

The Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton

MINUTES

January 13, 2021

In order to comply with Governor Larry Hogan's declaration of a State of Emergency as part of Maryland's response to COVID-19, and in order to limit public gatherings during this time, the Mayor and Commissioners of the Town of Elkton (the "Board") conducted a virtual workshop meeting on this date at 12:00 p.m. The following persons participated via computer and/or telephone: Mayor Robert J. Alt; Commissioners Jean A. Broomell, Charles H. Givens, Sr., Robert M. Massimiano and Earl M. Piner, Sr.; Town Administrator Lewis H. George, Jr.; Assistant Town Administrator Joseph V. Zurolo; Planning Director Jeanne D. Minner; Chief of Police Carolyn Rogers; Senior Administrative Specialist L. Michelle Henson; and Town Attorney John P. Downs, Esquire.

Mayor Alt called the virtual workshop meeting to order at 12:00 p.m.

Discussion - Elkton Alliance Update

Elkton Alliance Executive Director Ms. Jessica Price and Board of Directors Vice President Ms. Danielle Carroll introduced themselves to the Board.

Mayor Alt stated he requested a meeting with the Alliance in order to determine financial needs of the organization in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22). He asked Ms. Price to provide an overview of activities and the anticipated direction of the Alliance.

Mayor Alt stated the Town has historically provided financial support to the Alliance, stating the amount has ranged from \$50,000 to \$150,000, adding that the current funding support stands at \$100,000.

Mayor Alt, referring to uncertain revenue projections due to the current health emergency, stated the Board needs to assess all expenses associated with the FY22 Budget. He added that construction projects within town limits are increasing.

Ms. Price stated the Alliance was able to repurpose \$14,000 in grant funds to assist businesses negatively affected by the COVID pandemic, adding that the Alliance has applied for additional emergency assistance, including \$250,000 in Maryland Strong Recovery Grant Funds.

Ms. Price noted that the Alliance has recognized lower revenues as well, adding that the group is sponsoring outdoor events and reaching out to businesses beyond the downtown area in order to encourage growth of the organization.

Ms. Price stated the Alliance continues to transition from its current 501(c)(6) designation to a 501(c)(3) classification.

Mayor Alt questioned the difference between the designations. Ms. Price stated that the 501(c)(3) designation will provide tax exemption for donations, adding that the classification will permit the Alliance to apply for additional grant and loan funds.

Mayor Alt questioned if any of the previously mentioned repurposed grants were issued to any business beyond Main Street. Ms. Price answered in the negative, stating the grants were specific for Main Street businesses, adding that the recently applied for grant funds can be utilized beyond the downtown area.

Mayor Alt questioned the effect of reducing the Town's contribution to \$50,000. Ms. Price stated the Alliance depends upon events for the bulk of its revenue, adding that the current pandemic situation has curtailed all events. She stated a \$50,000 reduction in financial support could have a dramatic negative impact on the Alliance's ability to support local businesses.

Ms. Carroll stated a substantial reduction in financial support would be detrimental to the Alliance, as the pandemic led to reduction of event income. She noted that the Alliance reduced paid staff and relies on volunteers to provide administrative support to the Executive Director. She asked the Board to consider maintaining the \$100,000 in financial support until the Alliance receives its 501(c)(3) designation, at which time the organization can pursue donations via large stakeholders.

Commissioner Broomell questioned the net profit from the Fall Fest event. Ms. Price stated the 2019 Fall Fest generated \$25,000 through sponsorships and vendor space leases. She noted that previous Fall Fest events garnered approximately \$15,000 in profits.

Commissioner Massimiano questioned what is the largest expense associated with Fall Fest. Ms. Price stated entertainment is the largest expense. Commissioner Piner concurred with Ms. Price, stating entertainment and sound equipment setup are expensive. Commissioner Massimiano stated he will work to find volunteer entertainment.

Ms. Price stated the Alliance dedicated an area specifically for children that linked with the arts area. She stated this addition resulted in patrons staying longer.

Ms. Carroll stated the Alliance relies heavily on social media for advertising.

Ms. Price stated the Cecil College School of Performing Arts is in search of a new venue for its "Battle of the Bands" event, which could run throughout Fall Fest. Ms. Carroll stated the goal of entertainment is for businesses to benefit from crowds brought in by quality performers.

Commissioner Broomell questioned the status of the former Minihane's Pub. Ms. Carroll stated there is active interest in the space however the COVID pandemic stalled activity.

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Commissioner Givens questioned if outdoor dining can be accommodated in the event Fall Fest is held this year. Ms. Price answered in the affirmative.

Mayor Alt, referring to the Board's previous discussions regarding outdoor dining, expressed support for making it a permanent venue. He asked the Alliance to provide a formal request regarding outdoor dining. Noting that outdoor dining reduces parking spaces on Main Street, Mayor Alt added that hours of operation for participating businesses should be established and included in the request.

Discussion ensued regarding residential tenant use of downtown parking spaces.

Mayor Alt requested that the Alliance inform the Board of questions and concerns from the business community on a timely basis so that he and other Board members are prepared to answer queries.

Mayor Alt expressed support for maintaining \$100,000 in support for the Alliance in the FY 22 Budget, and requested updates during and after the organization's transition from 501(c)(6) to 501(c)(3) status.

Mayor Alt expressed his desire for the Alliance to proactively reach out to county stakeholders.

Ms. Carroll stated the Alliance's goal to further the Town's interests. She asked the Board to provide guidance to the Alliance regarding the Board's expectations.

Discussion ensued regarding the Alliance's focus on the downtown area vs. Elkton at large. Ms. Carroll stated the Alliance Board's desire to support Elkton at large, adding that funding availability will determine the outcome.

Ms. Minner stated the Town has a Downtown Master Plan that should be updated. Ms. Price stated the next round of grant applications opens in April, 2021, adding that she will apply for funding to conduct a plan update.

Commissioner Givens questioned if the Alliance has a list of vacant businesses. Ms. Price answered in the affirmative, stating she maintains the information for downtown as well as Route 40.

Mayor Alt thanked Ms. Price and Ms. Carroll for the Elkton Alliance Update.

General Discussion

Mayor Alt, referring to the Board's recent discussions regarding a request for annexation associated with property located between Belle Hill Road and Route 279, stated the County Council tabled a request to rezone the property prior to its annexation into Town. He stated the request was to amend the zoning from High Density Residential in the County to Highway Interchange in Elkton.

Mayor Alt stated the County, in tabling the decision, questioned ownership and maintenance of a portion of Belle Hill Road near its intersection with Route 279, stating that the proposed use of the annexed property will place a burden on the road.

Commissioner Broomell questioned if the State Highway Administration (SHA) would permit truck traffic from the annexed site to Route 279. Ms. Minner stated the proposed purchaser is working with SHA regarding access to Route 279. Commissioner Broomell requested to be updated regarding the process.

Mayor Alt questioned if the area is located within the Town of Elkton's established growth area. Ms. Minner answered in the affirmative, stating the Town's Comprehensive Plan identifies the area as Highway Interchange. She stated the County previously designated the area as High Density Residential, which is in conflict with the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Minner stated she received correspondence from the Maryland Department of Planning which questioned the discrepancies between the County and Town's zoning classification of this parcel.

Mr. George stated County Executive Daniel Hornberger sent correspondence opposing any change to the zoning designation of the parcel. A copy of the letter was read and placed in the record of the minutes.

Mr. George asked Ms. Minner to obtain copies of correspondence between the proposed developer and SHA.

Mayor Alt stated he received the Maryland State Rail Plan Survey from the Maryland Department of Transportation, which he will forward to the Board. He asked the Board to complete and share the survey.

Commissioner Givens stated he understands the need for confidentiality regarding potential business development in Town, adding that the Board should be kept advised.

Commissioner Broomell, referring to the planned Southfields Planned Unit Development, expressed concerns regarding the proximity of baseball and softball fields to residential property. She stated the sports field developer agreed to meet with her at her home in order to witness the

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potential effects of ball fields located near residential property. Commissioner Massimiano added that baseballs and softballs can travel a substantial distance from playing fields. Commissioner Broomell added that she will keep the Board updated regarding the meeting.

Mayor Alt reminded the Board that the third monthly meeting of the Board will be held at 6:00 p.m.

Hearing no additional comments or questions, Mayor Alt adjourned the virtual workshop meeting at 12:50 p.m.

L. Michelle Henson
Senior Administrative Specialist

A VIDEO RECORDING OF THIS MEETING RETAINED AT THE ADMINISTRATION
OFFICE