

**Open Work Session
Wicomico County Strategic Plan
March 19, 2019**

Mr. McCain said they presented the Strategic Plan previously and went through the process of how it came about, the different goals, strategies, and objectives, and, at the end, they asked for feedback from individuals on Council as well as people involved in Government, the Executive Office, and some other folks as well. He said they got some very good feedback, and they tried to incorporate all of the comments that have been made regarding the Strategic Plan into this semifinal draft. He said they, basically, did not delete anything, but, for the most part, it was adding what people said they would like to see within the plan. He said some of it is just simple verbiage, and he is not going to go through it step by step because Council can read it. He said Mrs. Hurley has highlighted in yellow everything that is different from before, and, particularly, some of the changes were just word changes, such as the term "effective," and things like "timely" because they felt that was important.

Mr. McCain said he would like to comment on page 4. He said, when they were talking about purchasing goods and so forth, originally it just said "lowest cost goods," so they added to that "best value" and "being responsible and efficient" because it is not just about lowest costs, but they want to make sure they are getting their best bang for their buck. Mr. Holloway said the last three or four times the Council has approved any purchases, they have come in with just one vendor, so they seem to be moving away from the purchasing process, to which Mr. McCain responded, that could be a good point, and something like this might bring that to the surface where they need to make sure they have that additional vendor in there, or some kind of guarantee they are getting the best value because that is part of their plan. He said Mr. Weston Young, Assistant Director of Administration, commented on the plan, and helped them out on some things regarding sewer and the Airport, and they made a few little changes there. He said they also made sure they had ferries included because that was not originally included in transportation and infrastructure, so they made sure to involve the ferries and dams in that.

Mr. McCain said school climate and safety is a big issue, and there were some comments about that from Council, so they added providing support for a safe and positive school environment to make sure that was incorporated. He said, under performance measures to measure where they are, the star ratings is one of the more contemporary measures now, so they added that in there.

Mr. McCain said, in Goal I, that is all new, but has to do with economic growth and development in the County. He said Mr. Dave Ryan with Salisbury-Wicomico Economic Development (SWED) gave them some really positive feedback, so they tried to incorporate a lot of the feedback regarding attracting businesses, growing businesses, and retaining businesses here in the County. He said, if someone has a business, a lot of times the best way to grow that business is retaining who they have, and it is the same thing with the County. He said retaining their employers is one of the best ways to keep their economy strong, as well as trying to attract new businesses. He said there is a lot of verbiage there about encouraging, attracting, and collaborating to attract new business, so that was added.

Mr. McCain said Goal J deals with their biggest industry in the County, which is agriculture. He said Mr. Dodd made a good point in reference to the Agricultural Banquet that six out of seven of the Councilmembers attended the event. He said it is hard to think of any event where they have 100 percent participation because everybody has different schedules, but everybody made it a priority to be there. He said agriculture is, obviously, very important, so they added that because they felt it deserved

a separate section to itself. He said they want to promote, protect, and also expand their agricultural districts, and conservation districts, like their Rural Legacy district, which the Natural Resources Advisory Committee worked on a lot last year to add to that Rural Legacy district, which has been done.

Mr. McCain said they can still take comments, but they would like to ask the permission of Council to finalize this and submit it to the Executive Office for them to adopt and post on the website for everyone to see, and, basically, adopt this as their long-term Strategic Plan.

Mr. Cannon said he likes the fact that economic development is in the plan because he thinks that is a huge priority, and what was mentioned about agriculture. He said when he was going through this initially, he felt this is not really a Council role, but then he realized this is not really necessarily a Council objective, but a County objective. He said he certainly hopes the Executive Branch appreciates the fact that Mr. McCain has taken the time he has to develop this Strategic Plan because, as was said before, it is important. He said it is also important for the public to look at it to see what the County is doing, or attempting to do, and it crystalizes it for everybody. He told Mr. McCain he appreciates it, and said, as was stated, it is a document that can be changed however they might choose to do so.

Mr. Holloway said they are probably already doing all of this stuff, to which Mr. Cannon responded, again, to have it in written form really gives the public an idea of where they are headed. Mr. Holloway said everything they do is based around what is in here. He said he does not see any problem with putting it all on paper, but he is just wondering why, to which Mr. McCain responded, that is, actually, a good point because now the public can see it. He said a lot of times the public does not know everything the County is doing, or what is in process, so it can serve the purpose to educate the public as well. Mr. Holloway said the problem is, when they put some of these things in here, but then do something that actively works against what is in here, it comes up. He said a few years ago the downzoning issue came up where Council was pushing to downzone land, and that is, basically, against what this plan says. He then asked what will happen when they have something in this Strategic Plan, and then Council or the Executive say they want to do just the opposite. He asked if they will use this plan against an idea, to which Mr. McCain responded, that is why they have a plan. He clarified, if they are doing something that is opposite of what they are saying in their plan, then they need some rationale as to what has changed, or why they think they should be doing something different. He said plans will change, particularly in Government because State Legislature can enact something tomorrow that causes the County to have to reverse something that might be in their plan, but that is an explanation and a reason why. He said, once again, it is a plan, a roadmap, and they will diverge from that on occasion, to which Mr. Holloway responded, but they have a Comprehensive Plan. He then asked how many plans they need, to which Mr. Cannon responded, Mr. McCain has already done the work for them. Mr. Holloway asked how many plans he lives by? He said he is not criticizing him for doing this, but he is just wondering how many plans they live by. He said they have their Charter, they have their Code, they have their Comprehensive Plan, and now they have a Strategic Plan, to which Mr. McCain responded, the irony of this is they were working on plans like this without a Strategic Plan, and it should have been the other way around. He clarified, they should have always had the Strategic Plan, and making sure their Comprehensive Plan fit into their Strategic Plan. Mr. Cannon said he thinks the purpose of the plan is that every once in a while they can go back and look at what they are doing and say, for example, that they have not been paying enough attention to economic development like they had initially wanted to do. He said, for example, they could say they have done things with education and agriculture, but they have not done enough with economic development, and he thinks it just gives them a few reminders, to which Mr. McCain responded, that is the reason for the performance measures at the end of each of those goals, so they can go back and see if they are accomplishing what they are trying to accomplish. He said they may be,

or they may not be, but they would be surprised when they go back and look at it that sometimes they are not actually doing it. He said they may think they are, but that is the purpose of this plan, to give them something to go back to, and keep reinforcing whether they are doing their job or not.


Mr. Hastings said, just to be clear, this is not a legal document. He said a lot of the Comprehensive Plans have been used in court cases because those are legitimate legal documents, but this is just more aspirational. Mr. Holloway asked if voting on it to approve it makes it a legal document, to which Mr. Cannon responded, no. He clarified, they will just take a consensus to pass it to the Executive Branch, and let them take advantage of it.


Mr. Cannon thanked Mrs. Hurley for her additions to the plan, to which Mr. McCain added, he cannot emphasize enough the assistance Mrs. Hurley has given. He said just about every single Councilmember gave some sort of input on this, and the Executive Office did too, which was very much appreciated. Mr. Dodd said Mrs. Hurley has done a lot of work, so she should be commended.


Mr. Cannon took a consensus from Council to make sure everybody was okay with moving the plan forward to Executive Culver, to which there was a consensus. Mr. Cannon thanked Mr. McCain for his work. There was no further discussion.


John T. Cannon, President



Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3


Ernest F. Davis, District 1


Marc Kilmer, District 2


Josh Hastings, District 4


Joe Holloway, District 5


William R. McCain, At-Large


Laura Hurley, Council Administrator