

CITY OF SALISBURY
WORK SESSION
JANUARY 2, 2024

Public Officials Present

Council President D'Shawn M. Doughty
Vice President Angela M. Blake
Council member Sharon C. Dashiell

Mayor Randolph J. Taylor
Council member Michele Gregory

Public Officials Absent

Council member April R. Jackson

In Attendance

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Field Operations (FOps) Director Mike Dryden, Director of Housing and Community Development (HCDD) Muir Boda, Department of Infrastructure and Development (DID) Director Rick Baldwin, Sustainability Specialist Dylan Laconich, City Attorney Ashley Bosché, City Clerk Kim Nichols and members of the public

On January 2, 2024 the Salisbury City Council convened at 4:30 p.m. in Work Session in Council Chambers of SBY Headquarters, located at 115 S. Division Street. The following is a synopsis of the items discussed.

Discussion on City trash collection delays and fleet issues

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow and FOps Director Mike Dryden joined Council to discuss the recent trash collection delays. Mr. Kitzrow said a lot happened last week regarding trash collection and reminded Council this was not a new conversation as they were informed multiple times about the issues with Sanitation, particularly in the fleet. Due to the fleet desperately needing repair and FOps being behind on replacing inventory, they passed ordinances for additional funds to help with maintenance and labor costs just to try to keep up with demand. Right before Christmas FOps had another catastrophic failure with the fleet inventory on the eve of the busiest annual sanitation collection week which was between Christmas and New Year's.

Mr. Dryden said they had dealt with this for quite some time. They noticed in August 2023 that the vehicles were starting to break down more regularly. They had three new trucks coming, but the supply chain was the biggest hold up. It took two years to build the trucks once they were ordered. One of the vendors told him it took four years to get a dump truck. They leased a front loader which arrived today and hoped to have a rear load truck delivered this week. The Town of Berlin offered to assist FOps with their rear loader next week. With everything planned and scheduled to arrive, Mr. Dryden said he hoped to be back on track in a week and a half. He said every person at FOps was out helping, and her knew it had been an inconvenience for the citizens of Salisbury.

Mr. Kitzrow said everyone in the City had December 26th off, but FOPs did not. They worked that day to make sure the City was picked up. There was room for improvement on our communication, but we did not want to give out false information or mislead people. He said they would maintain their relationship with Berlin and even call on other municipalities. We had old equipment, and hoped there were no further break downs.

Ms. Jackson asked how long it had been since the City ordered the fleet and Mr. Dryden said FY24 was when the orders went in. She asked if the City saw this coming with the age of the trash trucks. Mr. Kitzrow said they knew they had an aging fleet which was why they passed Ordinance No. 2774 in January to order three trucks (two side loaders and a rear loader). He added they did not account for construction manufacturing delays- what once was months has become more months or even years, and we should think about our needs for three years from now and budget accordingly. Mr. Kitzrow said many people were asking about using private companies and outsourcing this to them, but it was not cost effective. Mr. Dryden added that some of the private contractors quoted \$3 million to \$5 million annually for citywide trash collection and were not interested in a short-term lease. Ms. Jackson wanted to ensure the citizens understood.

Ms. Gregory asked when the trucks would be delivered and Mr. Dryden said they were told in March. She thanked FOPs for their hard work and asked if there were any other options to fix this. Mr. Kitzrow said the equipment could be rented for premium costs, or we could look at other ways to pick up trash, buy time was not on our side. Ms. Gregory added that communication was probably the major frustration that she had heard from constituents. Not everyone was on Facebook and had not seen the press releases. She asked if the monthly newsletters were utilized. Mr. Kitzrow said that there was a fairly newer Comms Team and they met to determine how they would effectively communicate proactively and continue to do so throughout this and any other incident.

President Doughty asked Mr. Dryden for his plan to reassure people that they were doing something. Mr. Dryden said they had multiple teams and normally picked the trash up in four quadrants. With all of his staff working on it, they would be able to get more of that taken care of. He planned to be back on track in a week or two and stay fully staffed in Sanitation until they were caught up. Fortunately, the Parks Division had more time to devote to this since it was the winter months. Long term, the trucks had to be on a proper replacement schedule. They had to think long term due to the supply chain.

Mr. Doughty asked about the vendor and Mr. Dryden explained the relationship. Ms. Dashiell suggested the City release a timeline.

Ms. Blake said this was discussed on multiple occasions in the past year and the last budget session. The struggle was knowing there were three trucks ordered and we wanted to also order another one. We received emails concerning the tax increase and discussed repairing the trucks we had in order to not increase taxes, and then we cut out the extra truck. It was a constant balancing act and knowing when things would come in. Initially when the trucks were ordered no one knew how long the delay would be, not even the company. She said she recalled the company was notifying the City that they

had delays in getting the trucks built. She said we were talking about it balancing between tax increase versus the trucks we had on order. She said on December 4th Mr. Dryden came before Council and gave a very detailed plan with multiple steps. She also commended FOPs on their hard work and appreciated the citizens being patient.

One member of the public provided the following comments:

- A lot of the neighborhood apps were suggesting people with trucks take trash to the landfill. It might make sense to create a list of people with trucks willing to do this in case this occurred again.
- A temporary solution may be to provide additional bins for citizens to store their garbage until they caught up.
- Discussed communication confusion around “staggered service” statement.

President Doughty said he looked forward to not continuing this conversation and improving communication.

Budget amendment to accept funds from Bless Our Children for Santa’s Workshop Program

HCDD Director Muir Boda asked to accept the \$1,000 donation from Draper Holdings Charitable Foundation through their Bless Our Children Program to be placed into the Santa’s Workshop multi-year fund account. He said the annual event evolved from Santa’s Workshop at the Truitt Street Community Center to Santa’s Winter Wonderland on the Downtown Plaza. Toys for Tots and Cloverland Dairy provided toys, milk, and books which were distributed through the drive-thru Santa event.

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

MS-4 Presentation

DID Director Rick Baldwin and Sustainability Specialist Dylan Laconich joined Council to discuss the MS-4 (Municipal Separate Storm Water Sewer System), which was based in the Federal Clean Water Act. Delegated to Maryland to regulate storm drains in 1999. Our current permit was a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Small Municipal Separate Storm System MS-4 under the general permit number 13IM5500. He added that compliance was not an option for the City of Salisbury. The presentation Mr. Baldwin provided was included in the agenda packet.

Mr. Laconich discussed the following upcoming activities to get the City to 2025: Street Terrascaping, Conservation, Conservation landscaping, Water & Sewer Extension Policy, and BMP Retrofits.

Ms. Dashiell liked the Street Terrascaping but was concerned with the costs. The jut-outs on Fitzwater and Isabella Streets were in the way and were not maintained. The City may incur added expenses to maintain these lovely areas. She said she appreciated all DID’s work because she knew this was state required and she commended the creativity.

Mr. Baldwin said each of the projects would be considered by Field Operations, and before any of the projects were moved forward they would be brought back to Council in the planning stage. They were trying to accomplish this without having to come in for a large Capital Improvement request. In 2024, the focus on repaving would be on the west side of Salisbury. They would take advantage of looking at mobilizing equipment and doing the work since they would be on those streets anyway. They were desperate to find more acreage than they were able to achieve in the past four years.

Ms. Gregory noted a while ago the Meadow Program for residents was instituted and asked if the City could create a way to get credits for these meadows. Mr. Baldwin said they could review the criteria for State qualifications and utilize the Green Team.

Ms. Jackson asked what areas on the west side this would begin in. Mr. Baldwin directed her to the “Street Terrascaping” slide in the agenda packet where there was a map highlighting the streets on page 11. Ms. Blake said the packet showed Delaware Avenue and Cypress Street would be enhanced with tree plantings and green areas. Mr. Laconich would email Council a clearer map.

Mayor Taylor remarked that the .39 conversion rate turned it into a revenue stream with hook ups and asked how many we could tap into. Mr. Baldwin said the only way we could proceed was when the Health Department declared a health emergency, but some of the adjacent communities were already experiencing failures. As PFAS continued, the houses on septic systems were also on wells and could dramatically drive this forward. Better for the City, the Wicomico and the Chesapeake. Mayor Taylor asked about the 2025-2030 projection of the 226 acres that they wanted to convert, at \$100,000 per acre in the bioretention, that was \$22 million. We had to look at numbers that made it revenue neutral unless we could get state funding. Mr. Baldwin agreed it was a frightening figure and unfunded mandate and was a challenge. Mr. Kitzrow added that as some properties went through changes in use there may be opportunity removing impervious surfaces.

One member of the public provided the following comments:

- Schumaker Pond was the City and County’s responsibility and a lovely place. There were 26 houses there in the City of Salisbury. He hoped the City and County would do something about the hydrilla and lily pads.
- Many people do not get their information from the internet. The Daily Times did not do as good a job as the Independent. An uninformed public was the worst thing to have. He implored the City and County to hire a Public Information Officer to work for both entities to keep the public informed.

Ms. Blake said she reached out to Salisbury University’s Biology Department to discuss the possibility of them doing a research project on Schumaker Pond. She heard from the County that they could only do temporary fixes, such as shocking the pond, and they needed to know what parts of the City and County were polluting it. The City committed \$25,000 in the CIP about two years ago to resolve some issues with the pond and reassured the speaker it would be addressed with either research or recommendations.

Multi-use path on Armstrong Parkway update

Mr. Kitzrow said that the multi-use path on Armstrong Parkway update would be tabled. He said that the packet had some of the information on the pathway which was adjacent to the Coca-Cola Plant by Naylor Mill. Transportation Manager Will White would brief Council at a future date. President Doughty allowed the public to comment on the topic since some of them traveled at least two hours to attend the Work Session.

The following comments were received by 6 members of the public:

- Speaker was the Governor's appointee to the Maryland Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. She worked with City staff and community advocates on active transportation planning. She said when she spoke with cities and counties on the Eastern Shore she held Salisbury as an example of exemplary inclusive community planning, forward thinking about active transportation with equity, economic, environmental, and health impacts. They participated on this project in a community meeting held with MoveSBY Planning. This part of the trail was approved and the contractor was on-site in June scheduled to begin work, but the project was pulled. There was a great need to the most vulnerable for the shared-use pathway and the project was very much in line with Best Practices, Safe Streets, MDOT priorities, and what the previous City Administration and Council approved. She urged Council to consider this and did not know why the topic was pulled. The project had already been funded by a State grant. She drove over two hours to attend but would come back to speak again.
- Speaker was the Director of Land Use and Policy for the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy. His organization was leading an effort to create a regional trail network across the Eastern Shore, which had fewer trails than other regions in Maryland. They held Salisbury as a champion for trail development and maintenance. Trails connect people to job centers, parks, schools and provides active transportation and healthier lifestyles. The trail development paid dividends in the future and was one of the best investments communities could make. This was a great project and he highly encouraged it to be considered.
- The speaker, representing the Green Team, voiced her support for the project. It was very important for the reasons mentioned by the speakers before her.
- Speaker spoke in support of bicycle infrastructure and providing separated bike lanes away from traffic to ensure safety. Most people he spoke with did not feel safe enough to ride their bikes to work. He hoped the City continued supporting projects such as this so that more people would take this option.
- Speaker was member of Eastern Shore Running Club, Eastern Shore International Mountain Biking Association, Ocean Bello Club, and BPAC. He supported this project and all other bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements necessary to provide better access to businesses and recreation. The belief that these infrastructure improvements would slow down motorized transportation was true and was the point. They were designed to make it safer for everyone to get where they needed to go and would create Salisbury as a destination for active people.

- Speaker was a BPAC committee member and said connectivity was a huge issue in Salisbury. With Routes 50 and 13 going through the City, it seemed to be built for cars. It was important to have the opportunity to bike in the City.

President Doughty thanked the speakers who came out and invited them to return when Mr. White made the presentation. Mr. Kitzrow apologized for the change in the agenda and emphasized that the project would impact some of the businesses along Armstrong, and wanted to make sure they had representation from them. Coca-Cola was the primary industry that would be impacted by this and we wanted to know where they stood in this before a formal recommendation was made.

Ms. Gregory asked if this was one of the projects placed on hold when we realized DID was overwhelmed with projects. Mr. Kitzrow said the project was in the queue to start moving forward during the summertime and was put on hold.

Employee Child Care Services Discussion

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow said he and Councilwoman Michele Gregory had discussed for several years the idea of employee child care services and wanted to see if Council wanted to further explore the concept as a benefit for the City's employees. He stated they noticed that one of the topics was child care around recruitment and retention efforts within organizations, and should an employer provide either child care or some sort of subsidized opportunity. There would be costs associated with it to make it affordable, and it could either be running the program, partnering with someone, or providing some stipend to help employees needing the service for ages birth to five years old.

Ms. Gregory said that prior to COVID, the country was already in a crisis mode to find quality and enough child care. When COVID hit, over half of the child care facilities closed. One of the things they wanted to address was the huge shortage of child care, and employees without child care would not show up for work, or wouldn't even take a job because the costs outweighed the benefits for them. Begin able to offer this to employees would be huge, and she knew the wait lists were incredibly long. This benefit would make the City an employer people would want to come work for, and it would help retain employees. She thought the City should have a facility of their own, and being close to the employees would be monumental. Mr. Kitzrow said there would be a cost encumbered by the employer to do this if it was created as a cost effective model. He wanted to get Council consensus for Ms. Gregory and himself to explore this further.

Ms. Dashiell said it would be a cost to the City, but in order to retain trained employees, it was a necessary cost.

Ms. Gregory said she thought the benefits far outweighed the costs to administer it.

President Doughty said his former employer during COVID provided a stipend for child care. He did not think any employers were even doing that.

Ms. Gregory added that there was a great shortage now and people were now planning pregnancies around child care availability. They could offer stipends, but if there was no availability, that would be no benefit. The City had grant opportunities they could apply for to help.

Ms. Jackson said this was crucial and shared there was inadequate child care available.

Mr. Kitzrow said it sounded like there was enough interest from Council to do some further exploring.

COUNCIL RULES OF ORDER

This topic was tabled to allow Council more time to review the Rules and for all to be present to participate.

ADMINISTRATION AND COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Kitzrow wished everyone a Happy New Year.

Mayor Taylor said about 2500 people attended the New Year's Eve celebration Downtown. It was a good event and he appreciated the turnout.

Ms. Jackson agreed with Mayor Taylor that it was a nice turnout, but she got sick.

Ms. Gregory said she did not attend, but reminded people to get their COVID boosters, flu shots, and pneumonia shots. Prioritize your health so that others don't get sick.

Ms. Blake said the New Year's event was wonderful, and gave kudos to the employees and departments that helped it run smoothly. If healthy enough, please donate blood.

Ms. Dashiell wished everyone a Happy New Year. She appreciated the experience.

President Doughty wished everyone a Happy New Year. To see everyone happy and wanting to experience the best in 2024 made him proud.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, President Doughty adjourned the Work Session at 5:40 p.m.



City Clerk



Council President