

**MINUTES**  
**BEL AIR BOARD OF TOWN COMMISSIONERS**  
**RETREAT – WORK SESSION MEETING**  
**February 4, 2023**

The Retreat - Work Session Meeting of the Board of Town Commissioners was called to order on Saturday, February 4, 2023, at 8:00 a.m. at Harford Mutual Insurance Group, 200 N. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kevin M. Bianca, Chair  
Mary F. Chance  
Paula S. Etting  
Erin S. Hughes  
Donna L. Kahoe

**STAFF PRESENT:** Edward Hopkins, Town Administrator  
Trish Heidenreich, Director of Economic Development  
Kevin Small, Director of Planning  
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works  
Michael Krantz, Director of Administration  
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance  
Charles Moore, Chief of Police  
Pamela Wockenfuss, Deputy Director of Finance  
Charlie Dawson, Deputy Director of Public Works  
Angela Robertson, Economic Development Coordinator  
Josh Forth, Technology Manager  
Catherine Butrim, Recording Secretary

**REVIEW AGENDA:**

Mr. Hopkins welcomed everyone to today's Retreat – Work Session Meeting. Mr. Hopkins expressed gratitude on behalf of the Town of Bel Air (TOBA) to Frank Kellner, Vice President of Administrative Operations at Harford Mutual Insurance Group, and to Steven Linkous, President, and CEO of Harford Mutual Insurance Group, for graciously providing space in their building to hold today's meeting.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the agenda for today's meeting includes a presentation during the first hour by Frank Krick of Harford County Department of Emergency Preparedness (DES) regarding how a mass shooter incident would affect the Town of Bel Air, including a scenario and questions for the Town staff.

Mr. Hopkins advised that Harford County Sheriff's Office will give a public relations/social media presentation.

Mr. Hopkins advised that, in the last 90 minutes of today's meeting, Mr. Small will speak about the budget review and County properties on the tax rolls, potential future development and potential annexations that the Town staff would like the Town Commissioners to consider.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Commissioner Kahoe moved and Commissioner Etting seconded the motion to approve the agenda for the Retreat – Work Session Meeting dated February 4, 2023.

Ayes: Commissioners Chance, Etting, Hughes, Kahoe, and Chair Bianca

Nays: none

The motion carried.

**ACTIVE SHOOTER TABLETOP (TTX) SCENARIO**

Frank Krick, Planner at the Harford County DES, informed that there have been 54 active shooters in areas throughout the U.S. since the beginning of January 2023, so there have been more active shooters than there have been days thus far in 2023.

Mr. Krick informed that it is important that TOBA take a proactive approach to this issue because Bel Air is the County Seat and at higher risk than other municipalities due to the presence of local, County, State and Federal buildings in the Town.

Mr. Krick advised that today's presentation will discuss what would happen if an active shooter were to occur in Bel Air, and he presented a specific scenario.

Mr. Hopkins advised the Town staff present that they should all have received their copies of the Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan.

Mr. Hopkins, the Town Commissioners and Town staff discussed how the Commissioners and Staff would be notified of an active shooter and what the roles and responsibilities of the Town Commissioners and department heads would be in this situation.

Mr. Hopkins, the Town Commissioners and Town Staff discussed where the staging area should be in the event of an active shooter in the TOBA.

The Town Commissioners discussed what notifications Chair Bianca and the Town Commissioners should make in the event of active shooter or emergency in the TOBA.

Mr. Hopkins and the Town Commissioners reviewed the Town line of succession and the line of succession for the Town Commissioners.

Mr. Kline discussed his roles and responsibilities as the Director of Public Works during an active shooter incident.

Chief Moore discussed who the incident commander at the scene of an active shooter would be, the location of an incident commander and his roles and responsibilities during this scenario.

Mr. Hopkins discussed the role Harford County DES would play in the event of an active shooter in the TOBA. Mr. Krick advised that the person who comes to DES should be a decision maker, and DES would have or would find all the resources needed by the TOBA. Mr. Hopkins advised that the decision maker who goes to DES would not likely be an elected official but a member of the Police Department, a member of the Public Works Department staff, member of Planning Department staff or himself or Mr. Krantz.

Chief Moore advised that during an active shooter situation, the TOBA will still need to provide continuity of operations, including police services to the TOBA, while still stabilizing the Town.

Mr. Hopkins, the Town Commissioners and Town staff discussed how government would continue to function during an active shooter incident.

Mr. Hopkins advised that he will be working on developing some language in the Town Code for an Emergency Action Plan.

Mr. Hopkins, the Town Commissioners and Town staff discussed how to handle messaging to TOBA employees and to the public regarding an active shooter incident. Mr. Hopkins advised that the messaging is critical, and it should be honest and should come from the Town Commissioners.

Mr. Small inquired about how officers who self-deploy would be handled. Chief Moore advised that this is part of the incident command structure. He advised that self-responders know that they need to be identified before they get anywhere near the scene. They would be told where to go and people would be collecting their information, categorizing them, and feeding that information to the command post. Mr. Hopkins advised one of things that will affect the issue of those who self-deploy is the Radio Interoperable System (RIS) in the County.

Mr. Hopkins and the Town Commissioners discussed the appropriate time for the Commissioners to visit the scene.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the Town department heads, and the Town Commissioners should begin thinking about what their role will be in the event of active shooter in the TOBA.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the TOBA could declare a local declaration of emergency, and he will be working on the creation of a plan for such circumstances.

Mr. Hopkins advised that it is a question if the TOBA has the authority to close businesses in the event of an active shooter incident. He advised that the TOBA does not have the authority to force people to evacuate their homes.

Mr. Hopkins advised that recovery begins the day of the event and discussed what is involved in the long-term recovery process. Mr. Hopkins advised that the COOP Plan outlines the next

steps after the incident and that mental health is extremely important following this type of incident.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the Town Commissioners and Town staff need to understand what their roles and responsibilities are and how they may become interchangeable in the event of an active shooter or other emergency. He encouraged everyone to read the literature provided and contact him with any questions.

Mr. Hopkins thanked Mr. Krick for his presentation and inquired if he has any further guidance. Mr. Krick advised that DES and the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) will help and guide the TOBA through any emergency.

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS/SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENTATION**

Subject matter experts from Harford County Sheriff's Office gave a presentation on how public sector agencies and employees should respond if confronted by a First Amendment Auditor.

Note: First Amendment audits are a largely American social movement that usually involves photographing or filming from a public space. It is often categorized by its practitioners, known as auditors, as activism and citizen journalism that tests constitutional rights,[1] in particular the right to photograph and video record in a public space.[2][3] Auditors believe that the movement promotes transparency and open government.[4] However, critics argue that audits are often confrontational in nature, as auditors often refuse to self-identify or explain their activities.[5][6] Some auditors have also been known to enter public buildings asserting that they have a legal right to openly carry firearms, leading to accusations that auditors are engaged in intimidation, terrorism, and the sovereign citizen movement.[7][8][9] - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Amendment\\_audits](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Amendment_audits).

The following topics were discussed:

- Managing social media messaging.
- Conducting regular training on messaging.
- Maintaining a high level of transparency, sharing both good and bad news, is important to building trust internally and externally.
- Maintaining positive relations with representatives of the local media (television, newspaper, allied governmental agencies, etc.).
  - Not waiting to be asked by the media, a proactive approach in the dissemination of information is key.
- Keep internal public relations personnel informed so they can respond quickly.
- Employees should conduct themselves as if they are always being recorded on video.
- Responding to all negative or positive online messages and/or videos is important because social media does not disappear with time, in fact, old videos often reappear, even years later.
- Keeping the public informed, as each stage of an investigation unfolds is important.

- A video of the body camera footage of a Harford County Sheriff's Office Deputy was shown to illustrate how a routine traffic stop can become complex when a first amendment auditor arrives on the scene.
- Messaging across all platforms and switchboards should be consistent.
- Investing in technology to ensure body camera video, which can protect a civil servant from false accusations, is important.
- Reviewing and maintaining current policies on video and social media is important.
- Conducting post incident reviews to improve and share best practices can be helpful.
- Communicating internally to educate and support all employees can result in better outcomes.

### **COUNTY PROPERTIES ON TAX ROLLS, ANNEXATIONS AND BUDGET OUTLOOK:**

Ms. Moody reported that, regarding the budget, she and Mr. Hopkins have had preliminary meetings with every department head with Economic Development scheduled for the coming week. She advised that she expects to have real estate tax assessments, the largest piece of the Town's revenue, by February 14. Ms. Moody reported that the budget should be balanced by the end of March.

Mr. Hopkins advised that he reviewed the minutes from the Budget Listening Sessions and inquired if the Commissioners had anything they would like to discuss regarding the budget. Chair Bianca advised that everyone seemed to be very appreciative of the sessions and that everyone seemed to enjoy having constructive conversations. Commissioner Kahoe advised that she felt the sessions were a great idea and were very helpful.

Commissioner Etting advised that the TOBA should hold off on hiring a Public Relations Specialist as it looks as if the budget will be very tight this year with the numbers from the reassessment not being good. She advised that it looks as if the State is looking at its budget and may cut aid to municipalities. Commissioner Etting suggested not hiring for any positions until there is a better handle on what the budget will be. She advised that she could not find a PIO listed in the staff for Aberdeen and Havre de Grace. Chair Bianca advised that he understands Commissioner Etting's concerns, but the presentation today showed the importance of public relations, and there is a large portion of the population asking for more information. He advised that the TOBA should move forward with hiring a PIO since the position is in the budget. Commissioner Hughes advised that she agrees with Chair Bianca, and the recent announcement about Bel Air Athletic Club demonstrated the need to have a PIO as everyone at Town Hall had to drop everything to address the closing of the club. Commissioner Chance advised that she also agrees with Chair Bianca and cannot see how the TOBA cannot have a PIO as so much of what people believe is what is posted on social media. Mr. Hopkins advised that the TOBA halted the process of hiring a PIO at the Commissioners' request, but candidate interviews have been completed.

Mr. Small advised that he has distributed a list of properties that are either on the public rolls or private properties that are either undeveloped or underdeveloped. He advised that he also created a map of properties in the Town that cannot be taxed.

Mr. Small advised that every time a parcel is lost, it is a concern because that parcel is no longer paying for the sustainability of the Town, especially in services. Mr. Small advised that there is a map in the Economic Development section of the Comprehensive Plan with all the properties that are undeveloped or underdeveloped, and that is further summarized in Appendix E with their acreage, zoning and what may be expected as a yield.

Mr. Small presented the following sites for potential development:

**Old Tire Lot**

121 S. Main Street

Owner: Harford County

Ex Use: Parking for employees; storage within structure

Prop Use: Mixed Use & Parking

Potential Yield: 73,000sf/level x 4 levels = 292,400sf

Potential Parking: 480 spaces (2 levels of structured)

Commissioner Chance inquired if the County is using the old High's building. Mr. Hopkins advised that the building is empty and scheduled for demolition.

Ms. Heidenreich inquired if the Town would be open to subdividing the Old Tire Lot. Mr. Small advised that the Town would be open to subdividing as the zoning would allow a developer to build to the property.

Chair Bianca inquired if the Town has discussed repurposing the lot with the County. Mr. Small advised that the County initiated an RFI and received two (2) responses; however, the County wanted to retain the parking they were losing, which would have left about 200 spaces for the developer to accommodate.

**Mary Risteau Lot**

6 S. Bond Street

Owner: State of MD & Harford County

Ex Use: District Court; parking for patrons & employees

Prop Use: Mixed Use & Parking

Potential Yield: 55,800sf/level x 2 levels = 72,000sf

Potential Parking: 279 spaces (surface)

Mr. Small advised that this space is very important for the development of Bond Street.

Chair Bianca inquired if the yield would change with the Parking Study. Mr. Small advised that it is likely to go up, but we will likely hear from the Market Study that a lot of these numbers are 10-15 years ahead because demand needs to precede development.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the TOBA has talked to General Services about the building but has not spoken to the County about the parking lot. He advised that no one would commit to what

the State would like to do with the building, but the State knows what the Town would like to do to reenergize Bond Street.

**Hickory Avenue Lot**

17/19 Hickory Avenue  
117 E. Pennsylvania Avenue  
Owner: Town of Bel Air  
Ex Use: Public parking; parking for library  
Prop Use: Residential  
Potential Yield: 24,000sf/level x 3 levels = 72,000sf  
Potential Parking: 47 spaces

Mr. Small advised that the parcel is underutilized as a parking lot.  
Mr. Hopkins pointed out that the building on the back of the lot is not a shed but a cabin from the old Kenmore Inn, which has historical significance.

**Health Department Lot**

101 Hays Street  
143 Thomas Street  
Owner: Harford County  
Ex Use: Parking for employees; construction storage  
Prop Use: Public & employee parking; festival space  
Potential Yield: 34,700sf

Mr. Small advised that this lot is flat and level, which is advantageous for a festival space.

**Burns Alley Lot**

33/37 S. Main Street  
Owner: Town of Bel Air; Harford County  
Ex Use: Parking  
Prop Use: Pop-up commercial; festival space  
Potential Yield: 8,000sf

Mr. Small advised that this space could be an urban park that is flexible enough to accommodate some events. He advised that it could be expanded to include pop-up or permanent shops.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that Bel Air is very linear, but successful towns have the ability to venture onto shops on side streets.

