

MARLBORO COUNTY COUNCIL
MARLBORO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP BUILDING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2022

6:00 PM

CHAIRMAN

CHARLES P. MIDGLEY, JR.

VICE CHAIRMAN
ADMINISTRATOR
CLERK TO COUNCIL
COUNTY ATTORNEY

JASON STEEN
RON MUNNERLYN
PATRICIA BUNDY
ANDREW MCLEOD

COUNCIL:

JASON STEEN
CHARLES P. MIDGLEY, JR.
KENNETH STROMAN
STEVE BLACKMON, AND

DR. DAMIEN JOHNSON
CORRIE H. PLATO
VERD ODOM
ANTHONY WOODS

- Absent

Others Present: Ms. Doris Sumpter, Administrative Services Director; Mr. Doug Carabo, Public Services Director; Mr. Steve Pollard, IT Director; Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director; and Ms. Jaqueline Hough of the Herald Advocate.

A copy of the agenda was emailed to Ms. Jacqueline Hough of the Herald Advocate and posted on the front door of the William P. Wallace, Sr. Administration Building and on the county's website (www.marlbocounty.sc.gov).

INVOCATION – Mr. Anthony Woods

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS

Motion made by Mr. Jason Steen, seconded by Mr. Steve Blackmon, to approve the agenda as presented. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – DISCUSSION OF NEGOTIATIONS OF CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PROPOSED PURCHASE OF PROPERTY, PURSUANT TO SC CODE SECTION 30-4-70 (1,2)

February 8, 2022 County Council Meeting

Motion made at 6:04 pm by Mr. Steve Blackmon, seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, to enter into executive session to discuss negotiations of contractual arrangements and proposed purchase of property, pursuant to SC Code Section 30-4-70 (1,2). Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

Motion made at 7:35 pm by Mr. Verd Odom, seconded by Ms. Corrie Plato, to leave executive session and return to open session. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, stated Council discussed the County Administrator's annual evaluation during the executive session and determined no action was necessary. He stated Council fully supports the County Administrator and Council is pleased.

Chairman Midgley stated Council has a proposed purchase of property which will be discussed during agenda item 7.a. and a motion and vote will be taken at that time.

PRESENTATIONS

AUDIT REPORT ENDING JUNE 30, 2021 – SHEHEEN, HANCOCK & GODWIN, LLP

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, recognized the representative from Sheheen, Hancock & Godwin, LLP for the annual audit report for FY ending June 30, 2021.

Mr. John Boykin, CPA, stated members of Council have received an audit report and summary. He stated he would follow the outline and briefly discuss the audit results as it relates to the county's general fund.

Outline of Audited Financial Report – Mr. Boykin stated the Independent Auditor's Report could be found on pages 1-3 and the county received an unmodified opinion, which was the highest that could be given. He stated the Management's Discussion and Analysis could be found on pages 4-11, Basic Financial Statements could be found on pages 12-23, Notes to Financial Statements could be found on pages 24-55, Supplemental Information could be found on pages 56-80, and Compliance Section could be found on pages 81-82.

Types of Funds – Mr. Boykin stated there are Governmental funds which consist of the General Fund Special Revenue, Debt Service, and Capital Projects. He stated there were also fiduciary funds which were called Custodial funds.

Analysis of Financial Position – Mr. Boykin stated the county's general fund assets as of June 30, 2021 totaled \$12,208,189 and the total liabilities totaled \$5,837,780 with a fund balance of \$6,370,409. He stated more detailed information on the assets and liabilities could be found on page 14 of the audit report.

Analysis of Fund Balance/Net Position – Mr. Boykin stated the fund balance as of June 30, 2021 included \$94,200 in non-spendable funds; \$688,910 in restricted funds; \$5,587,299 in unassigned funds for a total of \$6,370,409.

Analysis of Activity – Mr. Boykin stated as of June 30, 2021, the total operating revenues were \$12,703,427 and the total operating expenses were \$12,621,968 with an excess of revenue over expenses of \$81,459, and transfers and other sources of \$85,801 for a total change in fund balance of \$167,260. He stated more detailed information regarding total revenues versus budget for the year could be found on pages 56-63 of the audit report.

Mr. Boykin stated it was recommended that the County maintain approximately four to six months of reserve in its fund balance. He stated with the excess revenue over expenses, the county has approximately four to six months of reserves as of June 30, 2021.

