

**Open Work Session**  
**County Council Goals for Fiscal Year 2022**  
**July 20, 2021**

Mr. McCain said he knows they have several balls up in the air as they always do, but they mentioned sometime ago that maybe this would be a way to talk about their goals a little bit first to see if they are all somewhat on the same page, and to try to wrap themselves around some of these goals with some metrics to see how they are progressing, and also set some timeframes to try to target to keep them moving towards these goals. He said he thinks maybe they can see what each person's goals are and see how much commonality they have with their goals. He added, this is also an attempt to make sure they are following their strategic plan, and when Mrs. Acle was trying to put her goals together, he knows she mentioned that she was paying attention to the strategic plan.

Mr. Dodd said it would be nice if someone could take one project and follow up to see if there is any work to be done with the State or Federal Government, such as water and sewer because that is going to be a top one.

Mr. McCain said he thinks one of their challenges is going to be that they are the Legislative Body, so he thinks there are a lot of goals they have as a County, but their ability to advance them is a question of how they can advance them Legislatively. He clarified, he thinks it is fine to mention goals that may not be something they may be able to advance Legislatively but would still be coming before the Council. He said Mr. Dodd mentioned public sewer, which he has as goal one and he is probably not the only person. He said he thinks all seven of them probably feel that public sewer is a high priority, but a lot of that is primarily going to be an administrative function advancing that forward. He said, under public sewer he listed that there are several pieces to that pie, such as the cost, how is it going to be managed, how is it going to be implemented, and what it is going to look like. He said they are expecting to get the study and hopefully they will have that in September, which he thinks has to be a goal communicated to the folks doing that because they are already behind the eight ball on this from a timing standpoint. He said, once they have that study in their hands in September, hopefully it is realistic to think that maybe by year-end they can have some kind of plan in place working with the Executive's Office. Mr. Dodd said that is why he would like to see the study sooner, so the Council can digest it before then.

Mr. Hastings said his biggest thing is the issue with the DAF tank and water and sewer expansion. He said his third item is anything as far as ag zoning or any zoning when it comes to solar or anything like that, but above all else, water and sewer expansion. He said he thinks the real question is how they break up those next steps. He said he imagines the report will say that some of the work needs to be done as expansion from current municipalities, in which case they have to have coordination and overlay with those Counties as soon as possible. He said the other part would be expanding where they can with package plants. He said intermediary steps could be anything with regard to getting information as to what it might look like to create a new water and sewer authority. He said he does not know if MACo has any resources that could be helpful, but, from what he understands, they are the only County that does not have one, so the more they can understand what that process looks like, what the timeline looks like, and whether there are any funding sources that go along with that. He said he knows there is a State water revolving loan fund. He said they should find out what immediate sources are available to get revenue in the door as soon as possible to have them prepared so they can start the process sooner. He said, just so it is said, the County as a whole over the last 25 years or more has done

these things before, but they have not advanced them, and he thinks the real reason why is that they have not had those next steps put together in addition to the public understanding that this has to happen. He said he thinks that is the one difference that they have now is that they have a full understanding that they are not building subdivisions or large developments on any kind of agricultural land, so there has to be water or sewer. He said the more they can get that information as far as the next step of finding out what that authority looks like and funding sources, to him, would be helpful.

Mr. Dodd said that was why he mentioned a Councilmember taking the lead on each of the goals because, if they do not, they are just going to keep talking about it, so they will have to have someone reach out. He then asked Mr. Hastings to repeat his goals again, to which Mr. Hastings responded, his main goal is the DAF tank and then water and sewer expansion.

Mrs. Acle said she tried to focus on things that could be their goals as a Council that did not necessarily include the Executive Branch so they will not have to rely on another Branch to help them with it. She said Mr. McCain helped her quite a bit too. She said her goals include increasing civic engagement to provide them with access to digital information, increase opportunity for public input, and increase diversity on their County Boards and Commissions. She said the measures she has are to increase WiFi, which is under broadband, establishing a social media presence, establishing listening sessions and townhalls either virtually or in person, and making a numbers goal to have four townhalls or listening sessions a year, or one a quarter. She said then she has increasing WiFi connectivity and broadband in underserved communities.

Mr. Cannon said, to reiterate what Mr. McCain said, even though they are the Legislative Branch, a lot of what they can do is hold Work Sessions, as their responsibility is to make sure initiatives go through that are important to the County as a whole.

Mr. Cannon said a wastewater treatment authority is a high priority, and so is broadband. He said he thinks they need to focus on the Health Department as to how to address the oversight on environmental health, as that is a high priority, and they have seen this for years now, and he thinks there is some hope to get that done. He said they have to create some type of recruitment incentive for their volunteer fire departments because they are looking to the Council for some type of leadership, and he knows they are going to have the Fire Service Agreement coming up that they are going to have to be focused on. He said their enterprise accounts sort of just fell through the floor during COVID, and he thinks it is beholden upon them to work with the Executive to try to bring these enterprise accounts back up so they are self-sustaining because they have been funding them until the COVID money came in where the Council was helping to subsidize all of the enterprise accounts. He said of course there is also economic development as a whole and whether or not they try to figure out a way that they can do better branding of the County. He said there is education where he thinks the two highest priorities are Kirwan and pre-K, but aside from that they really need to focus more on the CTE programs and trying to work with the Board of Education to see how they can create incentives for expanding the CTE programs, which they saw an example of today with the Electrical Board. He said he really thinks they need to try to push the initiative of public-private partnerships. He said he would like to see the Council choose a serious goal to eliminate the dispensary. He said a few months ago this Council did not seem to have that interest, but he thinks they should always be concerned about allowing government to compete with private enterprise, and he thinks they need to reevaluate themselves as far as what they are doing and who they represent because the dispensary truly is competing with free enterprises.

Mr. Cannon said he also wrote down whether or not they reorganize the Law Department and put it back as a Department, or do they leave it on a contractual basis. He said the Council has oversight on the County Attorney as does the Executive, so that really is a priority.

Mr. Cannon said he also has solar panels and stormwater management on his list, which was an issue when it was flooding. He said it is not flooding now, but they might have to make sure that Public Works is getting back to that. He said Mr. Dallas Baker did an excellent job in putting some type of a program together, but he is gone and he thinks they need to pick that back up again.

Mr. Dodd said Worcester County is rebranding. He then asked if that is what Mr. Cannon is thinking, to which Mr. Cannon responded, it is always good to be conscious of branding. He said the City of Salisbury has rebranded and he thinks they have done an excellent job in how they have been branding, but he has no idea of the mechanics behind it or what companies they may have hired to help them with that, but he thinks it would not hurt. He said Dorchester County did it with a water theme, but whether that actually brings in more economic development he could not say, but that is really what he was referencing. He said it would be a way to make it more appealing for people to come here, and especially for businesses to want to come here, so either rebranding through SWED to try to figure out what they should do or talking to commercial realtors to ask what Wicomico County is missing that is not appealing to these major corporations that might be able to come here.

Mr. McCain said rebranding is a big deal, as every municipality needs to know what its identity is, and having something they are known for is a big factor in everything from having people move here to businesses coming. He said that is kind of labeled in the branding, but that is a very typical scenario for any municipality. He said, in Wicomico County, their recreational opportunities are unparalleled. He said Henry Parker Sports Complex is unmatched up and down the East Coast with the number of fields they have there. He said the unique thing about that complex that people say all the time is that it is wooded, as most sports complexes are not wooded. He said the fields have to be in the open, but they actually crafted a sports complex in a wooded environment, and what is so big about that is that people can sit in the shade and the parents and fans do not have to sit in the burrowing sun for a 10-hour all-day tournament. He said they also have their other parks and their natural resources, Seagull Century, and a number of running and cycling events here. He said it is a big part of their community, but he does not feel they really identify what sets them apart enough from other Counties that cannot do what they do. He clarified, he is just using that as an example.

Mr. Dodd said they have room to expand with their sports venues too.

Mr. McCain said, as he mentioned earlier, his first goal is public sewer, and solar has been mentioned, which he has as his second goal, which they have had some Work Sessions on, so maybe they can target that to get it completed. He said, at a previous meeting they talked about DAF being implemented into their zoning code, and that was also mentioned previously, as well as broadband. He said he thinks with broadband and connectivity, from a cost standpoint with the funds that are out there right now, they have a lot of moving parts to that, but he thinks with rural broadband there are some of the other opportunities that hopefully minimize the cost to the County.

Mr. McCain said actually he has a fifth goal that probably is not on most people's lists, and he kind of put it on as a late thought, but ironically it parallels a lot of what they have heard today, which is recognition

of the County's revenue limitations in an inflationary environment. He explained, they are in a current environment where they are seeing significant increases in lots of things. He said they just heard today that the Cove Road project has doubled, they see what is happening with lumber prices, and healthcare costs can go up 30 percent in a year. He said they have Kirwan coming, and they recently just approved the Collective Bargaining Agreement with their Public Safety Officials and are getting ready to build a new facility, so these are significant expenses they are getting ready to incur as a County. He said, at the same time, they have significant revenue limitations, so they need to look at how they address that, particularly in an inflationary environment. He said that is a major challenge they need to anticipate, not just next year when budget time comes around and they act like they are surprised by it.

Mr. Dodd said Kirwan is definitely going to be an unknown coming up.

Mr. Holloway asked if Mr. McCain is saying the County is going to have some financial issues in the future, to which Mr. McCain responded, yes.

Mr. Davis said of course everyone is on public sewer. He said he thinks they are trying to spend millions of dollars at the Airport with improvements, and he thinks as a County they need to promote it because they do not do a good job promoting what they have. He said he thinks they have the second largest Airport with improvements coming. He said they have major highways that go north and south and east and west, but they do not do a good job of promoting not only their County, but their employees. He said he thinks over the past four years they have lost about 30 essential employees, and if they look at Worcester or Somerset they will find them. He said they are not taking care of their own, and he thinks if they are going to function as a County government, they have to have all positions filled. He said they all know that some of the top positions in the County have not been filled for a long time, so how can they operate a government when all of their positions are not filled and they are losing essential people to other Counties for whatever reasons. He said, if they do not pay them, they are not going to stay. Mr. Dodd said he mentioned to Mr. Psota that if pay is an issue he can come back and talk to the Council.

Mr. Davis continued, as a Council, they encourage some of the Department Heads to come in, but he thinks they were told not to come and promote their people. He said they have the largest County jail on the Shore that is the lowest paid. He said they have talked about flooding issues, but he thinks the County Roads Department is short about 20-some people. He said, again, they do not have a Director at Public Works, and that has been going on for a long time. He said he thinks if they start taking care of their own, then they can show what the County itself is doing and then they can attract other things.

Mr. Davis said one of the other things he thinks they really have to look at is EMS. He said these volunteer fire companies are not going to be able to afford the costs to operate these services, and the County is going to have to step in and help them with funding or come up with a County plan. He said they are going to have to step in real soon because it was mentioned that they cannot get volunteer fireman to volunteer anymore. He said a lot of it is funding, the cost of equipment, and just the cost of running the ambulance services, and he thinks they are going to have step in and take a big part in that.

Mr. Davis said his last item is Wor-Wic. He said they just talked with the Electrical Board about that, but he thinks Wor-Wic is one of the lowest funded community colleges in the State. Mr. McCain clarified, it is the lowest. Mr. Davis continued, he thinks they need to step the funding up for Wor-Wic, especially if they are going to improve the Airport with jobs coming in. He said one thing they did not mention was the wind project, but he saw the other day that they are pushing that, and if that is going to come to fruition, they are going to need Wor-Wic to support them with the jobs.

Mr. Dodd said Mr. Davis mentioned promoting the County, but that kind of ties into branding. Mr. Davis said they tried it at one time with the previous Executive where they gave him \$185,000, and he had billboards put up in the County. Mr. Cannon clarified, he thinks it was \$300,000.

Mr. Holloway said he can ditto most everything everybody said. He said he always attends the fire department meetings and knows they are having their issues with volunteerism and retention, so he thinks that is something that should be on the list. He said he is not going to put anything on a high priority list but one thing, and he will get to that in a minute. He said WiFi is something that the private sector is basically going to try to take care of because there is a need there, so they are going to work through it, and what the County has to do is support and encourage them.

Mr. Holloway said of course water and sewer is something high on the list that they really need to stay on top of. He said he saw something in an email about water and sewer where a question was asked and the Executive said it was an Executive initiative, and he did not understand that response because it has been the Council's initiative for a long, long time, and they have been trying to work with the Executive on that. Mr. Dodd said the question he has is what the definition of Executive initiative is. Mr. Holloway said he thinks it should be a collaborative effort. Mr. Dodd then asked Mrs. Hurley if she ever got a definition for that, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, she did not ask.

Mr. Holloway said the main thing they talk about is their infrastructure, and he knows this is something that has to come along from the Executive's Department. He said he is going to be presenting to the Executive in the next couple of weeks a list of roads that really need fixing. He said he thinks some of them were on Shavox Road last night and there is a big sunken place right there just before getting to the driveway, and if they do not slow down to about 30 miles an hour it will knock the tires off their car. He said he has complaints within his District and out of his District. He said he was in a neighborhood completely out of his District the other night and he could not believe it was a County road. He said apparently their Roads budget got cut by \$10 million dollars. He said paving, slurry seal, and tarring have doubled or tripled in price, and they do not have the employees at County Roads to get things ready to fix like they should, and of course they go back to money, and Mr. McCain just said a few minutes ago that they may not have the funding. He said they will be doing the budget, and then all of this money has to be spread out. He said their fire departments and ambulances travel down these roads, and their commercial vehicles travel down them, and people complain about that a little bit, but if it did not come on a truck they would not get it, so the people who complain about trucks better look in their cupboard and their refrigerator and see where their food is coming from. He said this is going to be one of the things that he is really going to make an issue of that they need to do within the next year.

Mr. Holloway said, as far as education, they all know that they do their own thing out there. He said they give them the money and they pretty much do what they want to do with it, but the Council is who catches grief when they do not do something right, so he thinks a better working relationship with the Board of Education should be something on the list.

Mr. Holloway said, as he said, everybody has good idea and he dittos everything everybody else said.

Mr. Dodd said he agrees with Mr. Holloway that by the time it gets to them, these things have already been mentioned, but they can expand on them. He said water and sewer was mentioned, and broadband was a top one, and he has schools on his list. He said they mentioned CTE, which is very

important, and he would like to see them advance school sports in the middle schools, which he has been pushing for ten years. He said he thinks it is a great starting ground and it keeps the kids busy, and a lot of schools around the nation start their sports in middle school. He said public safety is also on his list, whether it is fire, EMS or the Sheriff's Department, but whatever they can do to assist them.

Mr. Dodd said, back to the schools, he really thinks that somebody on the Council should be a liaison to the School Board and to the Teacher's Association, to which Mr. Holloway responded, as Vice President, he will take that stand and put Mr. Dodd in charge of that. Mr. Dodd said he was on the Board for five years and he enjoys working with those people.

Mr. Dodd said rebranding was mentioned already, and they kind of touched on the Department of Corrections, but they really need to discuss that in more detail because there was a point in time where a lot of the employees were contacting the Council for different issues and about pay. He said they have not heard from them much lately, but he would like to get back on top of that.

Mr. Dodd said, as far as Roads, he got an email yesterday about the Roads being dirty in certain areas. He said he and Mr. Holloway always talk about that when they meet with the Acting County Executive, so that is really an issue. He said they talked about the beaches today, but Parks and Recreation expanding on sports is something that he would really like to see them do. He said, as Mr. McCain mentioned, they have a lot there, but they do not market themselves on that, and he really thinks they can expand. He said his boy played on a travel soccer team and they went to Hershey Park for a tournament and there were 800 teams, which is significant for a small area. He said he really thinks they can do that because they have fields around here, but they would have to work things out with the schools, and he is sure they would allow the County to use some of the fields. He said the first field they went to was at a middle school that had eight soccer fields, and their schools only have one field.

Mr. Dodd said, with that said, he would like each Councilmember to pick at least one of their goals and stick with that and report back at a future meeting. He then asked if everybody agrees with that, to which Mr. McCain responded, he is happy to do public sewer and solar, but he thinks public sewer might need a couple of them because that is a big nut. Mr. Dodd said he agrees and he was thinking they would probably need co-leaders on some of these because they are going to be so broad and expansive.

Mr. Dodd asked what Mr. Davis would like to lead and report back on, to which Mr. Davis responded, he will talk to the firemen to see what they can come up with to help them out.

Mr. Holloway said he is not going to choose just one topic, and his list is pretty short anyway. Mrs. Acle said she thinks education is a good one for Mr. Holloway. Mr. Dodd said Mr. Holloway is more than welcome to stay on top of everything, but he would like everybody to pick at least one thing to come back and report on. Mr. Holloway responded, he will give his report to the Executive's Office on the road conditions, but he also has his list. Mr. Dodd said he really enjoyed the trip Mr. Holloway set up before, so maybe he would be interested in doing that again because he would love to do that again.

Mrs. Acle said, if everyone is on board with increasing civic engagement, she will work on that, but no one else really mentioned it. Mr. Dodd said that is fine.

Mr. Hastings said he will work on the authority for water and sewer and do some extra research there, as well as funding sources. He said he knows Mr. McCain is leading on that, but he was thinking of specific actions he could do to be helpful, such as the actual resources that are available and the

authority. Mr. McCain said he and Mr. Hastings can just communicate on that. Mr. Hastings said he will also back Mrs. Acle up on civic engagement. Mr. Dodd said he thinks that is a great idea, and not everyone has to participate, but he likes the idea of doing more townhalls.

Mr. Cannon said he would be glad to help with Environmental Health Department oversight. Mr. Dodd asked if that would include sewer projects, to which Mr. Cannon responded, it would primarily focus on environmental health issues.

Mr. Dodd said he was nominated for schools with CTE and sports, so he will do that one and report back. He said he will also help out with the water and sewer since he attended several seminars on that and got some contact information, so they can all do that jointly, but whatever anyone can bring back to the table will be perfect. He said, if anyone has any ideas for doing a Work Session, they can set that up.

Mrs. Acle said no one picked broadband, so she can take that as well.

Mr. Hastings asked when they normally work with the State Delegation, to which Mr. Dodd responded, once a year. Mrs. Hurley said normally it is in December. Mr. Hastings said he was wondering if they could move that up. He said some of these issues, such as roads, involve the State, and he thinks the sooner he can make them more aware, the better they could be advocates, or they as a Body could advocate more. Mr. McCain said they can do that as part of a Council Meeting instead of the breakfast that they usually do on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Mr. Dodd said they can ask them to come sooner because that is a great idea.

There was no further discussion.

  
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Larry W. Dodd, President, District 3

  
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Joe Holloway, Vice President, District 5

  
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John T. Cannon, At-Large

  
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William R. McCain, At-Large

  
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Ernest F. Davis, District 1

  
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Nicole Acle, District 2

  
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Josh Hastings, District 4

  
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Laura Hurley, Council Administrator