

**Aberdeen Council Work Session  
February 2, 2009**

**Present:** Mayor Bennett, Council President Hiob, Councilwoman Elliott,  
Councilman Kupferman and Councilwoman Young

**Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Douglas Miller, City Manager  
Phyllis Grover, Director of Planning and Community Development  
Kate Talanehzar, Grant Coordinator  
Monica Correll, City Clerk

The work session was called to order by Mayor Bennett in Council Chambers at 4:30 p.m.

BRAC Zones

Kate Talanehzar presented an overview of the BRAC Zone. Topics covered the program intent, benefits, application process, mandates for applicants, and priority consideration information. Priority consideration is given to municipalities with support of the County and funds must be given to infrastructure improvements in that zone. The application deadline is April 15 or October 15 of each year. Demographics of Aberdeen were presented with information on infrastructure needs. The City of Laurel was a recent recipient of these funds and this city was illustrated as an example of how the development money was utilized.

Council discussion followed in regard to the benefits, tax incentives, and how the money is used as an inducement to private developers within the zone. State money would not be put in jeopardy. Ms. Grover stated that she has had contact with the Director of the Office of Economic Development with Harford County Government. Each county is entitled to only two BRAC Zones. The life span for a BRAC zone is ten years.

Charter

A discussion copy was supplied to the Council for review and discussion. Mr. Miller explained that a Charter Review group (Blue Ribbon panel) worked on Charter change recommendations and he gave an overview of these. He explained that after Council review, there would be a charter amendment resolution with advertisement and public hearing. More work is required on outdated State laws and the election section. Council should reconvene in a future session to discuss all of this in detail after they have come to a consensus. The Council discussed the Council President role, Council Member salaries, residency requirements, campaign signs, and form of government.

Budget Schedule

Per Mr. Miller, the budget has been started and revenues are down by \$220,000 from FY09 to FY10. The Mayor would like to meet with all the Council members individually the week of February 16 to discuss the budget. During the week of March 16, a budget document will be ready for discussion. Introduction of the budget is planned for April 13, followed by public hearing on April 27, and adoption on May 11.

Direction on Property Maintenance Code

Mr. Miller asked for direction whether there should be a work session in regard to this document and to ascertain guidance on how to proceed with any necessary changes since it was not adopted in its original form.

Councilman Kupferman inquired about a common sense approach to the problems addressed by the proposed Code and he felt that its language was too strong. Mr. Miller and Ms. Grover explained that if verbiage is subjective and not clearly part of a Code, it is rendered unenforceable.

The Council proceeded to discuss the other concerns including modifications regarding the dwelling and grounds, exterior versus interior emphasis, and consideration of implementing the International Code. Ms. Grover added that Harford County does not use the International Property Code, but Havre de Grace does. Councilwoman Young asked that the International Property Code be considered since the public may find this acceptable.

ILU Tax Exemption

Mr. Miller stated that Presbyterian Home of Maryland, Inc. (Presbyterian Home) wants to build a nursing facility and independent living units (ILUs) for senior citizens in Aberdeen. This organization has made contact with the City and asked for our support regarding ILU tax exemption; the nursing facility is already tax exempt. Joe Snee, a local attorney, acting in his capacity as a Board Member for Presbyterian Homes, met previously with the Mayor and Council President, and indicated that their financial model would not work without local legislation endorsing ILU tax exemption. Both the Mayor and Council President conveyed to him that they would not make a unilateral decision in support or nonsupport for the City government and that this would need to be presented to the entire Council. Therefore, Mr. Miller presented this information to the Council at this time for discussion.

Councilwoman Elliott asked what the cost would be to the City or what the City would forfeit in revenue. Mr. Miller could not provide this information due to the fact that the ICUs had not been assessed at this point in time. Mr. Miller stated that a previous Council, in 2004, had provided a significant reduction in water and hookup fees; a concession amounting in over \$2 million. This was done in ordinance form. Council President Hiob and Councilman Kupferman pointed out that this was grandfathered in.

Councilwoman Young provided information, based on figures supplied by Presbyterian Home, pertaining to the discussion:

Ordinance #652-04 Water and Sewer Rates

|                   |  |                                    |
|-------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Water             | \$ 1,400 per unit                            |                                    |
| Sewer Hook Up Fee | \$ 1,000 per unit                            |                                    |
|                   | \$ 2,400 combined 5/30/04 (date agreed upon) |                                    |
|                   | \$14,000                                     | current costs                      |
|                   | \$12,000                                     | difference (old fee/current costs) |

Comparison based on 220 units:

$\$2,400 \times 220 \text{ units} = \$528,000$  (what the City would get at 2004 rate)  
 $\$14,400 \times 220 \text{ units} = \$3,168,000$  (what the City would get at current rate)  
 $\$3,168,000 - \$528,000 = \$2,640,000$  difference

Councilwoman Young remarked that the City would have to adjust the rates of our current users to accommodate this difference. She is concerned and feels that this sways toward the interests of corporate welfare. She wants to know the role of Bruce Bereano.

Councilwoman Elliott was in full agreement with Councilwoman Young. She stated that the City cannot afford to do this.

Council President Hiob explained that the County supports this legislation. He said this is a three-piece puzzle comprised of three types of living. Two types are already tax exempt by State law. This particular one is the third step and Presbyterian Homes has locked into the going rate. The services the City provides for property taxes (solid waste removal, police, and road maintenance/snow removal) will not generally be used by them. The residences do not own and will not be building equity. In his opinion, it is not corporate welfare because this organization is a “not-for-profit” organization. In addition, the people living there would benefit our community in many ways through retail, restaurants, etc.; a symbiotic relationship. Some of the other benefits from Presbyterian Homes would be additional jobs, extension of water and sewer lines, and a new water tower.

Councilman Kupferman supported these views and pointed out that this is a state-of-the-art complex which is an asset to Harford County and Aberdeen. Ripken Stadium was a mistake but he supports this project 100 percent.

Mayor Bennett reiterated that Presbyterian Homes is a “not-for-profit” organization. Mr. Snee quoted a figure of 400 or more ILUs at full build-out. If the bill presented in Annapolis calls for mandatory legislation, tax exemption will be mandated. Harford County is the only county in the State which does not have this legislation as well as hotel tax. He indicated support of this project and the belief that it benefits local senior citizens to stay and be cared for nearby. He pointed out that to say the Aberdeen police will not be used, is an incorrect statement. The Presbyterian Home internal security force will handle other situations enhanced by a gated community. He stated that the Council needs to make input and give guidance to our delegates in regard to this bill.

There was further discussion by the Council in regard to how the taxes would be paid and from which funds, tax exemption, and the desires of the senior citizens currently residing in Aberdeen. Council President Hiob said that our representatives in Annapolis, particularly Senator Glassman, want us to craft a letter or resolution with our endorsement. Mr. Miller said that we have a split Council at this point and cannot, during this type of meeting, make a vote or affirmation.

Liaison Reports

There were no committee reports.

Council President Hiob announced that the Volunteer Dinner is scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 6 - 9 p.m. at the Greene Turtle in Aberdeen.

Matters of Council Concern

Councilwoman Young requested, from Mr. Miller, a calculation on how much the water and sewer rates would increase based on the numbers presented regarding Presbyterian Home of Maryland, Inc.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The work session was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.