Mr. Small advised that Burns Alley could be a pedestrian space that links everything in the Town. He advised that the Town also wants more people to park in the garage.

**Williams Street Lot**

Williams Street  
Owner: Courthouse Square LLC

Ex Use: Undeveloped  
Prop Use: Residential  
Potential Yield: 117 dwelling units

Mr. Small advised that this lot is zoned B-2A, which offers a lot of flexibility on how it can be developed.

Mr. Hopkins advised that the property actually extends past the tree line.

Mr. Small advised that Thomas Street will be improved from Bond down to Kelly by this time next year. He advised that any possible development could come off of Thomas Street.

**McComas Property**

411 N. Main Street  
Owner: LeeAnn McComas  
Ex Use: Vacant buildings; parking  
Prop Use: Commercial  
Potential Yield: 10,500sf

Mr. Small advised that LeeAnn McComas does not appear to have any intention of selling the property. He advised that the property is encumbered by a parking agreement with Independent Brewing Co. (IBC). Mr. Small advised that the neighboring properties are zoned Industrial and have environmental impacts, so the buildings would not likely be residential. Commissioner Chance inquired if the building would be demolished if IBC uses the property for parking. Mr. Small advised that this decision has not been made. Mr. Small advised that the Town could take action on vacant buildings if there is a safety hazard or structural failure.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the State does have a Smart Growth Demolition Fund available for people who would have no ROI if they demolished their buildings.

Mr. Small advised that the spaces across from IBC are prime.

Mr. Dawson inquired if the Fire Department could do a controlled burn in the buildings.

**Former Peoples Bank**

124/126 N. Main Street  
123/125 N. Bond Street  
Owner: 124 N. Main Street LLC  
Ex Use: Vacant building; parking  
Prop Use: Commercial  
Potential Yield: 150 dwelling units

Mr. Small advised that this property is zoned B-2, and no parking has to be provided for parking for any service or retail. He advised that the parking consultant would like for no parking to be required for any use that produces a parking demand of 50 spaces or less in B-2, and the consultant would like to apply that to residential.

**Harford Mall**

600-696 Belair Road



Owner: Harford Mall Business Trust  
Ex Use: Shopping Center  
Prop Use: Mixed Use Center  
Potential Yield: 320,000sf

Mr. Small advised that this site is under active development with the Shops at Harford Mall and a residential development of 250 units is proposed in front of Greene Turtle. Mr. Small advised that there is potential for more development, and the TOBA will be requesting a Master Plan.

**Santiago Property**

204/214 Baltimore Pike  
208 Hays Street  
Owner: 204 Baltimore Pike LLC; 208 Hays Street LLC  
Ex Use: Beauty school; vacant building  
Prop Use: Commercial  
Potential Yield: 15,000sf

Mr. Small advised that the owner of this site own the Aveda Beauty School, and they are going to expand the beauty school into their other buildings for storage and offices, which will bring signage for Aveda onto Baltimore Pike.

**Bailey Lane Lot**

400 S. Main Street  
Owner: 400 South Main LLC  
Ex Use: Undeveloped  
Prop Use: Residential  
Potential Yield: 12 dwelling units

Mr. Small advised that there were plans for about 12 townhouses and a plan submitted for apartments, but neither plan panned out.

**Euler Lot**

121 S. Bond Street  
Owner: 121 South Bond LLC  
Ex Use: Parking  
Prop Use: Mixed Use  
Potential Yield: 5,600sf / 24 dwelling units

Mr. Small advised that this is zoned B-3A, and the entire parcel could be taken advantage of with some setbacks.

Ms. Heidenreich advised that the issue has always been parking, and the solution is to go up to enable more space for parking. Mr. Small advised that he tries to avoid extending building heights without creating an incentive package. He advised that a change to the Development Regulations will propose extending building heights from 10% to 20% for someone who

provides structured parking. He advised that another option is that the Parking Study will find that the Town is demanding too much.

Chair Bianca inquired if the property owners would be notified about the changes to the Development Regulations. Mr. Small advised that he would notify them.

Mr. Small reported the following potential annexations:

Trails at Gleneagles – 101 lots

Harford Woods (Broadway) – Commissioner Etting advised that Oak Ridge runs from Broadway to Moores Mill.

Harford Woods (Jackson Boulevard) – combined 219 lots

Williams Subdivision – Mrs. Blum has made the request. She owns 3 of the 4 lots.

Tollgate Parcel – now cycling through the TOBA and will be introduced to the Town Board on 2/21/23.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

**APPROVED:** February 21, 2023

Signature on file  
Kevin M. Bianca, Chair  
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file  
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk