



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, March 10, 2026; 4:30 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; Michael Cohen, Solicitor; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; Kevin Thacker, Code Compliance Manager; Denise Gilks, Citizen Service Representative; Craig Adams, Code Enforcement Officer, and Nathan Price; Senior Project Manager, Allegany County Economic Development Department.

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

I. PRESENTATION FROM THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Kevin Thacker began the discussion and distributed a handout highlighting community development and revitalization efforts from 2021 to present, reviewing a few key points.

Code Enforcement Enhancements

- **New Legislation:** The ordinance, passed to expedite abatement procedures, covers approximately **75%** of common violations.
- **Response Times:** Property owners now have between **15 and 20 days** to respond to a citation, significantly faster than previous court-based timelines that could take up to a year.
- **Supportive Measures:** The city is exploring non-financial penalties to assist low-income homeowners who cannot afford repairs, potentially applying past fines toward home improvements.

Rental Housing Program Trends

- **Inspection Failures:** In 2025, there were **75 failed inspections**, nearly half of the total failures (155) recorded over the past five years.
- **Condition Issues:** Recent failures included issues such as missing toilets, detached railings, and doors falling off during inspections.
- **Accountability:** Most issues are associated with specific property managers; strict code enforcement is being applied prior to new occupancy.

Property Revitalization & Demolition

- **Strategic Shift:** Five years ago, the city shifted from "nuisance abatement" to a "revitalization" strategy.
- **Demolitions:** Since 2021, **77 blighted or unlivable properties** have been demolished at an average cost of **\$15,000–\$20,000** per unit.
- **Acquisitions:** The city currently holds **29 properties** for future sale or development.
- **Sales Success:** Since 2021, **122 properties** have been sold, generating **\$640,000** for reinvestment.

Rehabilitation & Grant Programs

- **Incentivizing Private Investment:** Small city investments have leveraged over **\$3 million** in private sector capital.
- **ARPA & City Grants:** Using ARPA funds and city budgeting, **32 total rehabs** have been completed or are in progress.
- **Affordable Housing:** Rehabilitated homes are selling for an average of **\$157,000**, providing affordable housing.

County & Community Partnerships

- **Village Crossing (Old Allegany High Site):** Construction on the first **10–11 units** is expected to begin in **June 2026**, with a goal of **65 total units** by 2027.
- **New City Park:** A new **3-acre park** featuring pickleball and cornhole is being designed in partnership with the county at the Village Crossing site.
- **Central Avenue:** A joint city-county-state partnership (\$600,000 total) has nearly cleared the remaining blighted structures on Central Avenue, with plans to create more green space.

II. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on April 7, 2026