

Minutes (approved, 5/7/07)
County Council Capital Budget Work Session
April 26, 2007

Meeting convened at: 10:00 a.m.

Members present: Calvin Ball, Greg Fox, Mary Kay Sigaty, Jen Terrasa, Courtney Watson

Discussion:

Recreation and Parks: Director Gary Arthur explained funding for parkland acquisition. Questions raised pertaining to Meadowbrook Park included the capacity of the center, the available parking and the uses of the indoor facility. The indoor facility will serve 225 people, with parking for 175.

Gary Arthur and Ken Alban showed diagrams of the North Laurel Park, showing accommodations made to buffer the community center from the neighboring properties.

The Council expressed support for accommodations for skateboarding.

The Robinson Nature Park was discussed as it relates to Blandair. Mr. Arthur said that the larger Robinson Nature Park, with natural forests and wetlands, was better suited than Blandair to a nature center.

There was a discussion of lighting at Alpha Ridge. Mr. Arthur told Mary Kay Sigaty that Rec. and Parks was working with the Howard County Astronomy club on accommodations for a telescope.

Community Renewal: Director Stacy Spann described two projects. He explained that Guilford Gardens, with damage much more extensive than expected, will be redeveloped into rental housing for low and moderate-income and workforce populations. This likely will involve cooperation with a private developer; however, the County will retain ownership.

A discussion followed about funds in the land bank and possible transfers to the Housing Commission. Courtney Watson expressed concern that the Commission may develop property without the kind of public process that offers transparency.

General County: In response to a question from Courtney Watson, Jim Irvin discussed the reasons for the increased costs of the Public Safety Training Facility. The new costs

reflect both program changes and higher than expected bids. The new scope of work includes enclosing the firing range. The department provided budget detail for FY 05, 06, and 07 to show the growth in costs.

The Council recessed at 11:40 a.m. and resumed at 12:50 p.m.

General County, Continued: Jim Irvin described the funding allowed and plans for the government service campus to incorporate four components: a new court building, a new government office building, and two parking garages. He anticipates a contract for a design-build project with a County leaseback. The project will be phased and may be reduced in size as an accommodation to the budget.

There was a discussion of the project at North Laurel Park, which is a cooperative venture between Rec. and Parks and the Office on Aging to provide a senior center modeled after the Glenwood Center.

Ira Levy described changes anticipated in technology, including a new telephone system, a new integrated finance, procurement and permits system, an imaging system that is more flexible, and back-up systems to ensure continuity of government better suited to a large enterprise. There was discussion of the possible opportunity to recover some costs from the supplier of the failing finance system.

Sewer: Jim Irvin described the sewer contingency fund as a resource to allow for later transfer of funds for projects that may become necessary, although not anticipated. He reported that increased costs in a number of projects related to charges from Baltimore City. In discussing the nitrogen loading project, he noted that the County has capacity for the growth anticipated in the General Plan, but that it would not have sufficient capacity for the downtown expansion that has been discussed or for the expansion at Savage that has been considered.

The Council looked at projects, without raising significant issues, for water, storm drainage, road resurfacing, road construction, bridges, intersections, and sidewalks. There was a discussion of the preference of setbacks for sidewalks from the curb as a safety feature, particularly on busy roadways.

Follow-up: The Council would like to meet with Rec. and Parks, probably on a tour of facilities, to discuss the parks program more generally.

The Council would like to schedule the Housing Department for a monthly meeting to discuss the housing programs and relationships with and responsibilities of the Housing Commission.

The Council expressed an interest in scheduling a discussion of the Agriculture Preservation Program at a monthly meeting.

Action: None

Time Adjourned: 4:00 p.m.