and consolidation of Public Safety Assets. Previous budget approved projects not yet completed include Fire Department vehicle replacement, Public Works Operations Center improvements, City Hall improvements, and Fairgrounds Park improvements.

Even though the proposed budget does not include a transfer to the Economic Redevelopment Fund for the former Invest Hagerstown program, \$ 250,000 remains reflected as committed General Fund Balance to be utilized in the future when this project commitment moves forward.

The City Fund Balance Policy Minimum Target is 17.0% and the Number of Months is 2.0. The City is consistently meeting this target.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic impact, the City received some federal aid dollars in FY21 to help offset some expenses. In addition, the City received funding to help address specific low income priority issues directly from the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The funds received from HUD are administered in the City's Community Development Block Grant Fund (CDBG) in collaboration with various third party non-profit agencies. Total CARES Act funding for FY21 is estimated to be \$ 1,738,658.

As of the completion of the budget document, the federal government approved a new federal stimulus plan that could provide the City with \$ 20.0 million in funding. The federal legislation was adopted too late to be incorporated into this budget document. When more details and more specifics are known, City leadership and the Mayor and Council will work on a strategic plan to identify where the dollars will be spent and timing of when the dollars will be spent. As of the date of the budget book completion, the following is known:

1. 50% of funding will be received within 60 days of approval
2. Remaining 50% balance of funding will be received 12 months after initial funds are received
3. Deadline to have all funds spent is December 31, 2024
4. Allowable uses of funds are:
 - a. Respond to or mitigate COVID-19 health emergency or its negative economic impacts, including assistance to households, small businesses, nonprofits, and aid for tourism, travel and hospitality
 - b. Provide essential workers with premium pay
 - c. Cover revenue losses incurred as result of COVID-19
 - d. Make necessary investments in water, sewer, or broadband infrastructure

The FY22 Proposed Budget includes 445 funded full-time positions with 306 in the General Fund and 139 in other funds and operations. Additionally, there are 35 unfunded positions, with 23 unfunded in the General Fund and 12 unfunded in other funds and operations. The changes in staffing in the General Fund include: 8 full time police position reductions that have been vacant in order to provide salary enhancements to retain current staffing; unfund 1 full-time vacant HR position; reallocate 5.4 position equivalents to newly created Stormwater Fund from Public Works and Engineering; reallocate 0.7 position equivalents to CDBG fund from Economic Development. These increases to full-time staff are offset in the Enterprise funds; 5.4 positions reallocated to newly created Stormwater Fund; and unfund 1 full-time position in Electric.

Revenue in the General Fund comes from property taxes, income and other taxes, intergovernmental revenues, interest on investments and appropriated use of fund balance. Intergovernmental Revenues are expected to decrease by 80.2% compared to FY21 budget due to one-time CARES Act funding received in FY21. Interest on Investments are projected to decrease overall by 66.7%. This is primarily the result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on interest rates. Appropriated Use of Fund Balance reflects a total request of \$ 937,000 to be utilized from prior years' General Fund balance for a variety of purposes. This presents a decrease of 60.6% over FY21 Budget amounts. The City had approved the utilization of a FY19 surplus in the General Fund for capital infrastructure needs. The \$ 873,000 in the FY22 Budget is the remaining balance of those reserves to be reallocated to a few new projects and for a few previously approved projects that have not yet been completed. It is anticipated that the City will remain in compliance with its General Fund/Retained Earnings policy.

Ms. Hepburn noted the income taxes and other taxes can change. Washington County has the authority to set the local income tax rate. The maximum allowed rate is 3.2%

(this is the current rate) and the City's FY22 proposed budget includes that amount. However, it is possible the rate will change to 2.8% soon.

