

Minutes (Approved 5/21/07)  
County Council Operating Budget Work Session  
May 8, 2007

Meeting convened at: 9:35 a.m. in the Ellicott Room

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

Discussion:

**Circuit Court:** Judge Diane Leasure, Administrative Judge, and Suzanne James, Court Administrator, summarized the changes in the FY 08 budget and explained the need for new positions to handle scheduling of cases formerly controlled by the Clerk of the Court.

**Orphan's Court:** Budget staff explained the changes in this budget.

**State's Attorney:** Tim McCrone, State's Attorney, explained that his request includes an extra car and a position to assist in managing the workload.

**Sheriff:** Sheriff James Fitzgerald explained the rationale for 4 new General Fund positions and one grant-funded position for the alternative sentencing program, which charges fees to offset in part its cost. He noted a future goal to hire more deputies to give greater flexibility to replace security officers.

**Elections:** Administrator Betty Nordaas and Deputy Administrator Guy McWilliams noted that there is one election in FY 08 and that they requested 2 positions, which are conversions of contractual positions to permanent. Ms. Nordaas also noted that she requested funding for tuition assistance for these state positions to match the county's tuition assistance program.

**Library:** Brian O'Shea and Ann Gilligan, Associate Directors, explained four new positions. Ms. Watson asked this agency and others to explain the positions requested and granted in budgets in prior years.

In response to a question about the Miller Branch project, Mr. O'Shea reported that Mr. Miller wants an easement on the land the library will acquire, but county officials do not foresee a problem with this. They expect to conclude the land acquisition agreement before the Council's adoption of the FY 08 budget on May 23.

**Health Department:** Director Dr. Peter Bielsonson, with Deputy Director Dawn O'Neill, and Nicky Worth, Fiscal Specialist, explained the need for five new positions and explained the new statistical program, based on CitiStat.

**Department of Corrections:** Director Melanie Periera explained the need for three new positions, two correctional officers and one dietary officer. She noted rising populations and extended stays as workload increases.

**Fire and Rescue:** Chief Joseph Herr explained that he will receive 21 new positions for 12 months and 18 for 6 months to staff a new tower and to meet staffing standards on current equipment. He noted that the Department equates 4.5 positions to one full-time, 24-hour, 7-day employee. He reported that the Department currently has 22 vacancies, which will be filled shortly. Ms. Watson asked for a history of positions requested and granted.

**Police Department:** Chief William McMahon and Major Gary Gardner explained the proposed personnel increase as part of a four to five year staffing plan, primarily aimed at increasing patrol staff. He described the patrol areas and explained stresses on personnel, including the need for court appearances, leave, and other duties.

**Office of Law:** Solicitor Margaret Ann Nolan and Irma Whitt described the 2.1% increase allowed for the office, which includes salary increases for new employees hired at salaries higher than those of departing employees.

**Office of Finance:** Sharon Greisz, Director, and Sandy Stecker, Deputy, were available to answer questions about the Office's budget.

**Economic Development:** President Richard Story and Debbie Bell, budget officer, described the change in this budget.

The Council broke for lunch and a hearing at 12:15 p.m. and resumed at 2:01 p.m.

Chairman Ball announced that the Council will have an unscheduled work session on Monday, May 14 at 1:30 p.m. in the Banneker Room.

**Executive and Administration:** Lonnie Robbins, County Administrator, and Lois Miller, Administrative Analyst, explained the new positions in the Executive's Office, a combination of transfers made in 2007 and new positions in FY 08. Mr. Robbins noted that the Director of Environment and Sustainability, a position to staff the Environmental Commission, is included as a regular, appointed position at a salary of \$77,000. His title will be Executive Assistant.

Mary Kay Sigaty requested a list of membership dues, which Lois Miller promised to provide.

Mark Desmangles, Chief of Fleet Services, responded to a question about the size of fleet: 1200 vehicles, with some exclusions. He reported that the county will add 72 vehicles to the fleet, primarily for police and DILP inspector positions. He said that 66 vehicles will need replacement.

Mary Kay Sigaty asked for details on “designated vehicles”.

She also asked for detail on the number of people assigned to GTV in the Public Information office. She wants to know how much time is allocated for original programming.

In response to questions from Courtney Watson, Lynn Levin, Risk Manager, summarized the components of the county’s insurance programs, with special attention to the self-insurance plans.

**Housing and Community Development:** Stacy Spann, Director, described his interest in better maintaining facilities and expanding opportunity.

**Technology and Communication:** Director Ira Levy summarized components of the budget, including a plan to convert 3 contractual positions to regular employees at a savings of \$230,000. He is trying to move to a 3.5 year cycle of computer replacement and will use a buy-back program Dell offers to dispose of used equipment. He also requested funds for a large increase in training and education for his staff.

**Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits (DILP):** Acting Director Bob Frances and Marilyn Weeks, Deputy, explained that most of the increase in this budget is attributable to fleet operation, including purchase of Prius vehicles.

**Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ):** Marsha McLaughlin, Director, Kimberley Flowers, Deputy Director, and Lisa Hill, Administrative Analyst explained five new positions: 1) Kimberley Flowers will concentrate on providing advice to the divisions of the department, communicating with the public, focusing as “point person” for the research division, and identifying priorities; 2) 2 positions are in land development, an administrative analyst and engineering person; 3) one is in zoning administration; and one is in transportation planning. The increase in professional services includes a new conservation easement program to be done in cooperation with the Howard County Land Conservancy. The Leeds program, a “green building” program, is a new initiative to explore efficient construction, and this entails a consultant. Councilman Greg Fox asked about the potential for working with the Maryland Energy Administration in this regard.

Another initiative relates to the business proficiency assessment, which will evaluate the development review process. The goal is to move to electronic processing, but this will follow assessment to streamline the process before automating it.

Funds are allowed for the Columbia Planning Process as a marker, with the possibility that they will assist the traffic analysis being performed by Public Works.

BRAC initiatives include a joint transportation project, which is grant funded and done cooperatively with Anne Arundel County.

Funds were allowed for chargebacks from Iron Mountain, the record storage and retrieval system.

Costs of increasing transit services also were allowed, as the contracts will be rebid.

DPZ's budget includes revenues from the Forest Conservation program; however, the expenditures are shown in the Recreation and Parks budget.

Courtney Watson asked if the Route 40 master plan is in the budget. Ms. McLaughlin said that funds are available, but the timing of the project is uncertain, given competing priorities.

M. McLaughlin reported that she would be bringing 60 more properties for historic designation to the Council soon for approval.

She also reported that she intends to begin taking zoning violation cases to a hearing examiner, using new authority to collect fees

**Mental Health Authority:** Donna Wells, Director, reported that \$300,000 is allowed for the mobile crisis team, which operates in cooperation with the police. Requests for crisis beds and additional mobile unit funds were not supplied in FY 08.

**Department of Public Works:** Director Jim Irvin noted that funds are allowed to reflect a large increase in the cost of water from Baltimore, which supplies Howard County. He explained three new positions, including an outreach person and a customer service person. Funds also were allowed for a consultant to take baseline measurements of greenhouse gases. In response to questions from Greg Fox about curbside recycling, Mr. Irvin responded that the pilot project using wheeled bins will reach 5000 homes.

**Recreation and Parks:** Director Gary Arthur, Laura Weatherold, Deputy, and Bill Eckert and John Byrd explained the increases allowed in staffing. They identified an error in the numbers, which Mr. Weinstein, Budget Director, said would be corrected by amendment.

Mary Kay Sigaty requested and Mr. Arthur promised to provide statistics on the outdoor environmental education component.

She also inquired about the deer management program and was told that a total of about 800 deer have been eliminated since the inception of the program, primarily in the Little

Patuxent Environmental Center area. Blandair continues to have a significant problem with approximately 124 deer per square mile, compared to a goal of 15 per square mile.

The hearing was concluded at 5:00 p.m.

Action: None

Time Adjourned: 5:00 p.m.