

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY  
SPECIAL SESSION  
TUESDAY DECEMBER 10, 2013**

At 1:20 p.m., the Board of County Commissioners for Somerset County met in Special Session on a motion made by Commissioner Mathies, seconded by Commissioner Boston. The motion carried 4-0.

Present for the meeting today were Commissioner President Rex Simpkins, Commissioner Vice President Charles F. Fisher, Commissioner Jerry S. Boston, Commissioner Randy Laird and Commissioner Craig N. Mathies Sr.

County Administrator-Clerk Ralph D. Taylor and Executive Secretary Lory E. Ebron were also present.

First, Mr. Taylor advised the Board that invitations have been sent to some of the groups who may have an interest in attending the Public Hearing (to obtain the views of citizens and organizations related to the remaining needs resulting from Hurricane Sandy and Irene), that is scheduled for December 17, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. Some of those noted that received the invitation included; Mayor and City of Crisfield, Town of Princess Anne, the Housing Authority, Long Term Recovery Committee, Smith Island United, Homeless Coalition and Shore Up.

Mr. Taylor read into the record, a letter addressed to Secretary Raymond A. Skinner, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development. In summary, the letter dated December 10, 2013, thanked Secretary Skinner and his Department for the assistance provided to Somerset County in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and also stated Somerset County's appreciation of the funding and support that has been offered by his department with regard to our recovery efforts. The letter also addressed concerns that have been expressed with regard to the additional \$16 million of additional funding that has been allocated to Somerset County. Mr. Taylor also acknowledged that the following government officials will receive a copy of the letter; Senator Barbara A. Mikulski, Senator Benjamin Cardin, Congressman Andrew P. Harris, Governor Martin O'Malley, Senator James N. Mathias, Jr., and Delegate Charles J. Otto. Following the reading of the letter, Mr. Taylor requested the Board's approval to authorize President Simpkins to sign the letter on behalf of the Board.

On a motion made by Commissioner Laird and seconded by Commissioner Fisher, the motion carried 4-0 authorizing President Simpkins to sign the letter addressed to Secretary Skinner as presented by Mr. Taylor.

Next, Mr. Taylor presented and read into the record, a Memorandum that has been drafted to be sent out to approximately 18,000 Somerset County Property Owners. Mr. Taylor stated that the purpose of this mailing is to make our best effort to ensure all Somerset County residents are aware the assistance available to them for any damage incurred during Hurricane Sandy. All costs involved with the mailing will be reimbursed to the county via Hurricane Sandy funding assistance.

On a motion made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Laird, it carried 4-0 to proceed with the mailing of the Memorandum as presented by Mr. Taylor to all Somerset County residents.

Mr. Taylor then asked for Mr. Phil Riggin and Mayor PJ Purnell to come forward. Mr. Riggin and Mayor Purnell were here today to present the Master Plan for Economic Development in the Crisfield Area.

Mayor Purnell began by complimenting the job that the Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) has done for the City of Crisfield. He noted that the LTRC came in early after the storm and picked up many of the pieces requiring to be addressed regarding the recovery; through no fault of city, local state and federal government efforts. He also noted that the LTRC has not substituted itself, but has aligned itself with city government in recovery efforts. The Mayor explained that the LTRC has formed an Economic Development Group under the guidance of Mr. Riggin, and they have created the Master Plan that is being presented to the Board today which looks at the potential that may exist for the City of Crisfield. Mayor Purnell noted that the plan has been embraced by himself and City Council and they were very appreciative of the efforts that have been put into the drafting of this plan. Mayor Purnell closed in saying that the plan is a good rounded picture of things that need to be done in the city.

Mr. Riggin explained how the plan was drafted, in that previous plans were taken into consideration and used to create the plan being presented today. Mr. Riggin stated that the theme of the plan naturally fits into the preservation of Crisfield's heritage. This plan is a "bare bones" product, that would initially focus on the short term projects, that when completed would create

momentum toward larger and more complex undertakings in future years. The "Short-Term Initiatives" as outlined in the plan were as follows:

- Use of the open space at the City Dock
- Expansion and development of Wellington Beach
- Construction of a replica of Somers Cove Light House
- Presence of "Arts" downtown
- Storefront and awning treatments for uptown stores
- Streetscape and landscaping improvements downtown
- Expansion of current heritage based programs and educational tours/forums
- Concert events downtown
- Creation of a marketing plan to promote Crisfield
- High speed internet infrastructure

Mr. Riggin continued, noting what the longer term initiatives were that could have significant impact on Crisfield:

- A high quality motel and conference center
- Expanded use of Somers Cove Marina
- Expanded services at Janes Island
- Kayak trails through Cedar Island Marsh
- The bike path between Crisfield and Westover
- Attracting and retaining new business
- Job creation produced by expanded tourism and more year round residents
- Job training

In closing, Mr. Riggin noted that the committee is looking for the Boards support of the basic concept of the plan.

Commissioner Laird inquired about the possibility of the use of Crisfield Airport and Wallops as part of the group that may be chosen in Maryland regarding the FAA Unmanned Aerial Systems Test Site Selection Program. Mr. Taylor advised that PAX River as well as the University of Maryland are also included as part of the Maryland group, and we are hoping to hear the results of who is chosen in January. Mr. Riggin noted that the plan did not include that project. Commissioner Laird stated that anything that is good for Crisfield is good for Somerset County.

Commissioner Mathies stated that the basis of the plan is fantastic in that the city is actively seeking to do something to improve the attractiveness of Crisfield. The key is to be productive, noting it is a great initiative and obtainable as long as the city keeps to the plan.

Mr. Riggin advised the Board of a meeting that is scheduled for December 16, 2013. Six state agencies will be present to discuss potential sources of funding. It was also noted that not all the initiatives presented within the plan will be at a cost to the city.

Commissioner Mathies asked about the condo's in Crisfield, and if anyone has attempted to contact a large hotel chain to see if they would have in interest to purchase the units. Mayor

Purnell advised that attempts had been made a couple of years ago, however at that time they were told by the chain that there were not enough "stays" to warrant an interest to purchase the condo's. It was noted however that there has been other investors that have shown an interest, and many of the ideas are still in the "works". In closing, Mayor Purnell stated that they need to figure out ways to get people to come down to Crisfield and stay, noting that Crisfield does not have highway traffic drive-thru opportunities.

Commissioner Fisher stated that the committee has done a good job.

Commissioner Boston complimented Mr. Riggin and the Task Force for doing an outstanding job. He also stated his support and his hope is that the plan will work.

In closing, Mayor Purnell noted that they were not present today to ask the county for any funding, noting that they will looking for funding avenues when they have their meeting next week.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:55 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Mathies, and seconded by Commissioner Laird to go into Closed Session by Authority of State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland Section 10-508 (a) (1) (i) the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction.

Respectfully Submitted:

  
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Lory E. Ebron  
Executive Secretary

Approved by:

  
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Board of County Commissioners  
For Somerset County