



**WORK SESSION
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 16, 2024**

PUBLIC OFFICIALS PRESENT

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

PUBLIC OFFICIALS ABSENT

Councilwoman April R. Jackson

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Arts, Business, & Culture Director Allen Swiger, Arts, Business, & Culture Economic Development Director Derek Jarmon, City Clerk Julie English, City Attorney Ashley Bosché

WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

The City Council convened in a Work Session on September 16, 2024 at 4:30 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 the floor over to City Administrator Andy Kitzrow for a proposed Horizon modification.

Horizon Program Update

Mr. Kitzrow explained how the Horizon Program began and how it was designed to revitalize Downtown Salisbury by encouraging development. He stated that the program offered tax abatements for redevelopment projects within the Central Business District and riverfront area, and strived to increase property values by at least 10 million dollars. He explained the effects Covid had on the program. Mr. Kitzrow added that a successful program could generate \$790,000 in tax revenue over 20 years. Additionally, the development of The Ross only occurred because of this program. The proposed abatement schedule would be called "Horizon Light." The new proposal would increase the property value by at least \$5 million rather than \$10 million and cut the years from 20 to 10. He shared that the State had created a similar

incentivized program but included the affordable housing component. He concluded by stating the program could remain with the current schedules, or it could be modified by an ordinance.

President Doughty then asked Mayor Taylor to explain what his thoughts were on this modification. Mayor Taylor mentioned that his reasoning for reducing the abatement schedule was to allow people with the smaller end of the development to benefit from it.

In responding to a question by Ms. Blake, Mr. Kitrow shared that there were seven bigger development projects in the pipeline but some may not participate due to incentives they received from the state. Ms. Blake asked how many applications they had in and Mr. Kitrow responded with only one, being the Ross. They had been receiving the incentives since July of this year.

Ms. Gregory asked if any of the projects required the lower threshold. Mr. Kitrow explained that after the initial applications were received and conversations were had with the developers, the projects would be above the \$10 million threshold.

Ms. Dashiell was concerned that the taxpayers were asking for affordable, attainable housing. If affordable housing was part of the incentive, another need would be met.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Speaker #1 addressed the need for affordable housing.
- Speaker #2 felt this new proposed plan needed to have attainable housing included.
- Speaker #3 explained how the proposed Horizon modification would not be beneficial. He felt that the Salisbury Towne Center would not be considered without the Horizon Program.
- Speaker #4 was not in favor of reducing the abatement schedule for the Horizon Program, it would not benefit the developers.
- Speaker #5 believed incentivizing was crucial for developers and was not in favor of reducing the abatement schedule.
- Speaker #6 emailed her comment, which stated she was in favor of development in the CBD. The Horizon “lite” Program was great if developers would move forward with it. She agreed that affordable housing is critical.

Market Development Project

Downtown business owner Lauren Gilmore explained that she lived downtown from 2014-2018 and bought her business downtown during the height of the pandemic. She shared a strategic initiative for business sustainability and growth and felt that a higher density downtown would attract more businesses and increase foot traffic. The Downtown Business Alliance believed the key to breaking the cycle of business closures and prolonged vacancies was to unite businesses and developers. The three phases they were working towards was investments and

endowments, revitalization programs and incentivizing new businesses. Nicole Rodgers, owner of Two Scoops Ice Cream, added that they were rebranding downtown to communicate clearly what downtown already was. They needed unity, support and collaboration to transform downtown and turn it into a vibrant destination.

President Doughty thanked them for investing in Downtown Salisbury. In responding to President Doughty's question for their vision for downtown, Nicole Blackwater responded that she would like to have more people employed downtown.

Ms. Gregory was glad to see them and appreciated the presentation to council. She was proud of them and encouraged them to keep moving forward.

Ms. Rodgers shared that the alliance was started after watching their friends close their businesses. They wanted "a seat at the table" and their voices heard. Ms. Gilmore added that the Ross helped grow the membership at her business. Ms. Gilmore decided to stay downtown when she saw more businesses opening. Ms. Rodgers explained that she wanted people to come downtown and stay all day. Ms. Blake thanked them for coming and added that she was blown away by the support and would like it to keep moving forward.

There were no public comments on this topic.

Ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a contract with the Maryland State Arts Council for the purpose of accepting grant funds in the amount of \$41,002 and to approve a budget amendment to the grant fund to appropriate these funds for expenses associated with the Maryland Folk Festival.

Mr. Swiger confirmed that the funds were for expenses incurred from the Maryland Folk Festival.

With no public comments on the topic, council reached consensus to move the ordinance forward to legislative session.

Tow Fees Discussion

Police Chief Meienschein and Command Staff spoke to council regarding tow fees. Chief Meienschein deferred to Captain Felts to provide an explanation for changes made to the tow fees on the fee schedule. A discussion took place between SPD and 24 out of 25 tow companies to get basic figures. The discussions were specific to emergency tows where the tow company had 30 minutes to arrive on scene. The recommended fee was \$425 for a basic police tow.

- Speaker #1 explained that they could not continue their business with the price of the current fees.
- Speaker #2 stated that they needed the extra fees to operate. He also requested the affidavit, prohibiting tow companies from assisting another company, be removed.

- Speaker #3 agreed with Speakers 1 and 2. He stated that the \$425 is a minimal pick up and they are not permitted to increase that charge unless it is approved by the towing supervisor. He added that he makes double when called by the state since they are permitted to charge the extra fees. President Doughty requested that the Maryland State Police be sent to him, however, the speaker responded that the state does not currently have a fee schedule for towing. He recommended looking into Ocean City's fee schedule and process.

President Doughty shared that he received concerns from constituents regarding outrageous tow bills, but understood that the tow companies need to stay in business.

Mayor Taylor added that he was not sure about the market rate for tow companies. One tow company representative explained that the \$425 was for emergency tows. Additionally, he explained that a normal tow was between \$125 and \$175. Tow companies were required by the City of Salisbury to show up in a 30-minute timeframe and were penalized if they chose not to go.

President Doughty concluded by requesting that the tow companies provide him with as much information as possible to the council so it could be reviewed.

Chief Meienschein added that they wanted good relationships with the tow companies and that they were needed.

ADMINISTRATION UPDATES/COMMENTS

Mayor Taylor hoped to see everyone at the Maryland Folk Festival.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ms. Gregory shared that they were still in need of volunteers for the festival and that it did not happen without volunteers.

Ms. Dashiell shared that the Eastern Shore Mission of Mercy took served around 1,108 patients for dental work with 930 volunteers assisting. She wanted to personally thank the Director of Infrastructure and Development for volunteering.

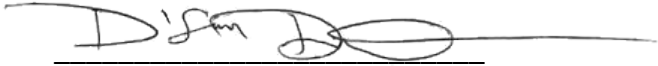
Ms. Blake thank everyone for their continued prayers and support as she dealt with her house fire. She hoped to see everyone at the Maryland Folk Festival and encouraged everyone to donate blood and plasma and become an organ donor.

President Doughty asked to keep Councilwoman Jackson in their thoughts as she had an upcoming procedure. He also wished his mom a happy birthday. President Doughty concluded by acknowledging that Ocean City was in our thoughts as they dealt with a tragedy.

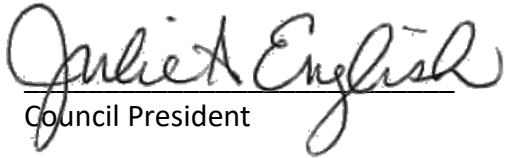
Ms. English shared her excitement about having a Deputy City Clerk starting in the office next week.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the Special Work Session adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D'Sm" followed by a stylized flourish, positioned above a horizontal line.

City Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Julie A. English" in a cursive style, positioned above a horizontal line.

Council President