



Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

Mayor Raymond M. Morriss
Councilman Richard J. “Rock” Cioni
Councilman Eugene T. Frazier
Councilman James L. Furstenberg
Councilman Brian R. Lepley

City Administrator Jeffrey F. Silka
City Solicitor Michael S. Cohen
City Clerk Allison K. Layton

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502
Tuesday, April 21, 2026; 4:45 pm

PRESENT: Mayor Raymond M. Morriss; Council Members: Richard J. “Rock” Cioni Eugene Frazier, James Furstenberg, and Brian Lepley.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Mark Gandolfi, Comptroller; Brooke Cassell, Director of Public Works; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; and Jason McCoy, Police Lieutenant;

Media: Hannah Fout from WCBC, and Theresa McMinn from Cumberland Times News
Members of the Shade Tree Commission

I. SHADE TREE COMMISSION UPDATE

Mr. Silka turned the meeting over to Frank Clark, Secretary of the Shade Tree Commission, he advised that he had a copy of a Shade Tree Plan from 2011, and according to the document the tree canopy coverage recommendation was 27%. The plan had a goal to increase this to 33% by 2020 and 45% by 2030 and Mr. Clark felt that this was not going to happen.

A member of the Commission has helped develop some responsibilities that they feel need to be addressed:

- **Public Outreach:** The need for a **coordinator** to manage free tree programs and updated social media.
- **Tree Canopy Protection:** A significant need exists for maintenance of existing trees, including watering and vine removal, which often falls behind due to union labor restrictions or a lack of dedicated personnel.
- **Planning and Inventory:** With the help of **Allegany College**, building a comprehensive tree inventory and finding ways to avoid planting trees over utility lines.
- **Commercial Partnerships:** The Commission hopes a coordinator could encourage private businesses to improve their "streetscape" by planting trees.
- **School Programs:** They emphasized the importance of educating the youth on the science and benefits of trees.
- **Budgeting for Growth:** The current budget is strictly for **maintenance**, but the Commission is asking the Council for funds and personnel to move from maintaining to actively **increasing** the canopy.

II. INITIAL BUDGET PRESENTATION

Mark Gandolfi presented the first draft of the FY27 budget (*see handout*), emphasizing several key financial points. He highlighted that the Water and Sewer/Trash funds operate independently in terms of their income and expenses, unlike the other funds to be discussed.

The General Fund budget yields a \$377K unassigned fund balance surplus. In terms of water and sewer, if no increase is implemented, these funds will result in negative cash flows of \$698K (water) and \$2.2M (sewer), leaving just one month of operating cash. The recommendation is an 8% increase, which would provide a neutral cash flow.

The sewer fund has not seen an increase since 2015, and because cash reserves are being utilized for the solar and switchgear project at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, without an 11% increase, a projected deficit of \$2.2M and negative cash flows would be the result in about four years.

The following are a few budget highlights:

Property Tax Base: With a 6% increase in the assessable tax base, the recommendation is to maintain the current tax rate.

Personnel Costs: A 3% COLA increase is recommended for all full-time personnel and longevity applies for union employees. Part-time and seasonal hours have been reduced by 8,000, or four full-time employees.

Capital Equipment: Purchases include five police patrol vehicles, a five-ton roller, a large excavator, and the replacement of the only city-owned forklift.

Capital Expenditures: \$188M in projects are planned over the next five years, including a 78" pipeline at the WWTP and bridge repairs, with \$78M in grant funds expected.

Debt requirements: The closure of AES had a financial impact on the City, as they purchased \$1M in water from us annually. AARPA contributions helped reduce a significant amount of debt and fund capital projects.

With no increases, our debt ratio leaves one month of operating funds, while an 8% increase in water (\$2.44/av. per household per month) and an 11% increase in sewer (\$4.26/av. per household per month) will leave just over two months of operating funds. Rate increases do not yield profits; instead, they cover expenses incurred.

The sewer fund is currently operating at a deficit, so this increase aims to mitigate future risks. Significant water line improvement projects are in place, and \$296K in budget cuts were made before the increase was presented.

Non-Major Governmental Funds: Street improvements for consideration include Cherrywood, Mt. Royal, Shades Lane, Cecelia St., Mechanic St., and Harrison lane widening

III. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

No updates

IV. REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA OF APRIL 21, 2026

Order No. 8 refers to the Utility partner service line agreement, offering homeowners additional warranty coverage for water/sewer line repair work.

V. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

There have been 15 applications received to participate in the 250th celebration parade.

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on May 5, 2026



Closed Session Minutes

City Hall, 57 N. Liberty Street, Cumberland, MD 21502

2nd Floor Conference Room

Tuesday, April 21, 2026; 4:15 p.m.

On April 21, 2026, the Mayor and City Council met in public session beginning at 4:15 p.m. in the 2nd floor Conference Room of City Hall for the purpose of immediately closing the to discuss A) matters related to the reappointment of the City Solicitor and B) to receive legal advice from the City Solicitor relative to the availability of a particular tax credit. Authority to close the session is provided by Sections 3-305(b)(1)(i) and (b)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

MOTION: Motion to enter into Closed Session was made by Council Member Frazier seconded by Council Member Lepley, and was passed on a vote of 5-0.

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members Richard “Rock” Cioni, Jimmy Furstenberg, Eugene Frazier, and Brian Lepley

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison K. Layton, City Clerk; Michael Cohen, Solicitor; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; and Mark Gandolfi, Comptroller