

CITY OF SALISBURY
WORK SESSION (VIA ZOOM MEETING)
MAY 18, 2020

Public Officials Present

Council President John “Jack” R. Heath
Council Vice President Muir Boda
Councilwoman Michele Gregory

Mayor Jacob R. Day
Councilwoman Angela M. Blake
Councilwoman April Jackson

In Attendance

City Administrator Julia Glanz, Deputy City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Department of Infrastructure and Development (DID) Director Amanda Pollack, Transportation Project Specialist Will White, Field Operations Deputy Director- Service Ben Baker, Procurement Director Jennifer Miller, Grants Manager Deborah Stam, Fire Chief John Tull, City Attorney Mark Tilghman, City Clerk Kim Nichols, and interested City employees and citizens

On May 18, 2020 Salisbury City Council convened in a Work Session at 5:03 p.m via a Zoom Meeting following the adjournment of the Special Meeting, which began at 4:30 p.m. The following is a synopsis of the topics discussed:

Budget Amendment for GOB repairs/upgrades

Procurement Director Jennifer Miller presented the budget amendment for \$55,000 for safety work to be done in the Government Office Building (GOB) consisting of relocating three large transformers from the building’s basement to an outside location and installing a disconnect switch near the transformers. Delmarva Power and Light would cover the cost of the new transformers and the installation, and the County and City would bear the cost of connecting the new transformers to the building. The estimate for the work was \$110,000, which included the pricing proposal of \$98,800 and \$11,200 in contingency, and the cost would be shared evenly between the City and the County.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the budget amendment to legislative agenda.

Ordinance to reallocate funds from the City’s Capital Project Fund to provide additional money for the Zoo Administration Office project

Deputy City Administrator presented the ordinance to amend the City’s Capital Project Fund budget account to provide additional funding for the Zoo’s administrative office/trailer project. The initial request was \$180,000.00 wherein, \$100,000.00 was included in the FY’20 budget. After numerous reviews of the project, it was determined that the project could be completed for less by using in-house resources and reallocating bond interest proceeds in the amount of \$40,000.00.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance to legislative agenda.

CDBG - Revisions to the City's Citizen Participation Plan

Grants Manager Deborah Stam reported on the revised/updated Citizen Participation Plan for the Community Development Block Grant Entitlement Program to include allowing for alternate/virtual public hearing procedures and expedited public comment period during emergencies and disasters. This was in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the resolution to approve the amended Citizen Participation Plan.

Ordinance- Public Safety Tax Credit

City Administrator Julia Glanz reported on the ordinance to amend the Salisbury Municipal Code by adding a new section concerning a Public Safety Real Property Tax Credit. The new section would establish a tax credit program to provide public safety officials who reside within the municipal limits of the City of Salisbury with an annual reduction on their real property tax bills. The tax credit may be granted in an amount of up to \$2,500 per dwelling, but not to exceed the amount of the real property tax. In order to qualify, public safety officials must use the city property as their principal residence, be a full-time member of the Fire/Police Department, or serve as an active Fire Department volunteer.

Fire Chief John Tull added the tax credit would recognize first responders who provide an invaluable service to the citizens and community, and to help with recruitment and retention efforts by providing an incentive to live in the City they serve.

Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the ordinance to legislative agenda.

Vision Zero Action Plan presentation

DID Director Amanda Pollack reported that the Vision Zero Action Plan was initially presented to Council in April 2019 when Resolution No. 2934 was adopted and DID was charged with developing and adopting a Vision Zero Action Plan plan by July 1, 2020.

Transportation Project Specialist Will White presented the PowerPoint (attached and included as part of the minutes) on Vision Zero, which prioritizes system-wide safety over speed to maintain the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, who are the most vulnerable street users. He reported the program recognized that all traffic deaths were preventable and that humans made mistakes, and street design should restrict the severity of accidents to prevent death.

Mr. White said that DID assembled the Action Plan over the past year with input from other City Departments, agencies, and stakeholders to guide City Transportation staff in project planning and execution, and the Plan was meant to guide Capital Programming and Budgetary priorities.

After Mr. White presented the Vision Zero Action Plan PowerPoint, Council reached unanimous consensus to advance the resolution to adopt the FY2021-2025 Vision Zero Action Plan.

Ordinance for rent increase freeze during an emergency

Ms. Glanz reported that Governor Larry Hogan declared a state of emergency due to COVID-19 on March 5, 2020, and 36.5 million Americans had already filed for unemployment. Many residents in the City of Salisbury were unable to pay their rent and other bills. The industries hardest hit by the pandemic included transportation, professional services, retail, health care, education, and arts and entertainment. In Salisbury, those industries made up approximately 69 percent of the work force. She explained the goal was to keep families in their homes, and the proposed ordinance would bar rental increases during the State of Emergency, and for 90 days after it was lifted. The ordinance would require landlords to notify tenants to disregard a previous notice of rent increase during the time frame. Late fees would be prohibited if the tenant made a nonpayment or late payment. Also, landlords shall offer payment plans to tenants for payment of rental fees for no less than one year after the expiration of the State of Emergency.

Mr. Boda supported the legislation and asked about it applying to other emergencies such as snowstorms. Mayor Day said that as it was written it would apply to snowstorms which only impact the community for about a week. Ms. Jackson asked the public to communicate with their landlords and to pay their bills if they were able. Ms. Blake thought the legislation was clear and would help the most vulnerable during this emergency. Ms. Gregory said that all people deserved a home and should not be homeless due to things out of their control. President Heath reported receiving calls from tenants and realtors regarding some landlords attempting to benefit from the pandemic.

Four members of the public provided the following comments on the proposed legislation:

1. Sent Mayor Day language from Anne Arundel County. People must be motivated to change their behavior. If late fees are removed, people will not communicate with their landlords. Leave it alone and landlords will work out payment plans and work with their tenants. Forcing landlords to provide payment plans for 12 months after the State of Emergency is lifted is not productive.
2. Concerned with how the payment plans would be addressed in a court of law. Tenant could not be evicted for a year. This should be thought out as delinquent tenants would always be delinquent. Many landlords are single family landlords with their entire income from rent payments for paying mortgages, etc.
3. Some landlords did not know the law and the majority of them are decent people. Requested the adjective “unscrupulous” be removed from the legislation. She works with payment plans all the time and without the courts some would be unable to get assistance. She said everyone was in this together, and requested bringing landlords to the table to create language everyone could live with.
4. Keep the language in the legislation strong and do not weaken it, as renters were struggling.

Council reached unanimous consensus to support the legislation.

Council comments

Mr. Boda remarked on the imbalance and what they did had to be strong. Support your local restaurants.

Ms. Jackson said everyone was going through something, and they needed to do what was right for others. Pay your bills.

Ms. Blake said the legislation was good.

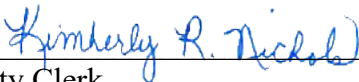
Ms. Gregory wanted everyone to stay safe, use masks and support their local businesses.

Mayor Day thanked Council for sharing their perspective. Said it was a moral obligation to pass and defend the legislation. He thought the language was written appropriately, and said this was not an indictment on people in the industry as a whole.

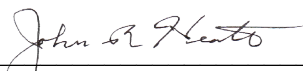
President Heath echoed what the Mayor said. The blood bank still needed blood, wear your masks and social distance.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the Work Session adjourned at 6:38 p.m.



City Clerk



Council President