

CITY OF SALISBURY
WORK SESSION
OCTOBER 18, 2021

Public Officials Present

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

Mayor Jacob R. Day (arrived 4:52)
Councilwoman Angela Blake
Councilwoman April Jackson

In Attendance

City Administrator Julia Glanz, Deputy City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Nate Sansom, Special Assistant to the Mayor, Assistant City Clerk Julie English, City Clerk Kimberly Nichols, Attorneys Heather Konyar and Michael Sullivan, and members of the public and press.

On October 4, 2021 the Salisbury City Council convened in a hybrid Work Session (in person and on Zoom Conferencing Video) at 4:30 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Ordinance to create PILOT program

Nate Sansom, Special Assistant to the Mayor, discussed the ordinance to revise Title 3 Revenue and Finance of the City Code to add Chapter 3.26 Payment In Lieu of Taxes to create a PILOT program for eligible affordable housing projects. He defined eligible projects as any project eligible to receive financing through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program administered through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. To qualify for a PILOT, no less than 60% of the units available in a project shall be reserved for households having no more than 60% of the area median income for 40 years. Mr. Sansom explained this was long-term, and the City was ensuring the developers were committed to the PILOT. The payment would be equal to \$400 times the number of affordable housing units within the development. They would not receive credit for units that were not affordable housing. The program mirrored the Green Street development of 2016, and created a template that would enable the Mayor to enter into agreements on behalf of the City. It was one of the central pillars of the Mayor’s “Here is Home” program announced on September 29, 2021.

President Heath asked if they started out in the program and had a unit that met the requirements, was there a mechanism to know if the status changed. Mr. Sansom noted in the draft agreement on page two there was an equation to be completed with each agreement (\$400 times the number of affordable housing units.) Each time they signed the program agreement, they would designate the number of affordable housing units within their development. If anything changed, they would be responsible for paying.

Mr. Boda asked if there was a mechanism for credit if there were any increases in their affordable housing units. Mr. Sansom said that the agreement would just need updating and since it was a 40 year agreement, it was in the realm of possibility that would occur.

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

Ordinance to create Fee Waiver program

Mr. Sansom said this program was one of Mayor Day’s primary pillars in the “Here is Home” proposal to incentivize residential development throughout the City. The Fee Waiver program would waive a number of fees associated with the development of residential single family and multi-family units and development projects in the City. Eligible projects would qualify for either full or partial fee waivers of fees including Comprehensive Connection Charges, Building Plan Review Fees, Building Permit Fees, Demo, Residential Building Fee, Gas Building Fee, Mechanical Building Fee, Plumbing Building Fee, Annexations Fees to include the Development Assessment Fee, Water & Sewer Connection Fees, Development Plan Review Fees, Subdivision Review Fees, Re-subdivision Review Fee, Critical Area Fees, Infrastructure Reimbursement Administrative Fee, Water Meter Setting Fee, and Fire Prevention Fees to include basic fees, expedited fees, after hours inspection fees, Fire Permit Fees to include Fire Alarm and Detection Systems and Sprinklers, Water Spray and Combined Sprinkler and Standpipe Systems.

Fees not waived included the Critical Land Area Program Fees, Water & Sewer Infrastructure Reimbursement Fee, Water Meter Tap Fee and Sewer Connection Fee, and any necessary reinsertion fee.

Mr. Sansom explained that to receive a full fee waiver, a program agreement must be executed within 90 days from the passage of the Fee Waiver Ordinance. This was a very narrow window because of Mayor Day’s objective to encourage development now. All fees would be paid in full and on time as the project progresses. The fees would not be waived up front, but reimbursement would occur upon the issuance of the certificate of occupancy. He reviewed the tiered system of the fee waivers, with the final certificate of occupancies required by June 30, 2025.

President Heath discussed emails he received regarding the program. People have interpreted the program as a ninety day window to sign up, obtain permits, and complete the project in ninety days. He added that the milestones were set in reasonable time periods and the program was meant to incentivize speed but not to create an impossibility for the developer.

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

Public Comments

Four members of the public discussed the following topics:

- Works at Joseph House and was so grateful for the concept of Housing First because it was clear to those working for the homeless that they could not be helped unless they had a place to stay. She was very grateful of the things happening under Mayor Day.

- Habitat for Humanity associate shared remarks by reading the attached letter, included as part of the minutes.
- As a Community Manager for an apartment complex, she wanted to inform everyone how Habitat, Salisbury Neighborhood Housing and Shore Up! had helped 80 families in her apartment complex, and helped them pay their rent and kept them off of the streets.
- They were able to keep the jobs in her company because of the assistance.
- There was a reduction in crime because people were supporting the local businesses.
- Mental health issues have increased due the pandemic, and being able to keep a home helps with stability in adults and children.
- Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity for Wicomico County stated they were in support of the two programs presented. She discussed the impact of low income tax credit properties.

Ms. Jackson said that affordable housing was definitely needed in Salisbury. Because of affordable housing, she could live in the neighborhood she lived in. When people lived paycheck to paycheck, it was hard especially when they had children to take care of. She supported “Here is Home” and said she often referred people to Ms. Hilligoss at Habitat.

Ms. Gregory knew how hard and desperate homelessness was, and when in that situation people were not aware always of the programs available to them.

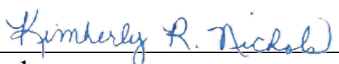
Ms. Blake said she took a lot of pride in Salisbury.

Mr. Boda supported “Here is Home” and thought that the number of people in the community near homelessness and co-habiting with others was where some of the relief would come.

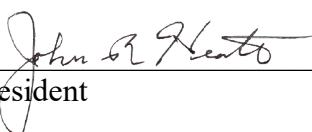
Mayor Day thanked SNHS and Habit for being present. He discussed the Tiny Home Village being planned and the chronically homeless in the City. Helping them have shelter, warmth in winter, cool in summer, would not create criminal activity. In the “Here is Home” program, it did not follow that every fee given up was a fee that would have been collected. Action on housing was being incentivized on housing because the City was in dire need of it.

President Heath said that what they were doing with these incentives was why he ran for office.

With no further business to discuss, the Work Session was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.



 City Clerk



 Council President

While working on the Emergency Rental Assistance Program it has put me in contact with hundreds of individuals every month. There are hundreds of individuals also applying at Shore-Up and Salisbury Neighborhood Housing. Over 275 individuals in September alone received assistance out of this grant from Habitat for Humanity Wicomico County. Dozens of those individuals are children in households who otherwise would have lost housing and ended up homeless. When speaking with people at the Board of Education, I am aware of dozens of teens in our schools whose families are homeless who face bullying at school for dirty clothing because they are living in cars or on our streets. I have spoken with people at the city government who relay to me that typically there are 25 individuals at any given time who are homeless, that number is up to 80 individuals.

The housing crisis in our county is growing more dire by the week as the owners of the properties sell their homes for profit in the current market, which is their right as a property owners, but with the increased cost of materials due to the pandemic, there are less houses being built and therefore, less places to rent. Epidemiologists have shown in various studies overcrowding in housing has been shown to be a factor in accelerating the spread of diseases in the past. Just this past week, a mother came in who was renting a property that had a rat infestation. Pictures were shown of bite marks on her children and blood on the sheets of the bed the children slept in at night. The mother told the property managers, who did nothing, and then reported the company to the housing authority. The property management company's response was to condemn the property, effectively evicting the family and making them homeless.

I am trying to lay out for you how several factors are coalescing to create a problem of mammoth proportions for our community. We must respond with measures, as are being proposed by Mayor Day, in order to prevent undue suffering.

We all live within a system that has resulted in a greater benefit to our national collective than any one individual could attain on their own merit: diseases like polio and smallpox are eradicated, many are literate because of our public education system, deformities such as cleft palates are nearly nonexistent, and cases of spina bifida are greatly diminished, due to measures to put folic acid (a key to fetal development) in bread and milk many decades ago. No one argues against proper nutrition requirements, disease prevention measures, and the value of an education. Yet, we are debating the merits of policies which will help provide a basic human necessity: shelter.

Last time, I spoke of how narratives impact us and the importance that the narratives we choose allow us to grow more compassionate. Something else essential to our societal well-being, and the narratives we choose to believe, is hope. In order to prevail in times of adversity, people need to believe in a system which is not indifferent to their suffering. As leaders in our community, you are entrusted with that civic responsibility of providing hope. I encourage you to continue working to provide that hope by creating a space within our local system for affordable, accessible housing; to provide shelter in a storm that is ravaging our land at large; to be a beacon of light and hope; so that one day, people will speak of our community response to such times with admiration rather than despair at wanton human greed and callousness.

Since working at Habitat for Humanity, I now have a growing fear and anxiety with the coming of the first of each month that more people will be evicted and we will begin to see

young children panhandling on the streets of our community. Who here has seen a destitute 4 year old on the streets? That is something I encountered while serving on medical mission trips to Honduras as a teenager. I assure you, it takes a toll on the soul to see such a sight. That this could be a reality here soon, fills me with a sorrow I do not have words for, but I encourage you to take such concerns seriously and respond in a way to prevent such senseless atrocities in our times.

Thank you.