

SPECIAL SESSION (19TH VOTING SESSION), WORK SESSION, AND EXECUTIVE SESSION
AUGUST 10, 2021
MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND
SPECIAL SESSION (19TH VOTING SESSION, WORK SESSION, AND EXECUTIVE
SESSION – August 10, 2021

EXECUTIVE SESSION – August 10, 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 of all members to meet in closed session 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)), to conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations (#9) (Section 3-305(b)), and to discuss (i) the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction (#1) (Section 3-305(b)), on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 3:01 p.m. in Room 407, 4th floor, City Hall, Hagerstown, Maryland. Councilmember K. B. Aleshire was not present at the time of the vote.

The Executive Session meeting notice originally included consulting with counsel to obtain legal advice (#7) to discuss pending litigation. Attorneys for this item were not available and the discussion was postponed.

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 A. Nicewarner, City Attorney Jason Morton, Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, Chris Siemerling, Economic Development Specialist, Doug Reaser, Business Development Specialist, Eric Deike, Director of Public Works, Kathleen Maher, Director of Planning and Code Administration, Paul Fulk, Neighborhood Services Manager, Don Francis, Director of Human Resources, Wes Decker, Communications Manager, and Donna K. Spickler, City Clerk.

The meeting was held to discuss three separate business proposals, the IBEW labor contract, and various personnel issues. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

SPECIAL SESSION (19TH VOTING SESSION) AND WORK SESSION – August 10, 2021

Mayor E. Keller called this Special Session (19th Voting Session) and Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:38 p.m., Tuesday, August 10, 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, S. McIntire, City Administrator Scott A. Nicewarner, and City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

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 Special Session at 4:38 p.m.

Approval of Comprehensive Plan Recommendation on R. Paul Smith Boulevard

Action: On a motion duly made by Councilmember K. B. Aleshire and seconded by Councilmember R. E. Bruchey, II, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed to direct the Planning Commission to remove from the Transportation Plan improvement recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan for the section of R. Paul Smith Boulevard planned from Howell Road/Dual Highway to Edgewood Drive, as shown on an attached map. The Mayor and City Council have determined that this section of the road improvement project is no longer in the public interest given development that has occurred outside the City, but also given the nature of development planned for the Harrison Tract it would traverse. At the next available opportunity of amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, this section of R. Paul Smith Boulevard shall be deleted from the plan. Site plans associated with the development of the Harrison Tract known as 1527 Howell Road shall not be required to provide right-of-way for this section of R. Paul Smith Boulevard. The City will prepare a Memorandum of Understanding with the developer of the Harrison Tract to specify the City's expectations for off-site road improvements in this area related to the impacts of development of this land.

The Special Session was closed at 4:30 p.m.

Proclamation: Forget-Me-Not Month

Mayor Keller read a proclamation naming September, 2021 as Forget-Me-Not month in Hagerstown. Each year the Disabled American Veterans Organization holds a Forget-Me-Not drive where all proceeds raised are given to those disabled veterans and their families who are in need. J. R. Arnold, Disabled American Veterans, accepted the proclamation.

High Impact Performance Award (HIP) Presentation

Heather Dennie, Organizational Development Specialist, announced Nelia Tidler, Utilities Finance Manager, is being recognized for her tireless efforts in assisting with the implementation of the Stormwater Management Fee with the City's High Impact Performance Award (HIP).

Ms. Tidler thanked everyone for the award.

Mr. Nicewarner stated he has worked with Ms. Tidler since his first day with the City. No one knows as much about the billing operation as she does and she is able to make the system work. He kids her that she wrote the billing module for Tyler Technologies. He congratulated her for receiving the award and on her coming retirement. She will be missed.

Support Services Update

Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, Beth Everhart, Support Services Manager, and Ryan Grove, Support Services Supervisor, were present to provide an overall status update to cover existing Utilities and Tax outstanding balances and additional funding that was provided by various State of Maryland funding sources for customer utility bills.

Support Services and Customer Service employees are located at City Hall, as are Utility Billing staff.

Ms. Hepburn noted that, as of August 3, 2021, total outstanding electric accounts were at \$ 1,913,681. This is lower than for the same period in August, 2020.

Ms. Everhart stated there is a substantial amount of extra funding for utility customers due to the stimulus bills that have been passed to assist people with bills. Ms. Hepburn pointed out customers expecting additional funding will see the payment on their bill when the funding is provided to the City.

