

Washington County Legislative Day

Members of the Mayor and City Council met with members of the Washington County Delegation at 11:47 a.m. at Hager Hall Conference and Event Center, 901 Dual Highway, Hagerstown Maryland.

The following people were in attendance: Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, P. D. Corderman, E. Keller, and L. C. Metzner, City Administrator Valerie Means, City Clerk D. K. Spickler, Senator Andrew Serafini, Senator George Edwards, Delegate Neil Parrott, Delegate Mike McKay, and Delegate William Wivell.

The following are topics discussed with the Delegation:

1. Support for the Urban Improvement Project – The public and private sector parties involved with this project agree it will be a turning point for Hagerstown.
2. Multi-tier tax structure – Councilmember Aleshire pointed out a story was published in the newspaper but the Mayor and Council have only had a brief overview of the possible outcomes of using this type of tax structure. More Work Session discussions will be held. He has suggested using the State classification for commercial property. Delegate McKay stated this type of tax structure may be a deterrent to potential investors looking to “re-use” larger homes. Councilmember Aleshire is hopeful the outcome will be to increase homeownership.
3. EMS Advisory Council – Councilmember Aleshire expressed his concern that the count of numbers of personnel (paid or volunteer) available to respond to calls may be inaccurate. He stated a number of the City’s paid personnel also volunteer at stations throughout the County. He stated these people may be mistakenly counted twice. Delegate McKay noted the counts are for each station so the people on location should be counted if they are on-call at that station. Councilmember Metzner stated he is concerned that paid firefighters are volunteering at stations after their regular shift, which may cause a safety issue. Delegate McKay does not agree.

Senator Serafni stated something has to be done to assist the Maryland Theatre with their fund raising efforts. The funding is available, but will be provided over time. There is a need to have the money up front to begin the project. He recommended the City provide \$ 2 million and the County provide \$ 2 million.

This portion of the Work Session was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

WORK SESSION – December 5, 2017

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II called this Work Session and Executive Session of the Mayor and City Council to order at 4:02 p.m., Tuesday, December 5, 2017 in the Council Chamber at City Hall. Present with the Mayor were Councilmembers K. B. Aleshire, P.

Council Candidate Interviews

Eight candidates for the vacant Council seat were interviewed. The candidates introduced themselves to the Mayor and City Council.

Each Mayor and Councilmember then had the opportunity to ask questions. The questions are listed below:

1. What do you see as the two major issues facing the City and how would you address them? (Councilmember Keller)
2. Why are you interested in applying for this vacancy if you didn't run in November? 2016? (Councilmember Corderman)
3. What is your opinion of the Urban Improvement Project (UIP)? (Councilmember Metzner)
4. Do you support a downtown stadium? Are you member of a landlord association? Do you support rental registration? What is your opinion of a tiered tax rate? The City of Hagerstown has a history of budget constraints. Do you support increased taxes or decreased expenses (particularly employee expenses)? Are you a member of a union? Would you support an indoor sports complex at the Municipal Stadium site? Do you own or rent your home? (Councilmember Aleshire)
5. We've been in office for one year. Where do you think we have fallen short or failed? (Councilmember Keller)
6. What do you think of the Community's City Center Plan, prepared by Urban Partners in 2014? (Councilmember Corderman)

The responses from the candidates are summarized based on these questions, or others if so noted.

Brian Foltz, 308 Key West Drive, Hagerstown, Maryland, was born and raised in Hagerstown. He attended high school here. He worked abroad for several years and has been living in Hagerstown since 2007. He is an engineer by trade and is involved with an instrumental music program.

Mr. Foltz stated heroin use, drug trafficking, and crime need to be addressed. These things negatively impact the culture and perception of Hagerstown. People don't view Hagerstown as a destination. The blight and un-used space also needs to be addressed. All these issues affect how residents view their hometown.

Mr. Foltz indicated he did not run for office in 2016 because was commuting at the time. He is now working locally. He has seen progress in 2017 and an increase of excitement for downtown. He wants to be part of continuing the excitement.

Mr. Foltz has read about the UIP in the newspaper. He supports the project, if it is sustainable, without overlooking other things that are occurring.

Mr. Foltz stated he would support a downtown stadium if it is integrated within a master plan for downtown. He also would support a new stadium at an alternate location. He has seen similar successful projects through his work in the Midwest.

Mr. Foltz is not a member of a landlord association. He supports rental registration. He is a member of a union (a fraternal organization).

Mr. Foltz stated he is developing his stance on a tiered tax rate, since this is a developing issue. He believes in equal and fair taxation.

Mr. Foltz stated he has experienced lay off situations to reduce expenses and the company loses momentum with employee cuts.

He thinks an indoor sports complex would be an exciting facility. He rents his home and has been discussing purchasing the property with the current owner.

He stated social media can be a blessing and a curse. The Mayor and Council should find a way to engage the millennials as much as possible. It is important to show millennials the value of civic duty.

Mr. Foltz has not read through the City Center Plan, but his general thoughts are that it has to be appropriate for who lives there today.

Paul Frey, 834 Potomac Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, feels he would bring a business perspective to the elected body. His career has been focused on service to others. As a Councilmember, he would be citizen focused.

The budget, and the limited opportunity for increased revenues to cover increasing expenses, is a major issue for the City. Some ways to address this would be to develop creative ways to create more revenue. Public/private partnership opportunities should be explored. Another issue facing the City is the perception of Hagerstown. Councilmember Keller's recent letter to the editor stated it well – that Hagerstown can be its own worst enemy. The good things that are happening need to be reported and celebrated. The Council should look into branding for the City.

Mr. Frey has been considering entering public service for several years. He was relatively new to this community during the November, 2016. He feels he is more connected with the community at this time. Mr. Frey is the CEO/President of the Washington County Chamber of Commerce. He stated he discussed concerns about being a member of the Council with the Chamber board. The Board did not have any

concerns and they thought it would be good for the Chamber, the City, and the community.

Councilmember Metzner stated all members have potential conflicts of interest. He asked if Mr. Frey would be comfortable taking a different stand from what the Chamber may on a tiered tax rate. Mr. Frey stated the Chamber is not his, it belongs to the board and members. He may have differing opinions; however, his track record shows he is not politically based. He is an opportunist.

He is very supportive of the UIP, which shows the work a group with multiple partners can do. He is not a member of a union.

Mr. Frey is open to discussion of a downtown stadium, in particular because of the possibility of a new revenue stream. An indoor sports plex could be beneficial for the City.

As a homeowner, Mr. Frey does not want to have a tax increase; however, he thinks there would be opportunities to look at different options. He doesn't think the City can save its way to prosperity. He is not completely opposed to a tax increase and would consider all the variables.

He supports rental registration, if that simply means the property has to be registered. He is not a member of a landlord association.

Mr. Frey supports the collaboration of groups involved with the City Center Plan. He believes the projects are good goals.

He has not developed an opinion yet about a tiered tax rate.

He realizes being a member of the Mayor and City Council involves a great deal of responsibility and time commitment. There could be more outreach between this body and City staff. As Chamber President, he has been able to reach out to a lot of people and has advocated for branding of Hagerstown's opportunities.

He asked what the members of the Mayor and Council see for the successful candidate in the next year. Mayor Bruchey mentioned the candidate needs to have an open mind on all topics and be willing to research subjects and make educated decisions. Councilmember Metzner stated an appropriate demeanor is necessary. Councilmember Keller stated the candidate needs to be a cheerleader for Hagerstown, as do current members. Councilmember Corderman stated a cohesive unit is needed to move Hagerstown forward.

Shelley McIntire, 2 Mealey Parkway, Hagerstown, Maryland, has lived in Hagerstown for 20 years. In 2010, she and her husband started an HVAC business and chose Hagerstown for the location. She is a board member of Brooke's House and Leadership Washington County.

Two major issues in Hagerstown are drug abuse and crime. These things go hand in hand, which leads to public safety needs. Many people don't feel safe downtown. Moving social service organizations and the public defender's office to the outskirts of Hagerstown would help eliminate some of the crime downtown. She would welcome the opportunity to work with the members of the Hagerstown Police Department to develop creative ideas to control crime. More events would bring more people to Hagerstown and help familiarize people with the City and its environment.

Ms. McIntire completed the Leadership Washington County program and saw opportunities for ways to support the community. This is one reason she decided to apply for the vacant seat. She feels this administration has done some amazing things, including the completion of the Cultural Trail.

While operating a business, management is often faced with difficult decisions. The employees are the heart of the company. She would review all the information provided regarding a tax rate increase or employee expense reduction before making a decision.

She is aware of the UIP. She thinks the City does a good job of helping the project move forward. She has reviewed the budget and is looking at other examples of successes.

Ms. McIntire is not a member of a union. She is not a member of a landlord association. She is a homeowner.

She is also aware there were discussions several years ago about a downtown stadium. She does not have a stance on this yet. The people who attend games at the stadium should be asked how they anticipate a project like this would be received in the community. In theory, a multi-purpose facility sounds like a good idea. She would review the details of a project like this before making a statement of support.

Ms. McIntire stated she is not familiar with rental registration but she is familiar with the City's codes and realizes what it takes to bring buildings into compliance.

If an indoor sports plex would bring more people to Hagerstown, she likes the idea. If the costs make sense, she would support it.

She would be interested in knowing where the excess revenue from a two tier tax rate would be allocated. Hagerstown needs more homeowners downtown who will take pride in their property. She doesn't anticipate a multi tier tax rate would be favorable for tenants. She wondered if rebates could be provided for some tenants.

Ms. McIntire stated she thinks the Mayor and Council have done a good job in their first year. She stated they have made decisions with the public's best interest in mind.

Penny M. Nigh, 634 N. Mulberry Street, Hagerstown, Maryland, has been a Councilmember several times in the last 12 years. She loves Hagerstown.

Public safety is extremely important for Hagerstown. She hopes to continue making improvements for public safety services. The number of officers needed in the City can't be covered by the current budget. More economic development is needed as well. Property assessment has stalled and citizens need to be assured the Mayor and Council is working to address their concerns.

Ms. Nigh does not support the UIP. There are components of the City Center plan that she does not support.

She thinks a multi-tier tax rate is needed. Additional revenue is needed for Hagerstown to succeed.

The only way she would support a downtown stadium is if the team and owner pay for it. Hagerstown cannot afford the cost of a new stadium. If property is available for an indoor sports plex, she would rather see a stadium be part of that facility.

She supports rental licensing, owns her home, and is not a member of a landlord association. She is familiar with unions and negotiations.

Ms. Nigh would support a tax increase rather than reducing employee expenses.

Ms. Nigh stated economic development needs to happen quicker. A medical marijuana dispensing company is not going to generate what the City needs. More businesses are needed for residents. When she was first elected, there were more than 100 businesses. She suggested reaching out to existing businesses to keep them.

Colin Ploscaru, 248 Avon Road, Hagerstown, Maryland, is a 14 year resident of Hagerstown. He is committed to many of the things the Hagerstown government has implemented. He believes in all the various downtown development.

Mr. Ploscaru thinks bringing in more opportunity for folks in town to develop downtown is important. Assisting and supporting the Barbara Ingram School for the Arts and the Arts and Entertainment District are important. Government is not a vehicle for creating opportunity. Government can encourage opportunity by putting in place programs that help businesses thrive.

Mr. Ploscaru ran for Councilmember in the November, 2016 election.

He stated it is a difficult decision to make between layoffs and increased taxes. He appreciates the services provided by the City being done efficiently. The City should be as efficient as possible.

Mr. Ploscaru supports the UIP. He is not a member of a union and has talked to a number of unions in the City. He thinks the Code enforcement process is a hot button issue. He believes there are ways to streamline the process. He supports rental registration. He is not a member of a landlord association. He owns his home.

He is a fan of anything that attracts business downtown. A downtown stadium project has to be reviewed carefully to determine if downtown is the most beneficial location.

Mr. Ploscaru stated he would need more information before taking a position on a multi-tier tax rate.

Creating more facilities that are available for the downtown population will keep them engaged and part of the community. A downtown stadium would be a good thing.

The City has done a good job implementing the City Center plan so far. He doesn't understand the negative response to some of this work.

Mr. Ploscaru is proud of what Hagerstown city government has accomplished. He wants to be a part of that success.

Tara Sargent, 1303 The Terrace, Hagerstown, Maryland, has lived in Hagerstown since 1999. She was an adjunct professor at Mt. Saint Mary's. She is currently the director of Leadership Washington County.

Negative perception of Hagerstown is one of the biggest barriers to overcome. The Opioid crisis and lack of development downtown are also barriers to Hagerstown's success. She spreads the highlights of Hagerstown through Leadership Washington County and critically discusses the challenges in the community. Being realistic about those challenges and making sure people actually understand them is a start in solving those challenges.

She did not run for office in 2016 because it would not have been fair for her to be away from the Leadership organization and colleagues during their preparations for their 30th anniversary.

Ms. Sargent stated she does not have enough detailed information to make a statement regarding increased tax rates or reductions in employee expenses. She supports the UIP.

She is not currently a member of a union and she has not been involved in direct negotiations. She supports a downtown stadium.

She stated it is important for landlords to be accountable for their properties and the rental registration program is one way to keep track of the rental units. She is not a member of a landlord association. She owns her home.

Ms. Sargent is aware of the multi-tier tax rate discussion. She would need to have more information before making a decision about it. She noted it may be one way to increase the tax base. She wondered if the goal is increased homeownership or revenue enhancement.

She was involved in some of the breakout groups for the City Center plan. The Cultural Trail has been the most visible of the catalyst projects. This plan overlaps with the UIP. She supports these projects.

She would support a creative idea for an indoor sports plex. She has heard there is a lack of opportunity for this activity in Hagerstown.

A good way to work together is to build a vision and determine ways to move forward to complete that vision. The Mayor and Council has to be realistic about the budget.

Jeanne Singer, 835 Oak Hill Avenue, Hagerstown, Maryland, has lived in Hagerstown for 18 years. She is a tax attorney and is involved with many boards. Applying for this vacancy is a way to be involved in a different way.

The challenges for Hagerstown are mostly economic. She has been involved with the OnTrack initiative, which focuses on improving the educational attainment levels of Washington County residents in order to strengthen the local economy and improve the community's quality of life. Like many other communities, Hagerstown is struggling with the Opioid crisis and how to handle it.

She has been considering running for office for some time. She and her husband are now empty nesters and this seems like the appropriate time.

Ms. Singer stated there would need to be detailed discussions about the state of the budget. She anticipates balancing the budget may be a combination of increased tax rates and employee layoffs.

She is supportive of the UIP and is glad to see the City and others be a working part of the project.

She is not a union member or familiar with negotiations. She is not a member of a landlord association.

Ms. Singer does support a stadium and would like to see downtown considered. She was hesitant at first, but has seen the foot traffic created at a downtown stadium in another community. She would also support a soccer facility. Her family was a soccer family and traveled every weekend.

When asked about Code Enforcement and Rental Registration, Ms. Singer stated that it is difficult to renovate older buildings to meet code standards. The City needs to find a way to make renovations more feasible.

She does not feel she has enough facts to make an informed decision about a multi-tier tax rate. She believes it is worth considering and including making buildings viable in a strategic plan.

She supports the City Center plan but does like some of the catalyst projects more than others.

Ms. Singer stated the next ten years is crucial for Hagerstown. The ratio of homeownership has to be increased soon. She is concerned Hagerstown is in a downward economic spiral.

Chad Smith, 637 Westwood Street, Hagerstown, Maryland, is a long time Hagerstown resident. He owns the business Fitness Revolution.

He believes two major issues for Hagerstown are crime, (the perception of crime and actual crime) and budget constraints. He wants to be a part of changing the perception people have of Hagerstown.

He has received encouragement from the community to apply for the vacant Council seat. Mayor Bruchey noted Mr. Smith had started the process to file for office in 2016. Due to time constraints, he was unable to complete the process.

Mr. Smith stated all options to balance the budget have to be discussed, not only for the City but also for the citizens. The needs and ability of the City to accommodate what the citizens need.

He is supportive of the UIP. He is in favor of anything that brings people downtown. Having more people downtown and participating in activities will be beneficial for the City.

He is not a member of a union. He is not a member of a landlord association.

When a downtown stadium project was explored several years ago, he was in favor of it. He is open to hearing any new information and would consider that information before taking a stand.

He is not familiar with the rental registration program. He rents his home.

He feels he understands both sides of a multi-tier tax rate. He cautioned that any increase will be passed on to tenants, who may not be able to afford the increase. He thinks this may place undue strain on the poorest tenants.

He supports the catalyst projects in the City Center Plan. He stated he was not a fan of the Cultural Trail at first, but has walked it and enjoys it.

Mr. Smith stated this administration has a stronger connection to the community than previous administrations. He doesn't feel as though the City in general has a full connection with the stated vision. Councilmember Keller is very visible in the community. He likes that both Councilmember Keller and Mayor Bruchey are active on social media.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR'S COMMENTS

Valerie Means, City Administrator, had no additional comments.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember L. C. Metzner thanked everyone for the good interviews.

Councilmember P. D. Corderman stated it is encouraging to see the talent, desire, and commitment from the applicants for the Council seat. It is obvious they have what is best for Hagerstown at heart.

Councilmember K. B. Aleshire thanked the people who submitted their names for consideration for the vacant Council seat. When selecting candidates to interview, he looked for people who don't have an "axe to grind" with anyone at the City. He looks for people who don't see this as a political position but rather a position of public service.

Councilmember E. Keller had no additional comments.

Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II thanked everyone as well. He appreciates that these people are in a position in their life at this time to consider serving the community.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – December 5, 2017

On a motion duly made by Councilmember L. C. Metzner and seconded by Councilmember E. Keller, the Mayor and City Council unanimously agreed by voice vote to meet in closed session to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; #1, (Section 3-305(b)), on Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at 5:56 p.m. in the Council Chamber, 2nd floor, City Hall, Hagerstown, Maryland.

The following people were in attendance: Mayor R. E. Bruchey, II, Councilmember K. B. Aleshire, Councilmember P. D. Corderman, Councilmember E. Keller, Councilmember L. C. Metzner, City Administrator Valerie Means, and D. K. Spickler, City Clerk.

The meeting was held to review the applications submitted for the vacant Council seat and determine if additional interviews are needed. No formal action was taken at the meeting. On a motion duly made, seconded, and passed, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by D. K. Spickler

Donna K. Spickler
City Clerk

Approved: January 30, 2018