

Members of the Mayor and City Council attended a groundbreaking ceremony at the site of the Hagerstown Field House, 290 E. Memorial Boulevard, Hagerstown, Maryland at 1:00 p.m. on December 12, 2023.

SPECIAL SESSION (82ND VOTING SESSION) WORK SESSION – December 12, 2023

Mayor T. Martinez called this Special Session (82nd voting session) and Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:02 p.m., Tuesday, December 12, 2023, in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Participating with the Mayor were Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, S. McIntire, P. E. Perini, Sr., and M. J. Schindler, City Administrator Scott A. Nicewarner, and City Clerk D. K. Spickler. Councilmember T. Burnett was not present.

Special Session (82nd voting session) – December 12, 2023

On a motion duly made by Councilmember S. McIntire and second by Councilmember M. J. Schindler, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote of all members present to meet in Special Session at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of a Resolution: Adopting the 2023 Washington County Hazard Mitigation Plan as the City of Hagerstown’s Plan

Action: On a motion duly made by Councilmember S. McIntire and seconded by Councilmember M. J. Schindler, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote of all members present to approve a resolution to adopt the 2023 Washington County Hazard Mitigation Plan as the City of Hagerstown’s plan. City staff participated in development of the plan to ensure City data was updated and hazards evaluated and prioritized. Inclusion of the City in the 2023 County Hazard Mitigation Plan makes the City eligible for grant funding to assist with pre-hazard mitigation projects and hazard-event response and recovery.

The Special Session was closed at 4:01 p.m.

FY23 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, Brooke Garver, Accounting and Budget Manager, and Christopher Lehman, SB & Company, LLC Engagement Partner, were present to review the City’s Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for FY23.

The preparation of this report would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of the entire Finance Department. Copies of the FY23 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report were distributed in early November and electronic copies of the FY23 report are on the City’s website.

Mr. Lehman reported the Scope of Services included the following:

1. Audit of the June 30, 2023 financial statements

2. Performance of United Guidance Single Audit
3. Review of Uniform Financial Report
4. Review of Data Collection Form
5. Available for year-round consultation

Mr. Lehman reported SB & Company, LLC has issued an unmodified opinion on the financial statements. They discovered no instances of fraud or any material weaknesses in internal controls. Management provided full cooperation during the audit process. They received full cooperation from management. No audit journal entries are proposed. There have been no issues for several years. The City will likely continue to be considered a low-risk auditee, even with the added COVID Federal Grant regulations. The City's total net position as of June 30, 2023 is \$ 42.7 million, compared to \$ 39 million in 2022.

Ms. Hepburn thanked Ms. Garver for her work on the Annual Financial Report and for implementing a new grant tracking program. She thanked Heidi Herman and Jeff Lear for their work on the annual audit. Councilmember McIntire thanked Ms. Hepburn for ensuring the City is always in compliance with regulations.

To complete the audit, SB & Company uses the FORCAM Audit Approach. The review focuses on risk, controls, and account misstatement. The evaluation of key processes were rated as effective. Because of the significant number of transactions, SB relies heavily on audit of internal controls.

Total assets have increased over the last 3 years to \$ 156.8 million. Liabilities have also increased to \$ 129.4 million. Including all funds, assets are \$ 263.3 million and liabilities are \$ \$ 67.7 million.

Total revenues for 2023 were \$ 65 million and expenses were \$ 60.3 million.

Councilmember Aleshire stated citizens will want to know how the City's financial stability affects them. He pointed out property taxes are finally starting to steadily increase, which generates more revenue. Public Safety services are a large expense, and the City is trying to get fair funding for fire services from Washington County. The bulk of additional revenue goes toward public safety, which is what it seems every citizen/resident wants.

Ms. Hepburn reminded the group that the public safety divisions include police, fire, code administration, and the signal division.

Mr. Lehman stated the General Fund Balance has shown an increase year after year. The general rule for unassigned fund balance is having at least 2 months' worth of cooperating expenses. The City's policy is 17% or 2 months of expenses. The City currently has 4 months of operating expenses in the Unassigned Fund Balance.

The General Fund ended FY23 with a surplus of \$ 3.3 million and an unassigned fund balance of \$ 18.4 million.

FY23 General Fund Surplus Allocations

Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, and Brooke Garver, Accounting and Budget Manager, were present to discuss allocations of the FY23 General Fund. It is important that the General Fund reflected strong fiscal results as staff plans for the upcoming bond issue and bond refunding combined for the Hagerstown Field House and Hub City Parking Garage. Since the unassigned fund balance exceeds the City's financial policy of 17%, there are some surplus allocations that staff recommend for consideration. Most of the allocations mentioned below are time sensitive and priority areas that need to be addressed. If the requested changes are agreeable, staff will include them for approval and adoption at the December 19, 2023 Regular Session.

The City ended FY23 with a surplus of \$ 3.3 million. The General Fund Balance Reserves policy states a target of 17% of overall operating expenditures and 2 months of cash on hand. As of June 30, 2023, the Fund Balance was \$ 18.4 million, which is 39% of overall operating expenditures or 4.2 months' worth of expenses.

Staff recommend the following FY23 General Fund Surplus Allocations:

1. \$ 1.7M transfer to Citywide ERP Software System Replacement (C0739) is needed as the City's current software system, MUNIS, is over thirteen years old. An RFP has already been completed to start this process and funding will be critical. Bond funding will not be an option for the City like it was during the MUNIS implementation.
2. \$ 100K transfer to Police Department Building (C0308) to help cover a portion of renovation needs on the third floor.
3. \$500K transfer to Hagerstown Field House (C0041) to continue with funding needs for the construction and equipment associated with this new building.
4. \$200K transfer to CIP toward Fire Department relocation needs. The Fire Department administration staff is currently in the former Market House building that the City previously owned. The current owners of that building extended two years for the City to continue to occupy space which ends in August 2024. The current owners have plans and need the Fire Department to move out to expand its business. As such, time is critical, and funding will be necessary to help find space that can accommodate the requirements of this staff.
5. \$600K to be utilized across various FY25 capital budget requests.
6. \$200K to remain in the General Fund Balance Reserve account.

Mayor Martinez welcomed Nicholas Martinez Martell, Hagerstown Youth Council, to the meeting. Nico has been shadowing the Mayor all day.

Ms. Hepburn pointed out reallocating surplus funds is not new. The last time funds were reallocated was in 2021. Even though Scott Nicewarner, City Administrator, says there is no reason to have a surplus, it is actually needed this year. In a couple months, staff will be re-funding the parking deck and issuing a new bond for the new deck. Bond rating agencies will look at healthy financial performance. The Police and Fire Pension

and Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) funds are very underfunded. This will likely have a negative impact on the bond rating.

Councilmember Perini asked for more information on the software system. Ms. Hepburn stated the bids are in and a multi-department group will be reviewing the bids. If they are acceptable, the next step is moving forward with demonstrations. Staff will continue their review and present a recommendation to the Mayor and City Council later in the Spring. It will take 18-24 months to implement changes to the entire data system.

Mr. Nicewarner stated there are at least 27 modules to review.

Councilmember Perini asked who he should talk to for more information about the fire department relocation.

Mr. Nicewarner indicated Fire Department staff are developing the specifications. The Department of Community and Economic Development, Engineering, and Public Works are also involved. Until new headquarters are constructed at 441 S. Potomac Street, the fire administration office needs to find a new location by August, 2024.

Councilmember Perini asked if it would be better to keep \$800K in Fund Balance Reserve rather than using \$600K for capital budget requests. Ms. Hepburn stated funding will be needed for the Citywide software system and for Capital Improvement Projects.

Mr. Nicewarner reported anticipated tax revenue won't be known until mid-January. Ms. Hepburn stated the State Department of Assessments has to announce the Constant Yield Tax Rates (CYTR) to jurisdictions.

Councilmember Aleshire realizes prices will change depending on when items are purchased. The alternative to making these fund transfers is to push purchases and projects to future years. Costs will increase on future purchases.

Ms. Hepburn stated staff are asking for specific transfers that will provide flexibility. The Mayor and City Council will have the opportunity to make changes.

It was the general consensus to move forward with the proposed surplus allocations.

Preliminary Agenda Review

Mayor Martinez announced that Citizen Comments for the December 19, 2023 Regular Session will be welcome either in person or by submitting comments by email to councilcomments@hagerstownmd.org by 5:00 p.m. that day. If by email, the submitter's name, address, and a summary of the comments will be announced during the Citizen Comments portion of the meeting. The email will not be read in its entirety, but it will be included in the public record for the meeting and may be viewed by the public at any time.

Consent Agenda

A. Engineering:

1. Street Tree Planting and Reforestation – Advantage Landscape and Construction, Inc. (Hagerstown, MD) \$ 62,440.48
2. Reconstruct Three Concrete Alleys and Contingency – Superior Facilities Management Services, LLC (SFMS) (Gaithersburg, MD) \$ 180,000.00

B. Fire:

1. Paratech Air Lift Bags – Fire & Rescue Products (Harrisburg, PA) \$ 16,870.21

C. Information Technology:

1. ESO Fire RMS-Incident Management Annual Software Renewal – ESO Solutions (Dallas, TX) \$ 26,569.45

D. Police:

1. Axon Contract for Software Licenses – Axon Enterprise, Inc. (Scottsdale, AZ) \$ 192,879.00

E. Public Works:

1. July 4th Fireworks Display at Fairgrounds Park – Starfire Corporation (St. Benedict, PA) \$ 28,000.00
2. Upgraded Hardware and Software, Installation, and Freight for 3rd Parking Deck – HUB Parking Technology USA, Inc. (Warrendale, PA) \$ 63,035.85

F. Utilities:

1. Light: Emergency Repairs to Unit 121 – Transteck, Inc. (Hagerstown, MD) \$ 11,367.08
2. Water: Treatment Chemicals FY24 and FY25 – Various Suppliers – \$ 1,659,046.50
3. Wastewater: Treatment Chemicals – Various Suppliers - \$ 770,358.80
4. Wastewater: Emergency Repair Fermenter Air Scrubber – Source Technology (Lexington, KY) \$ 19,967.33
5. Wastewater: Pump Station 33 Construction Project – Garney Construction, LLC (Fairfax, VA) \$ 5,192,444.00

Councilmember Perini asked if the City has a reforestation plan. Jim Bender, City Engineer, can provide information. Councilmember Perini would like to talk to Ms. Hepburn about future years of funding when the budget hasn't been approved yet. He asked why one of the bidding companies for the Pump Station 33 Construction Project was disqualified.

Nancy Hausrath, Director of Utilities, stated the company was disqualified because they did not meet the bid specs. Councilmember Perini pointed out the disqualified bid is approximately \$ 750,000 less than the other bid. He asked if the bid was disqualified on a technical issue. Ms. Hausrath noted the Staff committee reviewing the bids concluded the company did not submit a complete bid.

Ms. Hepburn pointed out this project is being funded with federal funding, so bidders have to comply with federal guidelines as well as with the City's procurement policy. There was a list of mandatory items to submit, which they did not provide.

Councilmember Aleshire noted typically within the solicitation it says a contractor says certain items shall be provided. He doesn't think a bid can be accepted if a bidder did not provide all the required items. The City could re-bid the project however; doing so provides the opportunity for everyone to know what other bidders submitted during the first bid. Re-bidding could be detrimental in terms of the overall costs of the project.

Ms. Hepburn agreed it could be detrimental. There was also a mandatory pre-bid meeting. The staff committee agreed it was only appropriate to disqualify one bidder.

Councilmember Perini stated he is very familiar with bids and bid openings. His concern was whether or not the bidder's error was significant enough to disqualify them given the cost difference between the bids.

Approval of the Subrecipient Agreements for the agencies awarded ARPA funding is scheduled as New Business on December 19, 2023.

Councilmember Perini stated it seems 2 of the agencies have similar programs. He wondered if it would be better for economies of scale for those 2 agencies to work together.

Ms. Hepburn reported the review committee reviewed each individual application and rated them based on a matrix model.

Councilmember McIntire stated Apples for Children and Girls, Inc. do two completely, separate things in her mind. It would be up to those two agencies to collaborate, if they choose to.

Councilmember Perini recalled a situation in Cumberland and agencies wanted their own 22-hour bus. The groups worked together and were able to provide the bus service.

Mayor Martinez stated the Mayor and City Council decided to use these funds to reach those in the community who are less fortunate. A scoring matrix was used to provide a structured review. The Mayor and City Council trusted staff to provide the recommendations.

Mayor Martinez announced approval of a Water and Wastewater Policy Amendment will be added to New Business for December 19, 2023. A Work Session to discuss funding for the furniture and fixtures at the Field House will be held on December 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. Depending on the discussion, approval of this funding may be added to the Regular Session agenda.

There were no other questions or comments.

This completed the Preliminary Agenda Review. There were no additional questions about any items. All items, unless noted, are scheduled for approval on December 19, 2023.

Proposed Amendments to Chapter 204, Signs – The Billboard Ordinance

Katheleen Maher, Director of Planning and Code Administration, and Paul Fulk, Neighborhood Services Manager, were present to review Chapter 204 and proposed amendments to this code in response to requests from the public and to update language that has become dated or is inconsistent with Supreme Court direction on signs.

Chapter 204 regulates off-premises advertising signs or billboards. Such signs are used to promote activity, events, or enterprises that are located on a different property from where the sign is located. The purpose of these regulations is to reasonably accommodate off-premises advertising signs while also establishing minimum standards intended to further traffic safety, maintain and enhance the aesthetic environment of the City, and minimize possible adverse effects of signs on nearby public and private property. This code is administered by the Chief Code Official. Chapter 204 dates to at least 1967 and was repealed and readopted with revisions in 1999. This code has not been modified since.

The following is a quick summary of the City’s billboard provisions:

1. Billboards are prohibited in residential zoning districts and must be setback from residential districts by 100 feet if unlit and 500 feet if lit.
2. Billboards must be distanced from one another by at least 500 feet.
3. There can be no more than one billboard per property.
4. The maximum height of a freestanding billboard is 30 feet.
5. The maximum size of a sign face is 300 square feet.
6. Billboards may contain one or two sign faces, but a billboard with two sign faces must have the signs faces placed back-to-back.
7. Billboards must be setback from the street right-of-way.
8. There are landscaping provisions for the base of billboards.
9. The following types of off-premises advertising signs are prohibited in the city: portable signs, rooftop signs, signs attached to stationary equipment, signs with lights that flash, blink, or turn off intermittently

The inventory of the exiting billboards in the City shows many of the billboards in the City pre-date some or many of the code provisions. They would be considered grandfathered.

Over the last several years, Planning staff have been contacted by several individuals regarding requests that would require amendments to Chapter 204 or requesting that certain revisions not be made. The following are the requests:

1. A property owner with two billboards containing 4 sign faces in the CG zoning district indicated he would like to be able to have digital billboards.

2. A representative from one of the three billboard owners in the City requests that the code not be amended to allow digital billboards, because it would put him at a competitive disadvantage
3. A representative of a local development company indicated they would like to be able to put up three-sided billboards in the City, like are in place near the corner of Massey and Halfway Boulevards.
4. A property owner in the downtown area has indicated they would like to put up a building-mounted digital sign to advertise their business and to promote activities and enterprises that are located off-premises.

During review of the requests and current code, staff observed the following issues;

1. County and SHA also have billboard regulations and they differ in some regards. Assess where consistency makes sense.
2. Most billboards in the City predate the 1999 ordinance, so they don't meet the current standards. Assess whether all the standards for new billboards still make sense
3. The 2015 Supreme Court decision on signs makes some of the content exception regulations are no longer legal. That provision was for on-premises signs and should be eliminated.

Staff provided a draft amended ordinance for review to address the requests and observations.

Councilmember Perini asked if a portable sign is one that is on the back of trucks. That is correct.

Councilmember McIntire asked if the lighting at the new stadium will be affected. Mr. Fulk stated the lumens from the lights can be directed to the field, so it won't really affect the residential areas. Councilmember Schindler asked if a light study was done. Ms. Maher stated the City did not conduct a light study.

Councilmember Perini noted a billboard is defined as advertisement for something not on that property. Ms. Maher stated that is correct and billboards will be transitioned to being regulated under the sign regulations.

Councilmember Perini is aware of a business in Frederick that uses a digital sign along a highway. It only takes a click of a button to make it an on-premises sign to an off-premises sign. Ms. Maher stated that situation would be considered a zoning compliance issue.

Councilmember Perini asked if painting an old Coca Cola sign on a building would be considered a sign. Ms. Maher stated if Coke was sold there, it would be an on-premises sign, otherwise it would be a billboard.

Councilmember Perini asked if painting something like a Michael Jordan scene, which looks like Nike, on a house would comply with the ordinance. Ms. Maher stated this seems to be interpretive, in that whether it is considered decorative or a sign.

Councilmember Schindler understands the reasoning for removing the landscaping regulations. However, he asked if there is a way to ensure that the areas are kept clean and trimmed. Mr. Fulk stated this could be enforced through the Property Maintenance Code.

Councilmember McIntire asked if staff anticipate any of the businesses will find it costly to make the changes. Ms. Maher and Mr. Fulk stated the current signs will not have to be changed. New signs will have to comply with the new ordinance.

Councilmember Schindler asked how staff sees being able to enforce things like auto dimming on digital signs. Ms. Maher stated auto dimming is rather universal and it would be shown on a building permit.

Councilmember Aleshire anticipates staff will be back with other amendments when someone feels they are aggrieved by the regulations.

It was the general consensus to move forward with the recommended amendments. Mr. Fulk will work with the City Attorney on the draft ordinance for approval at a future Regular Session.

Program Open Space Annual Grant Program

Eric Deike, Director of Public Works, was present to seek direction and approval from the Mayor and City Council on recommendations for the Program Open Space (POS) grant funds for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 and beyond.

POS is a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR). DNR places the responsibility of grant review to the local county jurisdictions. The City's request will go to Washington County for review and must be submitted by December 28, 2023.

Each year, staff review and recommends any number of projects to be submitted for POS funding. The FY25 projects, in order of priority, are as follows:

1. Hagerstown Field House: The request is to purchase recreational related items such as basketball backboards, volleyball standards, dasher boards, sport wall panels and other such items required to make the facility initially operational. POS will typically fund items that have a lifespan upwards of 20 years. General sports items such as basketballs and nets would most likely be rejected as would artificial turf.
2. Burnap Parking Lot: This parking lot is currently a stone and dirt parking area near the tennis courts and west pavilion in City Park. There are no curbs, erosion control or asphalt paving. The total cost of constructing a proper parking lot is estimated to be \$ 600,000. The POS request is only for a portion of the total cost. Most of the funding would be Highway User Revenue.
3. Mansion House Rehabilitation: The Mansion House is in City Park and Houses the Valley Art Association of Washington County. The building has a large, wraparound porch on 3 sides with steps that lead into the park. Work would

include reconstruction of the railings on the steps, replacement of some steps and repair of a support wall.

4. Resurface Tennis Courts: City Park and Wheaton Park both currently contain tennis courts. The courts need resurfacing and new lines painted. In addition to the tennis court lines, pickleball lines would be added. Pangborn Park is currently the only City park that contains a pickleball court for play.

POS funding requires a 10% match from the City. If all four projects were to be accepted, the impact would be a match of \$ 47,000.

Anticipated projects for the next five years are also included on the application list.

Staff recommend submitting all four projects. Washington County staff will review the project to determine which projects may be funded. The final decision will be made by DNR.

Councilmember Perini asked if the Field House includes a pickleball court. Mayor Martinez stated it does.

Councilmember Perini asked how staff determined the amounts to ask for. Mr. Deike stated the recommended projects are what staff think may be fundable. Staff considered projects, keeping in mind the reason for a park is for people to enjoy green space.

Councilmember Perini asked if the County has to go by the priority listed in considering projects to fund. Mr. Deike indicated the County can choose any project.

It was the general consensus to include approval of the application and priority list on the December 19, 2023 agenda.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Nonprofit Funding Recommendations update for Three Additional Organizations

Michelle Hepburn, Chief Financial Officer, and Brooke Garver, Accounting and Budget Manager, were present to provide an update on nonprofit applications for three organizations that were not included in the original charts and recommendations in November discussion.

As a reminder, a Nonprofit Funding Request Program and Funding Guidelines were approved in July, 2023. In addition to the application, other required documentation included: IRS designation letter, current certificate of good standing with the State of Maryland, project budget, and evidence of an active SAM.gov registration. Applications were received through 4:00 p.m. on September 1, 2023. As outlined in the application document, an internal staff subcommittee was established that reviewed the applications through October. In November 2023, the Mayor and City Council reviewed staff recommendations to provide \$ 924,670 to fund eighteen organizations that scored a total of forty points or more.

After staff discovered that three organizations were not included in the original count. There were a total of sixty applications submitted. Of that total, forty-six met the overall eligibility requirements as outlined in the nonprofit guidelines. After reviewing and scoring the other applications, staff recommend funding \$ 36,366 to one additional organization, The Mental Health Center, that met the prior established guideline which was a score of more than forty points. The Mental Health Center requested \$ 36,366 for their Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program (PRP) Coverage for Private Insurance and PRP Educational Parenting Group. The program provides coverage for those children with private insurance to receive the same PRP care as others covered by Medicaid funding which targets life, social, and symptom management skills. In addition, it provides a parent education group to families experiencing mental health issues exacerbated by COVID.

There is sufficient ARPA funding available to reallocate from projects not being completed to cover this additional \$ 36,366. All organizations were scored utilizing the same matrix that was discussed in July and that was included in the application. An updated scoring matrix and summary of applications was included in the meeting material.

Councilmember Perini asked if it is too late to include this award with the original motion. Ms. Hepburn stated it is, as staff did not want to assume the Mayor and City Council would approve this additional funding.

It was the general consensus to approve this additional program in the grant award.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – Restaurant Ready Grant Recommendations

Chris Siemerling, Economic Development Specialist, was present to review the applications the ARPA Review Committee recommends for approval for the ARPA Restaurant Ready Grant program.

As a reminder, the ARPA Restaurant Ready Grant program guidelines and application forms were approved by the Mayor and City Council during the December 20, 2022 Regular Session. The program was created in order to respond to the negative economic impact small businesses faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to lower the barriers associated with opening a restaurant within the City of Hagerstown's corporate boundaries.

Staff were provided with a total not to exceed \$ 250,000 for the Restaurant Ready Program, with a maximum award amount of \$ 50,000 per applicant. Based on the applications received, a total of five applicants are recommended by the ARPA Review Committee for a total utilization of \$ 234,572.61 in grant funding.

The following awards are recommended:

1. 339 Antietam LLC – 28 E. Baltimore Street, \$ 50,000
2. MarketPlace, LLC – 25 W. Church Street, \$ 50,000
3. My Last LLC – 139 Jonathn Street, \$ 50,000

4. HD Telecommunications, LLC – 10-12 E. Washington Street, \$ 34,572.61
5. Baile Cask & Kettle – 53 W. Washington Street, \$ 50,000

It was the general consensus to include approval of a resolution for subrecipient grant agreements with the recommended recipients on the December 19, 2023 Regular Session agenda.

ENVY ARPA Discussion

Chief Paul “Joey” Kifer reported the Ending Needless Violence With Our Youth (ENVY) initiative has created a basketball league involving five schools. Teams will travel to different schools for the games. Many people in the community are stepping up to help with this initiative.

Initially, the group had requested \$ 25,000 toward the ENVY initiative in general. Several events, including the basketball league, have been created to provide things for at-risk kids to participate in. The adults participating in the events are really connecting with the kids.

Chief Kifer stated the request for the ARPA funding is specifically to provide transportation for the kids to get to the events. They are also seeking other grant opportunities. One organization has pledged an annual \$ 5,000 donation to ENVY. He believes they will be successful with securing other corporate sponsors.

Mayor Martinez asked if ENVY representatives have connected with the Youth Council. Councilmember McIntire stated they soon will be.

Chief Kifer noted they are looking for referees. Danielle Staley, MCIN Coordinator, has been working hard to get this program started.

It was the general consensus to designate \$ 25,000 in ARPA funding for transportation for the basketball league.

Fuel Allowance for Sworn Police Officers and Crime Lab Scientists

Chief Paul “Joey” Kifer was present to discuss a fuel allowance for sworn police officers and Crime Lab Scientist.

For some time now, the Hagerstown Police Department has been seeking to provide sworn police officers and Crime Lab Forensic Scientists with a vehicle for Home to Work (HTW) usage. While they are currently able to provide sworn personnel assigned to certain assignments (i.e. Supervisors, Detectives, SRT members, School Resource Officers and Canine Officers) a vehicle, the ability to expand this benefit to all sworn personnel and crime lab personnel is not possible at this time.

HPD is authorized 91 sworn position and 3 crime lab scientists. Of those 94 positions, 53 are currently assigned an HTW vehicle. This leaves the department with 41 current positions without this benefit.

