

EXECUTIVE SESSION AND WORK SESSION – November 10, 2015

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On a motion duly made by Councilmember D. F. Munson and seconded by Councilmember M. E. Brubaker, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to meet in closed session to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto, #3, (Section 10-508(a)), to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, #7 (Section 10-508(a)), and to consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State, #4 (Section 10-508(a)), on Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at 3:01 p.m. in Room 407, 4th floor, City Hall, Hagerstown, Maryland. The following people were in attendance: Mayor D. S. Gysberts, Councilmember K. B. Aleshire, Councilmember M. E. Brubaker, Councilmember L. C. Metzner, Councilmember D. F. Munson, Councilmember P. M. Nigh, City Administrator Valerie Means, City Attorney Mark Boyer, Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, Michael Spiker, Director of Utilities, Kathleen Maher, Director of Planning and Code Administration, and D. K. Spickler, City Clerk. The meeting was held to discuss two potential property acquisitions, the status of the MELP property, and a business proposal. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the Executive Session was adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

WORK SESSION – November 10, 2015

Mayor D. S. Gysberts called this Work Session and Executive Session of the Mayor and Council to order at 4:15 p.m., Tuesday, November 10, 2015, in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Present with the Mayor were Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, M. E. Brubaker, L. C. Metzner, D. F. Munson, and P. M. Nigh; City Administrator Valerie Means, and D. K. Spickler, City Clerk.

Special Recognition – Pam Harris Code Certification

Mayor Gysberts congratulated Pam Harris for being certified as a Master Code Professional. This is the highest level of certification offered by the International Code Council. She is the 11th person in the State of Maryland and the first woman in the State to receive this certification.

Recognition of Hagerstown's Sustainable Maryland Certification

The City of Hagerstown recently received the Sustainable Maryland Certification award. Hagerstown was one of twelve Maryland municipalities honored on October 27, 2015 at the Sustainable Maryland Awards Ceremony at the Maryland Municipal League's annual fall conference in Cambridge, Maryland.

Sustainable Maryland is an initiative of the Environmental Finance Center at the University of Maryland.

Mayor Gysberts, Councilmember Brubaker, Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, and Erin Wolfe, Communications Manager, accepted the award at the fall conference.

New City Website Design and engageHagerstown Update

Scott Nicewarner, Director of Technology and Support Services, Erin Wolfe, Communications Manager, and Sarah Nelson, Planning and Outreach Coordinator, were present to update the Mayor and City Council on the progress of the new city website design and the engageHagerstown website transition to a new platform.

This Mayor and Council have an established priority to enhance access to the City website for users on a mobile platform. Communications staff have been working with the website vendor, CivicPlus, to re-design and refresh the appearance of the site while making it mobile-friendly. In completing this process, staff also noted opportunities where the organization and functionality of the site could be enhanced to increase ease of use and provide more convenient access to City services and information.

The re-design of the site is nearly complete, and staff are beginning to re-organize global navigations and other site functions. Staff will be coordinating with representatives from each department to fine-tune their respective site content and identify more effective ways to present information to users. It is anticipated the new site will be live after the first of the year.

Ms. Wolfe stated the new site will have more graphics than text and improved search capabilities. The site will be more user friendly to visitors who may not understand the process of municipal government. She then showed the group an overview of the new design.

Mr. Nicewarner indicated users will be able to make two or three clicks to get to the information they are looking for.

Over the last year and a half, the City has expanded opportunities for community engagement under the “engageHagerstown” brand. These initiatives are developed in coordination with an online tool, the engageHagerstown website (www.engagehagerstown.mysidewalk.com). Through the site, the City has had over 500 users participating in discussions, and 675 ideas have been submitted. These ideas have been used by staff in planning and community building processes. The following are some of the ideas that have been implemented throughout the last year:

1. Little Free Library
2. Pop-up Shops
3. Public pianos in City Center
4. Outdoor Movies in the park

5. Artist studies
6. "Before I die..." Wall (What are your dreams for downtown? Wall)
7. Hagerstown Bucket List
8. Additional Bike Lanes
9. Planting Trees
10. Yoga/Tai Chi in City Park
11. Community Garden
12. More frequent, multi demographic events
13. Investing in USMH
14. Student Housing

MindMixer, the organization that hosts the site, re-branded itself and at the end of August, the City transitioned to a new platform called MySidewalk. Staff have soft launched the new platform with topics related to community engagement, the search for the new police chief and public art along the A & E Trail. Outreach and engagement efforts related to updates to the Comprehensive Plan are also hosted on the site under the "visionHagersotwn2035" initiative. Staff continue to strategize how to use this new tool to enhance engagement efforts. The new MySidewalk platform does not include some of the features of the previous MindMixer site, but it offers a more user-friendly and streamlined way of interacting in community discussion. This transition in platforms offers an opportunity to more deeply embed engagement in the long-term planning efforts and general community involvement throughout the local government.

2015 COPS Hiring Grant

Acting Police Chief Paul Kifer reported the Hagerstown Police Department recently received a grant from the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). The grant offers assistance for new police positions or programs designed to improve the department's overall goals of Community Policing and Intelligence-Led Policing. John Moulton, Support Services Administrator, was also present.

This grant will fund four police officer positions to staff a Neighborhood Guardianship Program that would create incentives that focus on crime prevention in designated neighborhoods. At least one of the officers will be a post 9/11 veteran. These officers will utilize the Department's Intelligence-Led Policing programs such as Predictive Policing, CompStat and Safe-Streets Initiative to achieve their goal of reducing violent crime and to establish city-wide legitimacy in areas containing disparate amount of crime in low income and diverse communities.

The City's portion of the matching grant is estimated to be \$ 239,461.51, spread over a three year period, along with a one year retention requirement of an estimated \$ 258,536.91 for the fourth year. It is estimated that the four year cost to the city for four officers will be \$ 497,998.42.

The grant allows for the addition of four police officer positions, raising the sworn strength of the police department from 108 to 112.

Acting Chief Kifer stated if the City does not accept the grant, it may be detrimental for future grant awards.

Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, noted that staff is confident funding is available for the FY16 portion of the grant.

Acting Chief Kifer noted there are currently 108 sworn officer positions, with three vacancies. The vacancies would be filled before the new positions would be filled.

Councilmember Munson asked if the four officers would be in different areas around the City. Acting Chief Kifer indicated if there is a significant crime problem in one area, all four officers could be focused there. Acting Chief Kifer stated there are currently five officers attending the police academy.

The grant would begin when the officers started. Other grants awarded to the Hagerstown Police Department have been successful.

Councilmember Brubaker noted the City's portion of the funding for the first three years would be \$ 240,000.00. The amount for the current fiscal year, if officers are hired, would be about \$ 80,000.00.

It was the general consensus to accept the grant for the four additional officers.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Valerie Means, City Administrator reported City offices will be closed on November 11, 2015 for Veteran's Day.

Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, provided an update on the flag at the cell tower in Fairgrounds Park. The flag is large and tangles easily in the cables. Staff will work with the tower owners to correct the problem.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember M. E. Brubaker thanked the City's Code Enforcement Officers for their diligence. Regulations are often criticized, but when a problem is corrected in a neighborhood, people are thankful. He thanked Rodney Tissue and all staff involved in their efforts to make Hagerstown a Sustainable Community.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire attended the recent meeting of the homeless coalition. He is concerned about community accountability for services. Some organizations appear to have no interest in providing sustainability and being good neighbors. He

attended the Home for the Holiday cooking show at the Maryland Theatre. The Washington County School Board recently reported there is a need for diversity training in Washington County. He suggested that Board members receive the training as well, based on recent comments of an individual board member. A recent newspaper article stated a firm was a Hagerstown firm. That entity is not a city owned firm. Another article noted Washington County is a hub for sex trafficking. The reporting expert had no empirical data showing that activity occurs in this area.

Councilmember D. F. Munson pointed out the dilapidated buildings on the Massey site have been demolished. This project is a reminder of what can be accomplished by organizations working together (the Washington County Commissioners and the Mayor and City Council). This could be an example of how the groups could work together to locate an education hub downtown and the expansion of USMH. He thanked Public Works employees for removing a sign on Baltimore Street recently.

Councilmember P. M. Nigh thanked the Washington County Liquor Board for their efforts to address the issues with patrons of the Corner Pub. She attended the All County Honors Concert. She noted it is nice to live in a community that supports the arts. She wondered why large sums of money are spent to construct schools such as Antietam Academy for students who don't want to learn when the money could be used for a project like the education hub for students who do want to learn. She wondered why the number of union arbitration cases has increased. She noted Andrew Sargent, Downtown Manager, has submitted his resignation. She is concerned that a number of employees have recently resigned. She hopes Mr. Sargent's position is filled with someone who is as enthusiastic as he is.

Councilmember L. C. Metzner thanked staff for the explanation of why a flag is not being flown at the tower in Fairgrounds Park. He thinks private funding may become available for improvements at the Massey property.

Mayor D. S. Gysberts stated Veteran's Day events include a wreath laying at the Washington County Court House, laying a wreath at the Veteran's Memorial on Memorial Boulevard, and unveiling of the Blue Star Flag at Rotary Park. He presented the Mayor's Cup to South Hagerstown High School, winner of the Gridiron Class football game on November 6, 2015. He encouraged people to attend the Golden Book exhibit at the Washington County Museum of Fine Arts.

Mayor Gysberts reviewed the comments made recently at a Board of Education meeting. Board Member Karen Harshman stated the City of Hagerstown is not safe and she would not send her children downtown. He noted there are children who live downtown and they feel safe. Comments regarding recent crimes were not accurate. He stated 99% of violent crime is not random. He has invited Ms. Harshman to meet with him and Acting Chief Kifer to discuss crime statistics. She has not accepted the invitation yet. It is discouraging that elected officials make these types of comments. He hopes no one misunderstands his passion for Hagerstown as anger. As more people

move to cities, they have to be educated for city living. He thinks Hagerstown is safer than other cities of similar size. He wants the public to know the invective comments were made on speculation and innuendo.

Councilmember Munson noted the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts is a model for the State of Maryland. Mayor Gysberts stated that is true, for both economic development and educational purposes.

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 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: December 15, 2015