Mr. Boykin stated the county was in a good financial position as of June 30, 2021. He thanked Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, and Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director, and their staff of all their help. He stated they provided the auditors' staff with everything they needed to get the audit done in a timely fashion and it could not have been done without their efforts.

Mr. Boykin stated he would be happy to answer any questions.

Chairman Midgley asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Chairman Midgley thanked Mr. Boykin for the audit report.

EASTSIDE SCHOOL PRESERVATION ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (ESPAA) – MR. LUKE JOHNKIN AND MR. SAM BASS

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr. recognized Mr. Luke Johnkin and Mr. Sam Bass for their presentation on the Eastside School Preservation Alumni Association (ESPAA).

Mr. Luke Johnkin thanked members of Council for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Eastside School Preservation Alumni Association. He stated Mr. Samuel Bass and Mr. Rippin McLeod were also present and members of the alumni association.

Mr. Johnkin stated he took the liberty of providing some information regarding his presentation to members of Council which was included in their agenda packets. He stated he hoped that everyone has had an opportunity to review the information provided and he was here to address any questions they may have.

Mr. Johnkin stated the ESPAA was organized due to further degradation and even talk of total demolition. For a monument which we refer to as the generational jewel, it is an opportunity to center around an important initiative to see what can be done to save the jewel and help make it become a servicing arm for our county. He mentioned that many years ago, the existing

former library building which is being used for the meeting tonight, a few predecessors came in and swept, dusted and cleaned this building to get it to the point where it is today. He stated the project for ESPAA cannot be done without devotion, attention and support. He stated the ESPAA has been working diligently with the members of the community and some of the members of Council in conversations about various opportunities for this project. He stated it has been a tough challenge.

Mr. Johnakin stated the past meeting of county council was a disgrace to all of us. He stated there was no one person at fault and many felt they were doing the right thing, but it did not come across that way. He stated everyone should work to ensure things are done the right way. He stated the association does not want to get involved in the county's recreation plans but does want to be involved and partnership with the county on the Eastside property. Everything in the plan is up for revising, modifying or changing for whatever may be best for the citizens of our great county. He asked council to join and become partners in the project in order to accomplish the goal together. He asked that they be given an inclination that the Council as a body will join the association in a united effort to come up with a good use of the wonderful property, the generational jewel.

Mr. Johnakin stated he would be happy to answer any questions and stated Mr. Bass and Mr. McLeod were also available to answer any questions.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman asked Mr. Johnakin to discuss the financial aspect of their proposed plan. Mr. Johnakin stated the financial numbers are laid out in the plan provided in the packet but stated without financial feasibility and without timeliness and schedule of activities, etc, nothing will be accomplished.

Mr. Stroman stated there was a concern regarding asbestos in a portion of the building. Mr. Johnakin stated asbestos was not as big an issue as it once was. He stated he had been doing construction work for more than 40+ years and if something is found, you deal with it. He stated the walls at the Eastside school are solid 12" masonry and when assembled they were treated in a way so that it would not be a big issue.

Mr. Johnakin presented a picture of the facility. He stated the property contains 33+ acres which would provide enough open land to add additional assets beyond the typical recreational efforts which may include family water sports and activities. He stated it joins the infamous Lake Paul Wallace and suggested the state could be approached about partnering with the project. He stated the key is that we must come together jointly to make it happen.

Mr. Anthony Woods thanked Mr. Johnakin for his presentation and stated it was very thorough and put together well. He stated the county is at a point where we need to do something. He stated he felt this was a great launching pad with the 33+ acres. He stated this was a great project for recreation and for the county as a whole and felt it was something that could be accomplished with collaboration. He stated the county is stagnant right now and are at rock bottom. He stated Council needs to show our citizens that now is the time to move forward and

this is a great platform for which to start. He stated he hoped the subcommittees could continue the dialogue and hoped that Council would join together and show support of the project. He stated a lot of work was put in the presentation and he appreciated all efforts of those involved. He thanked all representatives of the alumni for coming tonight.

Chairman Midgley stated he felt this was a fantastic project and thanked Mr. Johnakin and his association's work for the presentation.

Mr. Johnakin stated the project boils down to the dollars that the project would require. He stated during his work on development board, many were involved with the NETC folks, and about \$60,000 was spent in just preparational plans. He stated the county would not need to reinvent the wheel. He stated the funds that have been invested by the county and its industries could be recouped if we all work together and are given the chance.

