

The Wicomico County Council met in Legislative Session on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in Council Chambers, Government Office Building, Salisbury, Maryland.

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

Present: Laura Hurley, Council Administrator; Robert Taylor, Council Attorney; and Lynn Sande, Executive Office Associate.

Mr. Dodd asked Mrs. Hurley to read a press release sent out from the Council Office Monday morning:

*Due to the concerns about the coronavirus, the County Council is encouraging citizens to watch the Council Meetings remotely. The meetings can be viewed live on PAC14, or replays of the meeting can be viewed on YouTube, and on the County's website. The Council will accept public comments by email so you do not have to attend the meeting and speak at the podium. You can email your comments to Laura Hurley at [lhurley@wicomicocounty.org](mailto:lhurley@wicomicocounty.org), or mail them to the Council Office at PO Box 870, Salisbury, Maryland 21803. All public comments received one hour prior to the meeting will be read into the record at the meeting. Public comments must include your name and County of residence. The Council will still be meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month, and the public may still attend in person, but we are encouraging people to stay home and watch the meeting from their TV. If the situation changes, we will keep the public informed.*

On motion by Mr. Hastings and seconded by Mr. Davis, the Consent Agenda consisting of the following items was unanimously approved:

- Legislative Minutes from March 3, 2020
- Open Work Session Minutes from February 4, 2020 – Letter of Support – Disparity Grant
- Open Work Session Minutes from February 4, 2020 – School Board Nominating Commission's Recommendations on the Process to Fill a Vacancy on the Board of Education
- Open Work Session Minutes from February 18, 2020 – County Seal/Logo
- Open Work Session Minutes from February 18, 2020 – MS4 Permit Update
- Closed Work Session Minutes from February 18, 2020 – Consult with Staff, Consultants, or other Individuals about Pending or Potential Litigation to Protect the County's Legal Position; to Discuss Personnel at the State's Attorney's Office

A proclamation was presented in recognition of Arbor Day in Wicomico County.

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**Laura Hurley, Council Administrator**

Mrs. Hurley said there are several changes to the Agenda this morning. She said there are quite a few Work Sessions that are being postponed. She said the discussion on utility scale solar will be rescheduled, as well as the discussion on the sale of beer and wine at the liquor dispensaries; the letter of opposition to House Bill No. 1312/Senate Bill 841; and the Wicomico County Board of Education quarterly Work Session will all be postponed.

**Resolution No. 14-2020** – To Unseal Closed Session Minutes from February 18, 2020: Consult with Staff, Consultants, or other Individuals about Pending or Potential Litigation to Protect the County's Legal Position, and to Discuss Personnel at the State's Attorney's Office. Mrs. Hurley said, for the most part,

everything that was discussed at that Closed Session has now been discussed openly, specifically at the March 3, 2020 Council Meeting, so there does not seem to be any reason to keep the Closed Meeting minutes confidential at this time.

There being no discussion, on motion by Mr. Holloway and seconded by Mr. Davis, Resolution No. 14-2020 was unanimously approved.

**Resolution No. 15-2020** – Declaring that Safety Resources, LLC is Eligible to Receive Enterprise Zone Benefits for Property at 1938 Windsor Drive, Salisbury, Maryland 21801. Mrs. Hurley explained, in order for a business to qualify for enterprise zone benefits, it must meet one of the two specific statutory requirements, which are that the business must either make an investment in capital improvements of more than \$50,000, or hire more than two employees since it has been located in the zone. She said Safety Resources, LLC is eligible for the enterprise zone benefits based on the hiring of at least two new fulltime employees.

There being no discussion, on motion by Mr. Hastings and seconded by Mr. Holloway, Resolution No. 15-2020 was unanimously approved.

**Resolution No. 16-2020** – Declaring that Arvind Jain, DMD is Eligible to Receive Enterprise Zone Benefits for Property located at 614 Eastern Shore Drive, Salisbury, Maryland 21804. Mrs. Hurley said this company is also eligible for the enterprise zone benefits based on the hiring of at least two new fulltime employees.

There being no discussion, on motion by Mr. Hastings and seconded by Mr. Holloway, Resolution No. 16-2020 was unanimously approved.

**Resolution No. 17-2020** – To Establish the Wicomico County Youth Advisory Commission and Approval of Bylaws. Mrs. Hurley said Council held a Work Session on the proposed Youth Advisory Commission and bylaws, and sent a letter to the County Executive with their recommendation to establish this Commission last November. She said the County Executive has now submitted his endorsement, and before Council is a Resolution to approve the bylaws and the establishment of that Commission.

Mrs. Acle said Section 8 regarding administrative support is the County Council Office. She said she recommends changing that to “The Local Management Board will provide administrative support”. She said she spoke with the Executive Branch, and they were in agreement.

On motion by Mrs. Acle and seconded by Mr. Cannon, Resolution No. 17-2020 was unanimously amended to change administrative support from the County Council Office to the Local Management Board.

Mr. Cannon said, in Article 3, Functions of the Body, number 9 talks about the identification of needs and best interests, and that the Body shall report annually to the Executive and the Council. He said it is a small thing, but he thought maybe they might want to change that “may” instead of forcing them to have to report. He said they recognize the fact that if they wanted to they would certainly have that opportunity, but he is a bit concerned in maybe going too far in saying that it is required by law to report annually. He said he is just throwing that out there.

On motion by Mr. Cannon, seconded by Mr. Holloway, Resolution No. 17-2020 was unanimously amended to change “shall” to “may”.

Mr. Cannon said he thinks under Section 5, Alternates, Article 4, Membership, it says that if a member is absent, an alternate member may sit as a voting member and, once seated, shall be counted in determining a quorum. He said he was not sure whether or not that should require a proxy, and the statement should say, upon receipt of a proxy, that person may become a voting member. Mr. Taylor said he does not see any problem with it the way it is now. He said it does refer to an alternate. He then asked if there will be alternates appointed, to which Mr. Cannon responded, he does not know, he did not see anything. Mr. Taylor clarified, he did not prepare these bylaws, and has not reviewed them, but if there are designated alternates who can sit, then he does not see that there is any need for any proxy, and he does not know who would issue the proxy. Mr. Cannon said the proxy would come from the absentee member. He explained, the member would say they are not going to be there, but they will allow someone to speak on their behalf. Mr. Taylor said he thinks that may be questionable, but he does not know, honestly, whether that would be a good procedure or not, to which Mr. Dodd responded, typically, it would be a written proxy. Mr. Taylor said he understands that, but the members are designated through a certain process, so to then have a member just designate anybody else in his or her absence he thinks begins to deviate from the initial process of appointment to this group. He said he can look at this if Council wants to defer it, but, off the top of his head, it just does not sound like a good policy. Mr. Cannon said with most committees he is on, if someone cannot attend, they have a proxy in order to speak on behalf of the absent member. Mr. Taylor said every group, of course, has its own rules, but this is a quasigovernmental Body, and he thinks there might be some concern with that, but he just does not know right off the top of his head. Mr. Cannon said it says the County Executive of Wicomico County may, not shall, but may appoint one or more alternate members, so they do not know whether or not there are going to be alternates. Mr. Taylor said, to the extent that there are alternates, he thinks that the problem solves itself. He said, if the Executive does not appoint alternates or alternates are not available, then they have a problem. He said he does not think the proxy method is a good method to do this, but he does not know sitting there today that it is not. Mr. Cannon said maybe he should change that to instead of worrying about the proxy to just say that the County Executive shall appoint instead of may appoint one or more alternates, and then it would be guaranteed, to which Mr. Taylor responded, that is a good idea.

On motion by Mr. Cannon, seconded by Mr. Hastings, Resolution No. 17-2020 was unanimously amended for Section 5, Alternates, to state that the Executive of Wicomico County shall appoint one or more alternate members, and to strike the word "may".

Mr. Cannon said, under Article 5, Section 8 on Vacancies, it says a vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification or otherwise may be filled by a majority vote of the members for the unexpired portion of the term. He said he is only bringing this up as an option, but does Council think the actual Committee itself should appoint a new member, or does Council think that should go back to the Executive and Council to make that appointment? He said he is throwing that out there for discussion. He clarified, right now it says that the members of this Committee would be able to appoint another member, and he is just saying that maybe when someone dies or resigns that it has to go back to the Executive and Council to make that appointment. Mrs. Acle said she thinks that is a good point. She said that section was taken from the Maryland Youth Advisory Council Bylaws, but that is on a much larger scale, so bringing this down to the County, she thinks that is a very good point. Mr. Cannon said that is kind of what is done with any other committee.

On motion by Mr. Cannon and seconded by Mrs. Acle, Resolution No. 17-2020 was unanimously amended for Section 8, Vacancies, to say that the filling of a position would be done by the Executive with confirmation by the Council.

There being no further discussion, on motion by Mr. Cannon and seconded by Mrs. Acle, Resolution No. 17-2020 was unanimously approved as amended.

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**Robert Taylor, Council Attorney**

**Legislative Bill No. 2020-02** – Extending a Moratorium on the Issuance of Building Permits for an Agricultural Storage Tank which will Store Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) Washdown Water from a Rendering Process Pursuant to Wicomico County Code Chapters 225, 125, and 128.

Mr. Davis said someone is not going to go to Planning and Zoning and say they want a DAF tank, they are going to go to Planning and Zoning and say they want a storage tank. He said, once they get a storage tank, he does not think the County can permit what goes in there. He said that is MDE, who would then advise them. He clarified, anyone can go to Planning and Zoning today and say they want a storage tank, and they will approve it, and the County has no control over what goes in it, so they are really beating themselves up. He said Council can extend this, but, technically, there is nothing they can do, it is all MDE. Mr. Holloway said the application would require for someone to say what goes in the tank, to which Mr. Davis responded, no, it does not. He said he has talked to Planning and Zoning, and they are not required to put it in the application.

Mr. Holloway said he thinks history will show that this Council in past years has supported the poultry industry fully, especially during the past zoning issues they have had. He said he has had a lot of conversations with folks on both sides of the table of this, and a lot of the folks at the Farm Bureau and poultry farmers themselves are not happy about this because it sheds a bad light on poultry farms. He said he has been told that the two people who actually do the spreading probably do not want any more tanks, and that is probably right, but apparently doing this is a pretty lucrative business, and that is not to say that somebody else might step forward and want a tank at some point in time. He said he thinks they should challenge the Planning and Zoning Department to come up with some kind of regulations so they can control this in some way. He said they saw the firestorm that ignited when this other tank was built, and if that were to happen in another neighborhood anywhere in the County, they would probably see that again. He clarified, this does not have anything to do with the spreading of the material. He said the company that actually brings this in has very large tanks on their site in Dorchester County, which he thinks is Valley Protein, so he thinks they can store it there. He said he does not like the word moratorium because that sounds negative, but he would implore Planning and Zoning to try to come up with some kind of regulations that would protect the citizens out there from another one being built.

Mr. Hastings said he supports this, but he still thinks they need to have the State of Maryland intervene. He said Mr. Davis is right that they need the Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Environment, but the Department of Agriculture specifically since this is currently an approved use for waste, but the question is whether this is more of a waste disposal system as opposed to farmers having it. He said, when his family had a chicken house, they put the manure on the ground, and that is a good, slow released nutrient, and is a positive thing, but this is not produced on the farm, this is spread elsewhere. He said the bigger issue Council has heard from the community has been about the smell and when it is actually applied. He said there are still issues when it comes to the fact that, in this case,

this is a 3-million gallon tank, and it is open so insects can land inside of it even if it is crusted over. He said, obviously, the biggest issue right now the world is facing involves disease factor, and this is one of those situations where this could be a future area for spreading pathogens, so he thinks maybe Council needs to step up their game and send a letter to the Department of Environment or Agriculture, and try to come to a better understanding. He said he thinks it is important that their local Planning and Zoning take a look at what is appropriate for their area, but more so, they need guidance from the State as to if what is being put down could cause further problems in the future. He said maybe that is a letter, or maybe that is just inviting them to come down for a meeting, but he thinks they should consider that.

Mr. Cannon said he agrees with Mr. Hastings. He said, as Mr. Holloway said, he is not a fan of moratoriums, but Council put this in place to try to accomplish some goals as to whether the zoning was correct, and whether or not changes needed to be made, but he does not think there was success in the entire six months, and he thinks what Mr. Hastings said is important. He said, if Council is going to put a moratorium on this for six more months, then he thinks they need to make a very concerted effort to address what the concerns might be, whether or not they want the State to look at the Right to Farm Act because of the odor, or whether or not they want the industry to self-regulate and possibly put additives into this sludge so it does not smell as much. He said the tank itself he does not think really is the issue. He said it is similar to what they faced in the poultry industry with the poultry houses where, in many cases, individuals would come to Council meetings and go to the podium and complain about the odor, but, in reality, they were complaining about the manure that was being spread on the fields and not so much the poultry houses in some cases. He said he would not want to get that mixed up as well in as the tanks themselves may be okay, but it is really the spreading that is more of an issue, so if they are going to put a moratorium on them, he would like to make sure they have some direction as far as how they are going to address this and where they are going to go.

Mr. Holloway said he had a conversation with somebody in the industry, and they are trying to put together a meeting with the State, possibly the County, and the industry involved; however, with what they are going through with the coronavirus right now, that had to be put off. He said they are moving to try to do something, so he thinks they need to give this time and maybe it will work out.

Mr. Taylor said there are two points worth noting, and first is on this particular tank that has been approved. He said there is now pending litigation on the permit itself as to whether that is actually a permitted use in that particular Ag district. He said second, there were references to the State's regulations regarding what really has to do with their nutrient management regulations, and, as far as he knows as it has been about five or six weeks since he has looked at those, they apply to the spreading of the product, not to the storage of it. He said he does not believe it discusses at all anything having to do with the storage, so the argument that is sometimes made that the State regulations essentially preempt any County regulations he believes would only apply to spreading, not to the storage. He said, ergo, if Council wanted to they could actually prohibit the storage of this material in tanks if they wanted to do that. He clarified, he is not suggesting Council should, he is just making that observation.

Mr. Holloway said Mr. Taylor said there is litigation proceeding on the building of this tank, to which Mr. Taylor responded, challenging the permit. Mr. Holloway then asked, if another permit were issued, could somebody challenge that the same way, to which Mr. Taylor responded, yes, it could be challenged. Mr. Holloway said maybe this will prevent that.

Mr. Dodd asked Mr. Hastings if he would be interested in drafting a letter and working with Mrs. Hurley because he agrees that Council should step up their game since they gave the County six months.

Mr. Dodd asked Mrs. Hurley if she has anything to add, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, they can schedule the Public Hearing because that is the next step, and they can have that on April 7 at 6:00 p.m.

There being no further discussion, on motion by Mr. Hastings and seconded by Mr. Holloway, Legislative Bill No. 2020-02 was introduced. Mr. Davis opposed.

**Public Comments:**

Ms. Ashley Teagle, Executive Director of the Wicomico County Public Library, came to the podium and said she wants to offer a few highlights about the services the Library offers to the community. She said they have a strategic plan, and those copies have been distributed to Council. She said their new mission is to innovate, educate, and inspire. She said their new vision is the Wicomico County Public Library is an inclusive, welcoming community resource that strives to meet the diverse needs of all Wicomico County citizens. She said, as the County Council determines funding for various agencies, she would ask they consider how the Library supports all citizens of Wicomico County when making their decision. She said, in FY19 they had over 230,000 visitors to their branches who attended 1,464 programs and classes. She said they made 3,355 meeting room reservations, and they answered 5,143 information questions. She said they had 42,584 computer users use library equipment, and 92,135 wireless sessions in their branches. She said they circulated over 87,000 materials through their bookmobile and the reader van, which specifically targets their senior centers, schools, and also childcare providers. She said they helped 104 individuals through their legal clinics with things such as their child support questions, and also getting criminal records expunged. She said they also had 1,463 children who came to their Homework Help Center for assistance, and 2,848 visits to their Job Search Center. She said, in addition to all of these things, they also launched passport service at their Centre Branch in the mall, and they now also lend hotspots out to Library customers.

Ms. Teagle said she would like to thank the County Executive at this time. She said he has committed \$50,000 towards the purchase of a new bookmobile, and also supported the Library in pursuing a State Bond Bill to achieve additional funding towards the purchase of that bookmobile. She said he has also been supportive of their efforts to get a new Pittsville Branch, and she thinks there is some work to be done there as far as agreeing on a location and what that facility needs to look like, but she does feel the County Executive has buy-in with offering a Library that the Pittsville Community needs. She said, additionally, she also wants to thank the County Executive as he has recognized the important role in the County that the Library offers, and he is committed to offering them an increase to their operating budget to support all the work she mentioned above.

Ms. Teagle said the Library does great work every day for their community, and they do work at a bargain. She said BEACON's economic impact report noted that for every dollar that is invested in the Public Library, their community realizes a \$5.40 return on this investment. She said they are an employer, and they use other local businesses to carry out the services that the Library needs support with. She said, when this Council makes decisions to protect funding for their Library, they are making a decision to keep books in the hands of their children, they are making a decision to help illiterate adults get the help they need to make it in their society, they are making the decision to help connect job seekers to employment opportunities, and they are making a decision to support early childhood

literacy. She said, in a community where only 40 percent of their children have access to internet at home, the Public Library is an essential resource. She said Public Libraries are important to any community that seeks to promote early childhood education, lifelong learning, workforce development, and small business development. She said the Public Library is a catalyst for many great things in their community, but she needs Council's help and support to ensure that those things can continue to happen. She said she looks forward to engaging in further conversations with the Councilmembers about the Public Library.

Mr. Kenny Robinson came to the podium and said he lives on Riggin Road, 400 yards from this tank that is already built. He said he had no intention of getting up there and speaking today, but he just sat there and wrote down ten lies they have been told since this started. He said the tank never should have been built to start with. He said Planning and Zoning did not ask what was going in it, and they will not ask, so Mr. Davis is completely right on that. He said they do not care. He said all they care about is that they are building a tank, but that sure is not much good planning and zoning as far as he is concerned. He said they can put plutonium in it if they want after they build it, and Planning and Zoning does not care what they put in it. He said they were told it would be Burns only trucks hauling in there, who is the person who built the tank, but the very first truck came in on Friday, March 13, and was not a Burns truck. He said it turned in off the road loaded with sludge that should not have been stored on Friday, March 13 because it is supposed to be put on the fields in March, and they were told it would not be stored in the months that it could be put on the field, which was another lie. He said the truck was owned by Southern somebody, not a Burns truck, so that is the second lie. He said they were told the critical areas were not being torn up to build this tank, another lie. He said, by the State's and County's maps, he is in critical areas. He said they were told the disturbance would be less than an acre, another lie because they are pushing 2 acres now, and they hauled in more stone and dirt yesterday to build the road up some more so they would not get stuck. He said they were told there were no non-tidal wetlands involved, another lie. He said they were told there was an existing road to this tank site, but there was never a road to this tank site. He said he has lived on the same piece of property for 64 years as of yesterday, and there has never been a road there. He clarified, there was a culvert there for tractors to get out to the field, but never a road. He said they were also told there would only be DAF stored in this tank in the non-spreading months. He said the very first load that went in there was in a month that it should have been put on the fields, another lie. He said they were told there was only chicken waste in this substance, another lie. He said there is french fry oil, dead animals, and whatever Valley Protein can boil up and make chicken gut soup out of. He said it was said that there is no nutrient benefit to the farmers, but Mr. Holloway said this is a very lucrative business, so there has to be something there for somebody to want it if it is a lucrative business. He said, if it is a business, it should have never been put under agriculture, but that is how Zoning put the application through, as Ag only. He said it was only to be spread on Burns farms or owned property, but he spreads on at least five other farmers' properties. He concluded, that is a list of ten lies, and they will continue to get more lies because nobody will take claim for allowing this to be done. He said, as far as the moratorium, he agrees with the two gentlemen that it is a waste of time. He clarified, he appreciates the effort, but if they cannot ask what is going in the tank, what good is a moratorium? He said it is a waste of their time.

Dr. Maida Finch came to the podium and said she is a resident of Wicomico County, and, in the interest of full disclosure, she is a member of the Library Board of Trustees; however, she is speaking today as a private citizen and not on behalf of the Board. She said she wants to make three points regarding the

recent discussions about a possible Library program. She said, since libraries are institutions committed to providing information, it is in that spirit that she offers the following remarks. She said, first, the American Library Association, the professional organizing body for libraries, offers clear guidance on the matter of library resources and programs. She said she is quoting now from their policy manual.

*“The American Library Association affirms that library initiated programs provide vital support for the missions of libraries by providing users with additional opportunities for accessing information, education, and recreation. Libraries should actively seek to include a variety of programming options representing a diversity of genres, formats and expressions exemplifying a multitude of viewpoints and cultural perspectives. Additionally, access to library services and resources should be available to everyone. The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with subject matter including sex, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation. Libraries should vigorously defend the first amendment right of speakers and participants to express themselves.”*

Dr. Finch said Library programming should not be cancelled because of the topic of the program or the views expressed by the participants or speakers. She said, particularly germane to the issue they are facing now, the American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogatives that lead to the intimidation of individuals or groups and discourages them from exercising the right to free expression as guaranteed by the first amendment of the US Constitution. She said the suggestion at a recent Council Meeting that the Council hold funding from the Library if it does not acquiesce to the objections of a group of parents is antithetical to the rights of libraries to provide programming that reflects the diversity of the communities they serve.

Dr. Finch continued, second, on the matter of the issue in question, Drag Queen Story Hour, again, in the spirit of sharing information, it is important to understand what this program is. She said she shares the following information from the Drag Queen Story Hour website. She said Drag Queen Story Hour is just what it sounds like, drag queens reading stories to children in libraries, schools, and other community spaces. She said most events are 45 minutes and designed for children ages 3 to 8, though this may vary by location or event. She said a drag queen reads three to four children’s books, sings children songs, and leads children in a craft activity. She said, according to their website, Drag Queen Story Hour helps children develop empathy, learn about gender diversity and difference, and tap into their own creativity. She said Drag Queen Story Hour can also be life changing and ultimately lifesaving for LGBTQ kids and teens, kids with LGBTQ parents or family members, and anyone who feels different because of their identity or interest who might not otherwise see themselves reflected in the broader culture. She said this type of programming reflects libraries as an American institution that, and, again, she is quoting from the American Library Association, values their nation’s diversity and strives to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum and resources and services to the communities they serve.

Dr. Finch said, finally, she wants to conclude by stating that it is understandable as they navigate these issues to draw comparisons to other examples of materials and programs that might also be considered objectionable by some; however, it is important to ground these comparisons in actual, not imagined events. She clarified, for example, lingerie story hour is not a suitable comparison. She said, again, in the spirit of sharing information, she offers Merriam Webster’s definition of lingerie: Women’s’ intimate apparel; a term first used to refer to women’s underwear and bras in 1922. She said, conversely, according to the Oxford Dictionary, drag queen refers to a man who dresses in women’s clothing



typically for the purpose of entertainment. She said drag is an artistic way of expressing one's self and showing the world who you are or who you want to be. She clarified, these are not comparable ideas. She said, instead, she urges Council to consider instances where Library materials and programs have been contested, such as calls to ban books, objections to plays and materials, and instances of book burning. She said those are real examples of the challenges libraries face, and she suggests they are a better way to focus a conversation on controversial materials. She said they may not all agree on the resources available in their libraries, but they have the right and obligation to offer materials and programs that reflect the diverse communities they serve without fear of coercion or retribution. She said, if a book does not interest her, she does not have to check it out. She said, if she finds a program objectionable, she does not have to attend it, and, as a parent, she can prevent her children from attending, though she admits that now that her children are teenagers, this is becoming a little more difficult. She said these are her rights, and Council's rights, but it is not their right to deny access to resources to others.

Mrs. Hurley said she has two Public Comments that came in by email. She said the first one is from Gary Bullard of Wicomico County, and his comment is as follows:

*"Please make sure all Eastern Shore residents who are tested positive for this virus are publically named so the rest of us who have been in contact with them can quarantine themselves and take other measures so the disease can be stopped quickly."*

Mrs. Hurley said the second Public Comment is from Kristin Douglas of Wicomico County:

