

WORK SESSION AND EXECUTIVE SESSION - March 8, 2016

EXECUTIVE SESSION – March 8, 2016

On a motion duly made by Councilmember D. F. Munson and seconded by Councilmember L. C. Metzner, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to meet in closed session for to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, #7 (Section 3-305(b)) on Tuesday, March 8, 2016 at 3:32 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, Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, Michael Spiker, Director of Utilities, Paul Rose, Miles and Stockbridge, Nathan Fridinger, Electric Operations Manager, and D. K. Spickler, City Clerk.

The meeting was held to discuss the status of the MELP property. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the Executive Session was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

WORK SESSION – March 8, 2016

Mayor D. S. Gysberts called this Work Session and Executive Session of the Mayor and Council to order at 4:15 p.m., Tuesday, March 8, 2016, 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 City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

Proclamation: 311 Day

Mayor Gysberts proclaimed March 11, 2016 as 311 Day in Hagerstown, Maryland. 311 is a universally-recognized number across the nation where people can expect to find government information and make inquiries where non-emergency municipal services may be needed. The City of Hagerstown has established and promotes a Resident x311 program where community members can “call or click” to find information about City services and functions most important to them. Erin Wolfe, Communications Manager, accepted the proclamation.

Fairgrounds Softball Association Items

Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, and Mike Kelbaugh, Hagerstown Fairgrounds Softball Association (HFSA) President, were present to discuss a request from the HFSA. The current User Agreement was established in 2001.

HFSA officials are requesting the following:

1. Consider an amendment to allow baseball to continue to 11:00 p.m. on Friday Nights: Staff supports this request provided that the HFSA officials be responsible for ensuring that everyone is removed from the park and they lock the gates by no later than 11:00 p.m.
2. Renew the User Agreement for an additional period of time. The officials of the HFSA are requesting a new long-term user agreement for the use of the three softball fields at Fairgrounds Park. These agreements provide them exclusive use of the two fields with lights. The third field provides them with “priority: scheduling, but the City may conduct other events on the field with their approval. The User Agreement expires at the end of this season, but staff is suggesting that a new agreement be developed for Mayor and City Council approval.

Councilmember Aleshire is concerned about the exclusive use of the two fields for the HFSA.

It was the general consensus to approve the two requests made. Formal approval will be scheduled for March 22, 2016.

Burhans Boulevard Pedestrian Study

Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, was present to provide information about pedestrian safety at Burhans Boulevard. Late in 2015, the Mayor and City Council requested that Engineering staff review the situation where pedestrians are crossing Burhans Boulevard in the vicinity of George Street (between Franklin Street and Salem Avenue). Council received complaints about pedestrians illegally crossing the street where there is a high volume of vehicular traffic. Due to the nature of the complaint, staff engaged the traffic engineering consultant, Sabra Wang & Associates, to evaluate the subject.

Review of the Sabra Wang study yields the following highlights:

1. 705 pedestrians crossed in this one block section during a 12-hour period in early January of this year.
2. Of these 705, 154 (or 22%) crossed mid-block at George Street; 191 (or 27%) crossed at the actual traffic signal either at Franklin Street or at Salem Avenue; the remaining 51% (or 360) crossed somewhere mid-block but not exactly at George Street.
3. The study does not recommend any type of mid-block pedestrian crossing since the problem is spread out through the entire block, and there is no guarantee that the installation of signalized mid-block crosswalks would resolve the problem.

4. SHA will not make changes at Franklin Street as they do not believe it will help pedestrians at an intersection with few accidents and would increase vehicle delay.
5. Therefore, the short-term recommendations by the consultant and staff, and approved by the City's Board of Traffic & Parking include the following:
 - a. Improve signalized intersection crosswalk timings at Salem Avenue:
 - i. Provide minimum of 15 seconds to cross Burhans
 - ii. Provide leading pedestrian phase at signalized crosswalks. Pedestrians would get a walk light 4-5 seconds before the cars on perpendicular street gets a green light
 - iii. Increase width of crosswalks
 - iv. Install sign "turning vehicles must stop for pedestrians"
 - b. Provide education to pedestrians (similar to the successful program in Ocean City):
 - i. Add "No Pedestrians X-ing" painted on tops of curbs
 - ii. Deliver flyers to businesses and residents
 - iii. Media campaign
 - c. HPD provides educational stops of people jaywalking.

Councilmember Aleshire believes the numbers would be higher at night.

Councilmember Nigh suggested having Auxiliary Police provide the educational stops.

Councilmember Metzner stated it will be difficult to stop all illegal crossing; however the City has to do what it can. The Board of Traffic and Parking has been reviewing the situation there as well.

It was the general consensus of the Mayor and City Council to move forward with implementing these actions.

Mayor Gysberts thanked staff for following up on an issue raised by a citizen during a Mayor and City Council meeting.

Budget/Funding Needs of the Hagerstown Fire Department

Fire Chief Steve Lohr was present to provide an overview of the budget needs of the Hagerstown Fire Department (HFD) in the areas of personnel, apparatus, and equipment.

Members of the HFD visited over 25% of City homes and installed over 600 smoke detectors with 10-year lithium batteries. The average response time is 4.5 minutes. Chief Lohr has implemented more frequent, themed, and transparent training and communications with both labor and volunteers.

The quality of work provided by the Hagerstown Fire Department is exceptional, considering the resources that are available. The budget he is submitting for consideration is reasonable while providing a plan for restoring equipment and apparatus to stated standards.

Fleet maintenance expenses have substantially exceeded budgeted funding for of the previous four years. This trend must be reversed. Vehicle replacements have been deferred beyond a reasonable maintenance of services level. Accelerated replacement of the 2nd aerial ladder truck is urgently needed in FY17 and may afford negotiated economy of scale savings. The previously approved U-3 replacement has been repurposed for a net savings and to compensate for the maintenance efforts in the primary fleet. Two light duty vehicles are redlined for auction. One replacement is on order. A third approved replacement has been deferred for higher priority needs. Two additional light duty replacements are requested for FY17, and one in FY18, using a shared puck-up platform for command and the Fire Marshall. Pumper replacements are requested to begin in FY20.

Funding to begin to address the deferred facilities maintenance needs is essential. Chief Lohr reported conditions at the City owned T-1 facility are unacceptable. The scope and long term benefits of repairs to that facility will need additional dialogue with Pioneer Hook and Ladder Company. Meaningful participation in the Washington County joint Public Safety Training Center is clearly in the City's best interests. For the foreseeable future, the Bowman Avenue training center will need to operate and be maintained. E-3 on Eastern Boulevard is in need of additional roof work. In addition, planning funding to consider future consolidation of public safety assets is being required.

Funding for IT Infrastructure and portable and mobile radios have been absent from pervious budgets. Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), Hydraulic Rescue Tools, Air Bags and ropes are at the ten year end of life duty cycle and further maintenance is impractical. Additionally, the health and welfare of personnel is more important than deferring replacements. Annual replacement funding for hazardous atmosphere meters, Thermal Imaging Cameras (TIC's), Automatic External Defibrillators (AED's), and other portable firefighting and rescue equipment are not at maintenance of service levels. Funding to begin to reverse these needs is requested.

Conversations have to be held about sustainable revenue sources in the City and the County. The current level of service is not maintainable without having a sustainable revenue source. The HFP provides first response EMS assistance to CRS and others who collect EMS transport revenues. The HFD remains uncompensated for these critical, life-saving services. The Washington County Commissioners have requested a joint EMS-Fire plan to help address the volunteer fire company's needs for guaranteed timely responses and minimum staffing. The HFD is now a fully participating partner in all of these dialogues. A review and analysis of the volunteer funding model in the HFD is

required since the City department is currently ineligible for fuel and maintenance reimbursements through the Washington County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association.

Mayor Gysberts stated he and others are willing to have a courageous conversation about sustainability. There is no question the City's professional staff sustain the surrounding areas.

Chief Lohr noted the HFD relies on the services of the volunteers as well.

Mayor Gysberts noted Chief Lohr was hired to be a change agent and it is appropriate that the Mayor and City Council move forward with difficult conversations.

Chief Lohr stated firefighters are working hard. They complete daily training sessions and distribute smoke detectors when they are not on calls. It is difficult to operate safely with 15 personnel on duty at any given time.

Sister City Relationship with Xinjin County, Chengdu, Sichuan, China

Mayor Gysberts stated a Sister City opportunity has been presented to the City of Hagerstown with the people of Xinjin County, Chengdu, Sichuan, China. A Sister City relationship with Xinjin County, Chengdu would provide benefits to Hagerstown and Washington County, as well as to Xinjin County, Chengdu. Collaborations could be established in education, tourism, the health industry, and organic agriculture, among other possibilities. Mayor Gysberts hosted a delegation from Xinjin County, Chengdu in September, 2015 for a day-long tour of Hagerstown.

