



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES SPECIAL MEETING

October 29, 2024

Present – Vice President Pete Leshner, Keasha N. Haythe, Lynn L. Mielke, Dave Stepp, County Manager Clay Stamp, and County Attorney, Patrick Thomas. President Chuck Callahan was absent.

- I. Agenda – Mr. Leshner requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Agenda of Tuesday, October 29, 2024.
- II. Disbursements – Mr. Leshner requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, October 29, 2024.
- III. Request from County Manager - Mr. Stamp requested Council’s consideration for a motion to allow for an absentee vote to be cast by Mr. Callahan on the Change Order for Phase 1-B of Bid No. 23-11, as he is unable to be in attendance. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approve accepting the absentee ballot by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Leshner – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- IV. County Manager’s Report:

Request from the Department of Public Works to Award Change Order for Phase 1-B of Bid No. 23-11, EXTENSION OF SEWER FROM THE REGION II (ST. MICHAELS) WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT, TO THE MOUNT PLEASANT AREA, UNDER BROAD CREEK, AND TO THE VILLAGES OF BOZMAN AND NEAVITT, AS OUTLINED IN RESOLUTION NO. 250 – Ray Clarke, County Engineer, requested Council consideration to utilize the project’s contingency funds following an unforeseen circumstance with regard to Bid No. 23-11. He stated that while the contractor, Spring & Associates, was conducting directional drilling under Broad Creek as part of the extension of sewer to the villages of Bozman and Neavitt, the drill hit cemented sands and hard clay approximately 50 feet down and approximately 240 feet from the end of the directional drilling on the Scotts Lane side of the creek. Mr. Clarke stated that specialized equipment is required to complete the directional drilling and that the contractor has submitted a secure cost proposal in the sum of \$153,296.17 and the Department of Public Works is requesting to use up to \$170,000 of the available contingency funds for the project. The Council, at its Friday, October 25, 2024, meeting, had requested that Mr. Clarke provide a detailed breakdown of costs related to the request to use project contingency funds. Mr. Clarke stated that the information had been provided to Council for consideration and that representatives from contractor, Spring & Associates, and engineering firm for the project, Century/Kleinfelder Engineering, are in attendance to answer questions. Mr. Clarke noted there is urgency to the request as the contractor is prohibited from working after December 15, 2024, due to an environmental deadline imposed by Maryland Department of the Environment. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Clarke. Mr. Stamp stated that there is \$811,000 in contingency funding currently available for the \$10 million project; costs associated with the project are to be repaid by the users of system. Council discussion again ensued with Mr. Clarke. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the request as presented by voting 5 - 0 to as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye (via absentee ballot)
Mr. Stepp - Aye
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe - Aye

The meeting adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council voted to adjourn and to reconvene at 5:00 p.m. in the Talbot County Free Library Meeting Room for a meeting with the municipalities; and to reconvene on Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room for a work session with Talbot County Finance Director, Martha Sparks, on proposed Reserve Fund policies; and to adjourn into Closed Session followed by the regularly scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m. by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Leshner – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe - Aye

The transcript of the October 29, 2024, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

- V. Meeting with Elected Officials from Easton, Oxford, Queen Anne, St. Michaels and Trappe – The Talbot County Council met with elected officials from the incorporated municipalities of Talbot County on Tuesday, October 29, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Easton Branch of the Talbot County Free Library. The following were in attendance: Megan Cook, Mayor, Town of Easton, Frank Gunsallus, President, Easton Town Council; Don Abbatiello and David Montgomery Members, Easton Town Council; Alan Lowrey, Interim Easton Town Manager; Miguel Salinas, Director of Planning and Zoning, Town of Easton; Tom Costigan, Commissioner, Town of Oxford; Norm Bell, President, Commissioners, Town of Oxford; Phil Starkey, Mayor, Town of Queen Anne; Dawn Starkey, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Queen Anne; Al Mercier, President, Commissioners of St. Michaels; Brian Schmidt, President, Trappe Town Council; Pete Leshner, Vice-President, Talbot County Council; Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, and Dave Stepp, Members, Talbot County Council; Clay Stamp, County Manager; Jessica Morris, Assistant County Manager; Martha Sparks, Talbot County Finance Director; Sarah Kilmon, Talbot County Communications Manager; and Jay Corvan, Architect, Trappe. The following matters were brought forward: (1) Proposal for Development Design Standards - Mr. Corvan utilized a PowerPoint presentation to provide his perspective on building designs of the historic towns and villages on the Eastern Shore, which, when compared to some of the current development, does not, in his opinion, acknowledge “historic” Talbot County and utilizes, in his opinion, outdated and ineffective zoning resulting in creeping suburbanization. He then briefed the group on “form-based zoning and pattern books” which, in his opinion simplify zoning codes, thereby making communities more connected by integrating building practices, resource management, etc. He recommended that the municipalities in Talbot County review and consider adopting a “regional pattern book” for future development in the county; (2) Tax Differential (Tax Set Offs) - Ms. Sparks briefed the attendees on the property tax differential provided to the municipalities in Talbot County and the formula by which the differentials are calculated, in order to compensate the municipalities for services they provide in lieu of similar County services such as police and fire protection, economic development and tourism, building code enforcement, parks and recreation, etc. in accordance with State law. Ms.

Sparks stated that in FY22, Talbot County provided \$3.7 million in tax differential to residents of the five (5) municipalities. She encouraged interested individuals to reach out to her office for more information; (3) Update on Development Project within the Municipalities - Mr. Salinas provided an update on various development projects within the town of Easton, including a 16-unit apartment building on the southwest side of Aurora St. and North Washington St., “Silo Square”, a 28-unit townhome development at the site of the former Perdue Agribusiness operation in Easton, an apartment complex on Elliott Road (near the intersection of Matthewstown Road) and on Dutchmans Lane adjacent to Easton Club East. Mr. Montgomery stated that the Poplar Hill Farm is no longer being proposed for development; however, the 200 units proposed for Matthewstown Road could come back at some point in the future. Mr. Schmidt stated that the Town of Trappe had issued 120 housing permits; Mr. Bell stated that the town of Oxford did not have any ongoing development; (4) Short-Term Rental Regulations – Mr. Leshar stated that the County has Short-Term Rental (STR) regulations in place and that the Town of St. Michaels had recently updated their STR regulations. Mr. Schmidt stated that the Town of Trappe is in the process of developing its regulations for STRs. Ms. Sparks reminded attendees that if the towns have STRs, they are subject to the Accommodations Tax, 95% of which is returned to the towns, with the remaining 5% retained by the County as an administrative fee for collecting and managing the Accommodations Tax. She stated that the County had recently reviewed Host Compliance software which tracks STRs to ensure that the County is aware of all STRs in the county so the Accommodations Tax can be collected; (5) Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee – Mr. Leshar stated that the County is soliciting volunteers from the municipalities and the general public (copies of the *Administrative Resolution Establishing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee* were made available to attendees); (6) Update from Town of Easton – Mayor Cook stated that the Town is in the process of hiring a Town Manager with finalists anticipated to be selected in late January or early February; the final Easton small area plan from Aurora to Washington St. has been developed; the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) team for the Town of Easton is reviewing accessibility for buildings and parking; water fountains are being placed along the Rails-to-Trails; the Town Visitors Center has been renovated and improvements made to the parking area; and banners recognizing approximately 30 Talbot County employees and county residents who are veterans have been hung throughout Easton. Mr. Gunsallus stated that an “attainable housing” taskforce comprised of residents and developers is in the process of being organized. Mr. Abbatiello noted several proposed recruitment incentives for volunteers of local fire departments including assistance in paying off college loans and being eligible for payments from LOSAP (Length of Service Award Program) upon attaining 25 years of service or 62 years of age. He stated that there are many experienced firefighters who continue to ride after 25 years of service, and he would like to see the experienced firefighters receive a bonus in LOSAP for continuing their service; (7) Update from Town of Oxford – Mr. Costigan stated that he and several individuals from Oxford had traveled to Butler, Tennessee to deliver donated supplies to those affected by the devastation of Hurricane Helene. Mr. Bell stated that the Town’s search for a Town Manager had begun and the Town hopes to have an individual selected by mid-December; (8) Update from Town of Queen Anne – Mayor Starkey stated that Queen Anne will utilize their ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds to build a library; the Town has contracted with Shannahan Artesian Well Co. to provide water in the Town park; and the Town hopes to show movies in the park next year; (9) Update from the Town of St. Michaels – Mr. Mercier stated that the \$1.7 million build-out of the Town’s recently purchased Back Creek Park property had been initiated and the Town offices have moved to the new location. He stated that the Town had been awarded \$1.3 million for extension of the biking and rail trail and several grants have been received or are anticipated to assist with the Town’s resiliency projects. Mr. Mercier stated that the Town will be reinstating its Tourism Board in the near future, advised that the Commissioners voted in favor of a 2% increase in the County’s Accommodations Tax, and stated that Mr. Straebel, the current Town Manager, had tendered his resignation, effective in May 2025. Mr. Schmidt stated that the new Dollar General Fresh Market

on U.S. Rt. 50 is now open, the Trappe Post Office has reopened after having been closed for approximately two years, the Town will be revising its zoning code in the near future, and the Trappe Fire Department is looking to build a new facility at an approximate cost of \$6 million. The meeting adjourned at 6:02 p.m.