



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 Scott Cohen
City Clerk Allison K. Layton

MINUTES

M&CC Regular Public Meeting
57 N. Liberty Street, Cumberland, MD 21502

DATE: February 18, 2025

I. OPEN SESSION – 6:15 p.m.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

III. Roll Call

PRESENT:

Council Member Richard J. "Rock" Cioni
Council Member Eugene T. Frazier
Council Member James L. Furstenberg, III
Council Member Brian R. Lepley
President Raymond M. Morriss,

Also Present: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison K. Layton, City Clerk;
Shannon Adams, Fire Chief; Chuck Ternent, Police Chief

IV. Statement of Closed Meeting

1. On February 11, 2025, the Mayor and City Council met in closed session at 4:00 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room in City Hall for the purpose of immediately closing the meeting to discuss the Memorial Hospital RFP and a new business prospect interested in locating in Cumberland. Authority to close the session is provided by Sections 3-305(b)(4) and (b)(14) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.
2. On February 18, 2025, the Mayor and City Council met in closed session at 4:00 p.m. in the 2nd Floor Conference Room in City Hall for the purpose of immediately closing the meeting to discuss Board and Commission appointments, to receive legal advice regarding a potential new Ordinance and to receive legal advice and input from staff regarding the waiver of a conflict of interest and to receive legal advice regarding matters pertaining to a sewer line relining project. 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.

V. Director's Reports

Motion to accept the reports was made by Council Member Cioni, seconded by Council Member Furstenberg, and was passed on a vote of 5-0.

(A) Administrative Services

1. Administrative Services Monthly Reports for January 2025

(B) Public Works

1. Maintenance Division Monthly Report for January 2025

(C) Fire

1. Fire Department Monthly Report for January 2025

(D) Police

1. Police Department Monthly Report for January 2025

(E) Utilities Division – Water/Sewer

1. Utilities Division Monthly Report for January 25, 2025

VI. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Council Member Lepley, seconded by Council Member Frazier, and was passed on a vote of 5-0

1. Approving the Open Work Session Minutes and Regular Session Minutes of February 4, 2025 and the Closed Session Minutes and Open Work Session Minutes of February 11, 2025

VII. Public Hearing

Convened: 6:21 PM

1. A public hearing for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2025 Annual Action Plan and the 2025-2029 Consolidated Five Year Plan, including a presentation by Ochoa Urban Collaborative regarding the CDBG community needs assessment and market analysis and the draft of the City of Cumberland Citizen Participation Plan

Manuel Ochoa with Ochoa Urban Collaborative greeted the Mayor and City Council members. He started by updating the 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan, which is currently in progress. The plan intends to drive goals, strategies and projects for the next 5 years based on community needs. A draft of the Citizen Participation Plan will be open for public comment which has the elements the HUD requires.

He advised of community engagement in the form of outreach, public hearings, a 20-member advisory committee, media strategy and accepting public comments. Committee members include Cumberland Economic Development Commission (CEDC), Social Services, Downtown Development Commission (DDC), Chamber of Commerce and Homeless Service providers. March 18, 2025 will be the next hearing, the consolidated draft plan will be ready for review on May 6, 2025 and hoping to return in mid-June with the final plan.

Abigail Ferretti began the discussion that as an Urban Economist she thinks about the context. And upon reviewing data from the Census Cumberland shows some growth over a 10-year span. Demographics show a population decline of 2169 residents since 2010. 72% of households are single or two

persons, 53% are homeowners and 1/3 are 55 or older. The median income in Cumberland is \$45,915 and \$55,000 in the County. In 2022 30% of households earned less than \$25,000. 23% of Cumberland residents have a disability.

Sales shows that 71% of homes are single family detached and sell for a median price of \$130,000. The rental market in Cumberland is currently at 2%, with short-term rentals contributing to this market. Households should allocate no more than 45% of income on housing and transportation. The Renter Housing Cost Burden used by HUD shows how many renters spend more on housing than their earned income. For Cumberland that number is 50% (960 households) are spending 67% of their income on housing.

Jesse Bardsley Urban Planner and Data Analyst from Ochoa Urban Collaborative discussed the survey responses, revealing that 30% of participants reside in the City but do not work there. Additionally, 40% reported that their homes require repairs and have structural issues. In terms of safety, 70% of respondents feel their neighborhood is safe, while 12% believe it is unsafe.