Total General Fund expenditures are anticipated to be \$ 48.6 million. A 2.7% decrease is reflected in Total Wages and Benefits due to salary enhancements per collective bargaining contracts for all employee groups including minimum wage increase impacting part-time and season staff. Offsetting these increases is a reduction in total staffing within the General Fund by 15.5 full-time positions resulting from reallocation of staffing to other funds and unfunding several vacant positions. At a combined total of \$ 31.7 million, General Fund Wages and Benefits represent 65.2% of the total annual operating expenditures for FY22 Proposed Budget and is the largest component of all General Fund expenditures. All four of the City's collective bargaining units expire in June 2022 and three remaining have wage re-opener clauses that were halted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The General Expenditures will increase by 51.7% and is a result of the transitioning of billing and postage costs from the Electric Fund to the Support Services and Billing group in the General Fund and the included cost of \$ 120,000 for overall general contingency in FY22. Capital Transfers to Other Funds is projected to increase by 82.5% as more infrastructure and capital projects will be funded with operating pay-go revenue in FY22 rather than relying on fund balance reserves to fund.

There is a \$ 1.4 million decrease in Fund Balance Transfer to the CIP Fund reflecting utilizing the remaining prior year's approval for fund balance reserve utilization for one-time infrastructure and capital projects. In FY22, more funding for capital projects is covered with operating pay-go revenue instead of needed additional reserve funds.

Review of the FY22 Proposed Budget will continue at the April 20, 2021 Work Session.

Indoor Turf Facility

Rodney Tissue, Director of Parks and Engineering, was present to provide an update about an indoor turf facility. In January, when it was discussed that the municipal stadium site would no longer be used for professional baseball, the consensus of the majority of the City Council was that as a long term re-use of the site be an indoor turf facility. The concept is generally a public/private partnership for removing the existing stadium and constructing an indoor turf facility much like the Frederick Indoor Sports Center in Frederick. The extensive Victus Advisors study from 2018 showed there is a significant demand for indoor sports. Many people travel out of the community to use these facilities because there are very limited available venues locally.

To solicit interest from developers and operators, staff drafted a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit statements of qualifications from developers (or multi-firm project teams) interested in designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining an indoor turf facility that would provide patrons with sports and recreation activities, serve

as an economic development driver and enhance the overall quality of life for Hagerstown residents.

The Victus report provided a clear window into the market for a sports complex. After interviewing dozens of people and receiving survey input from over 700 others, the consensus is that an indoor facility is warranted in the community and the existing indoor facilities do not meet the demand, let alone the potential growth. There appears to be significant public support for this type of facility.

Some points to consider related to sports facilities include the following:

1. The difference between a facility that will only serve the local citizens, versus one that can also generate economic impacts via sports tourism. How do we envision the use of the facility including both daily use and weekend tournament/special events?
2. Profitability (or lack of) of the actual sports complex versus the economic impact on nearby hotels, restaurants and businesses. Importance of grouping “economic drivers” in an area to create density versus scattering them over the entire community.

Based on discussions with contractors, the cost is estimated as follows:

\$ 100,000	Stadium demolition
\$4,900,000	80,000 SF building construction
\$1,000,000	Site work
<u>\$1,000,000</u>	Contingencies, permitting, design, etc.
\$7,000,000	Total

Mr. Tissue stated, depending on the Mayor and City Council’s direction, the City envisions entering into an Agreement with a private developer to design, construct, operate, and maintain a new indoor turf facility on this site. While the City desires to maintain ownership of the land, the City will entertain either of the following general scenarios:

1. Scenario #1 – The City offers a long-term lease, commencing upon the private owner constructing the turf facility. The developer would own, operate, and maintain the turf facility.
2. Scenario #2 – The City offers a long-term lease, but instead of the developer taking on initial debt of the facility, the City assumes the construction debt and would/would not charge interest to the developer.

The City may need to offer more incentives to attract interest. Potential incentives include potential Financing/funding from Phase II of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), demolition of existing structures, stormwater improvements to address flooding and develop possible MS4 credits, relief from City taxes, expansion of the Enterprise Zone to include this site, utility main upgrades as required, and access improvements as required.

Mr. Tissue stated staff is looking for direction from the Mayor and City Council if they are ready to move forward with this and what they would be comfortable offering to a potential developer.

Councilmember McIntire asked if the City determines which scenario to use. Mr. Tissue indicated the potential developer would make that decision.

Mayor Keller noted details on the amount of funds to the City from the CARES Act have not been provided yet. Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, stated the City will receive funding and staff is hearing there is another stimulus package being developed but no amounts have been stated yet. She suggested not exempting the facility from the admissions and amusement taxes or any other taxes except real estate. It would be beneficial to have a facility like this but not at the expense of a large loss of revenue. References to the CARES Act and City taxes will be removed from the draft agreement.

Councilmember Bruchey supports the City constructing, funding, and leasing the facility because the City would be reimbursed for those costs. He wondered why the cost for an 80,000 square foot building is so high. Mr. Tissue indicated the cost included is an actual quote and not an estimate.

Councilmember McIntire asked if a steering committee could be appointed to review the proposals. Mr. Tissue stated it would be helpful to have someone with expertise with this type of facility review the proposals.

Councilmember Bruchey estimated the debt service would be approximately \$ 450,000 per year. Ms. Hepburn indicated that is correct and the estimated cost per month is \$ 50,000.

Councilmember Bruchey stated he believes this facility is something the community wants and it will be a benefit to Hagerstown and the surrounding area. The agreement and process should be as simple as possible.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he has participated in the community discussions and has been getting facts and figures together for the proposal. He has a greater degree of passion for what it will be when completed. He thinks it is important that the property is owned by the City. Many people in the community travel to participate in sports at indoor facilities. It will be a great amenity for local residents. He will continually encourage use of other amenities as well.

It was the general consensus to move forward with the next steps to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP).

Property Acquisition – 441 South Potomac Street

Fire Chief Steven Lohr and Rodney Tissue, Director of Parks and Engineering, were present to discuss acquisition of property at 441 South Potomac Street.

Based on previous briefings with the Mayor and City Council regarding land acquisitions, staff is recommending the purchase of a 1.08 acre parcel of land at 441 South Potomac Street in the amount of \$ 162,000.00 for the purpose of relocating and consolidating current fire department resources. This site will permit more efficient deployment of current assets. Staff has negotiated a tentative agreement with the owner with the special terms and conditions provided in the attached purchase and sales agreement with exhibits.

A draft concept plan is included to ensure that up to four existing FD functions can be co-located at this site. They are: 1. The reduction of 5 engines to 4 engines; 2. Relocation of FD headquarters along with the 24-hr shift commander and aide; 3. Relocation of the fire marshal's office; and 4. The creation of centralized storage bays and other support functions for the HFD.

As reported recently in the FD strategic plan annual update, the decision to reduce to a four engine deployment model will need to be reconsidered in the face of imminent annexation south along the Rt-65 (Sharpsburg Pike) corridor. Current plans suggest annexation of an additional 1.5 miles from the existing municipal boundary. The next closest resource, the Funkstown VFC, is 2.6 miles from the proposed annexation boundary.

If the Mayor and Council wish to purchase the property, a purchase and sales agreement will need to be approved.

Staff has compiled the following additional information to assist Mayor and Council in their decision:

1. Staff has considered a Broker of Opinion Value document with comparable property prices from January of 2017 listing the value of the property at \$ 75,000 to \$ 100,000 per acre. In the time since that BOV opinion was performed, the seller has razed a two story commercial structure and certified the foundation site as uncontaminated from previous occupants.
As part of due diligence, and at the recommendation of the City Attorney, staff contracted with Mr. Brian Kurtyka, Esq. who specializes in environmental law to review the State of Maryland environmental remediation plan, verify the findings and recommendations for remediation, and prepare a draft sales agreement with all appropriate exhibits necessary to move forward.
2. Since this property reflects a non-contaminated portion of a former natural gas manufacturing and storage facility, extra care has been taken to locate and mark the known areas of contamination with a 25-foot buffer.
3. There is language in the purchase agreement that is designed to protect the City from any future claims that may occur.

4. The portion to be purchased is believed to be an environmentally “clean site”. Staff recommends that additional drilling and testing be performed on the 1.08 acre parcel at the City’s expense to certify that the information in the seller sponsored testing and monitoring report be completed to verify as a condition of the purchase.
5. Staff estimates the cost of the additional testing to be less than \$ 9,000.00. This includes 6 borings and an additional vapor intrusion study.
6. The City Engineer and staff have consulted all appropriate utilities, directors and others to ensure that all requirements for redirecting the existing alley terminus, relocate the appropriate utilities and upgrade the legacy brick lined storm wastewater system to current standards can be done.

Chief Lohr indicated current zoning allows this use with a Special Exception. The property runs parallel to South Potomac Street.

Mr. Tissue stated the City attorney recommends additional borings and vapor monitoring on the parcel that is separate from Columbia Gas’s property.

Chief Lohr reminded the group Cassidy Trucking was located there at one time. There is some work to be done with the brick drainage line and rerouting of three Verizon utilities. Per Federal regulations, NiSource (original owner) would be responsible forever for any environmental conditions. This clause is included in the proposed agreement.

Councilmember Aleshire wondered if the reason the City is not acquiring the entire property is because of not wanting the liability or that the current owner does not want to sell the entire property. Chief Lohr indicated it is a little of both. There is some consideration of constructing a larger salt dome and more lean-to structures.

Councilmember Aleshire asked how the property will look when the current building is removed. Mr. Tissue indicated it would be paved and look like a parking area.

Councilmember Aleshire acknowledged that he (and the other Mayor and City Councilmembers) received a letter from members of the First Hagerstown Hose Company. He appreciates the history that is provided in the letter. There are obviously strong opinions about the future of the station, just as there are with the station in the south end. He wants to make sure the members understand this topic has been discussed several times. There have been several public session discussions during the last 2 to 3 years. There is no change in the decision from the Volunteer Association to unfairly fund volunteer companies within the City limits of Hagerstown. It is increasingly clear that the County does not have the same level of perspective of the need for professional fire service in the future. This is no different than how the obligations for MS4 or police services, etc. are viewed. If the agency responsible for ensuring fire service county-wide is not going to address it, the City will have to. He believes the City is past the point of waiting for the County to take responsibility. Operating in this manner cannot continue

and the Mayor and City Council need to make sure the services are provided to City citizens.

Chief Lohr stated there have been discussions about consolidation during his tenure here. He has invited Community Rescue Service (CRS) to meet for similar discussions.

It was the general consensus of the Mayor and City Council to move forward with acquisition of the land as discussed.

Request for Extension for Incentive Agreement – Scott Barkan, Alexander House Owner, LLC

Mayor Keller announced discussion of this request has been postponed.

Application for Invest Hagerstown City Center Grant Program

Kaitlin Bell, Economic Development Specialist, was present to review an application from Jay Sachdev of JR Investments, LLC, for the Invest Hagerstown City Center Grant Program at his properties of 6-16 West Washington Street.

The Review Committee recommends approval and the following is a summary of the request. Mr. Sachdev has proposed a project that will include renovation of his property. Renovations include existing occupied retail updates on the first floor, 18-20 telework/co-working offices with shared workspaces on the second floor, and 6-8 luxury apartments/condos in line with the City's Partners in Economic Progress program amenity requirements.

Mr. Sachdev notes that the tenants would be able to enjoy an urban living experience while having work atmospheres just steps away from their living spaces and within walking distance to many restaurants and entertainment opportunities. The estimated total investment is \$ 843,000. The project will be partially funded by Fulton Bank. Mr. Sachdev is requesting a grant of \$ 250,000. The Review Committee suggests awarding the full requested amount. Mr. Sachdev has a tentative construction/renovation started date of June 15, 2021, with a timeline of five months for completion. The Review Committee recommends providing the Invest Hagerstown City Center Project Completion Grant deadline of June 30, 2022.

The Review Committee is supportive of Mr. Sachdev and his plans of renovation to his property. The Committee agrees that adding telework spaces/meeting areas and high end apartments/condos into the Downtown City Center area, as well as updating existing spaces in the building, is a fantastic investment.

Councilmember Aleshire asked if the request fits within the allocated amount for the program. Ms. Bell indicated it does. This is the second request for funding from the program. Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, will provide an update of the remaining funding.

It was the general consensus to schedule approval of the requested grant on the April 27, 2021 Regular Session agenda.

Hagerstown Police Department (HPD) Recruitment Strategy Update

Police Chief Paul “Joey” Kifer was present to provide an update on the Hagerstown Police Department’s recruitment strategy. The total number of funded sworn officer positions is 104. There are currently 88 sworn officers. Two officers are in the academy, four are out with injuries or on light duty, and at least three will be using leave for the births of their children.

In 2021, 8 officers have left HPD – 2 of those left law enforcement completely. In 2020, 14 officers left. He has heard another officer might leave next month. There are currently 77 officers available for solo patrol, with 5 completing the Field Training Officer (FTO) program. There are 7 (including the Chief) currently eligible to retire. With changes in the Police and Fire Retirement Plan, another 6 officers will be eligible for early retirement in February or March, 2022.

HPD has started a high marketing strategy for recruiting new officers. They have been working with WDVM media on a plan to reach 14,000 people over different platforms. He hopes this will be released in the next few weeks. They are pushing their recruitment drive on social media as well.

A service to automate the recruitment process is being reviewed. HPD does not have the manpower to have a stand alone function to handle recruitment. Staff members are completing other tasks as well.

Traditionally, a new police officer is hired and then attends the academy. When the officer graduates from the academy, he/she completes the FTO program and then is released to solo patrol. With lateral/comparative compliance, an officer can be on the street sooner. Comparative compliance is a shortened process (5 week compliance academy) for officers from other states.

The State of Pennsylvania offers police academies to self-sponsored individuals under Act 120. There are 16 candidates in the academy at Indiana University (Pennsylvania). HPD has reached out to all these candidates and they all seemed interested in completing the testing process at HPD. Five completed the application but none came to the testing. HPD plans to go back to Indiana University and administer the written test and physical fitness portion to candidates at that location.

HPD staff are planning to reach out to other ACT 120 Academies as well. He hopes some of these candidates will be enticed to come to Hagerstown and take advantage of what HPD has to offer. They will also be looking for certified lateral Pennsylvania officers. There are a lot of part-time officers who may be looking for full-time jobs.

The hiring process is being reviewed for ways to shorten the process without damaging the integrity of the process. Testing will be offered more frequently. Dates are already scheduled for May and June. The number of background investigators will be increased. Candidates currently must successfully complete two interviews, with different interviewers. They are considering combining both interviews into one meeting. HPD is focusing on hiring certified officer candidates to replenish the ranks faster. This may be a primary model for the future. Long time employees are beginning to be a thing of the past. Although processes may be less lengthy, the integrity of the process will be maintained.

Chief Kifer believes the cadet program is an important first step for long term officers. HPD will continue to recruit locally. They will find solutions to make HPD more competitive with surrounding agencies. This has been a barrier. In order to meet the appearance of the community HPD serves, they are seeking diversity in the staff make up. A high priority is a stop gap measure of hiring part-time retired police officers who may be able to help expand the Watch Command Center.

Chief Kifer noted a combined testing date was held recently at Hagerstown Community College. HPD invited 106 candidates to come and test, 25 signed up, 21 showed up and 16 passed to the interview stage. There are 3 potential lateral comparative compliance candidates being considered. HPD staff will be returning to Indiana University soon and will take the test with them. A media campaign is being produced, banners are being placed on railroad bridges, and other outreach is taking place.

