



Board of County Commissioners

David J. Caporale, President
William R. Atkinson, Commissioner
Creade V. Brodie, Jr., Commissioner
Jason M. Bennett, CPA, Administrator
T. Lee Beeman, Esq., Attorney

Public Business Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 23, 2023 - 5:00 PM

*Allegany County Office Building, 701 Kelly Road, Allegany Room 100
Cumberland, Maryland 21502*

WE ASK THOSE CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD TO REGISTER ON THE SIGN-UP SHEET AND CONDENSE THEIR COMMENTS TO FIVE MINUTES OR LESS.

THIS WILL ALLOW AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE WISHING TO COME FORWARD TO HAVE A CHANCE TO SPEAK. WE WILL CONDUCT OUR MEETING IN AN ORDERLY FASHION AND ASK THAT EVERYONE WISHING TO SPEAK FIRST BE RECOGNIZED BY THE PRESIDENT, COME TO THE MICROPHONE, AND GIVE HIS OR HER NAME AND ADDRESS PRIOR TO THEIR COMMENTS.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those in attendance.

2. Call to Order & Roll Call

The regular meeting of the County Commissioners of Allegany County was held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, Allegany Room 100, 701 Kelly Road, Cumberland, at 04:59 PM on 3/23/2023. Present: County Commissioner Creade V. Brodie, Jr., County Commissioner William R. Atkinson, County Commission President David J. Caporale, County Administrator Jason Bennett, County Attorney Lee Beeman.

3. Approval of Agenda

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

4. Approval of Previous Meetings Minutes

Upon Motion made by County Commissioner William R. Atkinson, seconded by County Commissioner Creade V. Brodie, Jr., and duly carried, the Minutes from the previous public business meeting were approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

5. Presentations

A. Mountain Maryland Trails - Check Presentation

Larry Brock attended the meeting on behalf of Mt Maryland Trails. He recapped the work that the 501c3 has done over the past year, working with the City and County to promote safety, tourism, upkeep, and beautification. Mr. Brock presented a check to Allegany County in the amount of \$5,000, to be applied to a brush cutter that the County uses to help keep the trail cut. He noted that this is a private-public partnership and the organization is thankful for the cooperation and assistance from the county.

6. Public Hearing

A. Constant Yield Public Hearing

Jason M. Bennett, CPA, County Administrator, reminded the Commissioners that each year, as part of the budget process, a constant yield hearing is held. Mr. Bennett explained that an advertisement was run in the Cumberland Times-News back on March 13, 2023, to display the constant yield message and rates. Copies of the advertisement and rates as discussed by Mr. Bennett are attached to and made a part of these minutes. Mr. Bennett pointed out that state law provides that it may calculate the "constant yield", which is the tax rate necessary for the County to collect the exact same tax as collected last year. He explained that the constant yield is sent to every County as the State starts the budget process.

Mr. Bennett then announced that this evening was the Public Hearing on the Constant Yield. He then presented information as set forth on the attached tax rate information sheet.

Mr. Bennett repeated that this evening was the Public Hearing, the chance for any public comment on the rates that will be moving forward with the budget. He asked the Commissioners for any comment they had before opening the public hearing and taking public comment.

Nancy Brant came to speak regarding Constant Yield. She requested that the Commissioners hold the line on spending, and reiterated that she would like to know where her money is going. She notes that the local population is declining, and she thinks it's because of our taxes.

Hearing closed.

7. Action Agenda

8. Consent Agenda

Upon Motion by County Commissioner Creade V. Brodie, Jr., seconded by County Commissioner William R. Atkinson, and Motion carried, the Board of County Commissioners approved and adopted the Consent Agenda as recommended by the County Administrator.

A. Request for Tax Abatement - (2) Properties from the City of Cumberland

The City of Cumberland is requesting tax abatement for two properties. The properties have been reclaimed by the City with plans to be demolished. Taxes were paid and are current, and the City is seeking reimbursement retroactively. Properties in question are located at 102 Altamont Terrace and 220 Harrison Street, and total \$1,028.74

B. Operating Agreement with Aramark Correctional Services, LLC - Amendment No. 5

Aramark provides food service for the Allegany County Detention Center. This is Amendment #5 to their contract running through July 7, 2024, approximately a 12% increase.

C. Rules & Regulations Governing Employees of Allegany County, Maryland - Resolution 23-6

Approval of job description for the position of County Investigator Narcotics with Allegany County Office of the State's Attorney. Approval of Public Information area to be renamed to Public Relations & Communications, including revision of Kati Kenney's job title to be Manager of Public Relations & Communications. Approval of job description changes to the position of Gaming Administrator with the Allegany County Department of Finance

D. Bowling Green Drainage Improvement Project - Phase III - Request to Approve Award of Construction Contract

The County completed the design and construction plans, bidding and award, and will perform the construction administration associated with Phase III (POI 8) of the recommended improvements. The County believes that this approach is fiscally sound and would provide greater benefit to the residents of the Bowling Green area. Advertisement for the project began on February 10, 2023 and a pre-bid conference was held on February 23, 2023. Three (3) bids were received and opened on March 14, 2023 and all were considered responsive. First Fruits Excavating, Inc. was the low bidder with a total bid of \$1,185,906.50. A bid tabulation is attached for reference.

E. Priority Letter to MDOT - 2023 Allegany County

The purpose of the County priority letter is for the local jurisdictions to publicly express to MDOT our local priorities for major capital projects so those needs can be included in the decision-making process of MDOT's budget. Each year, the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) or six-year capital budget for State transportation projects, is revised based on these letters, State needs, State goals, and funding availability. To be in compliance with State regulations, Allegany County coordinated with the local jurisdictions to compile one prioritized list of transportation projects and then demonstrate how the projects relate to the Maryland Transportation Plan's goals. It includes 9 existing projects and 6 potential future projects.

F. Community Promotions Request - Oldtown Summerfest

Oldtown Summerfest request for \$1,000 sponsorship.

9. Public Comment

Constituents – In order of sign-up sheet:

Sandra Lucile Raeder - Spoke on Women's History in Allegany County, including past female politicians Linda Golden, Barbara Roque and Francis Hughes Glendenning, who promoted the public partnership first Maryland Women's Heritage Center and remained president for a decade. She encouraged citizens to study women contributions to Allegany County local women's history, and quoted "adding her story to his story, to tell our story."

Michael Mudge - Expressed concern about a real estate transaction completed on 2/1/23 at 17202 McMullen Hwy with a sale price of \$699,900. The property was reportedly purchased by The Women's Health Center of WV. Mr. Mudge asked to know what the permitting process would be if this business wished to open an abortion clinic at this address.

Chris Stevens - President of the Washington Street Association, commented on the MDOT Priority Letter. He noted that the letter left out the Washington Bridge on its list of priority projects. The neighborhood association recommends exploring the same style of bridge as used in Oakland. Chris asked for a unified front from the state, city, county and neighborhood to work with CSX. He noted that the association had previously hired their own engineer and were willing to engage with all parties to stop misinformation and proceed forward. Jason Bennett, County Administrator, noted that the priority letter is specific to MDOT projects and the bridge in question was tied to Federal dollars. Commissioner Caporale commented that the County would participate in any way that they could to be helpful, and noted his frustration with CSX and their stance that a replacement bridge would need to support the passage of double stack trains. He notes that it has been 6 years, and no double stacks have been able to use this line. In the mean time, the bridge could have been repaired at the existing height.

Chip English - Washington Street resident echoed Chris Stevens remarks, and reiterated that the Washington Street bridge is critical to residents, especially when it comes to emergency vehicle access to the upper part of the street.

10. Reports

A. County Administrator

County Administrator Bennett commented that the County contributed Federal bridge money to the last two bridge projects that the City of Cumberland has completed.

B. County Attorney

No additional comments

11. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Brodie commented that he agreed with commentators and Commissioner Caporale on the ridiculousness of the Washington Street Bridge project. He feels that CSX is trying to get out of paying for the bridge by focusing on the double stack train car requirement.

Commissioner Atkinson commented that when he ran for office he wanted to let citizens know that good things are happening in Allegany County. The County does have an Economic Development plan, being implemented by very dedicated and hardworking staff. It's not as easy task, but they are working from a plan to move forward. Some of the

tasks they work on can't always be shared with the public until the project comes to fruition. One of the tasks in the plan is to work on housing, relevant to employee retention. There are 3 housing projects being worked on in the county right now. Additionally, money is allocated for Downtown revitalization, Invest Allegany grants, George Edwards Fund dollars. It's millions of dollars being pumped into downtowns, to promote market rate apartments and renovate our store fronts. We partnered with ACM for the Makerspace and IT Center of Excellence, established the Tech Incubator in Frostburg to help retain FSU students in our workforce. Our staff goes out and talks to our local businesses regularly to focus on growing and keeping our current businesses. We reached out to Hunter Douglas numerous times over the past year with no response, and it sure was not for a lack of trying on our part. Tourism is busy, receiving some Federal Funding for the \$25M Riverpark Project that will spur downtown development. The tourism sector is 3rd largest employee group in the county, generating \$183M visitor spending annually, and \$48M in tax revenue annually. Tourism works closely with Economic Development, and are working to attract outdoor recreation businesses to locate here, which is part of what our plan lays out; finding businesses who appreciate our amenities, not just the incentives. We continue to work with the George Edwards fund: 11 projects in Allegany County to be announced soon, to the tune of \$5.8M, which is being matched by \$13 million. We are really taking those funds and strategically applying them to projects that are having a big impact. Creating 200 new jobs, 250 new housing units, and helping 4 existing businesses grow in a big way. I want to give kudos to our Economic Development staff, they really work hard and have the best interest of our County at heart.

12. Reminders/Upcoming Meetings

- A. NEXT MEETING - April 6, 2023, 5:00 PM

13. Adjournment

There being no further business to come to the attention of the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 5:47 PM.

Commission President

Recording Secretary