When residents were asked how they would like to see the funds allocated, the choices were as followed:

- Infrastructure- adding new community facilities such as senior and youth centers. Additionally, street and sewer reconstruction.
- Economic Development – job training/skill improvement. Additionally, was commercial rehabilitation
- Goals – transforming vacant and abandoned properties as well as increasing the supply of affordable housing.
- Quality of life – vetting new employers, more public transportation and reducing crime

Lee Borrer explained that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is funding provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The funding is designated for use in the City to support low- to moderate-income individuals. At this time the estimated allocation amount is \$750,000. Factors considered during the application process include capacity and expertise of the requestor.

Public comments begin tonight and will continue through March 18, 2025. Draft Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing will start March 18 and go through April 18, 2025. Proposed projects received will be available at the Public Hearing on May 6, 2025 and will be available through public comment through June 6, 2025 and will be approved for vote on June 17, 2025. At this time comments from individuals or organizations who submitted applications for funds are welcomed.

Vic Rezendes Vice President of the Allegany Museum explained that the museum is applying for the funds for a Climate Control System. A requirement from the Institute for Library Museum Sciences to be accredited a Smithsonian affiliate. The cost for this project is \$1M. At this time, \$495K of grant funding has been secured as well as \$250K from the State of Maryland. Due to a deadline to allocate funds from the secured grant, this funding is urgent for project completion. The total amount needed for completion is \$250K.

To help cover operating costs, the organization leases out spaces along with fundraising and donations received and they barely break even which does not provide the funds for Capital Projects such as this.

Patricia Painter representing the Allegany Youth Enrichment Program (AYEPS) informed the application request is for funds to replace one of the oldest elevators in Maryland. Having multiple students and youths with disabilities makes participating in programs challenging for them.

Jim Raley representing the Archway Station as the Executive Director is present to talk about the SOAR grant they received last year from CDBG. The goal for the funding is to provide social security benefits to low to moderate residents within the city. The individuals being served are homeless or in jeopardy and qualify for a modified system called SOAR. The funding would allow them to keep serving individuals in need.

Brad Dressman representing the Department of Social Services is requesting \$50K to help individuals with rent and utility costs.

Nicole Brant representing Allegany County HRDC is requesting funding for four different projects.

1. Homeless Prevention - Currently they receive federal grant funds for homeless prevention but the funds are depleted by the end of the year due to rent and utility increases. And this year utility costs have increased due to OHEP.

2. Closing Costs - Funds for closing costs would assist first time home buyers.
3. Shelf stable meals - An average of 225 meals are delivered to seniors to help those in need of nutritious meals
4. Delivery truck for meals – Due to trucks that are in need of repair, replacement is imperative for food deliveries

Rhonda Pick representing the Family Crisis Resource Center which was established in 1978 and is a private non-profit agency. The Center provides services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assaults, stalking and human trafficking and offers a program 7 days a week. Some programs offer shelters, and a 24-hour hotline.

The application they are submitting is requesting \$40K to provide the Family Community Resource Center (FCRC) to have 24-hour coverage. Some of the shelters only have staffing during the day which creates a dangerous situation for overnight safety. During FY2024 FCRC provided services to 460 victims of domestic violence and sexual assault and are projecting to surpass that amount for FY2025. Having shelter coverage allows victims to speak with an advocate at any time and provides a path moving forward.

The application for the Abuse Intervention Program is requesting funds of \$30K. The funds will provide services to perpetrators of domestic violence. The Abuse Intervention Program (AIP) holds users accountable by providing non-violent relationship skills. 93% of those who complete the program do not re-offend.

Mayor Morriss thanked all who attended and spoke on behalf of their organization

Hearing Adjourned: 7:22 PM

VIII. Public Comments – Agenda Items Only

No public comments

IX. New Business

(A) Resolutions

1. Resolution R2025-03 (*1 reading only*) - Authorizing the City of Cumberland to apply for a Certificate of Waiver/Authorization of unmanned aircraft as a Public Aircraft Operator for purposes of providing support to the City of Cumberland Emergency Services

READING: The resolution was submitted in title only for its reading. **Motion** to approve the resolution was made by Council Member Fraizer, seconded by Council Member Cioni, and was passed on a vote of 5-0.

(B) Ordinances

1. Ordinance 4006 (*1st reading*) - providing for the closure of a 10-foot wide alley identified by the City as Alley 144, running from the Eastern right of way line of Seymour Street East to the Western right of way line of the 15-foot wide alley identified by the City as Alley 137, bound on both sides by lands owned by the Trustees of the Church of God

FIRST READING: The ordinance was submitted in title only for its first reading. **Motion** to approve the first reading and table until next meeting was made by Council Member Cioni, seconded by Council Member Furstenberg, and was passed on a vote of 5-0.

(C) Orders (Consent Agenda)

Mr. Silka reviewed each item on the Consent Agenda, and Mayor Morriss called for questions or comments. **Motion** to approve each item was made by Council Member Cioni, seconded by Council Member Furstenberg, and was passed on a vote of 5-0.

1. Order 27,654 - authorizing the Chief of the Fire Department to accept a grant from the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies in the amount of \$1,000 for the purpose of fire prevention in the community through the distribution of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors to Cumberland residents in need

2. Order 27,655 - approving the sole source purchase from Southern States Cooperative of heating oil for the Water Reclamation Facility and the Water Filtration Plant in the estimated amount of \$58,045.15 for 23,000 gallons, being the current cost as of February 6, 2025
3. Order 27,656 - approving the renewal of the maintenance service contract with Southern Corrosion, Inc. for the Water Tank Maintenance Service Contract (Project 2023-03-WTR), in the not to exceed lump sum cost of \$136,541.20 for FY25
4. Order 27,657 - authorizing the execution of Change Order No. 2 with Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc., for costs associated with obtaining information on the water levels to do future hydraulic modeling for the River Park and North Branch Potomac Industrial Dam Removal project (City Project 2022-39-FPM), in an increased amount of \$37,980, bringing the total project price not to exceed \$130,080.00, with the costs being covered by Canal Place's Economic Development Administration funds, which will be transferred to the City
5. Order 27,658 - declaring certain City-owned property at 403-405 Central Avenue, 417 Central Avenue and 212 Baltimore Avenue to be surplus and authorizing them for sale
6. Order 27,659 - authorizing new parking regulations for the parking spaces on Baltimore Street, Liberty Street and Centre Street, effective 30 days after passage of this Order
7. Order 27,660 - accepting the report of the City Administrator advising that, with regard to the proposed public right of way closure for a portion of Cat Alley, he observed no damages caused to the adjacent property owners as a result of the closure, and any added value would be formally determined by the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation
8. Order 27,661 - accepting the report of the City Administrator advising that, with regard to the proposed public right of way closure at the Unnamed Alley, he observed no damages caused to the adjacent property owners as a result of the closure, and any added value would be formally determined by the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation
9. Order 27,662 - authorizing the execution of an amendment to the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) 2024 Certified Local Government grant agreement originally approved on August 5, 2024 by Order No. 27,528 with MHT to increase funding in an amount not to exceed \$3,750 to be used for amending the Downtown Cumberland National Register District Agreement, and authorizing the City Comptroller to accept these funds

Public Comments

All public comments are limited to 5 minutes per person, no comments were made.

Charles Floto spoke on behalf of Let's Beautify Cumberland regarding the park above Patterson Ave asking for help.

Mr. Silka advised the West End Neighborhood group is maintaining that area with community gardens.

Keith Mikula addressed the Mayor and City Council of an issue that he is experiencing on the West Side with Bergmeier Hauling not picking up trash or recycling. He mentioned six different occasions and that it creates an issue with debris blowing around the neighborhood.

Mayor Morriss advised that when the Landfill is closed due to inclement weather, trash and recycling is not picked up. Notices are on the website updating residents of these schedule changes as well as emails if subscribed to the alerts.

Jo Ryan played a song and asked for a prayer to be held after the pledge of allegiance at every meeting. Mayor Morriss advised he would look in to it.

XI. Adjournment

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Minutes approved on March 4, 2025

Raymond M. Morriss, Mayor

ATTEST: Allison K. Layton, City Clerk