

## Review of Actions Taken in the Washington County

### Board of County Commissioners Meeting

July 15, 2003.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

During the approval of the Board of County Commissioners' Minutes for the July 8 meeting, Commissioners' President Greg Snook reiterated that the intent of the HotSpots grant was to provide \$45,000 for one year, regardless of any actions the City of Hagerstown government might take. The Minutes for that meeting will be amended to reflect that intent.

#### FULL COST ACCOUNTING REPORT-MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE SERVICES WORKSHOP

Budget and Finance Director Debra Bastian brought this report to the Board. Earlier this year, a Full Cost Analysis (FCA) was performed on all activities of the Solid Waste Department.

Bastian told the Board that Washington County has historically treated solid waste as one operation with no differentiation between the activities or programs which it oversees. As with most governmental entities service expectations increase as population increases. Local governments face challenges to maintain, and even expand solid waste activities. As this has occurred, Washington County has examined long-range forecasts within its solid waste operations and found issues that needed to be resolved. The county determined that it needed a full cost accounting of all solid waste operations. When it had full knowledge of the County's financial position an informed decision regarding current and future financing decisions affecting solid waste activities could then be made. Making cost-effective and informed decisions about solid waste services and programs requires access to information including, but not limited to, budgets and engineering estimates. Government Officials need to know the true cost of solid waste processing. FCA provides an approach to identifying and assessing the cost of managing solid waste operations. It offers a framework to aid decision-makers with short and long-term program planning and it can help identify measures for streamlining and improving operations. Bastian explained the financial structure now in use, with funding from landfill revenues and debt issues. Debt issues consist of revenue bonds secured by a specific revenue source and general obligation debt originally secured by tax revenue. With the implementation of the County's FCA model all solid waste fund debt can now be supported by the revenues generated under the cost of service plan. Some of more recent debt has been issued through Maryland Water Quality at below market rates. Total debt included for all municipal waste programs and activities for the budget year 2004 is projected to be \$18,711,786. Of this amount 86% or \$16,091,135 is attributable to self-supported activities at the 40-West landfill and transfer sites, associated with landfilling, permits, and composting. The remaining 14% of the debt, or \$2,619,651 is associated with closed sites that are no longer in operation and or involve mandated environmental activities other than landfilling. In evaluating the County's municipal solid

operations, it was learned that a large portion of the cost was unrelated to current operations, including debt. This combined with growing cost, increased federal and state regulations on landfills, and the projected long-range shortfalls prompted Washington County Officials to take a proactive approach to assure sound fiscal management for the future of solid waste operations within Washington County, Bastian said. Revenue generated by landfill permits does not cover the cost of the program, and Senior Citizen subsidies play a part in the shortfall, Bastian said. Some users of the landfill now pay a per-visit charge based on scale fees, with a minimum charge of \$5.00. Those fees are based on type and amount of trash weighed. The ultimate system for landfill fees would be a charge card that would be swiped with each visit or a credit/debit card, Bastian said.

#### 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.

Barbara Hovermale of the Citizens for the Protection of Washington County commented on trash dumping along roadways.

#### SAFETY PROGRAM UPDATE

Safety and Risk Management Administrator Brian Overcash and County Third Party Claims Administrator Debbie Elliot of Crawford and Company, brought this update before the Board. Overcash traced the history of the formalized Safety training program from its beginning in 1996 and how the program has functioned for the benefit of all employees and the citizens of Washington County. Overcash defined mandatory and non mandatory safety trainings presented each year, presented an overview of the County Safety Committee activities, and discussed future programs and activities the department will undertake. Automatic External Defibrillators, which save lives of victims of heart attacks have been placed in several County buildings and additional units will be put into use in the future. Employee safety has become the #1 priority in the County over the 7 years, Overcash said. Elliot told the Board that the County's program is among the best in the State, and a model for other governmental entities to follow. Less than 10% of the Workman's Compensation claims each year result in time lost, Elliot said. Overcash said that institution of a light-duty program in the County has helped cut those losses.

#### UPGRADED TELEPHONE SYSTEM REPORT

Information Technologies Director Ron Whitt presented this update on the County digital integrated telephone system to the Board. The County Commissioners awarded a \$500,000 contract to Verizon in 2001 to design, install and test a new telecommunications network. The process began in November of that year, and the final portion was accepted on April 1st of 2003. Through aggressive management

techniques, \$121,000 in credits and adjustments benefited the County, Whitt said. The system provides better, leaner and faster communications with improved voice quality, unified desktop messaging and digital convergence. This means that employees are able to answer and respond to voice-mail messages from their computer work stations, along with internet and intra-net emails. The new system reduces recurring costs, resulting in a first year net savings of \$34,458.00. There is still work to be done on the system, Whitt said, with accounting procedures and addition of locations to the system. Some remote agencies, such as the Ag Center do not have digital convergence as yet, but will be added in the future, Whitt reported.

#### WASHINGTON COUNTY PUBLIC NETWORK MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Whitt also brought a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the County, the City of Hagerstown, and the Washington County Free Library before the Board for approval. The original partners have expanded collaboration to the Board of Education through sharing of ideas, information, resources and cooperative endeavors. The mission of the group, known as the Washington County Public Network (WCPN) is to provide information access and close the "digital divide" for Washington County citizens. The MOU establishes a framework for cooperation between the partners. The original partnership established a high-speed fiber optic data network in the downtown area. The agreement does not impose funding obligations but will establish an interagency committee for enhanced project coordination. City of Hagerstown Finance Director Al Martin told the Board that the network will be expanded in the downtown area due to revenue raised from the City Franchise agreement with Antietam Cable. A result will be to link the City Police Department with the Sheriff's Department Detention Center through fiber-optic cable, providing for better communication between the agencies. The Hagerstown Mayor and Council, the Board of Education, and the Library are in concurrence with the memorandum. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

#### ENGINEERING REVIEW FEES

Department of public Works Director Gary Rohrer and County Chief Engineer Terry McGee brought to the Board a recommendation for adoption of revised Engineering Review Fees, as proposed to cover actual costs of services provided for growth and development.. On June 17th, the Board approved the addition of two new positions in the Engineering Department to address the significant increase in workload attributed to residential growth and development. The positions were approved for advertisement with the understanding that the Director of Public Works would return with a revised Engineering Review Fee structure to support these costs. The proposed revision to the review fee structure supports all growth related to operating expenses within the Engineering Department, Rohrer said. The Board approved adding a second Plan Reviewer position that would primarily focus on traffic impact analysis while providing support to the overall review process, as well as acting as a third field inspector. The latter position has been critically needed to handle the significant workload generated by growth-related issues throughout the County. The new fee structure covers salary and benefits, straight-

line depreciation for vehicle replacements, fuel, and vehicle maintenance costs. The new fee structure, if applied to actual growth and development data for June 2002 through May 2003, produces a "break-even" revenue total, Rohrer said. Fees proposed include \$120 plus \$50 per lot for a preliminary plat; Preliminary Site Plan and Site Plan fees of \$120.00 plus amounts varying from \$75 to \$275 per acre, based on number of disturbed acres; \$120 plus amounts varying from \$50 to \$200 per lot based on road construction and acreage; \$125.00 per Simplified Plat; \$250 per intersection studied for Traffic Impact, \$125.00 plus \$25 per acre for Grading Plans; \$100 for each Storm Water Management Exemption and \$125.00 for a Simplified Storm Water Management Plan. Washington County Homebuilders' Association representative Debbie Turpin commented that her group needed time to review the proposed fee structure. Commissioner Bill Wivell requested an analysis of all fees related to building a house in Washington County prior to action being taken. Staff will develop additional information and make a report at next week's meeting.

#### MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT: STATE DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS EQUIPMENT GRANT

Department of Emergency Services (DES) Director Joe Kroboth requested authorization of a Memorandum, of Agreement (MOU) between the County and the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to accept \$117,927.42 in grant funding. Each year MEMA provides funding to increase safety and the capabilities of first responders across Maryland. In order to receive this year's funds, an MOU must be executed. A committee that includes law enforcement agencies, the Washington County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and DES reviews the list of equipment available through the program, and has recommended purchase of personal protective clothing, detection gear and rescue equipment as authorized by the grant. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

#### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE GRANT AND ONE-TIME SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT FUNDING

Kroboth also requested execution of a Memorandum of Agreement between the County and MEMA to accept \$41,265 in grant funding from the state Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) and an additional one-time supplemental grant. The EMPG is an annual grant from MEMA to the County. This year \$20,000.00 in additional funding is available for interoperability radio equipment. The devices to be purchased link radios of different frequencies to serve as a short term stop-gap to relieve a problem in the radio communication system. 50% matching funds would come from existing department budgets in the Emergency Management Department and the Fire Department Special Operations line item. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

#### COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS AND COMMENTS

Commissioner Jim Kercheval told the Board that last week at a civic meeting, the issue of Pre-Kindergarten was discussed. Pre-K is mandated in Title I schools. Kercheval requested revisiting a

decision regarding Pre-K classes and the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance that was made in last week's Board meeting. The Economic Development Commission meeting last week discussed the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Intelsat facility at Allegheny Energy business park, that event has been set for September 24th, Kercheval said. The building that had been planned as the home for the Discovery Station is now back in City of Hagerstown hands, Kercheval said. The Discovery Station group is looking for a larger facility to meet its needs.

Commissioner Bill Wivell commented on last week's Maryland Association of Counties' Legislative Committee meeting. The state is still looking at a \$1.5 billion shortfall and additional budget cuts could be made. The Water Quality Advisory Committee issued a statement against support of the proposed City/County settlement on Water and Sewer issues if annexation is to be a part of that settlement. The Conococheague Pretreatment Facility showed a profit for the first time, due to the increased amount of leachate treated during the recent period of heavy rain, Wivell reported. Wivell asked for an update on the Police Athletic League issue. County Administrator Rod Shoop stated that Washington County Community Partnership Director Stephanie Stone will attend tonight's City Council meeting, and bring an update on the matter before the Commissioners next week. The WCCP will implement a revised review process for such instances, Shoop said.

Commissioner John Munson requested legal research into renting space at the Agricultural Education Center to recreational vehicle owners for parking in the winter months. Munson said he was told that private vehicles could not park under the pole barns at that facility because of liability issues.

Commissioners' President Greg Snook commented on the retirement ceremony for Pastor R. Edward Hampton of Emmanuel Baptist Temple after 34 years of service to the community. A letter from the Maryland Department of the Environment was received, dealing with a sewage sludge reapplication at the Robert Carr farm on Kemp's Mill Road. It is a usual procedure for MDE to ask Counties if public hearings should be held on the issue. The Board did not express interest in such a hearing.

#### REQUEST TO FILL VACANCY: HIGHWAYS DEPARTMENT

Highways Department Maintenance Director Jack Reynard brought a request to fill an existing Office Associate III position before the Board. Reynard told the Commissioners that the open Grade 6 position is critical to the Highways Department operations because it handles fuel billing operations for 28 agencies and prepares quarterly tax reports. Annual salary is \$22,044 to \$35,271, and the Department is using a part-time Office Associate to fill in. The measure was approved by unanimous vote.

#### TRANSFER TAX AND AMENDED EXCISE TAX ORDINANCES

County Attorney Richard Douglas brought these items before the Board for approval. Public Hearings were held on June 10th, 2003 on the Ordinances. Public Hearings on the Ordinances were held on June 10th, and Douglas said that information on the tax and its start date has been sent to all members of the

County Bar Association as well as local and state government agencies that deal with tax collections. The Transfer tax imposes a .5% tax on total gross transfers of properties with several exceptions. First-time Washington County home buyers would be exempt, and the first \$50,000.00 of the transaction would be exempt. Exemptions would also be applicable to state transfer tax and the transfers would be subject to the agricultural transfer tax. At least \$400,000.00 of the revenue generated annually would be used for agricultural land preservation and other measures to enhance viability of agriculture in the county. Remaining revenue would be used only for school renovation and construction, for public safety including loans and grants to volunteer fire and rescue companies for capital expenditures, for transportation projects and for debt reduction. Adoption of an Amended Building Excise Tax Ordinance will be delayed until the meeting on July 22nd, due to a revision in the text.

#### OTHER BUSINESS

County Administrator's Comments: County Administrator Rod Shoop requested approval of Planning and Community Development Director Bob Arch as Zoning Enforcement Official for Washington County. Permits and Inspections Director Paul Prodonovich, who had held that designation, retired recently. Arch told the Board that the move was part of reorganization of the Planning Department, which oversees Permits and Inspections. The measure was approved by unanimous vote. Shoop also polled the Board as to its wishes on having a meeting on July 29. The date had been scheduled as vacation for the Commissioners. The Board reached consensus to meet on that date.