

Review of Actions Taken in the Washington County
Board of County Commissioners Meeting
March 4, 2003

The Board attended the State of the City presentation held at the Clarion Inn and Convention Center.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW EMPLOYEES

Assistant Director of Human Resources Dee Hawbaker introduced three new employees to the Board. William Sprague is the new Facilities Manager for the Water and Sewer Department. Gretchen Hill was recently hired as an Office Associate III in the State's Attorney's Office. Kay Stratton, a Cook at the Black Rock Golf Course Restaurant recently became a full-time employee.

COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Commissioner Jim Kercheval commented on a meeting with members of the Cascade citizens' organization on concerns in that area of the County. The Planning Commission meeting made a number of decisions at its meeting Monday evening, including approval of an addition to Fountain Head Country Club and approval of a plan to incinerate used tires by St. Lawrence Cement Company. A three-one vote to decline approval of the Emerald Point subdivision plan was based on traffic studies as well as density issues, Kercheval said.

Commissioner Bill Wivell requested a report from County Planning Director Bob Arch on the current Subdivision Ordinance and how it ties into the new Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner John Munson reported on Solid Waste issues, and a non-injury accident at the 40-West Landfill.

Commissioner Dori Nipps commented on the Historic District Commission's recent meeting, and said that that group reviewed use of a historic home as part of a container storage project.

Commissioners' President Greg Snook told the Board that a letter from City of Hagerstown Planner Debbie Everhart proposes annexation of three-tenths of an acre of land off Dual Highway into the City. That request was made on behalf of the property owner. The County has the right of comment on the request, but the Board expressed no interest in the issue. \$4.8 million in Maryland Water Quality loans, for capping of Resh Landfill and other projects, will be issued at a rate of 1.67% Snook said.

REPORTS FROM COUNTY STAFF

Public Works Director Gary Rohrer and Budget and Finance Director Debra Bastian reported on increase in volume use of the 40-West landfill and how the usage will drive the need for moving up the timeline for design and construction of Cell #3. Currently, 125 thousand tons of trash are coming into the landfill each year, but with demolition of the housing project in the City of Hagerstown and the Baldwin House area demolitions, the volume is expected to increase significantly. Rohrer said the project will need to go to design in late fall for projected opening in the fall of 2005. A portion of funding for the

project can come from the Water Quality bonds, as a number of landfill components qualify for inclusion in that loan program.

MAUGANS AVENUE REALIGNMENT PROJECT

Real Property Administrator Dean Lowry brought a request to purchase a property owned by Leola Ott at 15534 Spriggs road, at the corner of Spriggs and Maugans Avenue. Acquisition is taking place to assist in the Maugans Avenue alignment project, at a cost of \$107,000.00, the exact appraisal value, plus the cost of 400 gallons of heating fuel and \$5,250.00 for replacement housing and moving costs. The purchase will assist the 96-year-old owner and her 100 year-old sister in moving into assisted living arrangements, Lowry said. Funds are included in the current Capital Improvement Budget for the Maugans Avenue Project. The measure was approved by a 4-0-1 vote, with Commissioner Munson abstaining.

BID AWARD: AG CENTER POLE BARN

County Chief Engineer Terry McGee requested acceptance of the low bid construction of a Pole Barn at the Agricultural Education Center from Building Systems, Inc. for a total of \$129,400.00. Due to budget constraints, three options were advertised. Option 1 would be construction of three barns. Under Option 2 only the southernmost barn would be constructed, and Option 3 would include the northern and southern barns. Option 2 was recommended as least expensive and the desired alternative. A 90-day contract, construction could begin as early as March 5th, with a completion date of June 3rd. The project is budgeted in the current CIP, with \$111,960 in state grant funds, \$20,000 in donated funds and \$12,440.00 from the General Fund. The measure was approved by a 4-0-1 vote with Commissioner Kercheval abstaining.

CONTRACT RENEWAL: CONSTRUCTION INSPECTION SERVICES

County Purchasing Agent Karen Luther and McGee requested renewal of the current contract for Construction Inspection Services held by Hilles-Carnes Engineering Associates of Williamsport for Contract Year 3. The firm provides construction inspection services for various projects located throughout the County including roads, bridges, traffic signals, drainage structures, water lines, sewer lines, and building projects. Contract expenses have totaled \$170,000.00 over the previous two years, McGee said. The request includes a price increase for services of a Construction Inspector from \$22.50/hr to \$24.30/hr. The Senior Constructor Inspector rate would increase from \$28.00 per hour to \$30.24 per hour, the Building Inspector position would increase from \$22.50 per hour to \$25.34 per hour and the Senior Building Inspector would increase from \$28.00 per hour to \$30.24 per hour. The contract was originally bid in 2001, and renewed the last two years without an increase. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

POLICY REVIEW

Human Resources Assistant Director Dee Hawbaker brought County Personnel Policy PR-9, dealing with Employees as Reservists or Active Duty Military Personnel before the Board for information and review. The policy was revised in 2001 and supports

employees who serve as military reservists. All reasonable accommodation to meet needs of those employees is pledged in the policy. Under PR-9 the Board of County Commissioners guarantees employees called to active duty for up to 5 years the right of reemployment in the previous or equivalent job, in accordance with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994. In addition, the County will pay the difference between the reservists' military pay and regular salary if military wages are less than those paid by the County for annual training or if the reservist is involuntarily called up to active duty status. All medical and retirement benefits will continue during the active duty period, Hawbaker said. Changes in the current policy to reflect requirements of USERRA were requested. County policy had read that only those military personnel called up involuntarily were eligible for the benefits. Federal law changed in 1994 to allow benefits for those who volunteer for active duty. Questions were raised by reservist Bob Leatherman, 1st Sergeant in the Sheriff's Patrol Division, relative to how the County credits guard and reserve service. Weekend duty should count towards accrual of military credits, as do two-week training periods, Leatherman said. The County allows up to three years retirement credit for active military duty, and that has not been measured for the once-per-month weekend duty. Commissioners' President Snook requested Hawbaker develop alternatives to the current plan and present a report for discussion at a future meeting.

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Each week the Board of County Commissioners sets aside time to hear from the Citizens of Washington County on matters of community interest.

Maryland Extension Service Director Mary Ellen Waltemire introduced Eric LeMasters as Horticulture Specialist for the County. LeMasters has worked as a nurseryman, and for the U.S. Department of Agriculture prior to taking the County position.

Donald Allensworth of Hagerstown commented on real estate values and proposed transfer and excise taxes in the county, and praised the Planning Commission's recent decision on a site plan based on traffic and density.

OTHER BUSINESS

Appointments to Boards and Commissions: County Clerk Joni Bittner requested filling a vacancy on the Planning Commission. Bernie Moser was nominated by the Planning Commission, and the appointment was approved by unanimous vote.

County Administrator Comments: County Administrator Rod Shoop told the Board that the Budget presentations for several County Departments that were to begin at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, will start at 8:30 a.m.

BUDGET PRESENTATION-GENERAL FUND

Budget and Finance Director Debra Bastian brought the General Fund Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2004 before the Board for discussion and review. Bastian gave the Board an overview of the proposed \$142.22 million budget, and said that after reduction of costs from revenues, grants and fees, a \$4.3 million shortfall exists at this time. Most operating budgets have been reviewed, Bastian said, with the exception of the Education budgets. One of the reasons for the shortfall is revenue on investments. The income from interest has fallen from \$2.7 million two years ago to \$700,000.00 for the coming year. The

interest rate fell from around 6% to a low of 1.1% over the period, Bastian said. Education will get \$6 million in new money in FY 2004, Bastian said, compared with around \$500,000.00 in new revenue for general county operations. The Board is reviewing budget options over the spring, with the budget Public Hearing set for May 6th at Kepler Theater on the Hagerstown Community College campus.

The Board toured the Special Operations Station at 638 Frederick Street at the noon hour.

MARCH OF DIMES WALK

Melissa Nearchos, Program Coordinator with the Washington County Community Partnership, Melissa Clark, Community Director for the March of Dimes for Washington and Frederick Counties, and Jim Pierne of F&M Bank informed the Board that the annual March of Dimes Walk will take place in May, 2003. Nearchos explained the importance of the efforts the March of Dimes make in promoting research to end juvenile diseases, and requested that the County form a team to participate in the march. Pierne told the Board that the Walk raised \$26,000 in 2001, and \$55,000 in 2002. Goal for 2003 is \$75,000, Pierne said. The Board endorsed the event and will allow Nearchos to act as County team Captain.

BLACK ROCK GOLF COURSE VACANCY

Assistant Human Resources Director Dee Hawbaker and Black Rock Director of Golf Darrell Whittington brought this request, to advertise the Pro Shop Manager position, before the Board. The position has been funded but empty through the winter. Whittington told the Board that the position must be filled by the end of March, when play at the course is expected to resume. Funds are contained in the current operation budget, and the Black Rock Board of Directors agrees with the request. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

WATER AND SEWER DEPARTMENT ELECTRICIAN VACANCY

Hawbaker and Water/Sewer Department Director Greg Murray brought this request before the Board, to allow advertising of an Electrician I position in that Department. An Electrician II position was filled internally, freeing up the slot. The position will be advertised internally and externally at the same time. The request was approved by unanimous vote.

BUDGET PRESENTATION-GENERAL FUND

Budget and Finance Director Debra Bastian brought the General Fund Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2004 before the Board for discussion and review. Part two of the presentation dealt with Revenue Projections for the coming fiscal year. The largest single source of revenue is Property Tax, with real estate tax estimated at \$63.4 million for FY '04, a growth rate of 4.4%. Personal income tax is the second highest revenue stream, projected at \$50.1 million or 3.73% increase. When all revenue factors are in place, Bastian said, the total projected General Fund revenue is \$137.93 million, up about 3.14% over FY '03. Bastian told the Board that major problem areas include a drop in the state Disparity Grant revenue from 1.3 million to \$250,000, a reduction in that line item

of 87.4%. The Board could make changes in the proposed revenue projection prior to the May 6th Public hearing on the FY '04 budget.