

The Wicomico County Council met on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom teleconference to hold a Public Hearing for the purpose of receiving public comments on a proposed Operating Budget of the County for the period July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

In attendance: Larry Dodd, President; John T. Cannon, Vice President; Joe Holloway, William R. McCain, Josh Hastings, and Nicole Acle.

Present: Laura Hurley, Council Administrator; Lynn Sande, Executive Office Associate; and Levin Hitchens, Assistant Internal Auditor.

Mrs. Hurley said tonight is the Public Hearing on the proposed Fiscal Year 2021 Budget. She said a Public Notice was published in the Daily Times and posted on the County's website stating that a Public Hearing would be held this evening at 6:00 p.m. She said the focus tonight will be on the operating expenses rather than on the revenues, but the County Executive's proposed budget, showing both revenues and expenses, is posted on the County's website as well as a copy of this presentation.

Mrs. Hurley said the Executive has submitted to the County Council, as required by the Charter, a balanced budget. She said he proposes a budget funded by many revenue sources, the principal of which is property taxes. She said the budget proposes a property tax rate of .9286. She said this tax rate is higher than the constant yield rate, so a Public Hearing is required by State Law and will be held at the next Council meeting scheduled for May 19 at 10 a.m.

Mrs. Hurley said, in looking at the expenditures for the operating budget, she will read each Department name and fund number, as well as the proposed FY21 budget request as shown in the proposed budget. She said, after she is finished reading each Department name and fund number, she will call on the individuals who signed up to speak in advance. She said then, if anyone participating on the Zoom conference would like to speak but did not sign up in advance, please use the raise hand feature and she will call them in the order their hand was raised. Mrs. Hurley then gave instructions on how to use the raise hand feature. She said, when your name is called, please state your name, county of residence, and then provide your comments. She asked to please keep your audio muted until your name has been called so the background noise does not disrupt the meeting. She asked to keep comments to three minutes or less to allow time for everyone to speak, and also to please try not to repeat what other speakers have already stated. Mrs. Hurley then read:

Fund 01 - County Council \$744,690; Fund 02 - Circuit Court \$1,928,868; Fund 03 - Orphans Court \$85,256; Fund 04 - State's Attorney \$3,737,018; Fund 05 - Executive/Administration \$899,935; Fund 06 - Community Promotions \$43,000; Fund 07 - Elections \$1,410,985; Fund 08 - Finance \$1,405,859; Fund 09 - Public Accountant \$96,360; Fund 10 - Purchasing \$276,355; Fund 11 - Law \$341,175; Fund 12 - Human Resources \$515,969; Fund 13 - Planning & Zoning \$1,718,992; Fund 14 - General Services \$1,648,791; Fund 15 - IT \$1,415,705; Fund 16 - Liquor License Board \$262,168; Fund 17 - Sheriff \$13,072,966; Fund 18 - Salisbury Fire/Ambulance \$758,014; Fund 19 - Volunteer Ambulance \$3,249,858; Fund 20 - Volunteer Fire \$2,224,349; Fund 21 - Corrections \$17,979,316; Fund 22 - Emergency Services \$3,477,188; Fund 23 - Protection of Animals \$367,506; Fund 24 - Public Works \$583,667; Fund 25 - Fruitland Water & Sewer is not being funded in this proposed budget; Fund 27 -

Mosquito Control \$201,346; Fund 28 – Gypsy Moth Control \$4,000; Fund 30 - \$57,689,823; Fund 31 – Community College \$6,060,632; Fund 32 – Public Library \$1,519,295; Fund 33 – Tri-County Council \$414,897; Fund 34 – Public Health \$4,061,771; Fund 35 – Government Office Building Security \$78,724; Fund 36 – Extension Service \$115,815; Fund 37 Community Access Channel \$128,866; Fund 38 – Office of Economic Development \$175,000; Fund 40 – Pensions & Retirement not being funded; Fund 41 – Hospital, Disability & Death Benefit \$403,153; Fund 42 – Liability Insurance \$674,000; Fund 43 – County Debt Retirement \$4,311,341; Fund 44 – Social Services \$3,793; Transfer to Other Funds and Contingency \$8,829,902; Fund 47 – Fleet vehicles \$340,000; Fund 50 – Roads \$9,139,112; Fund 83 – Grants & Mandates \$512,959; Fund 84 – Teen Adult Center/Dove Pointe \$61,363; Fund 85 – Maintenance of Aged in Community \$260,000; Fund 86 – Commission on Aging \$750; Fund 87 – Life Crisis Center \$13,500; Fund 51 – Solid Waste \$8,556,500; Fund 52 – Airport \$2,365,209; Fund 53 – Electrical Board \$71,878; Fund 54 – Local Management Board \$1,193,393; Fund 56 – Narcotics Task Force \$1,032,500; Fund 60 – Recreation & Parks \$4,854,425; Funds 61 & 64 – Wicomico Youth & Civic Center \$5,829,670; Fund 62 – Tourism \$2,348,084; Nursing Home \$9,005,156.