The union (AFSCME 3373) representatives met with management recently to discuss enhancing recruitment. There were many good ideas from the union and members. The recruiting drive has been enhanced because of that discussion.

Chief Kifer stated they set a goal of 10 candidates in the next police academy, which is in November. The hiring process takes a significant amount of time. It could take up to 18 months for a new officer to be out on the street. He asked the Mayor and City Council to consider allowing over hiring for positions to help prepare for anticipated retirement vacancies. The only way he can guarantee filling a vacancy is to hire candidates today, even though the academy isn't until November.

A lot of men and women in the Department are worried. It is demoralizing to see so many people leaving. With multiple vacancies, there is no ability to have specialized services. He is planning to do some things in-house to boost morale. For all those who leave, there are more who stay. The Hagerstown Police Department is a great department that will continue to serve the community effectively. They are working on retaining officers to end the ebb and flow within the police department. Hagerstown's unique geographical location makes keeping people difficult.

He assured the Mayor and City Council what they see nationally is not what the Hagerstown Police Department is. The men and women here are well trained and know their jobs. The Department was recently reaccredited. Maryland is implementing police reform legislation and they will deal with those changes. HPD is already operating in a

manner that the legislation requires. HPD is CALEA certified. They have prepared non-peaceful protests when a verdict is reached in the George Floyd case. The Mayor and City Council members do not need to be concerned about the integrity of the Hagerstown Police Department.

Mayor Keller asked if they provide packets of information to candidates highlighting the benefits of living in this area. Chief Kifer indicated Sgt. Murray and others are working on that kind of brochure. They are also looking at ways to get this information to younger people who may not read a brochure.

Mayor Keller stated there is a moral issue at HPD. She hopes the efforts of everyone involved with increasing recruiting makes a difference. She would like to see Chief Kifer have more support from command staff and the union.

Chief Kifer stated a lot of people were involved with the recruiting effort this past Saturday. He thanked them all for their work.

Mayor Keller asked what the Mayor and City Council can do as a body to support the police department, as citizens and elected officials. Chief Kifer stated the officers knowing the Mayor and City Council support them is a big thing. They need to feel that they are supported. He knows the Mayor and City Council does support Hagerstown's officers. He suggested having individual conversations with officers about what they appreciate about them when they see them.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Scott A. Nicewarner, City Administrator, agreed with Chief Kifer and that communication *with* people and not *at* people creates good conversations. He believes everyone is trying to be better communicators. He appreciates the fact that administration and union members are having good conversations about issues. He appreciates all of Chief Kifer's efforts to improve the Hagerstown Police Department. He knows things will improve.

Mr. Nicewarner announced the 2021 Spring/Summer Recreation Guide has been distributed. The Guide is also available on the City of Hagerstown's website. There are a lot of great programs available to participate in.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember S. McIntire announced the next Washington County Recovers event will be held on Friday, April 30, 2021 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the University Plaza. This event removes barriers to treatment for those dealing with addictions.

Councilmember T. Martinez had no additional comments.

Councilmember T. Burnett had no additional comments.

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

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire addressed Senate Bill 926, Hagerstown Stadium. There is a misconception in the community that the City of Hagerstown requested the funding approved in SB 926. This is squarely with the folks with influence to convince the State to contribute the entire funding for this largely private venture. The City of Hagerstown was not involved in the drafting of the bill. He doesn't take any credit for any of the success of obtaining the funding. The City's responsibility, at this point, is the taxes associated with these projects. He is not pro- or anti-baseball but he has been passionate about the location. The Mayor and City Council accomplished what citizens expected them to, and that is they didn't want the City to be the owners of or fund the debt service for the project. He redirects conversations stating the City sought the funding to the parties that did participate in the ask of the State. There will be a number of things the City will be involved in with a stadium project and citizens will decide if these things are assets or not.

Mayor E. Keller thanked Irene, Charlene, and Kevin for helping her navigate a situation last weekend that turned out to be beneficial for everyone involved.

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 6:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: May 25, 2021