

Open Work Session

March 15, 2022

Discussion of Harrington and Langrall Properties

Mr. Palmer Gillis, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Gillis Gilkerson, and Mr. Paul Wilber, County Attorney, came before Council. Mr. Wilber said Mr. Gillis has been working with the State for a couple of years on this project. Mr. Wilber said, in looking at the plat in the briefing material, there is about two-tenths of an acre of trees and brush at the corner of Route 50 and Hobbs Road. Mr. Cannon clarified, this is near the Shorebirds Stadium, to which Mr. Wilber then showed on the plat where the stadium is located. He said the idea is to develop a Wawa at the turn going into the Shorebirds Stadium on Hobbs Road, and the idea is that this parcel would increase visibility for both the Wawa and for the stadium. He said Mr. Gillis has stated he will pay all costs to see that the trees come down on the property and that there is a deed from the State to Wicomico County, and Mr. Gillis will get all permits and approvals to do the work. He said Mr. Gillis would be responsible for any damages and, he assumes, Mr. Gillis will also put grass or shrubs or whatever is appropriate on the parcel. He said, since it would be County property, the County would have the long-term grass cutting duties. He said there was a letter that came from the State offering the land to the County, but apparently it hit Jack Lenox's email, but he guesses it bounced back, so they just became aware of the letter quite recently. He said, if the Council is so inclined, they would prepare a Resolution that would be a conditional acceptance of the State's offer and communicate to the State that the County is interested.

Mr. McCain asked Mr. Wilber if he had any conversations with the State about meeting the March 24th deadline date as the County cannot get everything done by March 24th, to which Mr. Wilber responded, he has not spoken to the State as he thought it would be a good idea to brief the Council to get the Council's temperature on the project.

Mr. Holloway asked if Mr. Gillis would pay the costs for the price of the land too, to which Mr. Wilber responded, yes, Mr. Gillis would cover the cost of everything. Mr. Gillis added, he would cover all the engineering, civil engineering, deed preparation, title transfer, donating money to the County, and all expenses associated with any type of landscaping or clearing of the property. He said, keeping in mind the scope of things, he is not sure what the acreage of the stadium is, but he guesses it is 40 or 50 acres, and the parcel of discussion is two-tenths of an acre, and as a person who drives from Ocean City every day, this will greatly enhance the visibility. He said, in his conversations with the representative from the Shorebirds, they may consider putting a sign there because the visibility will be enhanced quite a bit.

Mr. Holloway said this project has been at the Planning and Zoning Commission, which he serves on, and they have discussed it. He clarified, not a final plat approval, but they have been working on it. He then asked if Mr. Gillis wants to retain the ownership of the two-tenths property, to which Mr. Gillis responded, he is not sure what purpose that would be for. Mr. Holloway said other than having to cut the grass on it. Mr. Gillis clarified, he cannot own it as the State will not transfer it to a private individual. Mr. Wilber said the letter from the State said it would be transferred at \$8,650.

Mr. Dodd said he is a big fan of Wawa as he loves their coffee and it would be very beneficial to that area. He said they are a big sponsor for the Delmarva Shorebirds, so he supports it.

Ms. Acle asked if there was any public hearing for the Planning and Zoning Commission to hear from the citizens, to which Mr. Holloway responded, they have not had a public hearing on this project yet.

Mr. Gillis clarified, what Mr. Holloway is referring to is the planning and zoning for the Wawa, not for this parcel of land, so this is just a donation of land to the County. Mr. Holloway clarified that the Planning and Zoning Commission has been working on the Wawa property, not this parcel. He said this parcel has not been in front of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Gillis said he is not sure there is a process for this parcel to go before the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Wilber confirmed that this would not go to Planning and Zoning as this is a land acquisition by the County that Mr. Gillis would be paying all the expenses for.

Mr. Dodd said he is a big supporter of Wawa, and they should put a sign up on the property, to which Mr. Gillis responded, the sign would be a marquee type sign advertising some events coming up only at the Shorebirds. Mr. Dodd said someone mentioned earlier that it was a sign for Wawa, to which Mr. Gillis responded, the developer of the property purchased three years' worth of advertising on the billboard at \$30,000 per year because he thought he was doing the right thing to facilitate this project, which is how long this has been going on.

Mr. Cannon asked Mr. Wilber what he needs from Council, to which Mr. Wilber responded, a consensus to move forward and then he will prepare a Resolution that will perhaps come to the next meeting.

Mr. Cannon asked if everybody is okay with that, to which there was a consensus to move forward.

Mrs. Hurley said the email she received from the State indicates that they would like to hear a response within three business days. She then asked Mr. Wilber if he would be reaching out to the State, to which Mr. Wilber responded, yes. He said his thought was, if they have a consensus, then they would reach out immediately. Mrs. Hurley said she was concerned about the Resolution because that would be two weeks away.

Mr. Cannon asked if the letter would come from the County Council or would it come from Mr. Wilber, as he thinks the letter could reiterate that the Council has demonstrated its support for this project, to which Mr. Wilber responded, he needs a consensus to move forward with a Resolution.

Mr. Dodd asked if a resolution needs to go to the State with the letter, to which Mr. Wilber responded, all he can do is send them a draft copy of the Resolution because he cannot send the final Resolution until Council acts. Mr. Dodd said they are running out time.

Mr. Gillis said he spoke to Mr. Grayson Middleton from the Governor's Office, and he has really been chasing this process easily for two years, so Mr. Middleton and the representative of the Governor's Office and State Highway Administration understood that the letter was not received by the County, so they are willing to extend more time. He clarified, the March 24th date can be extended.

Mr. McCain said the County can communicate with them to let them know that a Resolution is coming.

Mr. Cannon said there is a consensus to move forward.

There was no further discussion.



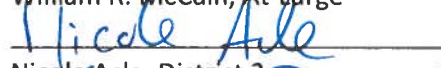
John T. Cannon, President, At-Large



Ernest F. Davis, Vice President, District 1



William R. McCain, At-Large



Nicole Acle, District 2



Larry W. Dodd, District 3



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator