

WORK SESSION - January 10, 2023

Mayor E. Keller called this Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:02 p.m., Tuesday, January 10, 2023 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.

Proclamation: World Hypnosis Day

Mayor Keller read a proclamation naming January 4, 2023 as World Hypnotism Day in Hagerstown, Maryland. Marie Hawse, Hagerstown Hypnosis Center, accepted the proclamation.

Hagerstown Youth News Corp Project

Brother Andy Smith, Brothers United Who Dare to Care, Inc., and Jean Kelly were present to discuss a new initiative – the Hagerstown Youth News Corps. The mission of the Youth News Corps is to train and provide young people with the opportunity to communicate effectively using the Speak Up! Community News publication.

The Hagerstown Youth News Corps program is an internship program that Brothers United Who Dare to Care will be offering to young people within the City of Hagerstown between ages 16 to 21 years old, with an interest in learning news media journalism and serving as news media staff to the Speak Up! Community News publication, which has served the area for over 20 years. Special consideration to be in the Hagerstown Youth News Corps will be given to young people within the City limits that live in public housing and lower income neighborhoods, especially in situations that put them at risk for getting involved in substance abuse, including tobacco use; in situations that can lead to teen pregnancies; or are at risk to be exposed to violence, intentional injuries or teen suicide. Additional consideration will be given to young people whose families are receiving public assistance.

Young people that enroll in the Hagerstown Youth News Corps program will gain first hand experience from seasoned Speak Up! Community News team members. The publication started as a monthly newsletter delivered door-to-door in the City of Hagerstown's Jonathan Street neighborhood; providing news articles and stories focused on cultural heritage, health awareness, community outreach activities and events; plus information to promote self-sufficiency.

The Speak Up! Community News publication, spread throughout the City of Hagerstown by way of social media with coverage of City and County news and then expended into news coverage throughout the four-state area: Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, including the District of Columbia. Speak Up! Community News boasts of being one of the first online news services and even had a program giving away free computers to access the publication from the Internet until the rise of smart

phones allowed expanded access to the publication. Every monthly issue ever published is available online and can be downloaded from the organization's website: [www.brotherswhocare.org](http://www.brotherswhocare.org). Speak Up! Community News continues its goal of online availability and now with up to date plus real-time stories online through social media.

Since the COVID crisis, they've noticed an increased disconnect between young people and those outside of their generation. In addition, there has been decreased contribution to news from Hagerstown to publish on the Speak Up! Community News platforms since social distancing and distance learning lured people away from helping the volunteer efforts to share news they believe people can use. They feel that young people involved in the Hagerstown Youth News Corps can become positive change agents and stakeholders in the City and impact their peers as well as their neighbors with making valuable contributions using news media from a youth perspective.

Brothers United Who Dare to Care will be looking for partnerships with the local schools, colleges, local news outlets and the local cable franchise to help recruit young people within the City to serve as interns in the Speak Up! Community News – Hagerstown Youth News Corps. Brothers Who Care will also be seeking funding and donations for the Hagerstown Youth News Corps internship program and funding needed to help with the cost of delivering the monthly publication to the public housing developments in the City and other lower income or at risk areas in the City of Hagerstown that has low to moderate income and public multi-housing units to provide news they can use: Self help information, news promoting cultural appreciation and news that can impact serious social, health, and mental health concerns.

Mayor Keller fully supports this initiative.

Councilmember McIntire suggested Brother Andy speak with the Hagerstown Youth Council as well. She believes it would be helpful for them and for the program. He has been attempting to reach a representative.

Councilmember Aleshire noted there was a debate 15 years ago over whether a government tv channel was happening. Things have changed and kids have moved on to new communication technologies. For example, Facebook is constantly being replaced with something more efficient and faster by many families wanting immediate news.

Brother Andy stated this initiative will provide peer training. The message needs to come in their tone. He has learned to listen to his grandchildren as they say important things about communicating.

Councilmember Martinez stated it would be exciting to see young people at the media table during Mayor and City Council meetings.

Brother Andy stated they are requesting a portion of the City of Hagerstown's funding from the ARPA funds to begin this initiative. He is requesting \$ 50,000.00 to cover the costs of one year. If there is an opportunity for recurring funding or funding

from the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), they would be interested in applying for the funds.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he thinks this program is one of the tenets for ARPA funding. It also fits within the CDBG funding requirements.

Mr. Nicewarner believes there are other opportunities with this initiative as well.

Ms. Kelly stated she is finding her niche in the community. There is always an issue and a problem but for every problem there is a solution. The adults in the community have to be the change that they want their kids to be. It is time to step up and help families.

The request for ARPA funding will be reviewed.

#### Approval to Submit Applications for FY23 Maryland SOLE Grant Funding

Nathan Fridinger, Electric Operations Manager, was present to discuss an application for the Maryland SOLE Grant funding.

