



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

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WORK SESSION

City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502
Tuesday, December 2, 2025; 4:15 pm

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

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Michael Cohen, City Solicitor; and Chief Pyles

Media: Hannah Fout, WCBC and Theresa McMinn, Cumberland Times News

I. DISCUSSION REGARDING ELECTRIC BICYCLES, SCOOTER AND SKATEBOARDS ON CITY SIDEWALKS

Mr. Silka provided an update on recommendations resulting from recent code research. (*See handout*)

The section relating to the “Cumberland Mall” needs to be rescinded/replaced because there is no longer a mall and the provisions covering special aspects of the closed pedestrian mall are null.

Repeal and restate Article VII for bicycles because 90% of the ordinance is null and void due to outdated information.

We need to define what counts as a bike, considering the updates to e-bikes, scooters, and skateboards in relation to sidewalks. This can cause problems with outdoor dining and also creates safety issues for pedestrians.

Mr. Silka advised that he and Michael Cohen would draft a new code to replace the outdated code currently in place, and all Councilmembers agreed.

II. DISCUSSION ON A DEDICATED PARADE ROUTE IN THE CITY

Mr. Silka expressed the desire to establish a dedicated parade route throughout the city to improve and streamline the process. He reviewed the route (*See Handout*) that begins beside Rose's parking lot and loops around ending on Queen City Drive. All agreed to the established route.

III. DISCUSSION ON THE LOCATION OF THE POSSIBILITY SHOP

Mayor Morriss advised that 28 Washington Street is being sold to AHEC West. Councilmember Cioni expressed his concerns about the location given the money spent on downtown upgrades.

Mayor Morriss added that the zoning at 28 Washington Street allows for the business.

IV. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

Mr. Silka updated that Ruth Davis-Rogers, Historic Preservation Coordinator, has tendered her resignation. Her last day in the office will be December 19, 2025.

V. REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA OF DECEMBER 2, 2025

There are first readings on surplus property sales and there is another Choose Cumberland award recipient.

VI. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

- Lily Books and Café ribbon cutting Friday at 10:00
- Chipotle has been well-received since it opened last Wednesday.
- Fort Hill will be heading to their 6th State Championship this Saturday in Annapolis

- The Tree Lighting was well attended, and the brief snow squall enhanced the ambiance, making the event more festive.
- Shop Small Saturday was successful with heavy traffic in stores downtown.
- The Canal Place had a successful event on Saturday with the Winter Festival and Market. The Scenic Railroad had a successful evening, with all seats sold out for the Polar Express experience.
- Secretary of Commerce Harry Coker, Jr. and Secretary of Labor Portia Wu attended an Economic Development meeting at the Arcadian with staff and other local elected officials.

VII. PRESENTATION FROM RICH REINHARDT WITH PERCY PUBLIC AFFAIRS (VIA ZOOM AT 5:00)

Rich Reinhardt started the discussion and provided an update on a potential special session for redistricting and the consideration of overriding veto bills.

With a late session start date of January 14, 2026, he shared details that forecast what the next 90 days look like.

Legislative Priorities for 2026:

The Maryland Department of Legislative Services (DLS) presented the FY27 State budget (*See attachment*) to the Spending Affordability Committee:

- A budget gap of \$1.5B with the structural deficit predicted to double in FY28 to \$3.2B and increase to \$3.5B in FY29 and reach \$4B by FY30-31

A comprehensive revenue package aimed at reducing the overall deficit through budget cuts, tax and fee increases did not have an impact. Contributing factors to the budget shortfalls included state deficiencies leaving a zero balance, the Federal Big and Beautiful Bill Act, Medicaid costs, and spending on Maryland's Blueprint for Education, a \$40B investment over 10 years.

Funding for the Blueprint was generated from lottery revenue, but in future budget cycles, the costs will be covered by the General

Funds. This will lead to increased spending that will significantly exceed projected revenue (see attached chart for FY28 impact).

- One alternative to generating new revenue to offset downward trends was to raid the Rainy-Day fund, but DLS is concerned about that option because it could threaten the State's bond rating and do little to reduce the deficit in future fiscal years.

Points raised about issues in Washington, DC, are now affecting Maryland. Maryland mainly depends on federal employees, medical institutions, and education institutions that heavily rely on federal grants. Removing those funds and the workforce leads to a significant impact on the state.

Lawmakers warned that during pre- and post-Covid periods, when the state was flush with cash, investing at that level could put them at a fiscal crossroads for FY26 and beyond in terms of affording the investment. Both scenarios, unfortunately, create a perfect storm for Maryland financially.

The State Capital Budget is healthier than the Operating Budget, with \$1.75 billion in Bill Bond Authorizations. Much of that money will go toward capital projects that are expected to benefit Cumberland. Capital commitments (see handout) exceed the budget, prompting lawmakers to consider how to balance the requests so that each municipality receives some funding.

Priorities for Maryland Municipal League (MML):

- The top issue facing the General Assembly will be the budget. The current numbers indicate that the next 90 days are crucial for establishing fiscal decisions for the coming years.
- Energy is a concern that is raised every year to ease taxpayers' burdens, as Maryland has to import a large amount of energy.

Priorities for Maryland Association of Counties (MACO):

- Restoration of Highway user funds
- Housing for the Counties, school construction
- County Budget

Legislative Priorities for Cumberland:

This year, Cumberland and Allegany Counties have two priorities, including providing funding to the communities affected by the flooding in May. A request and an appeal were submitted to FEMA, but they were denied. Currently, the cost to assist those impacted by the flooding is \$33M.

Additionally, commitment to supporting the George Edwards Funds (Western Economic Future Investment Program) remains a top priority. When George Edwards retired, the State pledged to contribute \$10M annually to support economic development in Western Maryland.

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on December 16, 2025