As a recruiting tool, the benefit of a HTW police vehicle is highly regarded by applicants, and studies have shown that nearly 90 % of current police agencies provide this benefit. This includes the closest competitor when it comes to attracting talent.

While securing the needed vehicles through CIP funding is Chief Kifer's goal, he recognizes the financial challenges associated with such a significant increase to the vehicle fleet. Beyond the financial hurdles, the ability to find police vehicles is difficult at this time.

Therefore, he is seeking approval to provide sworn personnel and lab scientists who are not provided a HTW vehicle, a fuel allowance beginning January 8, 2024, until a HTW vehicle can be acquired for them. His recommendation is for \$ 50 per week, and this allowance would not begin until personnel have successfully completed field training and are off probation.

Based on current staffing, the fiscal year 2025 cost estimate is \$ 28,600. Funding for this expenditure can be absorbed within the department's FY24 budget through salary savings.

Based on projections, the fiscal year 2024 cost estimate is \$ 74,100. Funding for this expenditure would be included in the department's FY2025 budget submission.

Councilmember Aleshire is ok with the proposal and the stated funding. He wondered if the other union groups will request parity for their members. Chief Kifer stated he does not think it will trigger a request for parity because not every member of the police union will receive the benefit.

It was the general consensus to support this request.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Scott Nicewarner, City Administrator, stated it was a welcome site to see the Field House Groundbreaking earlier today. This project has reached this point because of a lot of hard work by many people and organizations. He thanked the staff of Community Engagement and Parks and Recreation for all they've brought to folks in Hagerstown.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Nikko Martinez Martel thanked the Mayor and City Council for letting him sit in on this meeting. He learned a lot.

Councilmember S. McIntire thanked Nikko for joining them today. The Field House groundbreaking was amazing. It was inspiring and shows a great outlook for the City.

Another person that deserves a lot of credit for the field house is Councilmember Kristin Aleshire Without his persistence and vision it would not have happened.

Councilmember P. E. Perini, Sr., attended many events including the Greater Hagerstown Committee holiday party, the Home Builders Association Land Use Council meeting, the Washington County Drug Court's graduation ceremony, the Christkindl Market in University Plaza, the Central Maryland Labor Council's holiday party, and the wonderful groundbreaking for the Hagerstown Field House.

He offered condolences to the family of Edith Louise Walkley, who passed away last week.

He suggested a more formal policy for the Non-profit grant program.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire stated there were more people at the Field House groundbreaking than he thought there would be. A lot of people said a lot of good things today. He doesn't want the fanfare, but he enjoys working on a project and seeing it completed. In 2012, when it was obvious the Hagerstown Suns owner didn't want to be in Hagerstown, he asked what project could take the place of a new stadium. A multi-sport indoor facility seemed like the best answer. He appreciates the recognition, but the reality is having the idea is different than getting it accomplished. That recognition goes to City staff and others in prior administrations to get the attention in Annapolis and to the private partner who came back twice. Credit should be given to these public and private partners. Seeing the groundbreaking today was representation to Mayor Martinez's statements that Hagerstown is good ground.

Councilmember M. J. Schindler thanked Ms. Hepburn and the finance staff for bringing other applications for the ARPA nonprofit grant program to the Mayor and City Council's attention. It takes integrity of staff to say they missed the applications and go back to score them anyway. He watched meetings long before he was appointed, and he recalls Councilmember Aleshire talking about a field house numerous times. He realizes Councilmember Aleshire is humble and doesn't want to be in the spotlight, but he deserves to be recognized for his vision.

Mayor T. A. Martinez congratulated police officer Christopher Woody who was sworn in earlier today. Nikko lives close to her and is involved in the Hagerstown Youth Council. She thanked all volunteers and staff who work with the students.

The Hagerstown Field House groundbreaking was amazing. There is so much happening in Hagerstown right now. She can't imagine how staff keeps up with all that is happening. She thanked everyone for their patience and persistence.

ENVY needs referees and she hopes some can be recruited.

She thanked Councilmember Aleshire for his vision, his leadership behind the scenes and his commitment to Hagerstown's citizens.

She thanked Mayor Weare for visiting today and discussing ideas for youth. She has seen programs that help kids. You never know what different paths will bring people together.

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 6:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: January 30, 2024