

Open Work Session
Funding Request for Arthur W. Perdue Stadium Projects
October 18, 2022

Mr. Steve Miller, Director of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, came before Council and thanked them for the chance to be here on short notice. He said he is here to request a signature from the Council President on an engagement letter that would engage the Maryland Stadium Authority on future capital improvement projects at Perdue Stadium.

Mr. Miller said, as Council may know, over the last couple of years, Major League baseball has changed the way they are structured in terms of their relationship with the Minor League affiliates, which resulted in many communities losing their Minor League franchises in the last couple of years. He said Wicomico was fortunate not to be one of those, but one of the things Major League Baseball also did was impose certain facility requirements on both teams and jurisdictions that have Minor League affiliates to meet new Major League Baseball standards in order to keep their affiliation.

Mr. Miller said, to the State's credit, knowing this was in the works, the State of Maryland has been very proactive in trying to help teams located in Maryland address these issues. He said this past Legislative Session they passed House Bill 897, which is the Sports-Entertainment Facilities Bill, which established about a \$200 million dollar pot of money for sports and entertainment type facility improvements. He said the Stadium Authority last week released a policy document that outlined the procedure as to how to apply for technical and financial assistance through that Bill, and he will tell Council that the County is in a very good position. He explained, there are many types of sports facilities, but the Stadium Authority defined the first level priority as Minor League Baseball stadiums that have a Major League affiliation, and the Shorebirds, for example, are affiliated with the Orioles. He said he is told, and it is outlined in their policies, that the Stadium Authority is going to look at priority level one projects first before they consider priority levels two or three projects. He said Wicomico is one of three that qualify in that first level priority, so they are in a very good position to seek help of the Stadium Authority and the State to help fund improvements and ultimately keep the team here and affiliated with the Orioles.

Mr. Miller said the first step in that process, and the reason he is here today, is the Stadium Authority has asked that the County send an official letter of engagement that is signed by both the Executive and the Legislative Branch to engage the Stadium Authority. He said, from that point, they would set up site visits with them and they would go through the stadium evaluation, what needs to be done, what can be included, and what it would cost, and then they would go through that process of applying for funds and ultimately making those improvements. He clarified, they do not know what the number will be as that is part of a process, but the funding that has been established does not require a match, so they are, again, in a very good position to get State help, and this is the beginning of that process.

Mr. Dodd said he wants to point out that the County is very fortunate that they have the Delmarva Shorebirds in Wicomico County, so he can support anything to keep them here. Mr. Cannon responded, Mr. Miller and Mr. Chris Bitters do an excellent job in making sure that it stays here, so the Council appreciates that, and this is an example of Mr. Miller staying on top of it, so the Council certainly would want to help him in getting this letter out.

Mr. Miller said he gives credit to Delegate Anderton and the entire General Assembly and the State for creating this mechanism where they can help address this because this would have put jurisdictions in a

very tough spot across the country. He said many states are not doing what Maryland is doing, and he thinks Maryland is ahead of the game and they are very fortunate there is this fund they can tap into.

Mr. Dodd said they could have easily lost their franchise when they did the reorganization two years ago.

Mr. Cannon asked for a consensus to send the letter, to which there was a consensus. There was no further discussion.



John T. Cannon, President, At-Large

Ernest F. Davis, Vice President, District 1

William R. McCain, At-Large

absent

Nicole Acle, District 2



Larry W. Dodd, District 3

Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator