

MINUTES
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
January 10, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Streett, Vice Chair
Bill Kelly
Todd Boyle
Bill Seccurro
Jay Ellenby
Tucker McNulty

IN ATTENDANCE: Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development
Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator
L. Jesse Bane, Town Administrator
Christine McPherson, Bel Air Downtown Alliance
Robert Andrews, Harford County OED
Catherine Butrim, Recording Secretary

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. in the conference room at Town Hall, 39 N. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Approval of Minutes – November 8, 2018

Mr. Kelly moved and Mr. Boyle seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the November 8, 2018 meeting.

The motion carried.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Mr. Seccurro moved and Mr. McNulty seconded the motion to re-elect Paul Thompson as Chair and Mr. Streett as Vice-Chair of ECDC for 2019.

The motion carried.

TOWN BUSINESS UPDATE:

Town Administrator 2019 Update

Mr. Bane extended his gratitude to the ECDC members for volunteering their services to the Town.

Mr. Bane advised that the Town staff offered a presentation to the Town Commissioners on Tuesday evening regarding the new police building. He stated that the Commissioners needed to arrive at a decision regarding three (3) options for the new police building, which range in price from \$8.5 million-\$12 million. Mr. Bane advised that construction of the new police

building will likely require a tax increase in the Town and that this would be the first tax increase in the Town since 2004. Mr. Bane noted that the Town Commissioners have arrived at a decision regarding which of the three (3) options is best, but they are concerned about informing the citizens of Bel Air about the possible tax increase.

Mr. Boyle inquired about the proposed cost when the Town last investigated a new police building. Mr. Bane stated that studies were completed in 2006 and 2009. The cost in 2006 was approximately \$4.5 million, and the cost in 2009 was approximately \$6.5 million. He advised that the cost will increase if the Town continues to delay this project.

Mr. Bane advised that the only other option the Town has is to find a vacant 20,000 sq. ft. building in the town that could be refurbished. He advised that there was discussion about the cost of remodeling the Harford County Sheriff's Office, but that building is an administrative office and is not built for law enforcement operations.

Mr. McNulty inquired if the Town has any other means other than raising taxes to pay for the new building. Mr. Bane advised that the Town has investigated options other than raising taxes, but even if the Town sold all the property it owns, it would not come close to covering the cost of this project.

Mr. Seccurro advised that there has been a demonstrated need for a police building for a long time, and he believes the Town Commissioners should choose the option that will address the needs the Town has long into the future.

Mr. Bane advised that the Commissioners are very interested in citizen input and invited the ECDC members to offer their input to the Commissioners.

Mr. Bane stated that if the Town raised property taxes in the next fiscal year by \$0.05, there would be an average annual increase in the residential tax bills of approximately \$78.00.

Mr. Kelly stated that the Town should get these numbers out to the citizens of Bel Air and pitch the need for this project to the citizens.

Mr. Boyle advised that the major selling point is that in the last 10 years the estimated cost of the new police building has doubled, and the safety issue of separating the law enforcement offices from the administrative offices is another major issue.

Ms. McPherson stated that the Bel Air community is very appreciative and aware of the sacrifices made by law enforcement professionals, and the project should be well-received because it is for something so valuable.

Mr. Bane advised that a work group meeting will be held next week to discuss the marketing of this project, and this will be followed up with a Town Hall meeting for the citizens.

Mr. Boyle inquired if any police officers could be the face of the marketing campaign. Mr. Bane advised that the Town is discussing sending a letter to each homeowner and business indicating that there will be new construction that may necessitate a tax increase, and the letter will refer them to detailed information on the Town's website.

Mr. Securro advised that the citizens should be informed that a facility that is technologically up-to-date is needed and suggested that no mention should be made about the condition of the current police building. Mr. Securro recommended that ECDC draft a letter supporting the Town Commissioners as they choose the most cost-effective option for this project.

Mr. Streett moved and Mr. Kelly seconded the motion that ECDC draft a letter of support to the Town Commissioners endorsing a new police building.

The motion carried.

Mr. Bane advised that Mr. Kelly is representing ECDC on the Traffic Safety Task Force. He stated the first meetings will be educational and cover what the Town has accomplished thus far regarding traffic, pedestrian and bicycle safety in the downtown area. Mr. Bane stated that the Traffic Safety Task Force will entail a series of meetings to come up with recommendations for the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles in the Town.

Mr. Bane advised that the Town wants people to know that it wants its businesses to succeed and that the Town is considering making a monetary distribution to the mural at Black Eyed Suzie's. Ms. McPherson advised that any monetary distribution to the mural will factor into the amount of funding the Alliance can provide for façade improvement. Mr. Bane advised that Mr. Acquavella's submission of an application for façade improvement is key to the Town's decision on a final monetary distribution to the mural.

Mr. Bane stated that the Town is seeking to transfer the cost of operating the Armory to an entity that will oversee its management. The Town will maintain ownership of the Armory but would like to create a foundation or nonprofit or a partnership. Mr. Bane advised that the Town is talking to the Downtown Alliance and other parties who are interested, but the Town will not put any money up front. He stated that he has heard from citizens in the Town who do not want the Armory to be sold, and the Town will maintain ownership of the Armory regardless of any

partnership or agreement that is made. Mr. Bane advised that he expects this matter to be resolved by the end of 2019. He advised that some of the Commissioners are of the opinion that the Armory is a community center, and it should remain that way. Mr. Bane advised that the Town has had discussions with two (2) event planning entities, but those entities did inform the Town that managing the Armory would not be profitable for them.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that she and Mr. Bane will be meeting with the management of the Armory in West Chester, Pennsylvania on February 8.

Mr. Bane advised that anyone who oversees the Armory also will need to work with the Maryland Historical Trust.

Mr. Bane stated that he will have information about community events and commercial events that have been scheduled at the Armory for next month's meeting.

Mr. Seccurro advised that community events and activities are rolled up in the tax rate, and the Commissioners should accept a certain amount of loss for community events and activities taking place at the Armory.

Mr. Bane advised that the Town is awaiting news about the increase in water rates for citizens and businesses. He advised that almost one of every three Town residents is a senior citizen, so there is concern about any tremendous increase in the water rate. Mr. Bane advised that the Town is assembling information and will likely be presenting seminars or courses about installing devices to conserve water and lower water bills. He stated that the Town has been in contact with Maryland American Water because there is a fund available for those who cannot pay their water bill.

General Business Update and ED Dept. Update

Ms. Heidenreich stated that Chick-fil-A anticipates opening in late February or early March.

Ms. Heidenreich stated that Popeyes has been approved with permitting to move forward with their building.

Ms. Heidenreich stated that Barrett's on the Pike is under construction at the former Stone's Cove Kitbar location.

Ms. Heidenreich stated that there is leasing activity at Tollgate Plaza in the former hhgregg and Toys 'R' Us locations.

Ms. Heidenreich stated that Susan Burdette visited Harford Mall and spoke to some of the employees at Sears who expressed concerns for their jobs.

Ms. McPherson stated that the plans for the townhouses at Gordon Street were approved by the Planning Commission.

T3 Update

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the T3 group has met and will meet again in February. She stated that they are working on a Strategic Plan, which incorporates activities of ECDC and activities of the Downtown Alliance. Ms. Heidenreich advised that she has a draft of the plan but is awaiting a draft of the Town's Strategic Plan from Kevin Small. She stated that there should be a draft of the T3 Strategic Plan available by the end of February.

Ms. Heidenreich stated that she and Ms. McPherson have been working on initiatives to promote free parking in the downtown garage and ParkMobile. She advised that staff have reported that there has been a fair amount of activity with ParkMobile.

OLD BUSINESS:

Outdoor Dining/Modular Concepts

Ms. Robertson offered a PowerPoint presentation of her research regarding outdoor dining in other cities. She reported that the most robust program she found was the Street Seats program in Portland, Oregon, which they utilize for public parks and street dining at restaurants. She advised that this program ensures that the dining spaces are flush with the sidewalk. The photos show examples with planters at the ends and wooden plank flooring.

Ms. Robertson stated that there are 8' x 20' parklets in Clayton, Missouri.

Ms. Robertson displayed a photo of a dining space in New York that encompasses at least five (5) parking spaces.

Ms. Robertson stated that there is an online document of guidelines from the National Association of City Transportation Officials.

Ms. Robertson stated that many of the examples she found are on the west coast, and most of the examples she found are seasonal.

Ms. Robertson stated that most of the dining spaces encompass two (2) parking spaces, and it is recommended that they be placed at least one (1) parking space from a corner for safety. She stated that there were requirements for maintaining the 5' sidewalk width for accessibility.

Ms. McPherson inquired if many of the examples had umbrellas. Ms. Robertson stated that about 50 percent of the examples had umbrellas.

Ms. Robertson advised that the Town will need to determine how many outdoor dining spaces it will allow in Town and how many will be allowed per block. She stated that the Town will need to establish a time frame when outdoor dining will be allowed each year. Ms. Robertson advised that some cities require letters of support from neighboring businesses and business associations.

Mr. Ellenby inquired if any of the outdoor spaces were used for retail purposes. Ms. Robertson stated that she did not see any examples in her research used for retail.

Ms. McPherson suggested that two businesses, such as 111 Main and Sunny Day Café, could share one outdoor dining space, each with use during designated times of day.

Mr. Andrews inquired if liquor licenses covered the extension of the properties. Ms. Robertson stated that she did not find any information regarding liquor licenses in these examples.

Mr. Heidenreich stated that the Town would like to create guidelines that will allow the Town to take action regarding outdoor dining. She stated that the ECDC members should send their input to Ms. Robertson on the structural materials and other design guidelines that should be used to create consistency and the criteria for an application to install outdoor dining. Ms. Heidenreich advised that ECDC could be the oversight committee when applications are submitted. She advised that ECDC can schedule a special meeting to keep up the momentum on outdoor dining.

Ms. Robertson stated that some of the recommendations include a wheel stop buffer at a minimum of 6' wide and a vertical element no lower than 36" for visibility to traffic. Other requirements include a drainage solution, handicapped accessibility, requiring businesses to renew annually and liability insurance requirements. She advised that fees could include street fees, application fees, fees for lost parking revenue and /or a monthly fee.

Mr. Securro stated that he is in favor of charging fees for allowing outdoor dining and that this should be put out to businesses up front. He also advised that any outdoor dining spaces should be upscale in design.

Ms. Robertson stated that she will include examples of parklets that are not associated with a restaurant in the information she sends to the ECDC members. Mr. Ellenby requested information about outdoor retail kiosks.

Street Areas for “Pedestrian Commons”

Ms. McPherson stated that the Downtown Alliance will be pursuing an application to SHA for closure of a section of Main Street for Fourth Fridays in 2020. She asked for a letter of support from ECDC to include with this application.

Mr. Street moved and Mr. Ellenby seconded the motion to draft a letter of support for the closure of Main Street for additional events.

The motion carried.

OTHER:

Downtown Alliance Update

Ms. McPherson shared the brochures for the 20th anniversary of Main Street Maryland. The brochure has Independent Brewing Company on the front. She advised that the brochure is inside a publication called *Sip and Savor*, which are at I-95 rest stops, welcome centers and the visitors’ center at the Inner Harbor.

Ms. McPherson stated that the Alliance held its annual meeting in December.

Ms. McPherson stated that First Fridays has been moved to Fourth Fridays. She advised Fourth Fridays will be held April-September.

Ms. McPherson stated that Girls Night Out has been rebranded as Sip and Shop to include men and families as well as women. She advised that someone has reached out to the Alliance about bringing a men’s boutique to downtown.

Ms. McPherson stated that Jennifer Anglada has been hired as the Project Coordinator for the Alliance. She stated that Jenny Falcone is now the Director of Development.

Ms. McPherson stated that Petty Coat Junction, a Tom Petty tribute band, will perform at the Armory on February 8 as part of the House Party Series. Tickets are \$15.00/person, and there will be a food truck and a beer and wine cash bar. The House Party series will continue on October 4 with a performance by Crack the Sky.

County Update

Mr. Andrews stated that the State of the County Address, hosted by the Harford County Chamber of Commerce, will take place on January 17 at Water’s Edge Event Center. Mr.

Andrews stated that some videos to help further the development and advertising of Harford County will be rolled out at the State of the County Address.

Mr. Andrews stated that Maines Paper and Food Service in the Perryman peninsula has announced that it is downsizing its operations from 200 people to about 20 people. He advised that many of these workers are being hired by other local distribution companies.

Mr. Andrews stated that Saks Fifth Avenue has announced that it is moving due to corporate concerns about brick and mortar.

Mr. Andrews stated that Harford Night in Annapolis will take place on January 17. NCMS, which is moving into the H.E.A.T. Center will give the keynote address, and an augmented reality marketing piece about what will be at the H.E.A.T. Center will be rolled out next week.

Mr. Andrews stated that Harford Homeless Connect will be held at APGFCU Arena on January 24.

Mr. Andrews stated that an agri-business seminar will be held at the Harford County Economic Development Office next week.

Mr. Andrews stated that the Harford Transit Link is rolling out a new schedule starting on Monday, and a new app to purchase tickets via cell phone has been rolled out.

Mr. Andrews stated that Upper Chesapeake Health has received its approvals from Aberdeen.

Other

Mr. Seccurro stated that Bel Air lost a great businessman and wonderful man when James Hamilton passed away in December.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.