Dr. Donna Hanlin joined Council via Zoom videoconference, and thanked Council for the opportunity to provide a few brief comments relative to the FY21 Wicomico County General Fund and Capital Budget. She said, first, to the General Fund Budget, as Council knows, in March the Wicomico County Board of Education submitted for Council’s consideration a maintenance of effort budget for FY21. She said they did so after lengthy consideration of their needs specific to their strategic plan, Imagine 2022. She said they worked hard to develop a budget to support their strategic priorities of increasing kindergarten readiness, graduation rates, recruiting and retaining a strong workforce, and, added this year, ensuring safe schools. She said, as Council examines their budget, they will see how their budget is fully aligned with their strategic plan. She said she wants to thank Council for their willingness in the past to provide funding above maintenance of effort, and they do truly appreciate Council’s support for public education and their strategic plan. She said this year’s request for only maintenance of effort was done so first knowing that they could continue the implementation of Imagine 2022, but also in the interest of being a good community partner and understanding the needs of the County and other entities in their community. She said they did submit a list of one-time funding requests that has been revised based upon approval received from the Maryland State Department of Education, and they ask that Council consider funding those facility and safety requests that do not impact maintenance of effort.

Dr. Hanlin said, finally, they were also hopeful that, with their maintenance of effort budget request, the likelihood of funding their capital improvement budget would be increased. She said she wants to speak very briefly to that ongoing process. She said she would ask that all Councilmembers review the information she provided to the County Executive’s Office and to the Council President in a letter dated March 24 sent through email on March 25. She said, in that communication, she provided clarification on various communications, including what had occurred between Mr. Bob Gorrel, the Executive Director of the IAC, and the County Executive. She said, in that communication, Mr. Culver did go on record as supporting the Mardela project stating “Rest assured, as you consider various school construction needs across the State that Wicomico County stands ready to support and fund an appropriate plan for Mardela Middle and Senior High School.” Dr. Hanlin said, unfortunately, that support is missing in the County Executive’s Capital Budget. She said, while it is highly unusual for the IAC to grant planning approval to a school system when there does not appear to be local support, with

that written endorsement from Mr. Culver and communication that she has continued to have with State leadership, she remains hopeful that they will be granted planning approval next week. She said, based upon the discussion she heard last night among Councilmembers and their legal counsel, including the expected grant funding for the Airport, she continues to be very optimistic for the Mardela community that something can be done to keep this project moving. She said she can assure Council of the Board's and her unwavering commitment to the Mardela community and this project. She said, to that end, they stand ready to provide any information they can that would be helpful to Council in future Work Sessions. She said, again, on behalf of the Board of Education and Wicomico County Public Schools, she thanks Council for their ongoing support.