Dr. Damien Johnson echoed the comments made by Chairman Midgley and Mr. Woods. He thanked Mr. Johnakin for the presentation and stated the plan was comprehensive with great ideas for Council to take under advisement. He stated Council has had engaged discussions about this project and he felt there was room for collaboration to work together to see what can be done to change things in the county. He stated he looked forward to what comes out of this presentation and what comes out of subcommittee meetings as to ideas as to what we can do for the project. He stated he felt it was admirable of the association to provide the presentation to Council so that we may be invested to changing the dynamics of Eastside and happy that the association wants to partner with the county to make the project happen.

Mr. Johnakin asked members of Council if they would agree to partner with the ESPAA for the purpose of moving the project forward. Chairman Midgley stated there was an item on the agenda (7.a.) and support could be shown at that time.

Mr. Johnakin thanked Chairman Steen and members of Council for the opportunity to share their presentation.

PUBLIC HEARING

ORDINANCE # 826 – AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING (1) PURSUANT TO TITLE 12, CHAPTER 44 OF THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA 1976, AS AMENDED, THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES AGREEMENT, BY AND BETWEEN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA AND HICKSON SOLAR, LLC, A COMPANY FORMERLY KNOWN TO THE COUNTY AS PROJECT RHODES, AS SPONSOR, AND ONE OR MORE SPONSOR AFFILIATES TO PROVIDE FOR A FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES INCENTIVE AND CERTAIN SPECIAL SOURCE REVENUE CREDITS FOR THE BENEFIT OF A PROJECT IN THE COUNTY; (2) THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE BOUNDARIES OF A MULTI-COUNTY INDUSTRIAL OR BUSINESS PARK PREVIOUSLY CREATED BY MARLBORO COUNTY AND DARLINGTON COUNTY TO INCLUDE CERTAIN PROPERTY LOCATED IN

February 8, 2022 County Council Meeting

MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, NOW OR TO BE HEREAFTER OWNED AND/OR OPERATED BY HICKSON SOLAR, LLC, OR ONE OR MORE COMPANIES RELATED THERETO; AND (3) OTHER RELATED MATTERS

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, opened the public hearing. He read the title of the Ordinance and recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments.

Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, stated this is a solar project to be located in the Wallace area that will be located near Hickson Road and Brickyard Road. He stated Council has had two readings on the Ordinance and the project plans have been reviewed by Planning and Zoning commission to confirm that the project will meet the strict guidelines in place and ensure that the project is in compliance with all restrictions and conditions as set forth in the county's Solar ordinance.

Chairman Midgley asked if there were any questions of the public or members of council. There were none.

The public hearing was closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

JANUARY 11, 2022 – REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, asked if there were any comments on the minutes or suggested changes or additions.

Dr. Damien Johnson stated before Council moves forward with the minutes of January 11, 2022 being approved, he felt there was a procedural error that has taken place and noted that there may be a need to require members of Council to vote again for the Vice Chairman. He stated in reviewing the minutes and the video of the meeting, Chairman Steen, at the time of the vote, made the motion for Vice Chairman and Mr. Midgley completed the motion which was procedurally improper. He respectfully requested in the interest of procedural fairness that Council members vote for the position of Vice Chairman again.

Chairman Midgley stated he made the call and Council voted. He suggested that outside counsel be asked to review the action taken to see if it was in line with the protocol of Roberts Rules of Order and that the matter be placed on next month's agenda. He stated if the outside counsel feels another vote for Vice Chairman is needed, one will be held. He asked if that was fair and Dr. Johnson agreed it was.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Mr. Jason Steen, to approve the regular council meeting minutes of January 11, 2022 as presented. Vote in favor: Mr. Jason Steen, Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Mr. Kenneth Stroman, Mr. Verd Odom, Mr.

Steve Blackmon and Mr. Anthony Woods. Opposed: None. Abstained: Dr. Damien Johnson and Ms. Corrie Plato. Vote: 6/0/2. Motion carried.

JANUARY 25, 2022 – “CALLED” COUNCIL MEETING

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, asked if there were any comments on the minutes or suggested changes or additions. There were no recommended changes.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Ms. Corrie Plato, to approve the “called” council meeting minutes of January 25, 2022 as presented. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

ORDINANCE # 826 – AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING (1) PURSUANT TO TITLE 12, CHAPTER 44 OF THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA 1976, AS AMENDED, THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES AGREEMENT, BY AND BETWEEN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA AND HICKSON SOLAR, LLC, A COMPANY FORMERLY KNOWN TO THE COUNTY AS PROJECT RHODES, AS SPONSOR, AND ONE OR MORE SPONSOR AFFILIATES TO PROVIDE FOR A FEE-IN-LIEU OF AD VALOREM TAXES INCENTIVE AND CERTAIN SPECIAL SOURCE REVENUE CREDITS FOR THE BENEFIT OF A PROJECT IN THE COUNTY; (2) THE ENLARGEMENT OF THE BOUNDARIES OF A MULTI-COUNTY INDUSTRIAL OR BUSINESS PARK PREVIOUSLY CREATED BY MARLBORO COUNTY AND DARLINGTON COUNTY TO INCLUDE CERTAIN PROPERTY LOCATED IN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, NOW OR TO BE HEREAFTER OWNED AND/OR OPERATED BY HICKSON SOLAR, LLC, OR ONE OR MORE COMPANIES RELATED THERETO; AND (3) OTHER RELATED MATTERS – THIRD READING

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, read the title of the Ordinance aloud and stated comments were made on this Ordinance during the public hearing. He asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Jason Steen, seconded by Mr. Steve Blackmon, to approve third reading of Ordinance # 826 – an Ordinance Authorizing (1) Pursuant to Title 12, Chapter 44 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976, as Amended, the Execution and Delivery of a Fee-in-Lieu of Ad Valorem Taxes Agreement, by and Between Marlboro County, South Carolina and Hickson Solar, LLC, a Company Formerly known to the County as Project Rhodes, as Sponsor, and One or More Sponsor Affiliates to Provide for a Fee-In-Lieu of Ad Valorem Taxes Incentive and Certain Special Source Revenue Credits for the Benefit of a Project in the County; (2) the Enlargement of the Boundaries of a Multi-County Industrial or Business Park Previously Created by Marlboro County and Darlington County to Include Certain Property Located in Marlboro County, South Carolina, now or to be Hereafter Owned and/or Operated by Hickson Solar, LLC, or One or More Companies

Related Thereto; and (3) Other Related Matters. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

REDISTRICTING UPDATE

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this item.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated copies of the redistricting plan maps which have been drafted by Council are available for anyone interested in viewing. He stated the maps have been drawn based on input from members of Council on their specific districts and also the parameters which concerned Council that no district has a huge percentage change of demographics. He stated Council has also worked to ensure that there is no cracking, stacking or packing for gerrymandering and lines have not been drawn to keep someone out of a specific district. He stated he has taken information from members of Council and provided it to the state and found that the proposed maps which we have here tonight meet those requirements. He stated he has shared the statistics with members of Council and also provided them to Ms. Lawson who has a very strong interest in this process. He stated there is no significant change in racial demographics and no one district has too many or not enough voters in any district. He stated the goal is to have not more than 5% change move the highest to the lowest and these maps are at 3.88% and are well within those limits. He stated the maps are here and after the meeting tonight, staff will put the maps on the county's website so that folks can look at it and zoom in to review. He stated there is a short timeline for Council to have a public hearing, third reading and vote to approve the map for redistricting. He suggested a community meeting be held on Tuesday, February 15th at 6:00 pm in the large courtroom at the Marlboro County Courthouse. He stated staff would have multiple copies of the maps available at the meeting and there would be plenty of room available for folks to walk around and view the maps. He stated it has been a real challenge in being able to include road names on the maps, but staff is checking to see if this can be done and are also checking to see if the information on the maps can be made even larger so that folks can easily identify locations.

NEW BUSINESS

AUTHORIZATION OF STAFF TO PROCEED WITH COSTS ANALYSIS, SECURING OF OPTIONS, OR OTHER ITEMS NECESSARY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH POSSIBLE RECREATION INITIATIVES

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, stated the new item should include supporting the ESPAA in finding the best use of the Eastside School properties pursuant to the presentation made by Mr. Luke Johnakin earlier in the meeting.

Chairman Midgley asked Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, if there was any other comments. Mr. Munnerlyn stated in effort of transparency, there are legal and contractual matters discussed that involve property that should be handled privately but Council has

authorized staff to move forward so that when Council is ready to make decisions, they will have facts in front of them.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman stated he wanted to reiterate that Council is in full cooperation and support of the Eastside School Preservation Alumni Association in finding the best use of the Eastside School property.

Chairman Midgley asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Ms. Corrie Plato, to Authorize Staff to Proceed with Costs Analysis, Securing of Options, or Other Items Necessary to Move Forward with Possible Recreation Initiatives, to Include Supporting the ESPAA in Finding the Best Use of the Eastside School Properties. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., stated that an updated list of Boards and Commissions have been shared with members of Council. He asked that they please review their lists and advise of any recommended nominations for appointments.

Dr. Damien Johnson stated that he has some nominations in mind but would like to defer his nominations at this time. He stated he would like to make sure he is actively involved in extra boards and engaged before requesting someone else to be involved. He stated he would be making some recommendations for appointments as necessary once he is fully acclimated to the various boards and is able to gather information and better able to inform interested folks as to what may be expected of them once they are appointed.

REPORTS

FINANCE REPORT – MR. WES PARK

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, recognized Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director, for his report.

Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director, stated the general fund revenues for the seven months ending January 31, 2022 total \$6,093,966 in comparison with the seven months ended January 31, 2021, in the amount of \$4,950,974. Mr. Park stated the general fund expenditures through January 31, 2022 totaled \$6,690,541 of a 12,825,594 budget or 52.17% of budget year to date. Mr. Park stated expenditures for the seven months ended January 31, 2021, totaled \$6,533,382. He stated in summary, income is higher, and expenditures are slightly higher for the same year to date period for this year versus last year.

Chairman Midgley asked if there were any questions. There were none.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT – MR. RON MUNNERLYN, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, for the report.

EMPLOYEE SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

The following employees were recognized with five or more years of service to Marlboro County through the month of January: Tracy Polson (9 years); Lisa Herndon (6 years); John Lewis (5 years); and Melissa Skipper (27 years).

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 1. Upcoming COVID Vaccination Clinics** – Mr. Munnerlyn stated clinics have been scheduled for anyone who needs 1st and 2nd doses or boosters from ages 5 and up as follows:
February 18th at McDonalds of Bennettsville from 9:00 am – 12:00 noon, and
February 24th at Bennettsville Community Center from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm.
- 2. Retirement Drop-in for Susan Rivers** – Mr. Munnerlyn stated a retirement drop-in has been scheduled for Susan Rivers on Wednesday, February 23, 2022 from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm at the MCEDP office. He stated Mrs. Rivers will be retiring at the end of February after 20 years of service to the County. He invited members of Council to join us for this celebration.
- 3. Filing of Statement of Economic Interests (Ethics Report)** – Mr. Munnerlyn stated the Statement of Economic Interests form “ethics report” must be filed by all elected officials and some employers not later than 12:00 noon on March 30, 2022. He stated the form must be filed electronically with a \$100 late filing penalty if not filed by the deadline date.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

School District's Request for Meeting

Mr. Munnerlyn stated the members of the Marlboro County School Board have requested a meeting with members of County Council. He stated it is suggested that no meeting be scheduled until after the Recreation Study has been completed. He stated school members and other local governments were involved in the focus groups and will be an important part of the plan moving forward.

Mass notification sirens

Mr. Munnerlyn stated Emergency Management Director Steve Akers is working on a project that would install 6 sirens across the county to alert citizens of severe weather or other emergencies. He stated this idea came about after the terrible tornados in Kentucky.

EMS Recruitment

Mr. Munnerlyn stated as was discussed at the last meeting, a \$2,000 sign-on and retention bonus was put in place for difficult to fill jobs. He stated staff is pleased that the Marlboro Charities Trust has matched this bonus adding another \$2,000 to the bonus and added an additional \$500 for Marlboro County residents.

Digital sign

Mr. Munnerlyn stated staff is working with the City of Bennettsville to obtain approval for the digital sign location on Broad Street. He stated the Zoning board has approved the location and the matter will now go to the City Council. He stated he hoped to begin installation of the sign in the next 10 days.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Delta Site

Mr. Munnerlyn stated brush is being cleared and repairs made to stabilize sections of the building and make the “good warehouse” ready to be occupied. He stated Mr. Doug Carabo has prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) that will be advertised this week to begin selection of a contractor to demolish the central plant at Delta.

Spec Building

Mr. Munnerlyn stated the contractor for the spec building is prepared to begin the project this month. He stated there was a delay due to building material supply chain issues, but the contractor assures us that the completion date of this calendar year is still valid.

RECOGNITION OF CITIZEN’S REQUEST BEFORE COUNCIL

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman, stated two citizens had signed up to address Council.

Mr. Franklin Smith – Mr. Smith apparently left the meeting early and was not available to address Council.

Ms. Pearlle Lawson – stated she was present to represent the NAACP and also as a citizen and voter of the county. She thanked members of Council and Mr. Ron Munnerlyn for sharing the maps in a large format with benchmark information indicating the deviation of population of each district which is very important. She stated she would share her information with her team and members of the community but encouraged members of Council to share their maps with their constituents and allow them to provide input. She stated she was happy to hear that a community meeting has been scheduled for February 15th in a large open space. She stated she was unsure if there would be a large turnout with such short notice or not and stated there may be a need to have smaller meetings in each Council district. She stated the greatest part is that a community meeting has been scheduled to allow folks an opportunity to share their concerns and have them provide input.

Ms. Lawson asked that once the district maps are approved by Council that the Voter Registration office be given the information in a timely fashion in order to get new voter registration cards out to those whose district may change. She stated folks going to the polls for voting do not need to be confused and need to be clear about what district they are in and whether or not their district lines have changed. She stated Marlboro County already has a low turnout for mid-term primaries. She stated only about 10% of citizens in our county vote during a primary election and only about 45% vote during a general election. She stated that is a poor voter turnout with 17,000 voters in our county.

RECOGNITION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Anthony Woods – mentioned February being Black History month and stated besides the men in his family whose shoulders he stood on, he wanted to recognize Mr. Luke Johnakin as he stood on his shoulders. He recognized Mr. Sam Bass and stated he stood on his shoulders. He stated when he was 13 years old, these men helped him understand life, besides working in the fields and so forth. He recognized Dr. Rippin McLeod and stated he stood on his shoulders. He stated he is mentioning this today because of Black History Month. He stated there are many young folks that do not have shoulders to stand on. He stated he stood on others' shoulders and now he feels that his is strong enough to help others. He encouraged the young black boys and girls to look for people that they can stand on their shoulders so that we can continue to move forward.

Mr. Woods stated there are four African Americans on county council now and that would not be possible if it wasn't for our ancestors who worked, bled and died for us. He stated he celebrated Black History every day of the year 24/7. He stated we do not only have one month to celebrate our ancestors and each other but we can celebrate Black History every day.

Ms. Corrie Plato – thanked everybody that came out and spoke on different subjects. Ms. Plato stated she graduated from Eastside School and is very happy to see the support for the project. She stated that whenever the project begins, to please let her know if there is anything she can do to assist. She stated she would help in any way possible.

Ms. Plato thanked Ms. Lawson and the good education on the redistricting process. She stated there are many folks that do not understand what's going on with redistricting. She thanked Mr. Ron Munneryn, the County Administrator, for all the hard work in making sure that everyone is aware of what is taking place.

Ms. Plato apologized for missing the January 11th Council meeting. She stated she spent a good deal of time with her family in North Carolina and when she returned home, she received a call that all of them had contracted covid. She stated she was afraid to attend the council meeting and did not want to jeopardize anyone since she was uncertain if she would contract it or not. She stated she stayed home in an effort to avoid spreading any sickness.

Ms. Plato thanked God that everybody present at the meeting appears to be healthy. She stated God has brought us a long way and is still carrying us.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman – stated he wanted to go on record showing his full support of Mr. Ron Munnerlyn as County Administrator.

Mr. Stroman mentioned the Eastside project and stated he was happy to see that all Council members stand in support of the project based on what the county can do and what may be feasible. He stated everything he hears about the project is positive and the alumni has council's support.

Mr. Stroman recognized Mr. Sam Bass and stated he has known him for a long time. He stated everybody knows who Mr. Bass is and is aware of what he has contributed to the community. Mr. Stroman recognized Mr. Johnakin as well and stated many African American boys look to Mr. Johnakin for architectural advice. He stated Mr. Johnakin is known for the many programs to which he has contributed in our community.

Mr. Stroman mentioned the digital sign and asked Mr. Munnerlyn to be sure and get a sign up even if the digital sign was not approved by the city. He stated a sign needed to be erected even if an alternate sign needed to be purchased.

Mr. Jason Steen – echoed what was mentioned by Mr. Luke Johnakin in his presentation. He stated we want to all work together and that is the only way to get things accomplished. He stated the mentality to bring us in and request our support confirms that we all want the best for Marlboro County.

Mr. Steen thanked Ms. Lawson for always being here and always being on task. He commended her for keeping her hands on the plow and going forward. He stated Ms. Lawson is thorough with everything she does and the county needs more people like her.

Mr. Steen stated he had received some calls regarding the internet in the county. He asked staff if we could get an up-to-date map indicating what areas were now available for high-speed internet and the next areas that may be considered. He stated the list of roads that are being considered in various areas would be a great help along with a time frame. Mr. Munnerlyn stated he thought there was a link on Sandhills website where this information may be found and he would share with members of Council and also share on the county's social media account.

Dr. Damien Johnson – thanked Dr. McLeod, Mr. Bass and Mr. Johhakin for their presentation. He stated much community engagement is needed for the Eastside School project. He stated council members could not do it all but the project needed the support of the community to help instruct council on how to do things in an orderly fashion.

Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Lawson for the countless hours she has expended in the redistricting process. He stated folks do not realize how complicated the process is and how important it is

for folks to express their God-given rights. He stated the county has a low voter turnout and we as elected officials should be concerned about that fact and do our very best to ensure that folks are registered and know what district they are in so that they may get out and vote. He stated he was hopeful that we can continue to provide input in the process of redistricting and educate folks on the process. He stated many folks are distrustful because of things that have happened recently and it is important that folks be able to trust that the process will be fair and equitable and something that will work for the entire community. He thanked Ms. Lawson for educating him on the process. He stated he knew very little about it but Ms. Lawson had educated him and provided good guidance and information.

Dr. Johnson stated we are all Marlboro County. He stated we all live here and work here. He stated he felt we do not play much but hopefully that would change with renewed interest and creative ideas about how to help our county grow. He stated we must come together and not focus on what we are now but focus on what we can grow to become.

Dr. Johnson mentioned Black History month. He thanked Councilman Woods for standing in the gap for him at the age of 15. He stated Councilman Woods caught me in the street as he did so many other men. He stated he stood in the gap and allowed him to express himself through recreation. He stated that is the reason for his passion about recreation. He stated he understands that it can change lives. He stated if we work together and stick together, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish.

Mr. Steve Blackmon – stated he agreed with Dr. Johnson. He stated he felt 100% that we all need to have the betterment of the county in our hearts and he stated he felt that everyone on council does. He stated he felt he was getting to know everyone and thought that everyone has the best interests of the whole county, not just one part of the county. He stated he was happy to know that someone is interested in the Eastside School. I am glad someone is interested in the property and council wants to assist with the project. He stated we can all do more if we work together. He stated he felt this was a good productive meeting.

Mr. Verd Odom – stated he would not feel right if he did not say something about his dad that passed away two weeks ago. He stated his dad served on County Council for 16 years in the 70s and 80s and he always had a lot of respect for Mr. Luke Johnakin.

Mr. Odom mentioned Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, the County Administrator, and stated he does a great job. He stated while traveling all over the state, he hardly attends any meeting that folks do not mention Ron Munnerlyn and the great job that he does for Marlboro County.

Mr. Odom stated he received an update on the Academy Road bridge. He stated there were a few questions the engineer needed answers from DHEC on but as soon as those questions were answered, the repair work would begin. He stated both the funds and engineer were in place. He stated a solar damn will be installed and operated by Pastor Bowers. He stated he was looking forward to the road being opened back up to the public.

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr. – stated Council has had differences but all are passionate about doing what is right for Marlboro County. He stated Council wants to work with our community leaders and looks forward to meeting with the School Board and Interim Superintendent, as well as meeting with the legislative delegation members. He stated communication is key even among members of Council. He stated he felt that Council members have opened up some communication and will begin working together. He stated County Council stands unified. He stated committees would be organized soon.

Mr. Midgley recognized Clio Mayor Ben Petrone and thanked him for attending the meeting tonight.

ADJOURN

Motion made by Mr. Verd Odom, seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, to adjourn the meeting. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

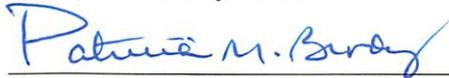
The meeting adjourned at 8:46 pm.

(SEAL)

ATTEST:



Charles P. Midgley, Jr., Chairman
Marlboro County Council



Patricia M. Bundy, Clerk
Marlboro County Council

Adopted: March 8, 2022