

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLADENSBURG
WORK SESSION MINUTES
February 12, 2024 - 5:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Takisha James called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Council Members McBryde, Brown, and Dixon were present. Also present were Code Supervisor Rinehart, Chief Collington, Treasurer Tinelli, and Town Administrator Michelle Bailey-Hedgepeth.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor James requested a motion to approve the amended meeting agenda. Council Member Brown motioned, and Council Member Dixon seconded the motion. No questions or comments were presented, and the motion passed 4-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Brown motioned to approve the January 8, 2024, work session minutes, and Council Member McBryde seconded the motion. Mayor James suggested that items under the Legislative Update should mention the exact House Bill and Senate Bill numbers to track these. The motion passed 4-0.

APPROVED ABSENCE

Mayor James said Council Member Blount could not attend this evening's meeting and requested a motion to approve her absence. Council Member Brown motioned to approve her absence, and Council Member McBryde seconded. The motion passed 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

FY 2024 and FY 2025 Budget Update:

Mr. Tinelli provided the Town Council with highlights of the current FY 2024 financials as compared to the budget and gave information on the FY 2025 Budget along with the Budget calendar.

- Revenues overall are just above budget through January, with almost \$7.5M received to date.
- Overall, expenses are in line with budget, with some departments being over/under budget, but these are due to staff vacancies or expenses being frontloaded early in the fiscal year.
- Mayor James asked if there are any large capital purchases that need to be made before the end of the fiscal year. Administrator Hedgepeth said we should only see the grant-funded projects already budgeted for and the vehicles part of the budget amendment being presented tonight.

- The total real property assessments of \$565M were reviewed, along with how the Town’s tax rate funds the budget every year. New assessments from the State for the next fiscal year will be released later this week.
- Budget challenges for FY25: ARPA funds will be going away, funding increases for staff COLA and Merit increases, continued funding of new positions in Public Works and Public Safety, increases in insurance, and vehicle replacements. Also, we need to budget for the long term for future funding of a new Town Hall.
- Tax rates for real property and business personal property were shared between all the municipalities in the County and where Bladensburg ranks.
- FY25 budget calendar was shared, and dates were confirmed again but these can be changed as needed. Sine Die day for the State is on April 8th which is the same date as our April monthly meeting. We can change our meeting date if needed.

FINANCIAL BUSINESS

1. **Adoption and Approval of the FY 2023 Financial Statements and Audit Report** completed by LSWG-certified Public Accountants. Mr. Tinelli provided the Town Council with highlights of the FY 2023 Audit and an overview of the report and information cited by the auditors.
 - Findings—Treasurer Tinelli said the Town's first finding was three-time sheets that did not have supervisory signatures. We responded with a corrective statement and clarified adherence to the internal control procedures of having all time sheets properly approved and signed off on.
 - Mayor James stated that even with this finding, which is minor but the Town takes seriously, we still have a positive audited opinion, which she read from the audit stating, “in our (their) opinion, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Town of Bladensburg as of June 30, 2023.
 - Eva Webb from LSWG will discuss this at the Mayor and Council meeting.
2. **Budget Adjustment 6-2024:** Mayor James read a proposed budget amendment for the purchase of two (2) 2023 Ford Police Interceptors and one (1) 2023 Dodge Ram 1500 from New Holland Auto Group for the Police Department, in an amount not to exceed \$135,188, to be funded from Speed Camera proceeds.

Administrator Hedgepeth said these are replacements for vehicles damaged and totaled in accidents. They will be funded from the Speed Camera funds, but Insurance proceeds for the totaled vehicles will be recognized in the General Fund. Mayor James asked to have our insurance claims history reviewed as well.

3. **Budget Adjustment 7 –2024:** Administrator Hedgepeth read a proposed budget adjustment for expenses related to the purchase of portable light towers with cameras from Mobile Pro Systems, not to exceed \$158,230, to be funded from Speed Camera proceeds.

Based on crime statistics, these will expand the current light towers in place in other areas, and they are in high demand.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Contract Approval 11-2024:** Approval to allow the Town Administrator to execute a contract with Bates to renew trash and garbage collection services for five (5) years with two (2) one-year renewals beginning March 1, 2024. Two-day weekly collection service along with bulk trash will continue with the following major changes:
 - Rate increased from \$24 per household to \$26 per household.
 - CPI adjustment beginning March 2026;
 - Added a new location for an additional town dumpster.
 - Fuel surcharge will only kick in when diesel rises above \$4.99/gallon;
 - This contract is still cheaper than the state trash contracts for our area, and Bates is a Town business, and;
 - The County still handles recycling through Bates and is not a Town service.

2. **Contract Approval 12-2024:** Approval to allow the Town Administrator to execute a contract with Low Impact Design Center for \$30,227. This is for the preparation of documents for future grants and planning activities, which will expand our funding opportunities. Specifically, this is for planning support for stormwater management projects with financial and technical assistance. This work will be done in the spring and summer of 2024.

3. **Resolution 6-2024:** A RESOLUTION of the Town of Bladensburg, Maryland, Supporting Legislative Initiatives that Re-establish Local Land Use Authority in Prince George’s County. This is a resolution of support for pending State legislation that would allow local municipalities within Prince George’s County to have the option to form a Planning Body. Council Member Brown asked about the cost considerations, but our lobbyist, Tony Perez, said municipalities could opt out.

4. **Resolution 7-2024:** A RESOLUTION concerning a Taskforce to Plan Celebrations for the Semiquincentennial 250th Anniversary of the United States of America. The Mayor is currently a member of the Statewide task force appointed by the Governor to plan this. We should lead by example by having the Town do this locally as well.

5. **Legislative Session Updates:**
 - The MAGLEV committee hearing will be on February 22nd.
 - PGCMA is supporting legislation for local audits to be completed in a timely manner unless there is a good and qualifying reason such as staff vacancies.
 - The Town sent a letter supporting the retail theft bill.
 - A bill to fund the Comprehensive Flood Management Grant Program for underserved and overburdened communities is in the works, and the Mayor and Council may want to send a letter of support.

- Mayor James said the Town may want to submit a letter of support for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to fund an annual mental health physical for bill SB124 and for the cross-filed bill in the House.
- The Mayor discussed bill HB266, which establishes a bill of rights for unit owners of homeowner and condo associations.
- HB280 is for a taxing authority to set aside funds for emergency repairs and maintenance for buildings with condo and homeowner associations. Staff said this would reduce the amount of revenues based on assessments if we had to hold back tax revenues to cover this.

6. Green Team Update (INFORMATION ONLY):

Staff presented information on the most recent meeting of the Town's Green Team. The team was formed so that the Town can comply with the Sustainable Communities Certification from the University of Maryland, which is recognized at MML.

7. Town Administrator updates/ Staff Reports – these are submitted in the Council Meeting packet.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor James asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting, which Council Member McBryde seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:42 PM