Mr. Nicewarner asked what is the criteria for the additional funding. Ms. Everhart stated customers who were not Office of Home Energy Program (OHEP) recipients and who had bills that were 30 days delinquent were eligible. She stated the City has also received additional funding from the Maryland Energy Assistance Program.

Mr. Grove indicated letters have been sent to customers who will be receiving the additional assistance.

Ms. Hepburn stated that, as of August 3, 2021, total outstanding water/wastewater accounts was \$ 1,404,083. This amount is higher than last year and that is due to the additional fees for the Stormwater Utility that were just billed in April.

Collection of real estate tax revenue is at 56.2% compared to 57.3% from last year in August.

Ms. Hepburn indicated Customer Service representatives worked with customers and offered COVID payment plans. Mr. Grove stated there were 150 customers who utilized this type of payment plan. Staff is currently managing 130 plans, as some have been paid in full.

The Emergency Rental Assistance Program through the State of Maryland will also provide funds for electric and water bills. Mr. Grove stated they are starting to see pledges for that funding each week. The program provides 15 months of assistance.

Ms. Hepburn stated staff encourages customers and residents to reach out to government agencies and assistance providers to see if there are programs they qualify for.

Prior to March, 2020, many customers came to City Hall to pay their utility and other bills. Since that time, foot traffic has decreased drastically. As shelter in place and business shutdowns were implemented, people's habits changed. Staff continues to review processes and are close to implementing a program that will offer customers a variety of ways to pay. When this is implemented, customers with multiple accounts will be able to complete one transaction for payment on all the accounts. The current program only allows one account per transaction. Staff will schedule a demonstration with the Mayor and City Council prior to the launch.

Holly Project – 72 W. Washington Street

Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, was present to review a proposed financial incentive agreement for Mike Fitzgerald of Gideon Properties for the Holly Project at 72 W. Washington Street.

The financial incentive agreement provides the terms and conditions for a \$ 750,000 grant for the large-scale downtown project. A summary of the project is as follows:

1. Holly Project at 72 W. Washington Street by Gideon Properties, LLC
2. Property Redevelopment and Expansion
3. Creation of 46 modern apartments with luxury units and building amenities
4. Proposed capital investment of \$ 11 million+
5. Pre-development phase currently underway
6. Targeted construction start date: January 1, 2022
7. Targeted construction completion date: January 1, 2024

Under the agreement, the City will provide \$ 100,000 upfront for the pre-development phase. Gideon Properties will be required to submit a detailed development plan before construction begins. This plan will become an addendum to the agreement. The second and third disbursements, \$ 325,000 each, will be based on the development plan and tied to the completion of defined construction phases. The defined construction phases definitions will also be an addendum to the plan. Construction must be consistent with the guidelines and standards of the Invest Hagerstown program. There is a 2:1 developer match required. The agreement includes claw back provisions if the project is not completed to the guidelines and standards

It was the general consensus of the Mayor and City Council to include approval of the Financial Incentive Agreement with Gideon Properties on the August 24, 2021 Regular Session agenda.

Scott Nicewarner, City Administrator, informed everyone the next Community Yard Sale will be held on Saturday, August 14, 2021 at Fairgrounds Park. A downtown event sponsored by the Augustoberfest group will be held at University Plaza on Saturday, August 21, 2021.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

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

Councilmember S. McIntire would like Hagerstown to host a Washington County Municipal League dinner. Mr. Nicewarner will reach out to the Chapter president for a tentative date.

Councilmember T. Martinez thanked Trevor Willard, Brett Guessford, Malik Philips, and Peggy Mothershed, for their help during the Community Clean Up. She appreciated their enthusiasm. She thanked the Hagerstown Housing Authority for hosting a cook out at the R. W. Johnson Community Center following the cleanup day.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire had no additional comments.

Councilmember T. Burnett also thanked everyone for their help with the cleanup. She thanked Heather Tapley for organizing a group of 20 people who worked in the Bester Community. She gave a shout out to the parks department for the improvements at Wheaton Park.

Mayor E. Keller gave a shout out to Lt. Mark Renner and the Hagerstown Police Department for organizing a great National Night Out. She thanked the community for participating in the Community Clean Up Day. It was great to see so many people out cleaning up their neighborhoods. She thanked Eric Deike, Director of Public Works, and Public Works staff for helping with removal of the bagged trash. She thanked the Homeless Coalition and other partners for meeting with the City of Hagerstown earlier today to discuss how to address homelessness in the City.

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 5:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: September 28, 2021