The Maryland Energy Administration is seeking applications from Maryland nonprofits, state agencies, counties, and incorporated cities, public and private schools, and community colleges for the FY23 Streetlight and Outdoor Lighting Efficiency (SOLE) pilot program for conversion of outdoor High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting to Light-Emitting Diode (LED) technology. A total of \$ 1.8 million is being offered on a first-come first-served basis with a cap of up to \$ 500,000 per application due by January 13, 2023.

Reimbursements are limited to \$ 150 per lamp rated less than 176 Watts, \$ 200 per lamp rated between 176 and 250 Watts, and \$ 300 per lamp rated between 251 and 400 Watts. Staff has identified 473 lamps meeting this criterion along certain routes and is requesting approval to apply for a grant amount of \$ 102,950.00, with a total project cost estimated to be \$ 297,704.20. The Light Department will donate \$ 104,754.20 in Capital. Following completion, a projected annual energy savings of \$ 37,284.424 to the General Fund is anticipated.

It was the general consensus to approve the application for the funding.

#### Review of Meritus Holdings and Battlefield Park

Doug Reaser, Business Development Specialist, and Stephen Bockmiller, Development Review Planner and Zoning Administrator, were present to review the potential land purchase of Meritus parcels known as Hospital Hill and a battlefield park at the site.

Staff have been in contact with Meritus and their representatives about a possible purchase of lands located at the former Washington County Hospital site. This would

include the surrounding parking lots (excluding the lot along E. Washington), the parking deck and hospital hill location.

All indications from the American Battlefield Trust (ABT) and the American Battlefield Protection Program of the National Park Service (ABPP) are that funding for this project will have staff support, as it offers some protection and interpretation of a previously under-recognized battle site and because it would preserve an urban site which is a rare occurrence for the programs. There is a likelihood of success in this grant application. Indications have been received that if the grant application is submitted as projected and all is in order, there is a good chance that the funding can be approved and in place by the time the properties go to settlement around June 30, 2023 and no bridging of that part of the funding formula will be necessary.

Grant funding will require a preservation easement be placed on the property. The future holder of that easement is yet to be determined. Potential holders discussed include the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), the Maryland Environmental Trust and Preservation Maryland. The funding agencies have been made clearly aware that the City intends to develop the property with sufficient interpretive amenities to attract regional Civil War Heritage tourism to the downtown area.

Staff have initiated contact with ABPP staff and the State Historic Preservation Officer (the Director of MHT) to gauge response to the City's plans for developing the park. A zoom call was held between City staff, ABT staff and ABPP staff on January 3, 2023, and a phone conversation was held with Elizabeth Hughes (Director, MHT) that afternoon. Feedback is preliminary, but nothing discussed so far seems to cause any great alarm to either agency. More official response is pending.

The purchase price for the majority of Meritus holdings is proposed to be \$ 900,000.00. The study period will be 120 days and begin at the execution of the inspection agreement. The inspection agreement would be approved in January to allow staff to begin any due diligence items related to the property as soon as possible.

The contract contains contingencies for the study period and financing related to the American Battlefield Trust to obtain grant funds toward the purchase. Grant funding may finance up to 50% of the purchase price. Settlement would be within 30 days after the end of the study period.

The purpose of this proposal is to implement multiple policies of the Comprehensive Plan and the City Center Plan, using outside funding sources to the greatest extent possible. It will provide needed open space in an underserved area and is anticipated to catalyze reinvestment in the surrounding area. The project will attract regional Civil War history tourist visitation into the downtown area. It will guide redevelopment of a large area of vacant landholdings.

It was the general consensus of the Mayor and City Council to move forward with this proposal and schedule introduction of an ordinance to purchase the land during a Special Session on January 17, 2023.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS**

*Scott A. Nicewarner, City Administrator*, reminded everyone that the 2023 Hub City 100 Miler starts on Friday, January 13, 2023. Registration information can be found on the City’s website. This year is the 10h annual Hub City 100 Miler.

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS**

*Councilmember S. McIntire* wished everyone a happy new year and Mayor Keller a happy birthday.

*Councilmember R. E. Bruchey, II* wished Mayor Keller a happy birthday.

*Councilmember T. Burnett* had no additional comments.

*Councilmember K. B. Aleshire* had no additional comments.

*Councilmember T. Martinez* also wished Mayor Keller a happy birthday.

*Mayor E. Keller* thanked everyone involved with the Donut Drop. It was still a success, even though there was heavy rain.

The 2023 Legislative Session opens tomorrow. She congratulated Senator Paul Corderman and Delegate Brooke Grossman on their recent election.

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 4:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Original signed by D. K. Spickler*

Donna K. Spickler

City Clerk

Approved: February 28, 2023