

WORK SESSION – December 2, 2008

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II called this Work Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, December 2, 2008, in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Present with the Mayor were Councilmembers M. E. Brubaker, K. S. Cromer, L. C. Metzner, P. M. Nigh and A Parson-McBean; and City Administrator Bruce Zimmerman.

Community Lobbyist

Brien Poffenberger, President of Hagerstown-Washington County Chamber of Commerce, stated the Washington County Community Lobbying Coalition has successfully lobbied for issues important to the City for the last several years. This year, the Coalition added the Convention and Visitor's Bureau, bringing to eight the total number of partners participating. The others are the City of Hagerstown, the County, the Chamber, Greater Hagerstown, CHIEF, the Library and the School System.

The agenda this year includes:

1. Library Expansion – The library expansion is part of a larger trend that has seen public and private investment in the core of downtown Hagerstown. With the City's and the County's commitments in place, the State's share is the missing piece. This year's lobbying effort will work to secure the State's commitment to the library project.
2. Adaptive Reuse – The State could change policy to give incentives for the redevelopment of existing and underused infrastructure. Maryland has programs for historic tax credits and brown field sites; maybe the State could initiate surplus building programs, smart growth initiatives or alternative financing. The lobbying effort will explore these and other opportunities to revitalize existing buildings.
3. Hagerstown-Washington County Life Science Development Initiative – As Washington County positions itself to be the terminus of the I-270 life sciences corridor, the lobbying effort will watch for opportunities that would make the community more attractive to businesses and investors in biotech. Possible examples include infrastructure improvements to the Eastern Boulevard/Robinwood Drive areas of the Urban Growth Area, PK-20 (pre-kindergarten through graduate school) initiatives, and DBED support for life science programs.
4. Watch List – As in the past, the lobbying effort will serve a "canary in the coal mine" function, alerting us to issues that affect our community. Some topics that may arise: USMH funding, gaming revenue, maintaining funding for transportation projects, and shifting funding burdens from State to local governments.

The coalition is asking the Mayor and City Council to support this agenda and the broader work of the Coalition. They are also asking for \$ 5,000 from the City.

Councilmember Brubaker supports the efforts, especially for the library expansion.

Councilmember Metzner suggested that the members of this coalition be listed with the City in connection with The Ferguson Group.

The Washington County Commissioners are being asked to contribute \$ 10,000 again this year. It was the general consensus to add approval of a \$ 5,000 contribution to the coalition on the December 16, 2008 meeting.

Red Light Cameras

Chief Arthur Smith, Hagerstown Police Department, met with representatives of Nestor Traffic Systems, a company which provides red light camera enforcement. They currently provide the system utilized in Frederick, Maryland. The system features collision avoidance technology.

Their system is far more advanced from the one considered in 2001. The Nestor system has the following features:

1. Guaranteed no cost to the City. There is no up-front cost for installation and the enforcement is guaranteed to have no overall cost to the City.
2. Collision avoidance system. One of their no-cost options is a system which, in addition to red light enforcement, delays the changing of the light when it detects a dangerous red light violation, greatly reducing the chances of an accident.
3. Crime camera capability. Also included as an option, is the storage of the images for about 3 days in case of the need to review same as part of an investigation.

While there are some functions which must be performed by HPD, it is not anticipated that an additional position would be necessary. Any personnel costs incurred would be covered by the revenue.

The red light violation would be treated in a manner similar to a parking summons. No points are assessed. The fine would be set by the Mayor and Council and would accrue to the City. Mr. Boyer has advised that a City ordinance would be required.

Councilmember Metzner suggested deferring this discussion until the Board of Traffic and Parking reviews the information.

Councilmember Brubaker is concerned about safety of motorists if this type of system is installed.

Mills Park Hiker/Biker Trail

Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, stated included in the current Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budget that was approved by the Mayor and Council is Project 07-737 the "Mills Park Hiker/Biker Trail." This project includes the construction of a 10 foot wide paved hiking and biking trail from Mills Park to Northern Avenue. The length of this trail is about 1000 linear feet and is shown in the exhibit. The genesis of this project was to provide another use in the much underutilized Mills Park. Staff believes a hiker/biker trail would be utilized by the neighborhood for recreational walking.

Mills Park, located at the end of Bleview Avenue, is very underutilized and contains recently installed small playground equipment plus an existing pavilion. One option to increase public use of the park would be the construction of a hiker/biker trail from the park's parking lot to Northern Avenue. This would be a new park amenity for the local residents to use for exercise and recreational walking.

The trail would extend from the parking lot through Mills Park and then enter the American Legion property at the north end. A unique feature is the trail would include a wetland crossing which could be provided with educational signs to allow users of the trail to learn more about ecological issues. The American Legion leaders would have to provide an easement to the City for the construction of this trail between Mills Park and Northern Avenue.

Trails, such as the Hamilton Run Trail, are very popular and receive heavy use by residents. Staff is always looking for additional opportunities to construct trails and this is likely the best opportunity in the City at this time.

Staff would not recommend using City funds at this time, but rather would seek state or federal funds through the trail programs and other sources. Some of current discussion around additional "economic stimulus packages" suggest that if projects are "ready to go" and are "green", they would receive a higher ranking. If Staff completes the design, permitting to cross the wetlands, and obtain the easement within the next few months, this project would possibly be eligible for federal funding. The estimated cost of the trail is \$ 200,000. Staff would also recommend that ornamental lights be placed along the trail similar to the Hamilton Run Trail.

Councilmember Nigh and Councilmember Brubaker asked that input be provided from citizens in the area. Mr. Rodney will canvas the general area for input and return to a work session for further discussion.

Green Practices for the City of Hagerstown

Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, stated the Green Practices task force has completed more research and study of the ideas endorsed by Council at the July 22, 2008 meeting. Green practices increase the efficiency in which buildings and facilities use energy, water

and material resources. Green practices also reduce the impact on the environment, reduce operating costs, improve public health, and help all to sustain their lifestyle.

Based on the Council's earlier feedback, the task force recommends the following practices by adopted by the City:

1. Require at least the minimum LEED Certification for all new building construction completed by the City. For renovation projects, the City will endeavor to use whatever LEED Green Practices are practical.
2. Provide discounts on all building permit fees for LEED certified buildings as follows: 50% reduction for platinum, 40% for gold, 30% for silver, and 20% for LEED certified buildings.
3. Develop an ordinance to provide a tax credit on commercial projects that are LEED certified. This would be a tax credit applied to the increase in the assessed value of new construction for a period of three (3) years after the construction is complete. The credits would be 30% for silver, 40% for gold, and 50% for platinum certifications. This will temporarily impact the amount of future tax revenue received from new construction that is LEED certified and may impact the City's ability to fund future tax supported expenditures.
4. Council authorizes staff to complete energy audits of all City buildings, provided they are completed by in-house staff as much as practical. The results of this audit will then become future capital improvement projects to reduce energy consumption in City buildings.
5. Provide bike racks at Fairgrounds Park and Municipal Stadium (bike racks are installed and will be maintained at the Potterfield Pool, University Plaza, Public Square, Hagerstown Ice & Sports Complex, and the North Potomac Street Parking Deck).
6. The City will provide recycling containers at all City sponsored events where bottles, cans, or paper waste will be generated.
7. The City will provide recycling containers at major City facilities including: University Plaza, the concession stands at Fairgrounds Park, Potterfield Pool, and Municipal Stadium
8. The City will develop an educational brochure to encourage residents in Hagerstown to be cognizant of their consumption of energy and natural resources by outlining a strategy to help reduce such consumption.
9. Management will endeavor to develop training for staff on energy saving practices.

Councilmember Brubaker expressed concern about the 50% tax credit mentioned in Item 3. He would like to see a fiscal impact statement for a hypothetical building.

Councilmember Metzner would like to discuss a joint effort with the County Commissioners. He would also like to see LEED guidelines be implemented for residential properties.

Councilmember Parson-McBean stated there are federal programs available for assisting communities with implementing green practices.

Mr. Zimmerman indicated Staff would probably be returning to the Mayor and City Council in the very near future to discuss projects that would fit into the economic stimulus package that is anticipated.

Additional information will be provided at a future work session.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Bruce Zimmerman, City Administrator, mentioned that the yard waste program will end for the winter season and will resume in the spring.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember L. C. Metzner commended Staff for the ideas presented during this meeting. He noticed an increase in foreclosure notices in the newspaper.

Councilmember P. M. Nigh asked residents to contact Public Works if leaves are clogging drains.

Councilmember A. Parson-McBean is disappointed someone was beaten up during the annual Turkey Roll at Wheaton Park. The incident made a good event ugly.

Councilmember M. E. Brubaker stated the Planning Commission will be reviewing the testimony presented during the hearings on the Comprehensive Plan to ensure the concerns are being addressed.

Councilmember K. S. Cromer had no additional comments.

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II discussed how to make cities green with elementary school students earlier today. Mayor Bruchey expressed condolences to the family of David Secrist, who was a retired Public Works employee.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna K. Spickler, City Clerk

Approved: January 27, 2009