

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY  
TUESDAY, MAY 21, 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 Laird, it carried 4-0 to approve the Minutes of the meetings held May 7, 2013 (open and closed sessions) as presented.

President Simpkins declared a public hearing open relating to the following matter:

"The Board of County Commissioners for Somerset County will conduct a Public Hearing to obtain the views of citizens on Community Development and Housing Needs, and to offer citizens the opportunity to comment on proposed applications that could include funding to assist homeless persons and families, and others with housing needs. The deadline to submit applications to the State is May 31, 2013. The hearing will be held at 2 p.m. in the County Commissioners Meeting Room (Room 111), 11916 Somerset Avenue in Princess Anne.

In addition, a summary of the County's Housing Rehabilitation Program that was funded through this Program for FY 2013 and 2014 will also be provided for public comment.

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 Somerset County Department of Technical and Community Services (DTCS), now present before the Board, advised of the approaching deadline for the submittal of a request for CDBG funding. The County currently administers four different CDBG grants: 1) Housing Rehabilitation; 2) Senior Center Renovation; 3) Hurricane Sandy Disaster Recovery; and 4) Housing Relocation. The housing rehabilitation grant that was awarded last year is only 40% expended and does not terminate until 2014. Therefore, Somerset County will not be submitting a request for another housing grant at the current time. Mr. Pusey reported that his office has been working with Ms. Jenny Roser, of the Somerset County Department of Social Services, regarding a homeless facility. Ms. Roser, which was present for today's hearing, advised that she is seeking assistance for the "Wood Home", a two-bedroom transitional home for those individuals with emergency housing needs. Case management services are also provided, in addition to job seeking assistance. The "Wood Home" first opened in 2004 and has been in constant use by needy individuals. However, mold was discovered in the structure last Fall and despite several attempts, the mold problem has not been eliminated. Ms. Roser asked for the Board's support in seeking funding assistance to address the mold issue and for other minor repairs to the "Wood Home".

President Simpkins asked for anyone present that wished to offer testimony in support of the proposal. No testimony was offered.

President Simpkins then asked if there was anyone present that wished to oppose the proposal. No opposition was offered.

In an effort to proceed with the funding application, Mr. Pusey asked for the Board's support of the proposed use of the grant funds. Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Laird, it carried 4-0 to support the funding request as presented by Ms. Roser. The Board will, however, accept written comments on the CDBG funding application for ten days.

Mr. Tom Lawton, Senior Planner for DTCS, was now present before the Board to discuss the Somerset County Agricultural Land Preservation Program, which is funded through dedicated revenues from the State's Real Estate Transfer Tax and its Agricultural Transfer Tax. The County Treasurer collects the Agricultural Land Transfer Tax at the time of sale when farmland is sold and converted to another land use, and remits two-thirds of the money to Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). One-third is retained by the County and can be used for agricultural land preservation purposes. Monies that have been retained by the County for more than three years and not used for agricultural land preservation purposes must be returned to MALPF. Through the local matching program, these retained funds can be used to extend easement offers to landowners within each county on a 40% county and 60% state matching fund basis. MALPF has requested that the County submit the amount of local matching funds which it will commit to the Matching Program for the upcoming 2013/2014 easement offer cycle. There is currently \$12,481.53 of the "less than three year old money" available for the current match. If the County commits this money, MALPF would match it on a 40% county and 60% state basis resulting in an additional \$31,203.83 which would be available toward easement purchase.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Laird, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried 4-0 to participate in the Local Matching Program and commit \$12,481.53 in local matching funds toward the 2013/2014 easement offer cycle.

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

A project notification from the Maryland Department of Planning, State Clearinghouse, was reviewed by the Board. The Town of Princess Anne is seeking federal funds through USDA in the amount of \$175,000 to assist with the renovation of the Washington Hotel. Since the Hotel is within the Town of Princess Anne it would not be subject to any county regulations. Mr. Taylor recommended the Board authorize him to respond with a C-5 designation – indicating that the project is consistent with our plans, programs, and initiatives.

A motion was made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, to authorize the County Administrator to submit the response as described above. The motion carried 4-0.

A letter from Charter Communications was reviewed regarding the Commissioners previous request for a meeting with Charter Communications staff. The Board authorized Mr.

