



For Immediate Release

Easton, MD – May 18, 2022

Contact: Clay B. Stamp
County Manager
cbstamp@talbotcountymd.gov
410-770-8010

Talbot County Council Meeting Highlights, Tuesday, May 17, 2022

These highlights only reflect the business items covered from the Council's approved agenda. To view the complete County Council meeting, please visit: Talbot County Meeting Videos - Talbot County, Maryland (www.talbotcountymd.gov).

Council members Callahan, Lesher, Divilio and Price were in attendance. Council member Pack was absent due to his father's death.

A moment of silence was held for Council member Pack's father.

Proclamation: National Safe Boating Week – May 21 – 27, 2022. The Council presented a proclamation to Reed Carey, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Edward Burke, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary and Tyler Laski, Boatswain's Mate, 2nd Class, U.S. Coast Guard. The proclamation noted that the vast majority of boating-related accidents are caused by human error or poor judgment and not by the boat, equipment or environmental factors; and that a significant number of boaters who lose their lives by drowning each year would still be alive today had they worn their life jackets. The proclamation also acknowledged that safe boaters have applied knowledge gained by attending the United States Coast Guard approved Safe Boating classes, and safe boaters operate vessels that have passed a Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadron Vessel Safety. The proclamation urged all those who boat to practice safe boating habits and wear a life jacket at all times while boating,

Carey reported that this past year in Maryland there were 148 boating accidents and six deaths. This rate has increased by 25% over a one-year period. He commented, "Taking steps toward staying safe and staying sober while boating substantially decreases the risks to boaters. National Safe Boating Week has been recognized nationally since 1958. Traditionally now as the week before Memorial Day weekend, it's a great time to remind boaters who are getting back on the water to be safe. The Coast Guard and the Department of Natural Resources will be out there keeping us safe."

Council member Divilio stated, “I grew up here waterskiing and wakeboarding and playing in the different rivers around and I certainly know the hazards and have seen plenty of dangerous activity out in the water and so I appreciate the work that you guys do to keep us safe while we’re out there. The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum started their boater safety class tonight that will run on Tuesdays and Thursdays this week, as well as July 19 – 21 and August 23 – 25. Anyone born after 1972 is required to take a boater safety course. It’s very easy to get lost out there and that basic boater safety class teaches you how to be a lot safer.”

Council Vice President Lesher added, “We know that even though it’s not mandatory for those of us who are born before that date to take the Boater’s Safety course, it’s still good practice. So thank you for all you do to promote boating safety. I remember an incident some years ago where I was just out there with my kids and a DNR officer came along and gave them each an ice cream coupon because he observed them to be wearing life jackets aboard – that was just great positive reinforcement. I’ve also seen the tragic side of this as I’ve personally known a couple of people who have not just been injured, but lost their lives out in the water. Everything that we do to save a life and everything that you do to promote safety and save lives out there is so important to us.”

Council President Chuck Callahan states, “As my colleagues have said, I was born and raised here and spent time on the water all the time. You provide emergency services to people day or night. We appreciate everything you do to protect citizens and visitors to Talbot County.”

Presentation of Letters of Interest for SFY23 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Mary Kay Verdery, Talbot County Grants Administrator

Mary Kay Verdery, Talbot County Grants Administrator, explained that the Maryland Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) is a federally funded program designed to assist county and municipal governments with activities directed toward neighborhood revitalization, housing opportunities, economic development, and improved public facilities and services. The Maryland CDBG program is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). CDBG funds are provided primarily as gap funding for projects selected by the jurisdiction to meet our community needs. CDBG funds provided must meet a national objective and additional Maryland objectives. CDBG applications are accepted on a competitive basis. This applies at the County and State levels. The maximum amount Talbot County may request, for a single project or cumulative projects, is \$800,000. Upon receipt of notification from DHCD of the SFY23 grant application process, Talbot County created and posted a notice of Community Development Block Grant funding on the County website.

Verdery requested the Council’s support to partner with the following non-profits for SFY23 CDBG grant applications:

1. Habitat for Humanity Choptank (Habitat Choptank) – Seeking \$100,000 to renovate a home located in the historic area of Easton at 122 S. Locust Lane. Funds will be used to support the demolition, stabilization, interior and exterior rehabilitation of an existing single-family home located in the historic area of Easton, known as “The Hill”. The subject lands were purchased by Habitat Choptank in January 2022. Habitat Choptank’s affordable home program serves those in

Talbot County who earn between 35% and 65% of the HUD defined Area Median Income (AMI) which equates to between \$35,385 and \$65,715 annually. Additional funding opportunities for this project include a Legacy grant and Town of Easton American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

2. Building African American Minds (BAAM) – Seeking \$400,000 toward the construction of an Academic Center located at 31 Jowite Street, Easton, MD 21601. The new 3-story state-of-the-art facility will be located in the Town of Easton in a low-to-moderate income (LMI) service area. The facility will continue to provide after-school and summer programs for 1st – 5th-grade students from Easton Elementary School and the middle school program. In addition, they will expand programming to offer a workforce development program for youth and the community. Partnerships include Chesapeake College and other community organizations that will provide educational programming for youth, parents, and the community in areas such as financial literacy & budgeting, job skills/enhancement training, GED courses, wellness, and arts programming.

Applications are due to DHCD on June 15, 2022, by 2:00 p.m. and will be awarded on a competitive basis. DHCD will score the project(s) independently based on many factors including public purpose and benefit to LMI persons, project impact; project management and readiness to proceed; and local commitment and leveraging of funds.

Council member Divilio made a motion to partner with both Habitat Choptank and BAAM on the SFY23 CDBG application; it was seconded by Council member Price and unanimously approved by Council.

Council member Divilio complimented Ms. Verdery on her efforts stating, “I think the community would be shocked at how many grant projects you have processed through your office and grant dollars you have been successfully awarded to benefit the community and local citizens. I know I am very impressed. I think might end up being an untold story, so I would make sure to keep track of the grants you have initiated. Thank you very much.”

Eligible for Vote:

Bill No. 1498, AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE 2022-2023 ANNUAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE was read into the public record.

Ken Davis, Acting Finance Director presented the following summary for the County’s 2022-2023 Annual Budget:

The FY 23 proposed general fund budget is approximately \$112,607,000 which is essentially flat as compared to the FY 22 budget. The FY 23 budget for operating expenses is increasing by 7.7%, which is less than the 8.5% increase in the consumer price index. The budget includes a one-cent increase in the Property Tax rate to fund County operations and a one-cent Educational Supplement to support Talbot County Public Schools budget initiatives.

Public safety is a top priority with budget increases for first responders such as the Sheriff's Office, Department of Emergency Services, and Talbot County volunteer fire departments. This

budget also includes funding for property acquisition to house the Sheriff's Office and the Talbot County Health Department.

The budget fully funds the educational commitment and additional requests to make investments in roadways, culvert replacements, and extension of sewer systems, as well as investments in information technology for greater efficiency, transparency and data security. There is also funding for increased retirement expenses with our paramedics joining the Law Enforcement Officers' Pension System (LEOPS) to help fund their retirement and it also includes the important Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and step increases for all eligible employees to address inflationary recruitment and retention issues.

The budget also includes rate increases for our enterprise Sanitary District to help ensure that these costs are self-funded by revenue through the customers served and it uses approximately \$14.3 million of the fund balance with a projected ending balance of \$31.6 million for FY 23 and beyond. Mr. Davis reported that it is a very healthy fund balance to help manage volatility in the market and an uncertain economy.

Mr. Davis read the proposed budget amendment into the record:

Amendments:

Appropriation Budget

DEPARTMENT	FROM	TO	CHANGE
Sheriff's Office			
Salaries & Benefits	\$5,698,270	\$5,785,601	\$87,331
Operating Expense	\$1,124,942	\$1,112,942	(\$12,000)
County Roads			
Capital Outlay	\$525,000	\$475,000	(\$50,000)
Senior Services			
Operating Appropriation	\$562,284	\$587,284	\$25,000
Health Department			
School Health	\$12,000	\$885,308	\$873,308
Addictions Program	\$885,308	\$12,000	(\$873,308)
Employee Benefits			
Other Operating	\$855,102	\$802,771	(\$52,331)
Miscellaneous	\$341,879	\$343,879	\$2,000
TOTAL	\$10,004,785	\$10,004,785	-

Capital Budget

CAPITAL BUDGET	FROM	TO	CHANGE
County Facilities Health Department – New Facility	\$12,000,000	\$13,000,000	\$1,000,000

TOTAL	\$21,932,430	\$22,932,430	\$1,000,000
Long Term Borrowing County Facilities	\$16,900,000	\$17,900,000	\$1,000,000
TOTAL	\$16,900,000	\$17,900,000	\$1,000,000

Council member Price introduced the motion to approve the amendment; it was seconded by Council member Divilio and unanimously approved by Council.

Upon motion by Council member Price, seconded by Council member Divilio, Bill No. 1498, as amended, was unanimously approved by Council.

Council Vice President Lesher commented, “Budgets are our policy documents. They are a reflection of our priorities. And in this case, it reflects our commitment to the voters to fund public safety – adding sheriff's deputies, raising the deputies' pay, and funding the LEOPS retirement system for them will help us to recruit and retain sworn officers. This is really important work. Likewise with EMS, making that unit in the northern part of the county full time and allowing our paramedics to buy into the LEOPS retirement system. This is important work and part of the commitment that we made when we asked the voters to allow an extra penny on the property tax. This is essentially a flat budget year over year and reflects our spending within our means. So, I want to thank all the staff who have supported us through this process and got us to this point and my fellow Council members for working through all these issues so smoothly this year. This is an important step forward for Talbot County.”

Council member Divilio stated, “This is my last budget cycle. I've really enjoyed the budget because it's collectively working together to solve the problems of the community. And we're challenged financially because we don't have infinite dollars to spend. It's been a real pleasure to sit down with a unique Council from different backgrounds and different ages and try to come up with the best solution for the community. My current concerns are mental health and the financial stability of this community. And I'm glad that we're addressing those issues in identifying a new location for the Health Department. For individuals to be able to get the immediate resources that they need and being able to walk to those places easily is the perfect solution.”

Council member Price commented, “This is my 12th and final budget and it has really changed dramatically and I'd like to thank Angela Lane for working together on all of those budgets. It has gotten a lot more expensive to do business and retain employees from 12 years ago. We've maintained the second-lowest income tax rate in the state over the last three Councils. This \$14 million transfer from the fund balance to help with the operating budget is returning an overpayment of taxes to the public. And that's what should be done. As far as public safety goes, we made that commitment to the voters who allowed us to have some extra revenue. But I certainly thank the people in the Finance Office and all the department heads for really doing everything they could to get the most bang for their buck when asked and present those flat budgets to us. They all have done that. And that enables the Council to keep the taxes as low as possible.”

Council President Chuck Callahan commented, “What is special about this budget is that the staff blended together and did great, great work. We're providing the citizens with a new Health Department and a new Sheriff's Office while upgrading Emergency Services. I think we provide the best we can with the services that we have. Thank you to the employees who help support us in all we do.”

Clay Stamp concluded, “I want to thank the staff and everybody who's worked hard to come up with a modest budget, recognizing the uncertainties that we're in right now, and addressing the priorities that the voters have given us. And I want to thank the Council for their support and for helping us put together this budget. It supports our operational strategy of investing in our workforce – we must keep the good people that we have. You've invested in technology to help us streamline some of our processes, supported major road projects, and helped us move forward toward the completion of rescuing failing septic systems. It has helped us build a North End EMS station to make sure we can deliver that eight-minute response time for our paramedics to people in trouble. And finally, we are building a public safety building and a health department as the third prong of our strategy. I certainly appreciate our staff and you have a lot of support behind you, Council.

County Manager's Report:

Board and Committee Appointments

Airport Board – Mr. Stamp requested the reappointment of Hugh Grunden to the Airport Board. The Council voted unanimously to approve the reappointment of Mr. Grunden.

Request from Talbot County Free Library for Letter of Support to Provide Matching Funds for Design and Architectural Engineering Services for the St. Michaels Library Expansion Project – Mr. Stamp noted the Talbot County Free Library is seeking Council approval for a letter of certification to the Maryland State Library Agency to provide \$45,000 in matching funds for the design and architectural engineering services for the St. Michaels library expansion project. The project includes upgrades to more efficient heating and electrical systems, additional space for both patrons and staff including study rooms, a larger meeting room, and larger youth spaces which can accommodate up-to-the-minute technology and can take into account the physical limitations of patrons and/or staff. Dana Newman, Director, Talbot County Free Library stated, “Once this project is completed, we are confident that the larger and newly renovated library will have an even more powerful impact on the entire community it serves, citizens and visitors alike.”

Council member Divilio made a motion to send a letter of support; it was seconded by Council member Price and unanimously approved by Council.

Request from Talbot County Free Library for Letter of Support of the Library's Application to the FY24 Maryland Library Capital Grant Program – Mr. Stamp noted the Talbot County Free Library is seeking Council approval for a letter of support to the Maryland State Library Agency for the FY24 Maryland Library Capital Grant Program funding for the St. Michaels library

expansion project. Mr. Stamp confirmed the project is included in the County's Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Council member Divilio made a motion to send a letter of support; it was seconded by Vice President Lesher and unanimously approved by Council. Council President Callahan thanked the Library staff for what they do.

Announcement – Mr. Stamp commented on National EMS Service Providers Week which is celebrated May 15-21, 2022. “We have an excellent system here with our providers and we make a difference each and every day” Stamp commented.

Council member Frank Divilio reported that the Bill Burton Fishing Pier State Park community discussion will be held on Monday, May 23 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at 29761 Bolingbroke Drive in Trappe. The public is invited to attend and more information is available at the Talbot County Parks and Recreation Department website (www.talbotparks.org).

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 24 at 6 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room.

The Council meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.



Front Row:

Edward Burke, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Reed Carey, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Council Member Frank Divilio, Officer Nate Bradley, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police and Tyler Laski, Boatswain's Mate, 2nd Class, U.S. Coast Guard

Back Row:

Vice President Pete Lesher, President Chuck Callahan, Council Member Laura Price