Ms. Eileen Johnson joined Council via Zoom videoconference, and thanked Dr. Hanlin for saying what she said, and said that is very reassuring. She said she does not want to take anything for granted, even given what Dr. Hanlin just said, which is very promising and makes her hopeful. She said she thinks they all have felt a lot of hope about this subject. She said she listened to the meeting last night that Council had, and she definitely left with some impressions, and definitely was not feeling hopeful after that meeting. She said some of Council have spoken up for the Mardela community, and she thinks some more consistently and strongly than others, and they really appreciate the persistence of some of Council and they are asking that they keep at it on behalf of the Mardela community. She said she forgot to mention that she is part of a group that advocates for increased investment in education in their County, and they just stand with the Mardela community. She said she is always there to remind them why they are doing this, and she has heard many of Council speak about the importance of teachers this week and teacher appreciation. She said they really applaud what Mr. McCain is doing with his Rising Star Program, and he is really walking the walk with the spotlight he is putting on teachers, so she thanks him. She said she thinks now is really a time to put those words into action. She said, of course, with everything that is going on, everything seems impossible and like they are not going to be able to get anything done ever again, but, from everything she has heard, and everything she has read about this and listened, a big issue is just access to information, knowing what is going on, and trying to find things here and there. She said a huge issue is, obviously, a lack of communication with the County Executive and the County Council, she does not need to tell them that. She said it seemed like the meeting from yesterday could have been from six months ago. She said it seemed like, basically, they have not seen any kind of change. She said nothing changed, and, to them, it looks like broken government. She said, once again, they call on the County Executive to meet with the Board of Education and the Council and to just make it happen. She said, to the average viewer, frankly, it looks ridiculous. She said, from what she sees, what is possible is maybe Council could advocate for them, and maybe just more strongly for them, and do not stop. She said, to her it seemed like Mr. Strausburg was saying last night that the IAC is looking to hear that the State really supports this, and, basically, he was laying the blame somewhere else instead of saying the County is going to show their commitment to this. She said they all know that the State will show up if the County shows they are committed. She said they have heard very clearly from the Superintendent that she strongly supports this, and they know that Council supports this, but she thinks they need stronger advocacy. She said they ask the County Executive to advocate with the County Council for them. She said they know there are personnel issues, which also seem to be personal issues, and nothing is changing, and it just keeps happening over and over, so they are asking them to find a way to change something and channel some of the frustration to actually change things. She said they need clear leadership, they need to not be dysfunctional, they

need direction, they need partnership and compromise, and working together. She said they have seen the Board step up, they have seen the Council step up, and now they need the County Executive to step up also. She said her main message is that she feels they just need strong advocacy and some way for the Board, the Superintendent, and the County Council to get in a room and not leave that room until they figure it out, at least the answer to Mardela. She said, obviously, the big issue of not being able to go to the bond market because of this personnel issue seems like something that is just paralyzing their government. She said that is their perspective, and she thanks Council for their time.

Mrs. Michelle Wright joined Council via Zoom videoconference, and said she lives in Hebron and also lives in the Mardela School District. She said she wishes she could start out with positive comments, but unfortunately, she does not find herself doing that. She said, first, as a taxpayer, she is disappointed in the lack of professionalism shown in the Executive Branch, especially after listening to the meeting from last night. She said it should be a standard procedure, in her opinion, for the County Executive, the staff, and Department Heads to be able to meet with the County Council to discuss the CIP and the budget. She said she finds it ludicrous that the Council has asked to meet and no one shows up. She said that should be a normal business standard practice. She asked how they as a Council are supposed to approve a multimillion-dollar budget and CIP without being able to get the answers they need from the people who have helped create these reports? She said she thinks it is an embarrassment for their County, and it is an embarrassment to be a citizen right now in Wicomico County. She said she guesses she just expects better leadership, and she expects, whatever the reasons are, whether business or personal, they should be separate, and they should not be tied together and have actions like they are seeing. She said she finds herself right now asking what she is getting from her County Government, especially the Executive Branch. She said their County spends at least \$1 million dollars for the Executive Branch, and are they as taxpayers getting their money's worth? She said now there is a request for a new CFO position in the budget, and it costs about \$125,000 plus benefits when they already have an unofficial Finance Director, an Administrator, an Assistant Administrator, an unofficial Attorney, and Department Heads, and she is just completely against this new position that is being requested. She said she would rather have the \$125,000 go towards Mardela's project. She said she would ask those of Council who have tried to encourage Executive Culver to commit funds to Mardela if they can take \$1 million dollars out of their savings account. She said she understands they have \$40 to \$50 million dollars in this savings account. She said it is a savings account, and it is to be used, so how much more do they need in their savings account? She asked why they cannot take \$1 million of that and put it back in the CIP, show they are committed, and decide next year if they can really afford to use that million dollars. She said she is just baffled why they are even having the same discussion they had a year ago. She said a couple of months ago the Board of Education suggested they take some of the completed school construction project monies that was left over and reallocate it to Mardela. She said she heard last night that some of that money is being reallocated to Beaver Run, which is great, and she is okay with that. She said her question is whether all the money is being reallocated to Beaver Run, and is there any money left that could be allocated to Mardela and have it split between the two schools? She said, for the past year, and at every meeting over this past year, taxpayers have been told they have to wait before any decisions could be made by their County Executive Branch. She said they are waiting on Kirwan Commission, they were waiting on the bond market, they were waiting on minimum wage information, and they were waiting on the IAC. She said all they have done for a year is sit back and wait, and they are no further along than they were a year ago. She said, quite frankly, she is tired of

