

Open Work Session

To Discuss a Supplemental Appropriation from Contingency to the Department of General Services for Funding to Connect new Delmarva Power Equipment to the Government Office Building

July 21, 2020

Mr. John Psota, Director of Administration, and Mr. Pate Matthews, General Services Supervisor, came before Council. Mr. Psota said this appears to be a pretty straight up request for \$340,000 to be transferred from contingency to the Government Office Building line item regarding an ongoing project that Mr. Matthews can speak with specificity towards. He said it is a problem that has existed for some time, and, for the safety and welfare of all employees and visitors, etc. they need to finally address it.

Mr. Matthews said really what this comes down to is, in 1975 when this building was built, Delmarva Power (DPL) put their main transformers in a segregated room in the basement that only they have access to. He said several years ago there was an existing exhaust fan in that room that maintained a reasonable temperature. He clarified, not air conditioning, but just kept outside air coming in to keep the equipment somewhat cool. He said that fan failed, from what he is being told, five years ago. He said a new fan was installed, but the old fan is in the room with the equipment. He said a contractor installed a new fan on the exterior of the building so they would not have to get in the room because they do not have access. He said it was installed, and now five years later it has still never been connected because nobody was able to get DPL here to get them in the room. He said, finally he had a connection at DPL, and got DPL here, but the first thing the service man said was they were not going in that room. He said 1,600 amps of electricity flow through that room, and everything is open, there is no protection, and there are no safety measures, it is just three big transformers. He said, when DPL goes in there, they suit up and go in there as if everything is hot, which it is, and they cannot even get to the control wiring for this fan in a safe manner. He said they would have to shut the power off at the street to be able to hook the fan up. He said DPL had their engineers come out, and, basically, what it comes down to is that this is yesterday's technology, so they want to upgrade the transformers out by the rear exit where they will locate them. He added, they will also be able to incorporate a main switch coming into the building so if they had a catastrophic event and the fire company or somebody else needed to shut the power down, they would be able to do it. He explained, right now, if they had an issue, they would have to wait for Delmarva Power to get here to shut the power off. He said really this is a life safety concern. He said it is a rare occasion that one of those transformers malfunctions, but, when it does, it is not a pretty sight. He said it is a safety issue, and equipment upgrade as well.

Mr. Dodd said his experience is that, when these fail, it is usually during a big storm. He then asked if the local fire departments know about the safety hazard and the location, and what to do, and have they done training on this, to which Mr. Matthews responded, he doubts it. Mr. Dodd asked if there is any way they can get them involved because he would hate to see someone get hurt. Mr. Matthews said he does not understand Mr. Dodd's question. Mr. Dodd clarified, if the fire departments locally are not aware of the hazard in this building, it would be nice to make them aware of it, to which Mr. Matthews responded, agreed, and they are trying to eliminate the hazard. He clarified, that is what this is all about, getting those transformers out of the basement to the exterior of the building, and providing a switch at a secondary site. Mr. Dodd said he gets that, but, in the meantime, if there is an emergency, it sounds like they are not aware of this. Mr. Matthews said he would venture to say they are not, and he cannot

say for sure that they do not know, but he would say they probably do not. Mr. Dodd said it would be nice if Mr. Matthews could get them involved, to which Mr. Matthews responded, he can do that.

Mr. Holloway said this is an afterthought because they are going to change it now, but he would have thought that putting them in the basement would have been the worst place in the world to put them because of flooding since they know the area they are in, and there used to be a pond close by, but he is glad to see this is getting changed. He said it looks like it could have been a real bad safety issue, to which Mr. Matthews responded, there are floor drains in that area, but they had a downpour two weeks ago, and they had water coming up from the floor drains at the courthouse, so it is one of those situations where it could be just a matter of time.

Mr. Holloway asked if this transfer is going to take care of all of the costs, to which Mr. Matthews responded, he added a 10 percent contingency to the total amount they got from the contractor, and there is no cost to the County from Delmarva Power.

Mr. Taylor asked if this supplemental appropriation involves this year's budget or last year's budget, because it is not indicated in the memo, to which Mr. Psota responded, that would be this year's budget. Mr. Taylor said that is good, and he will not get into the reason why, but that is good. Mr. Psota said it is a shared cost, and Salisbury has appropriated \$55,000 for that shared cost.

Mr. Taylor said he has a comment that has mostly to do with the Resolution. He said he understands what they are doing, but he thinks, in terms of their budget amendments, they should be written in terms of the budget language, and not just the Munis language for a couple of reasons. He said first, so they know where it is in the budget that they are changing. He said it is not hard to do, and this is a pretty simple case, but in things such as the Resolution that was knocked off the Agenda today, it can make a real difference. He said it was almost impossible to interpret that. He said what he will do, and it will only take about five or ten minutes, is just give them the format of how he thinks it should be in a Resolution, and it is simple to do. He said he will send it over through Mrs. Hurley. He said he would like to get the amount that is in the contingency. He clarified, in other words, the total sum from which the amount of \$54,340 is being taken so they know what is remaining in that contingency account after that transfer. He said Mrs. Hurley can get that and give it to him, and he will just stick it in.

Mr. Dodd said Charter Section 709 requires certification from a Finance Director, and, as they know, they do not officially have a Finance Director. He then asked Mr. Psota how they will work around this, to which Mr. Psota responded, that particular question he thinks would be inappropriate for him to respond to. He clarified, he is still trying to learn which way is up on the budget. Mr. Dodd said this is just a Work Session, so he guesses they will find a way to work around it.

Mrs. Hurley asked if the equipment that is actually going to be located outside of the Government Office Building is new, to which Mr. Matthews responded, yes. Mrs. Hurley further asked, if they were to have a hurricane or some event, how is that equipment protected, to which Mr. Matthews responded, it is in a weather-tight case. He said, just like they can see on the sides of roads, it is in a weather-tight cabinet. He explained, everything is made for outdoors.

Mr. Holloway asked where this will be located, to which Mr. Matthews responded, when coming in the back door, if they look to the left there is a stairwell that goes down to the basement. He said it will be right in that area in front of the stairwell where there are three scraggly bushes right now. He said that is where it will be, and it will be easy, and that is where the power comes in. He suggested, when Council leaves today, if they look on the sidewalk they will see a series of three red dots coming from the street. He said, by putting it there, they can dig up enough of their primary feed to come back into the new transformer without burying new cable. Mr. Holloway said he knows there were some tanks buried there, to which Mr. Matthews responded, they have plans to remove that tank, but he has held off on that pending this project because they are going to be tearing sidewalk up, and there is no need to throw good money after bad.

Mr. McCain said, kind of related to this in a way, MACo is doing a Summer Series right now every week, and a few weeks ago the series was on climate change. He said they had speakers from several of the Counties here in Maryland, and several of the Counties have Climate Resiliency Plans. He explained, these plans have to do with all of their capital projects, and this would be a perfect example. He said, as Mr. Holloway said, they stuck this in the basement in 1975, but they never would have done that today. He said, having these Climate Resiliency Plans, any capital project is looked at for making sure they are placed in locations that take into account water levels and sea level rise, and avoiding putting things in basements and so forth because these are things that are going to last for 40, 50, or 60 years. He said what was really unique about that was a couple of the County Executives were on the call, and a couple of planning folks, but they said when they went to New York for their bond money, the bond folks wanted to talk about one thing, their Climate Resiliency Plan. He said they did not ask them about their staff or education budget, they wanted to know about the plan, and that is all they wanted to hear about, and each one of them said they got lower rates on their bonds because of these plans. He said this is probably something for Wicomico to put on their target in the future to be working towards something like that because MACo is promoting it, and numerous Counties already have them, so it is not something they would have to invent, it is something they can mimic. Mr. Matthews said he thinks, in an indirect way, they probably are headed that way now with most projects. He clarified, when they have an engineer and/or architect involved, all the lead aspects get worked into the project. He said some of them are good, and some of them are not so good, but it is what it is in today's world as far as energy conservation and wise use. He said he can take a look at what Mr. McCain is talking about, and see what he can come up with. Mr. McCain said Anne Arundel's Planning Director was one of the speakers, and he gave an example where they are getting ready to build a library in the southern part of the County, but because of their Resiliency Plan, they ended up changing the location, even though this location had been on the books for several years to build this new library. He said, when they looked at the sea level rise predictions for the next 30 years, with where it was going to be built, they basically would have put it below sea level in 30 years, but they would not have known that if it was not for their plan forcing them to look forward like that. He said they ended up changing their location.


Mr. Matthews said the engineer from Delmarva Power remarked on how many setups like this were actually in Ocean City, to which Mr. Holloway responded, that does not make a lot of sense. Mr. Matthews said, in 1975, that was what they did. Mr. Dodd said that was a long time ago. He said it was probably a good idea then. Mr. Holloway said, if he walks into some of those rooms, he might start

tingling, to which Mr. Matthews responded, he walked in the doorway to take pictures, and they would not let him go any further. He said it is that significant in there.

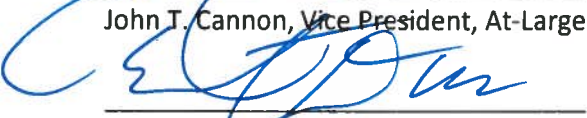
Mr. Dodd asked, when the equipment is removed, are there any plans for that space, to which Mr. Matthews responded, it is really not very big. He said it is very mundane, and is just a concrete room. There was no further discussion.



Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3



John T. Cannon, Vice President, At-Large



Ernest F. Davis, District 1

Nicole Acle, District 2



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



William R. McCain, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator