

EXECUTIVE SESSION – April 17, 2018

Councilmember E. Keller made a motion to meet in closed session to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotions, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; #1, (Section 3-305(b)), to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice, #7, (Section 3-305(b)), 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 3-305(b)), on Tuesday, April 17, 2018 at 3:00 p.m. in Room 407, 4th floor, City Hall, Hagerstown, Maryland. Councilmember S. McIntire seconded the motion.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he is opposed to consulting with the City Attorney in closed session. Councilmember Metzner stated he is opposed to this as well. He only sees two litigants in the second item, the Board of Zoning Appeals and the citizens. He wondered who potential weaknesses of the case would be exposed to.

Motion carried, 3-2 with Councilmember K. B. Aleshire and Councilmember L. C. Metzner voting No.

The following people were in attendance: Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II, Councilmember K. B. Aleshire, Councilmember A. Heffernan, Councilmember E. Keller, Councilmember L. C. Metzner, Councilmember S. McIntire, City Administrator Valerie Means, City Attorney Jennifer Keefer, Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, Eric Deike, Director of Public Works, Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, Stephen Bockmiller, Zoning Administrator and Planner, Jonathan Kerns, Community Development Manager, and Donna K. Spickler, City Clerk.

The meeting was held to discuss membership of the Stormwater Advisory Committee, potential litigation, pending litigation, and a business proposal for City properties. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

WORK SESSION – April 17, 2018

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II called this Work Session and Executive Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 17, 2018 in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Present with the Mayor were Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, A. Heffernan, E. Keller, S. McIntire, and L. C. Metzner, City Administrator Valerie Means, City Attorney Jennifer Keefer, and City Clerk D. K. Spickler.

Board of Zoning Appeals Decision for Cell Tower at North Hagerstown High School Discussion

Councilmember Heffernan stated the Council discussed the basic question of whether or not the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) appropriately addressed the recent application for a variance for a cell tower at North Hagerstown High School as a cell tower or a sign.

The Council also considered whether or not the City has the ability to appeal the decision of the Board of Zoning Appeals. The answer is yes, but the overriding issue is of judicial estoppel. The decision would likely be dismissed if the Council takes an opposing view in a subsequent proceeding. The best course of action for people who want to take action is to do so as a citizen's body. The City would then avoid the issue of judicial estoppel.

Councilmember Metzner stated it is clear the Council would be doing a disservice to everyone by appealing the BZA decision.

Mayor Bruchey noted it is the general consensus of the Council is to not appeal the decision and convey the message that any citizen who wishes to appeal the decision of the BZA has every right to do so and they stand a better chance during an appeal than the City would. This consensus was reached from discussing the issue with the City Attorney and amongst themselves.

Councilmember Aleshire reiterated that the BZA used a section of the code for a sign and applied it to a tower. He believes communication towers will continue to appear in urban areas. He recommended a code be created that will appropriately apply to future tower requests. Updated regulations should also address the permitted height of towers.

Councilmember Heffernan stated the intent of the sign ordinance was muddied by the discussion of a cell tower.

FY2018/19 Budget Review

Michelle Hepburn, Director of Finance, and Jennifer Peterson, Accounting/Budget Manager, were present to continue reviewing the FY 2018/19 Budget with the Mayor and City Council.

Ms. Hepburn provided a chart showing the amount of revenue that would be provided by different tax rate scenarios for a tiered tax rate. A tax rate increase of 3 cents for all property and 5 cents for apartments would create \$ 826,000 in additional revenue. During the Work Session last week, it was mentioned that a majority of the additional revenue would be utilized to fund public safety. This would be for operational costs only, not capital projects. A decision is needed for the tax rate by next week in order to meet the advertising deadline of April 30, 2018. Changes can be made after the Constant Yield Tax Rate notice is published. The Constant Yield Tax Rate, as provided by the State of Maryland Assessment Office is \$0.942 per \$ 100 of assessed value.

Councilmember Metzner supports the 3 and 5 cent tax rate increase. If the overall rate is reduced by a half cent, the apartment rate increase would need to be 8 cents to create the same revenue. He does not think the half cent reduction would be significant. To raise the tax rate at that level would not be a good message for property owners in the City.

Councilmember Aleshire does not agree. A higher rate for apartments would be a step forward in correcting the inequity of the tax rate on owner occupied properties.

Councilmember Keller envisioned a tax rate increase to apartments and not on owner occupied properties. She feels this scenario defeats the purpose of the Council's intent.

Councilmember Heffernan does not want to raise the tax rate on owner occupied properties. A four family building uses more goods and services from police, fire, and municipal services.

Councilmember Metzner stated an additional \$ 776,000 is needed to fund the proposed budget. He believes department heads have already reduced expenses to minimum levels. He will not vote for a budget that utilizes reserve funds to balance the budget.

Mayor Bruchey stated his recommendations for the budget includes the use of reserve funds and bond financing.

Ms. Hepburn noted only certain projects would be eligible for bond financing. There is a CIP fund balance included in the budget. This is leftover funding from projects that were either not yet completed or funded with a different source.

Mayor Bruchey stated if an overall 2 cent tax rate increase was used, with a 10 cent increase to apartments, only \$ 75,000 to \$ 100,000 would have to be found from expenses. This would be a significant step in reducing the subsidy from home owners to rental properties.

Ms. Means clarified that a consensus has not been reached on the tax rate. It currently stands at one Councilmember in favor of a 3 and 5 cent increase, while two Councilmembers are in favor of a 2.5 and 8 cent increase.

Mayor Bruchey announced there will be a Work Session prior to the Regular Session on April 24, 2018 to continue this discussion.

Councilmember Aleshire would like to see what revenue comes from the apartment category itself. He understands the Mayor has sent suggestions for reducing expenses. He wants to review those and other suggestions.

Ms. Means stated staff has reviewed the budget repeatedly and there is nothing available to reduce without eliminating services.

Ms. Hepburn noted Section 3 of the proposed budget provides an overview of each department, including revenue and expenses. Goals and staffing charts are also included. Licensing and permit revenue is included in this section as well. Fees from Distilled Spirits is the money received from liquor licenses. The Liquor Board does not have to provide money to the City if they aren't making money but no notice is provided if this is the case. The City has received no funding in the last several years. Staff has not been able to implement Utility License Fees. Cable Franchise Fees are restricted funds to be used specifically for communications and video productions. Residential Rental Licensing provides \$ 117,000 in revenue.

The FY 2018/19 Proposed Budget includes \$ 843,000 in transfers to other funds. Police and Fire capital projects are funded by \$ 783,000 of this amount. The proposed budget shows a 19% fund balance. The updated policy requires 16% in fund balance.

Councilmember Heffernan asked if the \$ 200,000 commitment to the Maryland Theatre project is included in contribution to agencies. Ms. Hepburn indicated it is not. That funding is for the budget gap that was discussed during the last joint meeting with the Washington County Commissioners. The amount needed is \$ 1.3 million. Councilmember Heffernan asked what the Commissioners have committed. Ms. Hepburn indicated that information has not been released.

Councilmember Heffernan noted most visitors to the Maryland Theatre or the Museum are not City residents. He showed a map of Hagerstown noting where there is development that provides an increased tax base. This commercial development is outside the City limits, creating a donut effect. The taxpayers in the donut (the City) are being asked to foot the bill for an additional \$ 200,000. It is not known what the County residents are providing for the Maryland Theatre project. He wondered why the City continually matches what the County does.

Councilmember Metzner noted that Hagerstown is also probably the only municipality in the State that provided funding (more than \$ 1 million) toward a new library. He stated this would be more equitable if the County provided the same ratio of funding for the City's fire service as it does for all other fire companies.

Councilmember Aleshire stated if the City received a fair share of the funding for fire service it would not be an issue when requests for other funding are made. There are four municipalities in Maryland that have paid fire service. Two of those municipalities receive funding through the tax differential provided by the respective counties. One municipality does not provide service outside the corporate limits. There are two options for the City – either not provide service outside the corporate limits or push to have the County provide an equal amount to the City for fire service. The City can't keep up with the salary increase the County recently announced for paid firefighters. The City taxpayers should not suffer the discourse from the difference in funding from the County.

Councilmember Keller stated this issue has to be discussed with the County. Councilmember McIntire agreed.

Mayor Bruchey stated when the County gives money to a project, 26% of it comes from City residents. City taxpayers are asked to give above and beyond what County taxpayers are.

Councilmember Heffernan stated he has trouble considering a 3 cent tax rate when an additional \$ 200,000 is included for the Maryland Theatre project. Ms. Means stated she and Ms. Hepburn struggled with this funding as well.

Ms. Hepburn stated staff is not saying the funding shouldn't be provided for the Maryland Theatre and other agencies. The City has committed \$ 250,000 toward a downtown project. In FY19, that funding will be repurposed to provide funding to the Maryland Theatre.

Mayor Bruchey asked how much Admissions and Amusement taxes the Maryland Theatre pays. Because the Maryland Theatre is located within the Arts and Entertainment District, they are exempt from this tax. Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, stated the A & E Designation from the State of Maryland requires the exemption. This was approved 15 years ago.

Councilmember Aleshire stated the largest structural issues, police and fire, need to be addressed.

Ms. Means stated she has been asking for the formula used for the tax differential since she started working for the City of Hagerstown.

Councilmember Metzner noted the County is in the same situation as the City with the budget process. He does not think progress will be made until after the County Commissioner election later this year. The County is a key partner in the Urban Improvement Project and this has to be considered when talking about tax differential discussions. The taxation issue has been discussed since the mid 1980s.

Mayor Bruchey suggested residents ask the Commissioner candidates about this issue at forums. There are posts on Facebook all the time about this.

Councilmember Keller stated the perception is that the City is irresponsible because they have to raise taxes every year and the County is responsible because they don't have to raise taxes.

Ms. Hepburn noted bond rating companies rate the City on many components, including the tax rate and property assessment. The County receives more revenue from taxes because of the increasing assessment. Assessments within the City have not rebounded.

Councilmember Metzner and Councilmember Aleshire noted that there is a 5% cap on any assessment increase, which also restricts the amount of additional revenue from taxes.

Review of the budget will continue at a Work Session on April 24, 2018.

Preliminary Agenda Review

Consent Agenda

A. Parks and Engineering:

1. Final Engineering Design – Marsh Run Multi-Use Trail – KCI Technologies (Sparks, MD) \$ 216,547.47
2. City Park Play Equipment:
 - a. Playground Specialists, Inc. (Thurmont, MD) \$ 153,992.00
 - b. Taylor Sports and Recreation (Martinsburg, WV) \$ 42,576.00

B. Police Department:

1. Ammunition – The Gun Shop (Vincentown, NJ) \$ 24,860.84
2. Monthly Payment for Red Light Camera Charges – March, 2018 – June, 2019 – American Traffic Solutions, Inc. (Mesa, AZ) \$ 197,104.00

C. Utilities:

1. Water – Ford F-550 with Utility Body and Crane – Truck 205 Replacement – Keystone Ford (Chambersburg, PA) \$ 117,015.00
2. Water – Dodge Ram 2500 with Plow – Truck 212 Replacement – Hetrich Fleet Services, Inc. (Denton, MD) \$ 29,151.00
3. Water – Ford F-750 Truck with Dump Bed – Truck 215 Replacement – Keystone Ford (Chambersburg, PA) \$ 76,813.00
4. Water – Ford F-350 with Plow and Salt Box – Truck 232 Replacement – Keystone Ford (Chambersburg, PA) \$ 46,220.00
5. Water – Ford F-550 with Utility Bed – Truck 234 Replacement – Keystone Ford (Chambersburg, PA) \$ 82,965.00
6. Wastewater – Valves for Oxygen System – Freemire & Associates, Inc. (Harmans, MD) \$ 20,867.00
7. Wastewater – Grinder Pumps – Fluid Solutions, Inc. (Westminster, MD) \$ 48,580.00
8. Wastewater – Redundant MagOx System – Sherwood Logan & Associates (Annapolis, MD) \$ 37,391.00
9. Wastewater – Muffin Monster for Wastewater Pumping Station No. 3 – JWC Environmental (Santa Ana, CA) \$ 37,449.00
10. Wastewater – Manhole Risers – East Jordan Iron Works (Finksburg, MD) \$ 13,494.69

Mayor Bruchey noted the Red Light Camera contract will be added to the Consent Agenda.

There were no questions about items on the Consent Agenda or other Preliminary Agenda items. This completed the review. All items are scheduled for approval during the April 24, 2018 Regular Session.

Rodney Tissue, City Engineer, and Mary Anne Burke, Executive Director of the Washington County Arts Council, were present to discuss two grants to add more public art in the downtown. The grants are through the Maryland State Arts Council (MSAC) and the applications are due at the end of April. The MSAC requires that an artist be selected and concepts provided with the application. To that end, the Arts Council issued a call for artists for each of the two grants and the City Council-appointed Artist Selection Committee (Rebecca Massey Lane, Mary Anne Burke, Lesley Whalley, and Aaron Peteranecz) reviewed the proposals and interviewed the artists. If the Council approves, staff and the Arts Council would apply for the grants and if successful in obtaining them, the art installations would occur in early fall 2018.

The two grants are as follows:

1. MSAC Public Art Across Maryland Grants for County Arts Councils – Adding additional sculpture in the Sculpture Garden of the Hagerstown Cultural Trail. The selected artist is Christian Benefiel of Keedysville, Maryland. The interactive sculpture that has the form of movement or air current flowing along the Trail similar to a river or air current. Materials would be reclaimed metal, likely aluminum and steel and neutral in color. To imply movement or flow in the pieces, chair shapes would be cast into the piece that is uniquely Hagerstown (maybe a chair modeled after a Beachley Furniture or other Hagerstown based company's piece) and the public can physically interact with. A concept rendering was presented along with a picture of one of the artist's past work. The cost would be \$ 10,000 with \$ 5,000 from the MSAC and the requirement match would be from the City's FY19 CIP # 686, Public Art. City Parks Division staff would also install the foundations, the "play carpet" mulch around and under the structures and a plaque about the art similar to other pieces along the Trail.
2. Public Art Project Grants for A & E Districts – Mural in University Plaza on the City-owned building on 60 West Washington Street. The selected artist is Eric Ricks, from Silver Spring, Maryland, originally from Liberia. The interactive wall mural, considered aerosol street art, depicts nature (monarch butterfly and hummingbird) that viewers can physically interact with (e.g. selfies). The art also has strong Maryland themes in honor of the University and geometric shapes. Mr. Halsey, the Director of the USMH, and Amanda Whitmore joined the committee in the selection of this artist. The cost is \$ 7,500 with \$ 5,000 from the MSAC grant and the required match from the City's FY19 CIP # 686, Public Art of \$ 2,500. The City would also provide a small lift for the artists and a plaque similar to other art pieces along the Trail

In addition, the Committee suggests the City also pursue a third piece, a tribute to the Moller Pipe Organ Company, by David Gibney of Smithsburg, Maryland. The concept was shown and would utilize authentic Moller pipes and bricks from the plant and would be interactive as sound could be generated in the pipes by pushing a button. Mr. Gibney

has indicated he will seek private funding for his work and staff recommends that the Council endorse his plan and allow him to attempt to find benefactors to fund the project in the Sculpture Garden of the Cultural Trail. If he falls short of fundraising, staff would seek a grant to fund the project next summer.

Ms. Burke stated the grants are in honor and recognition of the Maryland Arts Council's 50th anniversary.

Councilmember Aleshire stated he thinks a splash pad would be a better draw for the Cultural Trail than an additional sculpture. He likes the Moller Organ tribute better than the sculpture depicting movement.

Councilmember Heffernan supports art but is concerned that citizens will not understand spending money on art as taxes are increased. Councilmember Metzner stated art is an essential part of life.

The general consensus of the Mayor and Council is to move forward with the two selected pieces of art and apply for the grants.

Dwelling Unit Density Reduction Concept

Jill Thompson, Director of Community and Economic Development, and Jonathan Kerns, Community Development Manager, were present to discuss the concept of a dwelling unit reduction program and/or incentive for the City of Hagerstown.

Over the course of several decades, many large single-family homes in the City were converted to house multiple apartment units. Areas in the core of the City and neighboring streets such as South Prospect, East Avenue, East Antietam and Broadway were heavily impacted with these conversions. Based upon current zoning requirements, many of these structures are now considered nonconforming residential units.

In previous budget years, City staff had explored the possibility of a dwelling unit reduction incentive to be funded with Economic Redevelopment funds. In order for this type of program to have the desired impact, staff concluded a substantial amount of funding over many years would be required. If sustainable funding was unavailable, offering such an incentive program would likely have minimal to no impact. Due to budget constraints and other considerations, the concept was never formally proposed to the Mayor and City Council.

While recently revisiting the concept, staff identified the City of Elgin, Illinois as a community with an active unit reduction incentive program. Staff have spoken with a representative from the City of Elgin and obtained insight and data relative to their program. Their program has been in operation since 2002 with annual funding levels ranging from \$ 100,000 to \$ 500,000. Over the course of their program, 151 dwelling units have been eliminated.

Mr. Kerns stated one idea would be to address the density issue by targeting a block of buildings. Staff from Economic Development and Planning would work together to address zoning regulations.

Ms. Thompson pointed out the City of Elgin eliminates code violations through an inspection process. Finding continual funding sources is key so as not to lose momentum.

Councilmember Heffernan wondered what the incentive would be for property owners to reduce the density of their buildings. Councilmember Aleshire doesn't think owners in the areas needing this program the most would be interested in the incentive.

Councilmember Aleshire stated the City needs to find a way to fund this program. A funding source for a strategic demolition program is also needed.

Councilmember Keller stated the HomeStore has many active members and they may be able to assist with a program like this.

Staff will continue researching this incentive program and provide additional information.

Cyclical Tax Sale Properties

Scott Nicewarner, Director of Technology, Communication, and Support Services, Jonathan Kerns, Community Development Manager, and Jennifer Keefer, City Attorney, were present to provide information on possible options for reducing the number of problem tax sale properties within the City of Hagerstown.

As described on the Washington County Treasurer's website, the Washington County Maryland tax sale process enables the County to collect all unpaid and delinquent City and County property taxes as required by statute. The annual tax sale typically occurs in June each year. A detailed description of the Washington County Tax sale process was included with the meeting packet material.

Each year, numerous properties within the City of Hagerstown are subject to the annual tax sale process. Certain tax sale properties, especially vacant and/or abandoned properties, are a nuisance to their respective neighborhoods. These properties put a strain on staff time and resources while negatively impacting the City's assessable property tax base.

Approximately forty problem properties within the City have been subject to the tax sale process on an annual basis with the process repeating year after year. Some of these properties have delinquent tax amounts that far exceed the value of the property. Other factors include deteriorating property conditions, lot size, and the lack of feasible development options. Once up for tax sale, many of these problem properties do not receive tax sale bids. Even if the properties in question do receive a tax sale bid, the tax

sale bidder typically does not follow through with the necessary foreclosure process to gain ownership and the property goes back in the tax sale cycle in future years.

The majority of the problem tax sale properties are vacant structures and vacant lots in residential neighborhoods. The properties are monitored by Planning and Code Administration staff and nuisance conditions (trash, weeds, and snow) are abated throughout the year. These necessary abatements require hours of staff time and the abatement fees continue to increase the delinquent tax amounts for the properties in question. As delinquent tax amounts increase, the likelihood of property ownership being transferred through the tax sale process decreases.

In order to develop a solution for the problem tax sale properties, City staff have consulted with Jennifer Keefer, City Attorney. The Washington County Treasurer, Todd Hershey, has also been consulted. High level concept plans have been explored with a vision of finding a positive end use for each problem tax sale property. Concept plans that have been discussed include the following:

1. City acquisition of the problem tax sale properties and immediate resale to a preselected developer/partner/end user after City acquisition.
2. City acquisition of a problem tax sale property and resale of property through a process similar to the City's Competitive Negotiated Sale Program.
3. Creation of a land bank authority to assist the City in acquiring and disposing of subject properties.

This issue is not unique to Hagerstown. Many jurisdictions across the State of Maryland are experiencing similar problems with blighted properties subject to repeated tax sale. State legislation related to problem tax sale properties has been explored and staff will continue to monitor any legislative actions that may assist with resolving the issue.

Mayor Bruchey clarified that with any of these concepts, the City would never get their tax money from the tax sale. Mr. Nicewarner stated that is correct, but the City would likely not want ownership of these properties. Commitment to a program to address this issue is needed from the County Commissioners as well.

Councilmember Aleshire is more concerned about eliminating the vacant, blighted buildings than owning the property.

Mayor Bruchey is concerned that the foreclosure process, if the City acquires these properties, could take up to two years to resolve.

Ms. Means stated if the Mayor and City Council agree to the concept, staff will work with County staff to develop an agreement and to identify a funding source.

Mayor Bruchey wondered if the City could acquire the properties through the tax sale process for \$ 1.00. The City and County could then forgive the outstanding tax bills. It may be possible to use CDBG funds to create a pocket park in certain locations.

Councilmember Heffernan asked how a land bank works. Mr. Kerns stated this is a relatively new concept in Maryland and funds would be needed to create the land bank.

Legislation was passed by the State of Maryland last week that may help with a conversation with the County. Ms. Keefer is reviewing the legislation.

This will be discussed more at a future Work Session. It was noted that the City of Cumberland has a similar program.

Maryland Stadium Authority Memorandum of Understanding

Mayor Bruchey provided copies of a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Hagerstown and the Maryland Stadium Authority (MSA) for a study for location of a baseball stadium in Hagerstown. He stated the MOU was provided to him late last week. The MSA requires a request for a study. A request will be made to the Governor's office to include the cost of a study in his budget. Even though the Ripken Study was completed in 2012, the MSA wants their own study.

Councilmember Metzner asked if the Ripken Study was in effect, a waste of time. Mayor Bruchey stated it was not as the information in it will be used in the MSA study.

Councilmember Keller stated this will be the fourth study in four years. She wondered what happens after this study is complete.

Councilmember Metzner feels the study is premature. The owner of the Suns does not want to be in Hagerstown. No investors are interested in a stadium. The County Commissioners are not on board with a new stadium. The Mayor and City Council were led to believe there would be a change in ownership. They were never notified that it didn't happen. He does not want to talk about a stadium at this table without true investors participating.

Mayor Bruchey stated this is just the first step. There are people who want to be involved in this first step.

Councilmember Keller wondered how this study will be different. Mayor Bruchey indicated it may not be.

Councilmember Metzner said the City was told the stadium would pay for itself through the assessable base. He thinks TIF Financing is a good funding source for a downtown stadium. He thinks the City should start at the last step – with all the parties being involved in the discussion. He has not seen the State or County participating in a three way funding model.

Councilmember Keller asked if anyone had approached the County Commissioners lately. Mayor Bruchey stated he has not at this point.

Councilmember McIntire noted others are willing to provide funding for the study and it appears there is still interest in the possibility of a stadium.

Councilmember Metzner stated the City has been through this process before and the State didn't commit the funding. Mayor Bruchey stated the State did commit \$ 10 million to the project. The State Board of Public Works had 2 of the 3 votes needed for the commitment.

Councilmember Aleshire pointed out a December, 2017 letter from the Stadium Authority indicates \$ 36,000 had been secured. The Council had not even discussed a request for a study at that point. The Council was asked to not discuss a stadium or an indoor facility to allow one group to complete a 90 day review. The MOU states it is limiting the study to three potential sites. He asked if the sites have already been chosen.

Mayor Bruchey stated he just saw the MOU today and he had not noticed that.

Councilmember Aleshire stated based on the minutes from the MSA meetings, it appears this has been talked about for some time. He questioned whether or not conversations had been held outside the deliberations of the Council. He did not realize the MSA used a third party for a study. Per 2003 State legislation, the hotel/motel tax is to be split between the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the County. Since they have these funds and this would be a County project, these two entities should cover the cost of the study.

Councilmember McIntire reminded the group that, as a body, the Council agreed to spend up to \$ 100,000 on a study for an indoor facility, without knowing if there is an investor interested in the project.

Councilmember Aleshire asked Councilmember McIntire if she thinks there will be a stadium built. Councilmember McIntire stated she believes there is momentum in the community for a stadium. The Council owes it to themselves and the citizens to explore all opportunities. She supports the City providing \$ 12,000 toward the study.

Councilmember Keller supports a stadium but wonders what happens when the study is complete. Attendance at Suns games is not increasing and the team has not been sold.

Mayor Bruchey stated a plan is needed and it has to start with this study.

Councilmember Keller pointed out CHIEF and the CVB are obviously interested in a stadium study. She also thinks the County is interested.

Mayor Bruchey stated the next step is a study and picking a site and developing a plan for the site. Someone has to come back with information for at least three sites in order to determine the biggest return on the investment.

Councilmember Keller asked if the Suns are involved. Mayor Bruchey stated they will be because of the lease.

Councilmember Heffernan agreed a plan is needed. He asked where the funding will come from if a site is chosen. Ms. Means stated it would be bond financed and she does not think the City has debt capacity for the full amount.

Councilmember Metzner reminded the group that a previous study determined the most feasible site.

Councilmember Keller supports a study but she wants to know what the next steps would be.

Councilmember Heffernan speculated that the chosen site will be downtown and others will want to capitalize on the momentum.

Councilmember Metzner wondered if the previous studies and drawings could be submitted to the MSA for them to review and then provide funding.

Councilmember McIntire asked if a stadium could be a referendum question. Councilmember Aleshire would welcome this.

Councilmember Metzner stated he was a big supporter of a downtown stadium and people were excited. It would have been a benefit for the game and for economic development. He is not against a stadium but he agreed that all parties need to be at the table for it to be successful.

Mayor Bruchey asked if the Council would support a stadium if no taxpayer dollars were used for funding. Councilmember Metzner and Councilmember McIntire stated they would be.

Councilmember Aleshire pointed out the Council has been discussing a new stadium for years.

Dan Spedden, President of the Hagerstown/Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, stated a new owner is needed to build a new stadium with. People are telling him the supporters need to show their willingness to talk about a new stadium. The MSA need to be in the discussions from the beginning. The next step is to talk to a consultant to discuss funding models. He does not think it will be difficult to finance a new stadium. The bonus for the City would be increasing property values.

Councilmember Metzner asked why a private entity doesn't come forward with funding.

Mayor Bruchey stated this study has to be approved in order to move forward.

Councilmember Keller asked what are the chances of being in this same place five years from now. Mr. Spedden stated the project had a lot of momentum in 2012 and the team owner basically killed the project.

Councilmember Aleshire thinks the study will show the same downtown location as the one in 2012.

Councilmember Keller asked how the sites are chosen. Mr. Spedden stated public input will be a key component. He noted that in many urban stadium locations good things happen all around it. A new stadium will draw people downtown, even more than the UIP or the Maryland Theatre. He stated his vision for Hagerstown is to create a City Center behind the former YMCA on W. Church Street.

Councilmember Aleshire asked if the Cultural Trail would be impacted if the site chosen is the site from 2012. Mr. Tissue stated it would be.

Mr. Spedden stated everyone wants a 360 degree concourse. It would be open 365 days per year. A lot of people use this type of facility every day for walking.

Councilmember McIntire feels the time is now to consider a new stadium.

Mayor Bruchey stated the competitive bidding process would have to be waived in order to complete the project.

Councilmember Heffernan, Councilmember McIntire, and Councilmember Keller support completing this study.

Councilmember Metzner does not support a study. He is concerned the City is headed down the same unsuccessful path.

Councilmember Aleshire does not support a study and does not think it makes sense to even consider it.

Mayor Bruchey hopes this is a different path. He wants to hear from the MSA. This study may show a different way to do a stadium. Funding from the hotel/motel tax could be used and no taxpayer dollars would be needed.

Mr. Spedden suggested the Council talk to officials in South Carolina and Fort Wayne Indiana about their experiences with new stadiums. Community impact in both these locations has been outstanding.

Three Councilmembers agreed to move forward with the study.

Police Chief Brito introduced the See Something, Send Something App to the group. This is a free app that empowers everyday citizens to get involved in the safety of the community. Citizens can use their smart devices to provide information and “tips” to local law enforcement. The information can be sent anonymously via a text style application. Information can be sent with not only text but with pictures and/or videos.

The app also allows law enforcement to set up Geo-Fence notifications to citizens. When a citizen enters the area, they will receive the notification on their smart device. Should a citizen see something as a result of the alert or as part of proactive citizen empowerment, they can send seamless documentation to local law enforcement.

The ability to anonymously report suspicious or odd behavior may be the difference in keeping someone safe. A lot of tragedies may have been prevented if better, timelier information was known by those that can intervene. Empowering Hagerstown’s citizens to take an active role in the safety of the community will build a stronger, safer, more vibrant city.

The app is available on the iPhone App Store or through the Android platform for free.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS

Valerie Means, City Administrator, had no additional comments.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember L. C. Metzner stated the discussions after the budget get easier.

Councilmember A. Heffernan enjoys the challenge. If Council actions make a difference, the challenges are worth it.

Councilmember S. McIntire understands some discussions are difficult. She is proud to be part of the change for Hagerstown.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire stated one advantage to social media is being able to communicate with citizens in real time and real dollars in a less political format.

Councilmember E. Keller had a customer tell her that Pam Harris (Inspector) is very good at her job.

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II agreed with Councilmember Aleshire in that social media provides the ability to explain to people where their tax dollars are being used and how County actions affect Hagerstown citizens. He had a conversation with a 15 year old student from North Hagerstown High School about school safety. He encouraged her to talk to her peers about using the See Something, Send Something app.

WORK SESSION AND EXECUTIVE SESSION
2018

APRIL 17,

MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

HAGERSTOWN, MARYLAND

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 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: June 26, 2018