waiting. She said last night it was said again, "let's wait for the IAC". She asked what they are waiting for? She asked why they are not making decisions, coming up with a plan, and moving forward? She said it is just lack of leadership, and their kids and their community deserve better. She said the truth is, as far as the bond market, she said at a meeting last fall that she was afraid if they were not ready to go to the bond market that all of their County projects would be delayed. She said she was told then that they were not looking at going to the bond market, they were going to wait and see, but that they had other ways they were thinking about borrowing money, but they did not know what those avenues were. She said now here they are in May, they did not go to the bond market, and they are still moping along. She said then she heard last night that now they are going to wait and double up on their borrowing this coming fall, so they are going to wait six more months. She said all they do is sit back and wait, and it is just totally unacceptable. She said, during her time on the Chamber of Commerce, the Board of Education, and the Greater Salisbury Committee, she was told repeatedly that people do not want to move here and live here because their schools are not adequate. She clarified, they do not look nice from the outside, they are outdated, they do not have the technology, they do not have the latest and greatest, but yet here they are trying to invest in their school system, and it is a battle. She said she does not understand why they have to fight and battle to get their schools up to date when really they are the backbone of their County. She said her other question and comment is that they have 25 schools in their County, and the life expectancy of a school is 50 years, so every year they are going to have a school construction project. She then asked why they are not setting a budget every year where they could pick an amount and budget a certain amount of money because they know it is coming. She asked why the citizens and why the Board of Education have to battle and go for a fight to get funding for their schools? She said it makes no sense. She said she does not foresee Mardela being put back in the CIP right now because their County Executive does not want what the citizens voted on. She explained, there was a feasibility study done, there were four different options submitted, and citizens spoke and voted, and they picked what they thought they needed, and it is the County Government's responsibility to help fund that, and not for someone else to override to just toss aside all the work that was done. She said that is not the job of the County Government, but that is what is happening, and because of that, their students, teachers, and west side community has been waiting, and they are being delayed, and she is just not sure how much longer they are supposed to wait. She said she can guarantee one thing, and that is she will continue to advocate for Wicomico County School System, and she will continue to advocate and fight for Mardela. She said it is not going away, the needs are not going away, and she is not going away. She said, unfortunately, the County Council provides the ways they can communicate and get their voices heard, and she is sorry that Council repeatedly has to hear people like her because some of this she knows is out of Council's hands, but she is thankful the Council allows citizens a way of being able to voice their concerns and thoughts. She said hopefully the County Executive Branch is hearing this because that is really who this is geared towards because she truly understands that the County Council only has so much authority, and that much of this falls into the County Executive's responsibility. She thanked Council for their time and said she hopes everybody stays safe and healthy.

Mr. Samuel Gibson joined Council via Zoom videoconference and said he is a Salisbury resident, Wicomico County resident first, and Library employee second. He said firsts he would like to thank Mrs. Hurley for orchestrating this and keeping it running smoothly. He said it is greatly appreciated. He said he is there today to encourage the Council to maintain a responsible and realistic budget. He said he realizes they will be in challenging financial times, but he encourages the Council to continue and grow a

support of education and community services. He said, that being said, it is his hope Council maintains the current funding of the Wicomico Public Libraries. He said, even before he began working at the Library over a year and a half ago, he realized the importance of the Library to the community as a whole. He said, after working there, he realized that even more so. He said, given the community hub that the Library is to Wicomico County, all of the residents that the Library provides their community members are invaluable. He said everything from a place where people can meet and learn, an area for education and continued learning, resources for helping job seekers and employers, and most of all a welcoming place to each and every citizen of the County. He said, once he began working there, he found a group of dedicated employees who cared about the patrons and helped to learn and grow. He said they provided a wealth of services and programs on a very limited budget. He said he is also not sure how many people realize the valuable resources the Library provides. He said, once the pandemic started, they already had systems in place that allowed the County citizens to access online books, movies, music, and learning materials to help with learning and living at home. He said they also had in place a system where every Wicomico County Board of Education student from grade 1 to 12 has a Library card allowing them and their family to access these services online from home. He said they are resourced a lot at the Library, but please recognize the value of the Library to their community as a whole, and maintain the budget for the Library. He said, like all organizations, they are going to face tight financial times in the coming year. He said an investment in their Libraries is an investment in their community and the education system, and an investment in their future.

Ms. Ashley Teagle joined Council via Zoom teleconference, and thanked the County Executive, who has budgeted a \$50,000 match towards the purchase of a new Bookmobile for the Library. She said, as a State and County funded organization, she acknowledges the financial challenges that COVID-19 has created for their local government. She said their mission is to Innovate, educate, and inspire. She said, in the midst of a pandemic, Library staff are already demonstrating their ability to continue to carry out this mission through rapidly changing their service models. She said their customers can expect virtual programs from them this summer, and to interact with them via email to get their questions answered. She said customers can now call them and receive assistance as well. She said their online collections and resources allow their customers to keep up with their reading from home and to have access to remote learning resources, such as Brainfuse where students can chat live with a tutor. She said, briefly, she wants to go back to the great recession. She said, between fiscal years 2008 and 2009, circulation at the Library went up nearly 10 percent. She said, during a difficult time when households had to make sacrifices, 16 percent of their customers renewed their library cards. She said their program attendance went up 38 percent as customers sought free resources, activities, and information. She said she is anticipating a similar pattern of increased usage of the Public Library during and following this pandemic. She said, during this pandemic, the only path to follow is forward. She said the Public Library will be integral to community healing. She said, as the Governor takes steps to reopen their State, the Library is a willing partner to help slow the educational slide for students who are out of the classroom. She said they are committed to helping their community sift through all of the information out there, and help connect customers to resources to help them recover from the pandemic. She said digital literacy is a necessity during this time, and the Library offers free WIFI access at the Downtown and Pittsville Branches, as well as allowing customers to sign up for Library cards online that they can use immediately to access their resources. She said the Public Library will also help residents find new jobs through their Job Search Center, Job Fairs, and workshops on workforce development. She said, after so

much time apart, the Library will bring the community back together as a gathering place and a unifying community space. She said, speaking of place, she was grateful to see the Library's future projects kept in the CIP. She said, again, she understands that the difficulties of the financial climate do not make it possible to move forward with a new Pittsville location at this time, but she thinks it is important they keep these projects on the radar because they want their physical facilities to match the programs and services they are offering to the community. She said, for 150 years, the Library has been an important part of the fabric of Wicomico County. She said the Library is an asset that will help, along with their partners, to continue moving Wicomico County forward toward a brighter, better future. She thanked Council for supporting the Public Library.

Mr. Darren Lombardo joined Council via Zoom teleconference, and said good evening Council. He said, in review of the County budget, please refer to page 131 of the Executive County Budget for Wicomico County Public Schools. He said he sees a one-time funding requests for 2021 proposed unrestricted current expense budget, and he is a little concerned here because he sees the categories are very broad. He said the following items are listed: Replacement document cameras due to aging equipment; laptop carts for NexGen Academy; three replacement whiteboards due to failing equipment; fencing for multiple schools to ensure student safety; replacement of student desks in poor condition; upgrade of aging security camera equipment from analog to HD security camera system to ensure student safety; replacement of sound system and projector in Wi Middle auditorium due to aging equipment; school exterior doors to include secure locking mechanisms to help ensure student safety. He said those are all very important and wonderful items, but before any money is provided to the school system for their requested one-time funding, on behalf of the citizens of Wicomico County, he is requesting that the Council require the following from Wicomico County Public Schools before any one-time funding requests are approved: The total number of replacement document cameras needed and three estimates; the total number of laptop carts that are needed for NexGen Academy and three estimates; the number of whiteboards to be replaced and three estimates; the total number of linear feet of fencing and posts to be replaced or upgraded at school locations and three estimates for those; the total number of replacement desks and three estimates for their bulk purchase. He said it would also be nice to see a plan to upgrade the surveillance systems by identifying the specifications of all system components, such as DVRs, cameras, wiring, etc. at each school, and three estimates for each; a plan from a sound engineer for the auditorium sound system and projector at Wi Middle School, and three estimates for that as well. He said it would be nice to see a plan for all doors that will be upgraded or replaced, including their locking mechanisms, the types of doors, the dimensions, and three estimates for those. He said, in order to justify this request, this information should be readily available to the public should anyone request this information directly from the County, not necessarily from the school system. He said that is the greatest concern, and that is what he wanted to share tonight.

Mrs. Hurley said that is all the Public Comments, but before Council adjourns, she would like to go over some Budget Work Sessions dates. She then asked if Council can pull out their calendars and let her know when they would like to start having Work Sessions on the budget. She said she had Council staff prepare a memo and a short list of Departments that Council may want to consider meeting with. She said they can go over that list if Council likes, or they can look at the dates. She then asked Mr. Dodd what he would like to do, to which Mr. Dodd responded, he thinks they should look at the dates first, and he thinks everyone should have their calendar. He suggested as early as next week. Mrs. Hurley asked if Mr. Dodd would like to start meeting on Monday, May 11, to which Mr. Dodd responded, that

would be a good day for him. He said they were talking about starting the day with several hours in, and if they could, they may be able to knock them all out in one day. He then asked how the 11<sup>th</sup> sounds for everyone? Mrs. Acle asked, would they be starting in the morning, to which Mr. Dodd responded, yes. Mr. Dodd said, if they start at 10:00 a.m., they would probably get done by 2:00 p.m. Mr. Cannon said he would not want to go any longer than 2:00 p.m. Mr. Dodd said, if they do not go over the allotted times, he believes they should be able to get done by then. He said he believes he calculated less than four hours for the requested Departments. Mrs. Hurley asked if Mr. Dodd would like to start a little bit earlier to allow some time for lunch, to which Mr. Dodd responded, he thinks the Members are going to need lunch, so he thinks it may be a good idea to start at 9:00 a.m. He said he is okay with 9:00 a.m. if everyone else is. Mrs. Hurley said they will schedule this for Monday, May 11 at 9:00 a.m. Mr. McCain asked if they really need an hour for lunch? He suggested they do a half hour because five hours is a long time to carve out in the work day, to which Mr. Dodd responded, they may be able to get done with lunch in a half hour, and then if they get done early they can all leave early.

Mrs. Hurley said she will go over the list of Departments Council may want to meet with. She said they are looking at the Executive/Administration and Community Promotions. She clarified, they are both the same Departments, Fund 05 and Fund 06, but she believes Administration would speak on both of those funds. She said they are looking at IT, to which Mr. McCain asked, why are they meeting with IT? Mr. Cannon said he believes it was the 14 percent overall increase that was suggested Council review. He said he thinks the guideline they are following is what Mr. Hitchens took the time to put together. He said it is an email Mr. Hitchens sent out called Memo 5-16-2020. He then asked when it was emailed, to which Mr. Hitchens responded, it was a few hours ago. Mr. McCain asked what time that was sent, to which Mr. Hitchens responded, Mr. McCain responded in the string. Mr. Dodd said it is the one where he said they should include the States Attorney's Office. Mr. Hitchens said the subject line is Budget Pre-analysis, and it was sent at 3:30 p.m. Mr. McCain said he did not have an attachment with the first one, to which Mr. Hitchens responded, he will forward it to Mr. McCain. Mr. McCain said he saw Mr. Dodd's response, but he could not even see what the response was to for some reason. Mr. Hitchens said he just sent it back out. He said, essentially, the recommendations were based upon an overall increase in their budgets or major categories, such as salary, operating, capital, etc. He said IT had a 14 percent overall increase in their budget.

Mrs. Hurley said, continuing on, they have Volunteer Fire and Ambulance, Funds 19 & 20. She said for Public Works they would want to speak with both the Roads Division as well as the Solid Waste Division. She said Leased Vehicles, Fund 47, she believes would fall under Purchasing. She said there have been a couple of recommendations for the Board of Education to come in, the States Attorney's Office that was just discussed, and the Airport.

Mrs. Acle asked, what about the Law Department? She said there has been a pretty big increase in their budget. Mr. Dodd said he agrees, and he made a note of that. He said they went from \$318,000 to \$347,000. He then asked, who would come in to speak on the Law Department? Mr. McCain recommended Council send that question to Mr. Strausburg for a response, to which Mr. Dodd responded, he agrees. Mrs. Acle said she thinks it at least needs to be addressed.

Mrs. Hurley asked if everyone is okay with all of those Departments, including the Law Department, to which Mr. McCain responded, they do not need them to come in if they send an email and get a response, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, understood. Mrs. Acle asked if it is something that needs to



be done publicly, or do they just read the email response, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she thinks they could get the response from Mr. Strausburg, and that would just go to all County Councilmembers. Mrs. Acle said this is her first budget, so she is sorry if she is asking all of these questions because she is not sure how it works.

Mr. Dodd asked Mrs. Hurley if they are done, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she thinks they are done. She said they have it set for May 11, and they will include all of the Departments from the list she just went down.

Mrs. Acle said she has some questions on some of the things Council funds, but it is something they can discuss later, to which Mr. Dodd responded, they can discuss that on Monday.

Mr. Cannon said he would like to hope that at some time Council can begin meeting back in Council Chambers. He said the Governor started relaxing some of the restrictions today. He said the Airport Commission, he thinks, held a very successful meeting in Council Chambers, and he thinks they could do that. He said he thinks there is enough room for Council, and they do not all have to sit behind that one table, and he thinks they could orchestrate it where they could spread out a little more by putting a few more tables out in the area where the visitors sit. He said he definitely thinks they should do that. Mr. Dodd said they already talked about this, and it is a good idea, but they were told that PAC 14 may not be able to do it with Zoom, but he thinks it has already been proven that it can be done. Mr. Cannon clarified, they would not be Zooming, they would just be having a Work Session in the Chambers. Mr. Dodd said he is wondering if there would be enough room for all the Councilmembers and the staff, to which Mrs. Acle added, to be six feet distanced. Mr. Cannon said he is just suggesting they should maybe look at trying to orchestrate it, to which Mr. Dodd responded, it is a great idea. He said, if they have to set up additional tables and spread Councilmembers out, he is okay with that. Mr. McCain asked if it has to be open to the public, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, it does. Mr. McCain said they would not be able to do that, unfortunately. Mr. Cannon said there are very few Council Work Sessions they have had on the budget where there have been that many people who come in to sit in on the meetings, to which Mr. McCain responded, he realizes that, but they have to make it available to the public. Mr. Hitchens suggested it could be hybrid, like the Airport Public Hearing was the other night. He said that was in the Chambers, but people were still calling in, to which Mr. Cannon responded, that is a good point, but the Work Session is not really a session that allows for public discussion regardless. He said, when they are doing the Work Session, the benefit to the public is to come and listen. Mr. McCain said, as long as they have audio so the public can hear, to which Mr. Dodd responded, yes because they are not going to be having interaction with the public. He said it is a Work Session where they typically do not have interaction. Mr. Cannon said hopefully it would be streamed by PAC 14 and they can put it on the website so people could watch it, just like they would watch when Council participates via Zoom. Mrs. Hurley said PAC 14 can do it a couple of ways. She explained, they can do it live, or they can just do a recording and then replay it. She then asked if they are talking about broadcasting live, to which Mr. Cannon responded, he would hope so. Mr. Dodd said he does not see why not. He said that way the citizens will see it sooner. He asked if Mrs. Hurley thinks they can do it on Monday, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, that is entirely up to Council. She said the Chambers are available. She said she checked on that before tonight's meeting, and if that is how Council wants to proceed, she can definitely set it up that way. Mr. Dodd said they have to realize that they will still have to wear their masks. He said he was watching some of the Members on the Airport Commission who were constantly adjusting their mask, and sometimes they could not be heard adequately. He said it is up to Council if they want to fight the

mask, but he does not mind doing it. Mrs. Acle said it was very difficult to hear them with the mask. She said she thought it was hard to hear them. Mr. Holloway said he thinks they would need to be conscious that they are wearing masks and that they speak closely into the microphone. He said he thinks they need to meet publicly. He said the interaction between the Councilmembers, he thinks, is important when they start working on this budget. He said the room is a big room, and he thinks they can separate themselves safely, so he would like to see Council do that.


