

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
FOR SOMERSET COUNTY

SEPTEMBER 29, 2015

**SPECIAL SESSION**

At 2:00 P.M., the Board of Commissioners for Somerset County met in Special Session with Commissioner President Randy Laird, Commissioner Vice-President Charles F. Fisher, Commissioner Craig N. Mathies, Sr., Commissioner Jerry S. Boston and Commissioner Rex Simpkins in attendance. County Administrator-Clerk Ralph D. Taylor and Executive Secretary Shannon L. Evans were also present.

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

Mr. Taylor began the meeting by inviting Mr. Clint Sterling, Director of Recreation and Parks Department, to come forward to discuss the Trail Mix Project. Mr. Sterling began by explaining the Trail Mix Project noting that it began with a MOU in spring to develop this project to improve the general health of the citizens in the County as well as draw visitors to our area. The Trail Mix Project involves hiking trails, biking trails, kayak trails and golfing trails. Mr. Sterling presented the Board with a draft of a brochure outlining the Trail Mix Project which catalogues the trails and features a QR code that once scanned will direct you to the Trail Mix Website which includes a forum for visitors to highlight their experience. Mr. Sterling displayed a sample of the road signs created by the County Roads Department and noted that the Trail Mix Project is fully grant funded. Mr. Taylor thanked Mr. Sterling and his staff as well as the Tourism Department for their hard work on this project. President Laird also noted that the opening day of the Fall Sports Programs had been a success. Mr. Sterling was excused from the meeting at this time.

Ms. Julie Widdowson, Tourism Director, was now before the Board to discuss the SHA Tourist Area and Corridor (TAC) Signing Program. Ms. Widdowson updated the Board on a recent meeting explaining the TAC Signing Program noting that the purpose is to replace existing non-retail road signs for attractions located throughout the County with new signs at no cost to the County unless a sign is destroyed. The SHA would then fabricate the replacement

sign and the County would be responsible to replace the pole and provide the manpower to replace the sign. The SHA is requesting the President's signature on a letter allowing them to bring these signs into the County as well as the County's help with promoting this program to local attractions that may be eligible and requests that the County assist with the application process.

Commissioner Simpkins left the meeting.

Attractions wishing to participate need to submit an application along with brochures and/or other support materials which document its potential eligibility to the State Highway Administration for approval.

Commissioner Simpkins returned to the meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Fisher, seconded by Commissioner Boston, and carried unanimously to authorize President Laird's signature on the letter allowing SHA to proceed with the TAC Signing Program in the County.

Next, Mr. Taylor invited Mr. Dan Powell, Vice-Chairman of Somerset County Historical Trust, to come forward. Mr. Powell introduced Ms. Gail Yerges of the Somerset County Historical Society and Ms. Lisa Ludwig, Executive Director of the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Council. Mr. Powell began by noting the 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Somerset County is approaching on August 22, 2016 and inquired if the County had begun planning for a celebration for this occasion. Mr. Powell noted that Grant opportunities were available to help cover expenses of the celebration. Ms. Yerges presented the Board with a Visitor's Guide highlighting the Teackle Mansion and Princess Anne, Maryland. Ms. Ludwig discussed the grant opportunities available explaining that the grant would be a matching grant with the match coming from in-kind money as well as cash. Ms. Ludwig also noted that if approved the expenses would be forward funded and reimbursed in November 2016. The grant process would begin in January 2016, due by April 1, 2016 and a decision would be made in June 2016. Mr. Powell also noted that other municipalities and organizations can be included in the planning and funding and a Grant Writer would need to be appointed.

Mr. Powell requested support from the Board to proceed with the planning process. The Board gave consensus to support efforts to explore future plans for the upcoming anniversary celebration.

President Laird called a short recess at 2:35 p.m.

At 2:45 p.m., the recess adjourned and President Laird called the Special Session to order.

Mr. Taylor invited Mr. Tony Stockus, General Manager of Somerset County Sanitary District, Inc., before the Board to discuss the proposed EDU ordinance. Mr. Stockus began by explaining the reason for the proposed changes to the Benefit Assessment billing method noting that the recent lawsuits and loss of revenue from non-paying accounts have forced the Sanitary District to address how it assesses their capital debt. Mr. Stockus referenced the following portion of the Annotated Code:

**Under 9-657 of the Annotated Code Classification and assessment of property.**

*(b) Basis of Assessment.* Except as otherwise provided in this subtitle, sanitary commission shall assess property:

1. On a front-foot basis; or
2. Under uniform rules and regulations adopted for the district and approved by the member counties.

Mr. Stockus explained that the Front Foot Assessment method has been abandoned by most municipalities for the EDU billing method. The EDU method was explained that each user would be billed based on water consumption noting that those who use more water will pay a higher percentage of the cost of capital projects. Mr. Stockus estimated that an EDU would cost a family in Princess Anne approximately \$383 annually for the first year and decrease in future years with the water portion being \$106.82 and the sewer portion being \$275.85. This rate assumed a 50% collection rate for delinquent accounts. After a brief discussion regarding how users with only water or sewer service will be billed, Ms. Starr Mister, Office Manager of Somerset County Sanitary District, Inc., came forward and explained that if the user only has sewer service they will only be billed for the sewer portion as well as water users will only be billed for the water portion.

Ms. Mister presented the Board with projections on various accounts and how this will affect their rates, indicating that the Westover area will see the greatest decreases in yearly assessments while the Princess Anne and Crisfield areas will reflect the greatest increases to users.

After a brief discussion regarding how the proposed EDU billing method will affect the residents of Somerset County, Ms. Mister advised that in order to use the EDU method for the 2016 billing, they would need the EDU Ordinance approved in October. Ms. Mister explained that if the EDU method is not approved, the Sanitary District will be working with legal counsel to explore their options for Front Foot Assessment billing but she projects an increase in the North Princess Anne subdistrict and it is projected that the Sanitary District would be default by next year in this case.

Mr. Stockus and Ms. Mister were excused from the meeting at this time.

With no further business and no public input, a motion was made by Commissioner Boston, seconded by Commissioner Fisher, and carried 4-0 to enter into Closed Session at 3:25 p.m. 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. The Special and Closed Sessions adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Shannon L. Evans  
Executive Secretary

Approved By:

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Board of Commissioners  
For Somerset County