

MARLBORO COUNTY COUNCIL
MARLBORO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP BUILDING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
“WORKSHOP”

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2022

11:30 AM

CHAIRMAN

CHARLES P. MIDGLEY, JR

VICE CHAIRMAN
CLERK TO COUNCIL
COUNTY ATTORNEY

JASON STEEN
SUSAN RIVERS
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. Donald Hamilton, Animal Control; Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director; and Ms. Jacqueline Hough, Herald Advocate.

A copy of the “Called” Workshop Notice and agenda were posted on the front door of the William P. Wallace, Sr. Administration Building and on the Marlboro County Website. A copy of the agenda was provided to Ms. Jacqueline Hough, Advocate prior to the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER – Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr. Chairman called the meeting to order at 11:50 a.m.

INVOCATION – Dr. Damien Johnson

FINANCIAL REVIEW – 1ST QUARTER FY 2022-23

Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator discussed the financial review for the first quarter for the FY 2022-23 year. A copy of the financials were provided to Council.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised the expenses are slightly more than 25%, while the revenue is slightly lower, which is on track. He discussed the various individual department line items that are

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significantly over budget. It was noted that the Sheriff's Department expenses includes overtime hours where they have been covering the McColl area because the McColl area has not had a certified officer. He said that if we continue helping McColl, we may have to look into an arrangement to have them reimburse us.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised EMS is in need of a competitive wage adjustment. The County did this last year, however, other counties apparently had made adjustments this year that met or exceeded our increases. We need to do it again – revenue estimates indicate \$100,000 is available for this purpose.

The Sheriff has asked the county to buy more law enforcement vehicles as soon as possible. The current budget included 4 vehicles: 2 for deputies and 2 for SRO's which will be reimbursed by the schools. Mr. Munnerlyn then asked Sheriff McNeil to address his request to Council.

Sheriff Larry McNeil advised that he currently has 5 vehicles which have between 125,000 to 130,000 miles which are driven on a daily basis. Sheriff McNeil said he needed 18 vehicles of which 2 are for the SRO's and 2 are for new officers. They are no longer able to get any Durangos because Dodge quit making them. Law enforcement is now using the Ford Rangers which cost between \$35,000 - \$37,000 each currently. Next year the same vehicles will cost between \$45,000 - \$47,000. He requested permission to purchase at least 2 more vehicles during this current year. There is a need to purchase at least 4 to 5 vehicles every year. Maintenance is expensive. They just paid \$5,000 to put a new transmission in a vehicle, it still does not run, and is back in the shop. The price of the vehicles since January has increased from \$25,000 to \$37,000. Costs are based off of new State contract for 2022.

Mr. Jason Steen asked Sheriff McNeil how long it had been since the vehicles were rotated. Sheriff McNeil responded "3 years" since vehicles were purchased. Mr. Steen asked why the arrangement with Enterprise did not result in more cars this current year. Mr. Munnerlyn replied that additional cars would have added cost to the budget and the approval by Council of other budget increases for the Sheriff and Detention Center had exhausted available revenue and also resulted in a 5 mill tax increase making it impossible to purchase more cars. Sheriff McNeil said that right now the only vehicles available are Tahoe's and Ford Rangers and they are available through State Contract. They do not need cars, they need 4 wheel SUV's and trucks because of the locations they have to go. They had a Dodge Charger bottom out in a field. He advised he is looking to save money any way possible. He said he doesn't ask for anything he does not need.

Mr. Steve Blackmon asked Sheriff McNeil how many vehicles would be needed next year. Sheriff McNeil responded "14" but if they can purchase 4 to 5 vehicles every year and keep turning them over, he would be pleased. He advised that if the 2 he needs right now is approved, he would be willing to ask for 3 next year.

Sheriff McNeil advised there is one other situation at the Sheriff's Office that needs to be corrected. They do not have a generator in their building. When power goes out, computers go down, and they also cannot gain entrance into the building. Everything shuts down. Hopefully, they will be

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able to secure a couple grants to get what they need. They were unable to get in the building during Hurricane Ian over the past weekend.

Mr. Jason Steen advised that with the loss of Mohawk, he was worried about reduction in tax revenue.

Dr. Damien Johnson asked if decisions needed to be made about buying more cars out of the next years budget because they will have to buy cars. Mr. Munnerlyn, advised not at this time as we cannot make obligations for the next year budget.