Mrs. Acle said she would like to get some advice from Lori Brewster on the guidelines for this. She clarified, she is really indifferent, but she just wants to make sure Council is staying within the guidelines the State has put forward, to which Mr. Dodd responded, as they just said, there was a meeting held last Thursday night in Chambers. Mr. McCain said he is kind of like Mrs. Acle, he is indifferent. He said he will do whatever, but he does not have strong feelings on it one way or the other. Mr. Hastings said, as long as Council is being safe, he does not want the public to get the idea that they are not being safe. He said, in that sense, he thinks they can find a way to make it work. Mr. Dodd said they will be six feet apart. Mrs. Acle said she likes the idea of having the tables out.

Mr. Dodd suggested doing a roll call vote. He said, if Councilmembers are in favor of meeting in Council Chambers on Monday, say aye; if opposed, say nay. By roll call vote, Mr. Cannon, aye; Mrs. Acle, aye; Mr. Hastings, aye; Mr. Holloway, aye; Mr. McCain, aye; Mr. Dodd, aye.

Mr. Dodd asked, if for some reason a Councilmember could not make it, would they be able to Zoom the meeting? He said they have not heard from Mr. Davis, but the rest of the Councilmembers will be meeting Monday at 9:00 a.m. in Council Chambers.


Mr. Samuel Gibson asked permission to make another comment. He said he just wants to say he appreciates Council having this and trying to figure out a way to do it publicly. He said his main concern as a citizen and a County member is to please just try to make this announced to the public so they can participate. He said he thinks the reason why they do not have a lot of participation is because it was very confusing with the Tuesday Council Meeting and then the Wednesday public information meeting not really getting out to the public via social media or the news sources. He said, if they could make this announcement as widely as possible, that would be greatly appreciated because then that way Council is not just talking amongst themselves. Mrs. Hurley said they did send their Public Hearing Notice to a media group, and it is posted on the website as well, so they did do some outreach. Mr. Dodd said the Council really does not have social media, but they are going to have to work on that. Mr. Gibson said he totally appreciates what Mrs. Hurley does. He said the Council meeting for today was buried deep in the web page for Wicomico County, so if it could be on the front page for Wicomico County Webpage, that would be ideal. Mrs. Hurley said she did make that request. Mr. Dodd said maybe some of the Councilmembers will be sharing it on their social media pages. Mr. Cannon said Mr. Dodd is right, and Mr. Gibson makes a really good point that he thinks they really need to try to figure out how to get that message out to the public in more nontraditional ways. He said maybe Mr. Hastings can help them figure that out. Mr. Dodd said it is an important tool, and everyone is using it.

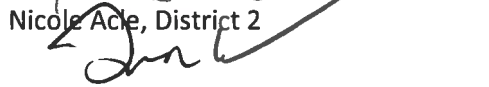
There being no further discussion, on motion by Mr. Cannon, seconded by Mr. Holloway, and unanimously approved, the Budget Hearing was adjourned at approximately 7:00 p.m.

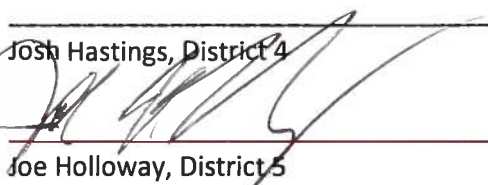
  
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Larry W. Dodd, President

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
John T. Cannon, Vice President

\_\_\_\_\_  
absent  
Ernest F. Davis, District 1

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole Ache, District 2

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Josh Hastings, District 4

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joe Holloway, District 5

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William R. McCain, At-Large

  
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Laura Hurley, Council Administrator