

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY
TUESDAY, MAY 8, 2012

At 2:00 P.M., The Board of County Commissioners for Somerset County met in regular session with Commissioner President Rex Simpkins, Commissioner Vice-President Charles F. Fisher, Commissioner Craig N. Mathies Sr., Commissioner Jerry S. Boston and Commissioner Randy Laird.

Also present was Ralph D. Taylor, County Administrator-Clerk; and Cynthia R. Ward, Executive Aide.

President Rex Simpkins called the meeting to order and asked Commissioner Mathies to lead those attending the meeting in the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried 4-0 to dispense with the reading of the Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, April 24, 2012, and the Closed Session Minutes of the meetings held April 17, 2012 and April 24, 2012, and approve them as presented.

At 2:00 P.M., President Simpkins declared a public hearing open relating to the following matter:

"To obtain the views of citizens on Community Development and Housing Needs, and to offer citizens the opportunity to review an application for a proposed Housing Rehabilitation grant that Somerset County is considering to submit to the State on or before the State's May 17, 2012 deadline. Other projects may also be considered by the County Commissioners, such as the renovation of the gym at the former Westover Elementary School at 8928 Sign Post Road in Westover into a County indoor recreational facility. In addition, a summary of the FY 2010 CDBG project that funded housing rehabilitation in the County will also be provided.

Citizens will be furnished with information including but not limited to:

- The amount of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds expected to be made available for the current fiscal year;
- The range of activities that may be undertaken with CDBG funds;
- The estimated amount of the CDBG funds proposed to be used for activities that will meet the national objective of benefit to low and moderate income persons; and
- Proposed CDBG activities likely to result in displacement and the unit of general local government's anti-displacement and relocation plans required under 24 CFR 42.325.

The Maryland CDBG Program is a federally sponsored program designed to assist units of general local government with activities directed toward neighborhood and housing revitalization, economic development and improved community facilities and services.

Maryland's CDBG Program is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), in close cooperation with the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED).

The Maryland CDBG Program reflects the State's economic and community development priorities and provides public funds for activities which meet one of the following national objectives, in accordance with the Housing Community Development Act of 1974, as amended:

1. Give maximum feasible priority to activities which will benefit low and moderate income persons and households having an income equal to or less than the Section 8 lower income limits established by HUD;
2. Aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight;
3. Meet other community development needs of an urgent nature, or that are an immediate threat to community health and welfare.”

Mr. Gary Pusey, Director of Technical and Community Services, was present for today’s public hearing, accompanied by Chris Parks, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist. Mr. Pusey stated that \$6.7 million in CDBG funding is available statewide, however, \$800,000 is the maximum amount we can apply for. In previous years, most of the grant funding has been directed towards housing rehabilitation projects, although last year’s entire allocation was directed towards the planned rehabilitation of the Senior Center. If approved, this round of funding will be primarily utilized for housing rehabilitation projects for qualifying residents of Somerset County, The City of Crisfield, and The Town of Princess Anne, which are considered to be at low to moderate income levels. Rehabilitation projects may include the replacement/repair of bathrooms, windows and roof, wells and septic. These repairs typically average \$11,400 per recipient. Mr. Pusey asked for the Board’s support of the CDBG application, which will include a request of

\$450,000	-	CDBG Funding
\$15,000	-	Local Match
\$75,000	-	In-Kind Match

In conclusion, Mr. Pusey asked that the ten day comment period, normally set by the Board following the public hearing, be reduced to seven days in order to meet the application deadline.

President Simpkins asked for any proponents wishing to offer testimony on the CDBG application.

Mr. Danny Thompson, Executive Director, Economic Development Commission, appeared before the Board as a proponent of the application. Mr. Thompson believes this is a vital program that serves low to moderate income residents. It is very beneficial to our County and thanked the Board for their support in the past.

President Simpkins called for any other proponents.

Mr. Garland Hayward, Princess Anne Town Commissioner, appeared before the Board in support of the CDBG application. Mr. Hayward agreed it was vital to our community and on behalf of the residents of Princess Anne, encouraged the Board to support the grant application.

President Simpkins called for any other proponents. There were none.

President Simpkins called for any opponents wishing to testify. There were none.

As a final comment from the staff, Mr. Pusey stated that the CDBG program has been very successful in the past, and appreciates the Board's support. Mr. Parks also spoke on the economic development benefits derived from the program through the employment of contractors.

Commissioner Mathies directed Mr. Pusey and Mr. Parks to follow the guidelines established for the grant recipients and to keep them informed of the status of their application, project, etc. The program will operate more efficiently if the lines of communication are kept open and all parties are updated regularly. Commissioner Mathies also agreed that the employment of contractors and skilled workers are an added benefit to the grant funded project.

With no further questions, the Board will accept written comments on the proposed CDBG application until Tuesday, May 15, 2012 at 2:00 p.m. At this time, President Simpkins declared the public hearing closed.

With Mr. Pusey still present, the Board discussed an opportunity to apply for Technical Assistance Grant funding offered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to assist the County in its efforts to reduce nutrients entering the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; and particularly assist the County with meeting the 2025 target date for the urban sector strategies of Phase II of the Watershed Implementation Plan. If approved, the County would look for opportunities on public lands and institutional properties where stormwater management retrofit opportunities may exist. Additionally, the grant funding may allow the County to obtain the services of the Center for Watershed Protection to serve as a technical service provider/contractor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, to authorize Mr. Pusey to apply for Technical Assistance Grant funding of \$40,000 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and utilize the services of the Center for Watershed Protection. The motion carried 4-0.

Ms. Jenny Roser, Supervisor, Somerset County Department of Social Services, was now present to request the Board's support for the submittal of the Emergency & Transitional

Housing Services and Homeless Services Program (ETHS & HPP) Funding Application to the State of Maryland Department of Human Resources. If approved, the three-year grant would provide \$5,468 in funding (per year) for ETHS and \$4,000 in funding (per year) for the HPP services. Ms. Roser also reported on the availability of additional bonus funding that is available, \$53,804 (ETHS) and \$20,000 (HPP), and asked for the Board's support to pursue this revenue source. The bonus funding would be utilized in connection with the purchase of the property adjacent to the Wood Home – a transitional homeless shelter, to expand homeless services in the County.

A motion was made by Commissioner Laird, seconded by Commissioner Boston, to authorize Ms. Roser to submit the application for ETHS and HPP funding through the Maryland Department of Human Resources, for the amounts as listed above, including the bonus funding. The motion carried 4-0. Commissioner Fisher abstained from the vote due to his membership on the Homeless Board.

Dr. Miles, Superintendent of Somerset County Public Schools, was now present before the Board, accompanied by Ms. Roxane Rounds, Interim Director of Finance. Dr. Miles presented her proposed FY13 Budget, totaling \$32,215,419, outlining her revenue sources:

\$8,634,274	-	Local Revenue
23,131,948	-	State Revenue
449,197	-	Fund Balance
\$32,215,419	-	Total Revenue

Dr. Miles advised that level funding would be reduced by only \$75,050, if the Board opts to only fund Maintenance of Effort. President Simpkins inquired as to the possibility of additional funding coming from the State. Dr. Miles confirmed that no additional revenue is expected from the State. Additionally, no requests for non-recurring costs have been submitted to the County.

The Board was advised of the loss of sixteen positions:

- 7 - teacher positions (through attrition)
- 7 - aides/assistants (eliminated)
- 2 - ROTC (originally announced as 4 positions)

Dr. Miles spoke on the decrease of teaching positions and the increase of supervisory positions. She advised they were "heavy" on the side of instructional aides. Dr. Miles also

spoke on restricted and unrestricted funds and how they are reflected in the budget, and her objective to reduce the budget by 7%, as instructed.

In a discussion regarding the ROTC decrease, Dr. Miles advised of her plan to move the program from Crisfield High School to J. Millard Tawes Vocational due to the funding shortfall and decreased program enrollment. Commissioner Laird expressed his concern for donations that have been committed to the ROTC program, that has now been eliminated at CHS. President Simpkins asked if the program could be maintained if level funding was provided? Dr. Miles reminded the Board that she needs to be effective and efficient with her funding – but she would consider it, if funded.

President Simpkins inquired about “stipends”. Ms. Rounds advised this funding is utilized for new employee orientation.

Commissioner Mathies asked what impact will this have on the teaching atmosphere, since some Aides actually perform better than teachers? Dr. Miles responded by stating that professional development and training was the answer.

With the A.Y.P. scores declining, Commissioner Laird expressed his concern for trying to improve scores with less instructional staff.

President Simpkins noted an error in the teachers’ pension dollar amount.

Commissioners Fisher and Boston expressed their concern for increasing the number of higher level supervisors. Dr. Miles reiterated that the Dean of Students positions are now in the mid-level administration category. She advised of her plan to have them visible throughout the school, and not just in the front office.

The Board thanked Dr. Miles for her presentation.

At this time, the County Administrator reviewed correspondence and discussion items with the Board.

A discussion was held regarding the proposed increase of the annual Smith Island Solid Waste District Fee. By authority of Senate Bill 569, the Board passed a motion on April 10, 2012, to increase the annual fee from \$48 to \$52. However, before the ordinance can be revised to reflect the new amount, a public hearing must be held. Due to the lack of time, prior to the new fiscal year, the Board agreed to withdraw the motion and delay the fee increase until next year.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, to rescind the motion to increase the Smith Island Solid Waste District Fee, as passed on April 10, 2012, and keep the fee at the current rate of \$48. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Taylor suggested a work session be scheduled with the property owners affected by the Crisfield Airport Avigation Easement Project and the Federal Aviation Administration, Maryland Aviation Administration, URS (Airport Consultant), and The City of Crisfield, to bring everyone up to date on the project. The Board agreed to schedule the work session for Tuesday, June 12, 2012.

The Board was presented with two proclamations for approval, recognizing Lenora Guion-Firmin and I. Theodore Phoebus. A motion was made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, to approve the proclamations. The motion carried unanimously.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, it was carried unanimously to recommend the re-appointment of Eddie Brimer as member of the Property Tax Assessment Appeal Board. As required by the Governor's Office, two other names will be submitted for consideration. The Board agreed to offer the same names as previously submitted, Keith Muir and Asher Daisey. However, the Board will ascertain their willingness to serve first.

A letter was received from the Somerset Ruritan Club requesting assistance from a supervised inmate labor group from ECI for general maintenance work on the ballfield. A motion was made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Laird, to approve the request made by the Somerset Ruritan Club for assistance from ECI. The motion carried unanimously.

A request was received to waive the permit fees for the construction of Christ Fellowship Bible Church on Crisfield Highway just north of Marion. Permits required for the construction include:

\$100	Zoning Certificate
\$100	Utility Permits
\$ 50	Occupancy Permit
<u>\$600</u>	<u>Building Inspections</u>
\$850	TOTAL

A motion was made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Laird, to waive the permit fees, totaling \$850 for Christ Fellowship Bible Church. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board reviewed a letter from the Blood Bank of Delmarva inviting the County to participate in the 10th Annual Summer Blood Challenge. Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it was carried unanimously to participate in the Blood Drive.

A letter was received from Dorchester Soil Conservation District asking Somerset County Commissioners to contribute \$125 towards The Land and Water Connection Youth Camp, as previously done through Resource, Conservation, and Development. Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it was carried unanimously to contribute \$125 towards The Land and Water Connection Camp and ask the local 4-H Club to select a student to attend the Camp.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it was carried unanimously to submit a letter of support to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, as requested.

At the conclusion of the agenda, President Simpkins asked for any comments or questions from the audience.

Mr. Dan Kuebler, of Crisfield, commented on the Superintendent's plan to eliminate the two ROTC positions at Crisfield High School (reported previously as all four positions). Mr. Kuebler stated the community and teachers support this program and it has been beneficial to students in the past. If we lose it, we may never get it back. He did, however, express his support for combining the program from both schools to increase the enrollment numbers. Mr. Kuebler also stated there is no data to support Dr. Miles' proposed student/teacher ratio of 20-1 is better than 12-1. Students do not benefit from this, and with already decreasing test scores, Dr. Miles is proposing less classroom instruction personnel, but plans to increase administration.

Commissioner Mathies addressed Mr. Kuebler's concerns and advised that parents need to take the initiative to make sure their children get to class.

Mr. Phil Riggin, of Crisfield, advised that he would have the same questions for the previous Superintendent, if she was still here. The information was not forthcoming during her tenure. In other business, Mr. Riggin updated the Board on proposed legislation regarding slot

machine regulations, and reported that \$270,000 in slot machine proceeds have been put back into the community during the last five years.

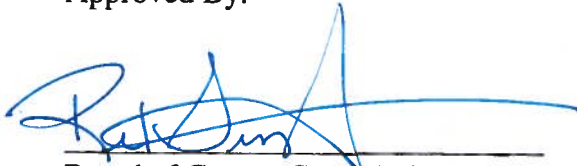
With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Cynthia R. Ward
Executive Aide

Approved By:



Board of County Commissioners
For Somerset County