Taylor to submit the appropriate meeting dates for July and August to Charter for their consideration.

A memo from the County's Department of Technical and Community Services regarding the Health Department's intent to replace the existing sign, located at 8928 Sign Post Road in Westover. The application requires an Administrative Review Hearing before the Board of Zoning Appeals, and a building and electric permit. Total fees for the sign replacement would be \$380.00.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried 4-0 to waive the fees as outlined above.

At this time, Ms. Nancy Smoker, Director of Technology, was present before the Board to provide information regarding the FY14 Board of Education Budget request. Ms. Smoker distributed a summary of information that relates to their FY14 Budget, which included the following:

I. Revenue

A. State Appropriations

- Slight increase in enrollment (48 students) results in additional funding
  - Compensatory Ed increased by \$1,640,385
  - Special Education increased by \$166,900
  - Limited English Proficient (LEP) increased by 148,017
  - Transportation increased by \$26,294
  - Guaranteed Tax Base increased by \$557,354
- Net Taxable Income Adjustment phased in over 5 years includes \$101,023
- Overall State Appropriations increased by \$3,458,196

B. Local Appropriations

- Pension Shift Amount \$608,570 (an increase of \$128,570)
- County Appropriation (MOE) \$8,778,969 (an increase of \$154,645)
- Non-recurring funds granted in the amount of \$93,000 for technology & security
- Total County Appropriations \$9,480,539

C. Total Revenue

- The operating budget for 2014 is \$36,321,557 (an increase of \$3,494,088)

- This represents almost a 10% increase in funding for FY14
- In addition, the Board of Ed. receives over \$4 Million Dollars in restricted grant funds each year.

President Simpkins questioned an amount provided in their Budget for mid-level administration. Ms. Smoker stated that last year's amount was not correct in comparison with the previous year.

The Board also inquired about the line item described as "Opt Out for Health Insurance - \$30,000". According to Ms. Smoker, any Board of Ed. employee that chooses not to enroll in the health insurance program, receives a stipend of \$800.

President Simpkins then inquired about salary increases for Board of Ed. employees in the new fiscal year. Ms. Smoker reported that a 1% COLA and a half step salary increase has been budgeted.

Commissioner Laird inquired if funds were allocated for a new speech therapist. Ms. Smoker advised "no", but additional hours were added to the schedule for the existing speech therapist.

Commissioner Mathies inquired if funding was allocated for an Assistant Superintendent in the coming year, and thereafter. Ms. Smoker reported that funds have been allocated for the new fiscal year to assist the new Interim Superintendent and then the newly hired Superintendent. Commissioner Mathies also questioned if Mr. Blye and his staff participated in the budget preparation. Ms. Smoker replied "yes".

During the discussion, Ms. Smoker also reviewed the remainder of the budget summary, which included the following topics:

- II. Expenditures (Budget Items)
  - A. Notes about the FY14 Budget
  - B. Significant increases over FY13
  - C. What's new (or added back in) in FY14
  - D. New positions in 2013-14
- III. FY14 Budget Summary
  - A. Categories of greatest increases
  - B. Categories of greatest expenditures
  - C. Objects of greatest expenditure

Dan Kuebler, Board of Education Member, appreciated the fact that Somerset County Employees are not getting salary increases, however, the Board of Education has to compete with Worcester and Wicomico Counties.

Commissioner Boston commented on the "Opt Out" for health insurance, which resulted in additional income for Board of Education Employees.

Board of Education Chair, William Miles, stated that the health insurance opt-out was part of the package offered by Somerset to remain competitive.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board thanked Ms. Smoker for providing them with the information.

Mr. Pusey was now present again before the Board to discuss a request from Green Street Housing of Salisbury and TM Associates of Rockville, Maryland, to waive permit fees associated with the renovation of the Princess Anne Villas and Princess Anne Apartments. Mr. Tom Ayd and Mr. David Layfield, of Green Street Housing, were also present at today's meeting to report on their efforts to seek state funding (\$480,000) through the Rental Housing Works program to assist with the purchase and rehabilitation of the two projects. In order to qualify for the state funding, the local jurisdiction must provide a contribution. In this case, waiving the permit fees would serve as the local jurisdiction's match. In 2010, a similar request was granted by the Board in which fees were waived for an amount not to exceed \$11,000, however, the state funding was not acquired therefore the local match was not utilized. The proposed project includes refreshing the façade, improving energy efficiency; and consolidating management. Mr. Ayd asked for the Board's support once again and believes that the increase in the assessed value would increase property revenues and therefore offset the local match.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Mathies, to support Green Street Housing and TM Associates in their funding application and waive the permit fees as a local match, for an amount not to exceed \$11,000. The motion carried unanimously.

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

During recent budget deliberations, Commissioner Laird suggested the County implement a "Length of Service Awards Program" (LOSAP) for the Firefighters in the County that have served as volunteers for twenty-five (25) or more years. The Program would be funded by the County and provide each qualifying Firefighter with an annual monetary benefit, similar

to a pension benefit. The Program would be modeled after Garrett County, which has implemented a similar plan. Somerset County may earmark funds for "LOSAP", however, we would be required to seek legislation for authority to implement the Program to commence with the next commissioner term of office. Mr. Taylor recommended a commission be established to study the proposed program and upon approved legislation, implementation would take place in 2015.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Laird, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried 4-0 to authorize the County Administrator to form a commission to study the proposed "LOSAP" plan; earmark the funding in FY14; and seek legislation during the next session of the General Assembly. Commissioner Fisher abstained from the vote.

The Board was presented with a Subrecipient Agreement for Homeless Services provided through the Emergency Solutions Grant. The Seton Center (Catholic Charities) was awarded \$30,498 in funding through the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development for the period of October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2014 to help prevent homelessness by maintaining essential utility services and assisting with rental payments. As part of the ESG application, the Seton Center has agreed to comply with all requirements of the ESG Agreement.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried 4-0 to authorize President Simpkins to sign the ESG Subrecipient Agreement with the Seton Center (Catholic Charities).

President Simpkins has received a request for inmate labor to clean-up the Simms Cemetery in Mt. Vernon, located directly behind the Petroski property. The property owners have been contacted and have given their approval for the clean-up.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried unanimously to request inmate labor from ECI Annex to assist with the clean-up of the Simms Cemetery.

Mr. Taylor addressed an issue regarding the rental of the Messick Farm in Westover. Updated aerial maps of the farm, utilizing current technology, calculates the total acreage to be just under 32.2 acres. This revised number is 3.3 acres less than previously estimated and displayed on county maps. Therefore, Mr. Taylor recommended the rental amount for the Messick Farm be decreased accordingly, for a new annual rent of \$2,318.40, a difference of

\$237.60. This change would become effective immediately and the reduction would be reflected in the 2013 billing. The Lease would also be amended to reflect the change.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Mathies, it carried 4-0 to amend the Lease to show the corrected acreage and reduce the rental amount accordingly.

The Board was reminded of a request from Mr. Phil Riggin, Commander of the American Legion Post #16, regarding a monetary donation towards the Freedom Fest Event in Crisfield, July 6, 2013.

Upon motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, it carried 4-0 to contribute \$250 to the American Legion Post #16 for the Freedom Fest Event.

With no further agenda items, President Simpkins asked for any questions or comments from the audience.

Mr. Dan Kuebler, of Crisfield, expressed his appreciation to the Board for their efforts on the FY14 Budget and although a property tax increase was proposed for the upcoming year, Mr. Kuebler acknowledged that the tax rate had not been increased for many years.

Mr. Phil Riggin, of Crisfield, agreed with Mr. Kuebler's statement and supports the proposed tax increase. Mr. Riggin also extended an invitation to the Commissioners to attend several upcoming events: Cruise aboard the Steven Thomas; Softshell Festival; Memorial Day Service; and Freedom Fest. In addition, Mr. Riggin reported that a \$10,000 check was presented to Jennifer Ranck (Somerset County Library System) as a local effort on behalf of the Crisfield community.

BG Warner I. Sumpter (Ret.), of Princess Anne, expressed his support for the "Length of Service Awards Program" for Somerset County Firemen.

With no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Approved By:



Board of County Commissioners  
For Somerset County

Respectfully Submitted:



Cynthia R. Ward  
Executive Aide