Dr. Johnson questioned the status of signing the contract for inmates with the federal government. Sheriff McNeil responded that he was confident they would get a contract for 16 inmates. The contract could not be signed until October 1st. He is very confident. At the end of the year they should clear approximately \$200,000. His recommendation was to increase the number of inmates after 3 months. He expected to hear from them within the next few days. They can house 96 inmates at our facility. Sheriff McNeil requested that 75% of the funds from the federal government contract go to the Sheriff's department and Detention Center operational funds and 25% go to the General Fund.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated he thought the funds from the federal contract is a good thing. However, he felt the money should go to the Sheriff and Public Safety. He doesn't want to depend on it for the General Fund.

Sheriff McNeil advised that the quote for the 2 vehicles was only until the next morning. Mr. Munnerlyn advised he would need Council's direction on how to proceed. He asked if they wished they want to buy or lease? Mr. Stroman asked if the Sheriff could get them to extend the quote. Mr. Steen asked if they could amend the agenda. Mr. Munnerlyn stated Council could amend the agenda to add a item considering the expenditure of \$75,000 out of reserve.

Mr. Midgley said he thought this was too much money to take out of the budget for buying. Could we lease them? Mr. Stroman asked whether the lease included maintenance. Mr. Munnerlyn advised maintenance would have to be paid separately.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated that leasing them would negatively impact our budget. He said that if they were discussing next year's budget, he would recommend leasing, but, if for this year, he recommends buying out right. Mr. Stroman said he saw no reason in delaying the purchase because if you wait, it will be more money out of the budget.

Sheriff McNeil stated the bottom line is to pay \$72,000 now or \$92,000 next year.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman stated that he would like to make a motion to amend the agenda to allow Council to take action. Council members started discussing issue again.

Mr. Munnerlyn explained that in purchasing vehicles they must either be on State Contract or bid out. This is why the Sheriff is having to go around and find vehicles that are either on state contract

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or equivalent to state contract. Mr. Munneryn advised that Council would have to make two motions and votes: first to add the item to the agenda and then second to vote on the item. He advised he had heard a motion to amend the agenda.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Dr. Damien Johnson, to amend the agenda to discuss allowing the Sheriff's increase of cars and allow council to take action on the matter. Vote in Favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

PURCHASE/LEASE OF SHERIFF DEPARTMENT VEHICLES

Mr. Kenneth Stroman said it makes sense to go ahead and purchase the vehicles now and not next year and save the county money. The question is whether council wished to lease/rent or to use reserve funds to purchase 2 vehicles. Mr. Munneryn advised the request to purchase 2 vehicles should not exceed \$80,000 and the purchase comply with the county procurement code. Mr. Blackmon stated he would like to be in favor of the purchase with the Sheriff being agreeable to reimbursing the General Fund when the funds came in from the Federal Government for the inmate contract. Sheriff McNeil was agreeable.

Motion made by Dr. Damien Johnson, seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stroman to approve amending the County Budget for the Sheriff's request to buy 2 vehicles using no more than \$80,000 of the fund balance, that the purchase be made in compliance with the the county procurement code, and contingent upon the Sheriff's Department reimbursing the General Fund once the funds are received from the Federal Government for the inmate contract. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

Sheriff McNeil advised that all of his officers are now certified. He will also speak with the Town of McColl about possible reimbursement for covering their law enforcement while they do not have any certified officers. Mr. Munneryn said the county requires a council-approved contract or agreement with McColl for these services. Mr. Verd Odom said he felt sure McColl has the funds for this coverage. Mr. Munneryn said the initial cost of helping them was \$6,000 however the county cannot continue this going forward, do not have the funds.

Mr. Jason Steen said the county must be cautious with their reserve funds. He is concerned that the country may be facing a recession. He asked where do we get the funds next fiscal year if these concerns materialize and or inflation continues.

Mr. Ron Munneryn advised extreme pressure on increased compensation plus inflation are likely to continue. There is an estimated 7.5 mils legally available next year with an estimated 7.5 X 65,000 equals approximately \$485,000 in revenue. Expense increases will likely exceed the ability to cover with allowable millage increases. Mr. Munneryn advised Council that employees had to be furloughed in 2008 due to a recession. Dr. Johnson questioned whether some of the recreation funds could be shifted to other departments in that situation. Mr. Munneryn advised "Yes".

RECREATION INITIATIVE – UPDATE, DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

Mr. Munnerlyn advised the County could not start any new recreational programs without the money from new revenue. Programs must pay for themselves and the revenue must be a sure thing. Grants are a good source for funds but essential operating expenses must be from other sources.

Various options recreation were discussed which included: Water Park/Aquatics Park; Golf course; indoor multipurpose facility; and different ways to improve the county.

The one-time funds currently available for the Recreation project are:

\$4,000,000	American Rescue Act Funds (on-hand)
\$ 500,000	Designated fund balance (on-hand)
\$2,000,000	State budget (approved – not received)
<u>\$ 500,000</u>	Private Foundation (verbal commitment)
\$7,000,000	Total

Mr. Munnerlyn said the estimated construction cost estimates for the Water Park/Aquatics Park vary greatly from \$1.8 million up. They along with the Lake Paul Wallace Authority are working together and are looking at a proposed site on Jefferson Street. The Lake Paul Wallace Authority requires more details before proceeding. Also, the State advised there are “hurdles” with regards to use of state-owned land for a new facility.

Dr. Damien Johnson said that he has been speaking with citizens that are not enthusiastic about the golf course.

Mr. Munnerlyn went over the features for the operating cost of the Aquatics Feature. A professional feasibility/financial study is needed. In reviewing the feasibility of the Water Park/Aquatics Park, the committee looked at the Hartsville site which is much larger but, financial details were available. Hartsville is only open 76 days a year, forecasted a 30% reduction in revenue from 2021 to 2022, showed loss of \$600,000 which had to be subsidized by local taxes. Financials would scale up or down depending on what was built here.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised staff has access to the current operating financial information for the Golf course. Currently as is operations, they are breaking even. However, they have needed significant maintenance over the past few years, there is no debt/lease payments for the equipment or carts, and they have primarily part-time personnel with a lower overhead.

He advised the possible revenue sources are: Cart and greens fees (pay to play); Concessions (snack food and beverage); Membership dues (will offset the cart/greens fees for regular players); Facility rental (banquet hall); Driving range; and Pro shop (gold supplies).

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Significant categories of golf course operating costs are: **Labor** (employees or contract) for overall management and golf programs; and maintenance and operations of golf course facilities;

Equipment/Carts lease/debt – or buy outright with the American Rescue Act Funds; **Course Maintenance** – employees or contract; **Other Maintenance** – employees or contract; and **Utilities**.

Mr. Munnerlyn said the Golf course Operating Strategies could either be: Lease/finance equipment and depend on growth in play or buy equipment outright and allow time to grow revenue.

The one-time estimated cost is \$3,827,395.

Mr. Munnerlyn advised Council that other issues plaguing the county are image issues. There is a great need for the demolition/clean-up of derelict property in corridors; enhancements to public properties such as the Courthouse grounds; Consider the funding of facades; a revolving loan fund; and Incentivize new small businesses.

Various discussion was heard concerning the issues presented.

Mr. Verd Odom said that Scotland County helped with the revitalization of the Railroad Bar and Grill in Laurinburg. He encouraged council members to check it out. We need to look into more grants with helping with the community. He said that the county could start with upgrading the golf course, next create a restaurant in the Club house, and upgrading the pool.

Dr. Damien Johnson stated that he had conducted a poll and was as a result stated that said that “85% of the Marlboro County citizens are not interested in a golf course” He said felt it was a “travesty” for a county as big as Marlboro County not to have a Multi-County park. He said the county need a multi-purpose facility.

Mr. Charles P. Midgley, Jr., said the golf course could be an advantage as the building could be used for multiple purposes including turning the club house into a restaurant. Reopening the pool and using the property extending to the Community Center are other possibilities. He said that Arris wants a corporate membership.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman said he had received great reviews for the golf course project. He said there must be a happy medium and he believes the golf course and aquatic center are great ideas. He thought that since we have someone willing to donate to the golf course, council would be derelict in not going forward. He said the county has spoken of different phases before including a wellness center. “The project must be in phases. The citizens need to know there are different phases, not just one. “

Mr. Steve Blackman said the County needs to decide what they are going to do and move forward. “We do not need to go to the city. The City is not going to do anything. “

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Ms. Corrie Plato stated she would be gone in a few months (retiring). She hopes everyone can get together and do something for everyone in the county. She said it can work and will work if they stick together and pull together.

Mr. Ron Munnerlyn asked if there was any opposition to him approaching the City of Bennettsville to see if they would do anything. There was no opposition.

The contract is good until January 31, 2023 and the price will not change while we are under contract.


ADJOURN

Motion made by Mr. Verd Odom, seconded by Ms. Corrie Plato, to adjourn the meeting. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion Carried.

The meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.

(SEAL)

ATTEST:



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



Susan Rivers, Clerk
Marlboro County Council

Adopted: November 15, 2022