This opportunity is brought to Hagerstown by the UNESCO Center for Peace. UNESCO encourages international peace and universal respect for human rights by promoting collaboration among nations.

The UNESCO Center for Peace's mission is to promote understanding of UNESCO's mission and ideals and to translate them into programs that will help raise a new generation of peacemakers, placing human dignity at the center of their activities and striving to make the culture of peace a commodity of everyday life through education, science, culture and communication.

Xinjin is located in the western portion of the Sichuan Basin and the southern part of Chengdu. Xinjin got its name in North Zhou Dynasty over 1,450 years ago. Covering an area of 330 square km, this county has a population of 308,800.

Mayor Gysberts informed the group that thanks to Guy Djoken, UNESCO Center for Peace, he will be traveling to China at the end of March. Some people from Kaplan University are also interested in traveling to China. This trip will provide an opportunity to create fellowships with newly rich Chinese folks who are looking at investment opportunities in America. He informed the group he is paying for the trip, not the City.

Councilmember Aleshire does not see the benefit of establishing a Sister City affiliation with the people of China.

Mayor Gysberts stated this designation may create an ongoing relationship.

Councilmember Brubaker supports the designation, even though the climate in China is aggressive. A Sister City relationship was established with Wesel after World War II. Unless the differences are addressed, nothing will change.

Mayor Gysberts stated he hopes to make connections outside the government. The Chengdu region was one of the first allowed to experiment with private capital and entrepreneurship.

Councilmember Munson supports the affiliation also. President Richard Nixon made the biggest impact with interactions with China. When China prospers, the United State prospers.

Mr. Djoken stated he is a proud resident of Hagerstown. He believes that a people to people conversation and relationship will have lasting effects, no matter what is going on with the respective governments.

Councilmember Metzner pointed out that many positive programs and initiatives begin with just one thing. He mentioned the success of the Habitat for Humanity house building program. If the only people we associate with are like us, then nothing changes.

Councilmember Nigh does not support the affiliation. The relationship with Germany makes sense because it is part of Hagerstown's heritage. She supports promoting peace but does not support this designation.

Mr. Djoken stated he is an American and his wife is Chinese. He is insulted by the discussion of Germany ancestry.

Approval of the Sister City affiliation will be included on the March 22, 2106 agenda.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Valerie Means, City Administrator had no additional comments.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember L. C. Metzner had no additional comments.

Councilmember P. M. Nigh had no additional comments.

Councilmember D. F. Munson offered condolences to the family of C. Walt Miller, who passed away recently. Mr. Miller helped a lot of children in this community.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire is concerned that, based on articles published in the Herald Mail, additional duplicate services are going to be offered in Washington County through a day reporting center and expansion of staff at Valor Ministries. He continues to stress the need to hold a conversation with all these groups about the continued growth of subsidized housing and clinics downtown and their negative impact on Hagerstown. He contacted a person who discussed the Farmers Market in the opinion section of the newspaper. He noted that produce and farm products are readily available in this community and that people are visiting consolidated farmer's markets less frequently.

Mayor Gysberts has spoken with someone new to the community about the market as well. He will meet with staff to discuss ideas. He has mentioned a sustainable business model at that location to representatives of USMH and Frostburg State University.

Councilmember Aleshire pointed out ideas for the market were discussed in August, 2015 and a conversation should be held soon regarding a marketable strategy. Critical components of the discussion should be the vision and ideas, not just the location.

Councilmember M. E. Brubaker testified at a Senate hearing last week for the City Revitalization Improvement Zone (CRIZ). Several amendments are being discussed for the bill. The City is working with Senator Serafini and Delegate Wilson on the CRIZ bill. Jill Frick, Director of Community and Economic Development, a representative of Bowman Development, and a representative of High Rock Studios, also testified.

Mayor D. S. Gysberts reported a coalition of stakeholders from the Board of Education, the Washington County Commissioners, The Maryland Theatre, and the City of Hagerstown has met twice to discuss a downtown project. Mayor Gysberts and Valerie Means, City Administrator, have represented the City at the meetings. He hopes the momentum being created continues. He congratulated everyone who helped make the Blues Cabin Fever event a success.

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 5:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: April 19, 2016