

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY
TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2013

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 motion made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, it carried unanimously to approve the Minutes of the meetings held January 2, 2013 (open and closed sessions) as corrected (Commissioner Boston noted an error in the time the January 2nd closed meeting was adjourned).

Ms. Nicole Benner, Program Specialist for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Chesapeake, appeared before the Board for a Proclamation presentation. On behalf of the Board of County Commissioners, President Simpkins presented Ms. Benner with a Proclamation designating January as "Mentoring Month" and encourage each Somerset County resident to "Expand Your Universe. Mentor A Child".

At this time, the County Administrator announced the nomination of the Employee of the Quarter, Mr. Karl Walter, of the Somerset County Roads Department. Mr. Walter's accomplishments and outstanding performance during Hurricane Sandy were shared with the Board. On behalf of the Board of County Commissioners, Mr. Walters was presented with a Certificate of Recognition and a gift card.

Mr. Gene Akins, Finance Director, was now present before the Board to review projected revenues for Fiscal Year 2014 and preliminary audit results from Fiscal Year 2012. According to the State Department of Assessment and Taxation, Somerset County is expected to receive a 11.7% reduction in revenue based upon reassessments for residential property, and a 10% reduction for commercial property – for an average reduction of 11.5% overall. This equates to a projected loss of \$600,000 to \$700,000 in estimated revenues for the upcoming fiscal year. In a

review of the preliminary audit results from Fiscal Year 2012, the news was more encouraging. The General Fund ended the year with \$900,000 in excess over expenses. The County Roads Department and the Golf Course experienced a slight deficit after expenses. Although the figures are still unofficial, the County ended FY12 with an overall excess of approximately \$365,000. As Mr. Adkins prepares to plan for the FY14 budget work sessions, he asked for direction from the Board as to what funding level each county department should budget for. In his 2012 memo, Mr. Adkins advised each department director to reduce their budget by 7%, along with no new staff positions or upgrades. After some deliberation, the majority of the Board agreed to ask each county department to submit their FY14 budget with another 7% reduction.

At this time, Dr. Kirkland J. Hall, Sr., President of the Somerset County NAACP #7026, appeared before the Board to share the initiatives which are considered to be their legislative priorities for 2013. He began by reviewing items for political action:

- 1) Increase registration and voting
- 2) Work for the enactment of municipal, state and federal legislation designed to improve the educational, political and economic status of minority groups
- 3) Work to repeal racially discriminatory legislation
- 4) Improve the administration of justice
- 5) Secure equal enforcement of the law

As part of their vision for the future, the NAACP is focusing on specific areas of concern, such as:

- 1) **Public Safety & Criminal Justice:** “Disproportionate incarceration, racially motivated policing strategies, and racially biased, discriminatory, and mandatory minimum sentencing will end. Incarceration will be greatly reduced and communities will be safer. The death penalty will be abolished at the state and federal level, as well as in the military.” Dr. Hall advised incarceration rates are escalating; 4 out of 5 that are arrested for non-violent crimes are drug users or sellers. These individuals are then labeled as “felons” making it more difficult to gain employment upon their release. According to Dr. Hall, African American males are less likely to sell drugs but are more likely to be arrested. As noted above, the NAACP hopes to abolish the death penalty.
- 2) **Home Act:** “NAACP supports legislation to end discrimination against people renting or purchasing with housing vouchers or other legitimate sources of income.”
- 3) **Maryland’s Historic Black Colleges and Universities:** “Support the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus in its initiative to prioritize and ensure continued and adequate funding for Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The Caucuses’ number one focus is going to be the equality and fairness of funding for historically black colleges and universities in the State of Maryland. The State, during the era of segregation, had a policy of underfunding HBCU’s and, as a result, the infrastructure at these universities is not comparable to the infrastructure at predominately white institutions.”
- 4) **Advocate for the Implementation of the Affordable Care Act in MD**

- 5) Cigarette Tax Support to Improve Health Care Services
- 6) Prevent HIV and AIDS in Communities of Color
- 7) Sickle Cell Anemia Prevention and Awareness
- 8) Drug Law Reforms:
 - a. Funds allocated for private prisons would be better spent on education.
 - b. \$51 Trillion spent on the war on drugs; \$1.53 Million for non-violent drug charges.
 - c. Non-violent criminals released from incarceration are faced with court costs and the inability to gain employment because of their felony status, which directly affects the recitivism rates.

In conclusion, the Board thanked Dr. Hall for his presentation.

At 3:05 p.m., the County Administrator advised the Board of the need for a Closed Session. A motion was made by Commissioner Mathies, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, to go into Closed Session authority of State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Section 10-508 (a)(4) consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State. The motion carried unanimously. Also present for the Closed Session were Commissioner President Rex Simpkins, Commissioner Boston., Commissioner Laird; County Administrator-Clerk, Ralph D. Taylor; Executive Aide, Cynthia R. Ward; Somerset County Sanitary District Manager, Robin Street; and Economic Development Director, Danny Thompson.

At 4:05 p.m., the Board resumed in Open Session and proceeded with a review of correspondence.

Two memorandums, submitted by Gary Pusey, Director of Technical & Community Services, advised of the term expiration of John Webster (Building and Plumbing Code Appeals Board) and Carol Samus (Planning Commission).

A motion was made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, to re-appoint John Webster to serve another three-year term as member of the Building and Plumbing Code Appeals Board. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion was made by Commissioner Laird, seconded by Commissioner Boston, to re-appoint Carol Samus to serve another five-year term as member of the Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously.

The Board was advised of a request to submit a letter of support for the Somerset County Humane Society for their attempts to secure grant funding to assist with their sterilization and vaccination program. Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner

Boston, it carried unanimously to authorize President Simpkins to sign the letter of support for the Somerset County Humane Society.

The Board was also advised of requests for Proclamations:

- 1) For Crisfield Fire Department and Chief Pruitt for their outstanding performance during Hurricane Sandy; and
- 2) In observance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday

Upon motion made by Commissioner Laird, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, it carried unanimously to issue a Proclamation for Crisfield Fire Department and Chief Pruitt.


Upon motion made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, it carried unanimously to issue a Proclamation in recognition of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's Birthday.

Commissioner Boston discussed the possibility of flying the POW-MIA flag in front of the Somerset County Office Complex, in addition to the American Flag, Maryland Flag and County Flag that is currently flown. Information has been provided by Charles County Government regarding the POW-MIA flag. The Board agreed to view the CD provided by Charles County and take action at a later date.

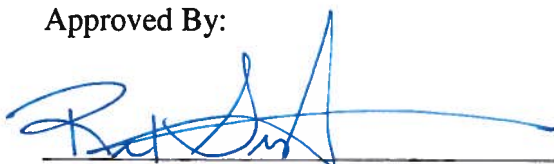
Mr. Taylor addressed a draft Resolution that was presented during the January 2, 2013 meeting for the Board's consideration. The Resolution is intended to adopt standardized rules and procedures for processing Public Information Act requests, such as establishing fees for researching records and reproduction of documents. The Board delayed taking action on the proposed Resolution until their next regular meeting.

With no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Laird, seconded by Commissioner Boston, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:


Cynthia R. Ward
Executive Aide

Approved By:


Board of County Commissioners
For Somerset County