



SPECIAL WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT

Council President D'Shawn M. Doughty, Council Vice President Angela Blake, Councilwoman April R. Jackson, Councilwoman Michele R. Gregory, Councilwoman Sharon C. Dashiell, Mayor Randy Taylor

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, City Clerk Julie English, and City Attorney Ashley Bosché

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The City Council convened in a Special Work Session on September 9, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Office Building Council Chambers, Room 301, located at 125 N. Division Street. After reviewing the emergency exit instructions, President Doughty turned to the City Attorney Ashley Bosché in regard to a legal question. How should second legal opinions be obtained and what did that look like going forward? In summary, it was stated that the Mayor could not retain legal counsel without approval from the council. Additionally, City funds would not be permitted for use as payment to counsel not approved by the Council.

Council President recused himself from the remainder of the Special Work Session due to a conflict of interest. Vice President Angela Blake took over the meeting.

RESOLUTIONS

Vice President Blake presented a resolution to confirm she had the authority to execute all closing documents on behalf of the City to convey the Mitchell Landing Apartment Complex from the City of Salisbury to the Wicomico County Housing Authority.

Ms. Dashiell asked if Council, as the Legislative Branch, had the authority to sign off on something that would normally be handled by the Executive Branch. Ms. Bosché responded that "executing settlement documents to effectuate contractual obligations is neither a legislative nor executive function; it is ministerial act".

Ms. Dashiell then asked why it had taken so long for this to happen. She added that the project had begun in 2021 and acknowledged it was a different administration then. Ms. Blake responded that a commitment letter had been emailed to Council.

Ms. Jackson expressed her frustration with the condition of Mitchell Landing while people were still living in those conditions.

Ms. Gregory reminded everyone that Covid was still very active when this project began and things were very backed up. She believed that was a contributing factor regarding the timeline of this project.

Ms. Blake pointed out that the Administration has had different opinions on how the project should be handled.

Ms. Jackson asked that there be no finger pointing. The current condition of Mitchell Landing did not solely fall on the shoulders of Mayor Taylor.

Mayor Taylor was disappointed that the City was not receiving any money for the property. He stated that when he requested a commitment letter, it raised questions with requirements.

Ms. Bosché clarified that the purpose of the proposed resolution was to confirm that the Council Vice President could sign on behalf of the City, not that she was signing.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Speaker #1 spoke in favor of Mitchell Landing being rehabbed into subsidized housing. She was not in favor of taxes being increased again.
- Speaker #2 was in favor of waiting for the commitment letter to proceed with the Mitchell Landing project. He blamed former Mayor Day for the condition of Mitchell Landing.
- Speaker #3 spoke in favor of affordable housing. She was concerned about the City being sued. She was in favor of having a back up plan.
- Speaker #4 spoke on behalf of the homeless community – veterans, single families, disabled. She felt people were always trying to survive rather than to live.
- Speaker #5 spoke of his love for the City. Asked for more empathy and passion from the body. He reminded them that they were there for the citizens of the city and to be kind.
- Speaker #6 provided a neuroscience perspective. By helping those who cannot help themselves, the body was helping the community prosper neurologically and through humanity.
- Speaker #7 was in favor of ensuring the commitment letter was accurate and acceptable. She believed in taking the Mayor's word that the document would be signed.

- Speaker #8 spoke in favor of affordable housing. Agreed with comments made by Speaker #1. She shared the benefits of having affordable housing.
- Speaker #9 expressed his frustration with the Mayor delaying the progress of the Mitchell Landing project. He implored the body to move forward with the resolution.
- Speaker #10 spoke about the struggles to find affordable housing in the city. He agreed with the words of Speaker #9.

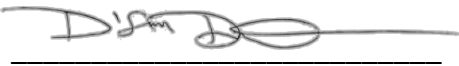
Ms. Jackson, Ms. Blake, and Ms. Gregory were in favor of moving the resolution forward to legislative session. Ms. Dashiell was not in favor of moving it forward.

ADJOURNMENT / CONVENE IN A LEGISLATIVE SESSION

With no further business to discuss, the Special Work Session adjourned at 6:58 p.m.



City Clerk



Council President