*"I am writing to ask you to pull all funding from our Wicomico County Libraries if they choose to host a Drag Queen Story Hour for children. As an educator and parent, I am deeply concerned, and make this request only as a last resort. My family and I have often enjoyed our local Library and the resources it provides. I have personally met with Ashley Teagle, Library Executive Director, and she did not commit to keep our Libraries safe for children. I have some neighbors who would hail a Drag Queen Story Hour for children as social progress. This is the view the American Library Association states on their website; however, I speak for those who, like me, strongly disagree with those neighbors. Children are vulnerable. It is immoral to purposely introduce or encourage gender confusion to these young citizens. Councilmembers, you are representing citizens who are divided on the issue of a Drag Queen Story Hour. Though we are neighbors, we are neighbors who disagree on this social agenda, and we need you, our councilmembers, to send a clear message to our Library that it should not endorse this social agenda but choose instead to be neutral and thus a welcome and unifying literacy haven for all of us. Please do not take tax dollars from all of us to support an agenda that violates the conscience of many of us. I am asking you to tell our Library that your financial support is conditional upon their compliance to your request to deny a Drag Queen Story Hour."*

Ms. Ashley Teagle then came back to the podium and said she met with Ms. Douglas last week. She said she does her best as the Library's Director to not allow for the spread of misinformation because she feels that is a key component of her job, so at this time she cannot make any commitments for or against this program. She said she does invite the community to continue to have conversations with her, persons who are for and against this program, and they will have a follow-up Board meeting in April where this issue will be addressed, and that is open to the public, and she invites customers to attend. She clarified, to be clear, she also would like to remind everyone of the separation of church and State, and also, making it clear that the Public Library does have an obligation. She clarified, she does get State

money, she does get County money, and the request for this program was made to her by Wicomico County residents, and so, to be clear, this is not her choosing an opportunity to incite conflict in their community, this is her honoring and treating a customer the same way she would any other customer. She said she is glad Dr. Finch brought up the discussion of real life Library examples, and she will leave Council with this one. She said she is an African American, and when she started this job in January 2019, they did not schedule any Black History Month programs, so the Pittsville Branch put up a Black History Month display. She said she was told a customer was, essentially, upset by “all the black faces on the books in the Library.” She clarified, just because that customer complained, does that mean that the Library should remove all books that are written by African American authors? She said she looks forward to additional conversations if Council needs a little background information on Public Libraries, but she would also encourage Council to have the understanding that when they are talking about matters of programs and meeting room use, because that has come up where someone told her they feel like a hate group is meeting at the Library, people have a first amendment right, as Dr. Finch noted. She said, not only that, but as a Library Director, part of her neutrality comes from her personal bias not being in this, but this is her saying today it is LGBTQ+ story programming, and tomorrow it could be the African American book collection, and the next day it could be an objection to a particular group meeting in the Library. She said she is challenging the Council to make the best decision they can for making sure that information is accessible. She said there are many, many examples in the modern society of government that limit access to information, to the internet, and to information resources, and she invites their community to use the Library in the way that it best fits them.

#### **Council Comments:**

Mr. Hastings thanked Director Teagle, Mr. Robinson, and Dr. Finch for their comments. He said Council did ask the public to stay away because of the coronavirus, and he just wanted to briefly speak on that. He said this is an issue that is global, and this is something they are all in together. He said there are a lot of folks who, if they do not work, they do not get paid, and there are a lot of bars and restaurants that are now ordered closed, and a lot of them are asking whether or not they can make it through the next month or so, so that is some seriousness there. He said he also wants to mention Wicomico County Public Schools. He said a lot of the children get their food and nutrition through there, and, with the schools closed, it certainly has been challenging. He said he is actually really impressed by all the folks who have reached out to try to meet the needs of the students who are not getting food, and he sees that the Wicomico County Public Schools have actually made options to try to make sure that school nutrition is still a focus. He said, also, buying a gift card to different establishments locally to make sure they have money in the door in the meantime hopefully will be helpful. He said, as a whole, he is encouraged by all the unity that has seemed to come out. He said they have been lacking unity for quite some time in American society, so it is really positive to see that come out of something that is kind of terrible. He said be vigilant and wash your hands.

Mrs. Acle said she is aware that school meals will not be served at Mardela or Northwestern, and it is her understanding that Wicomico County Public Schools has an arbitrary threshold of how they determine what schools will be served meals. She said her concern is the needs of the children in the rural areas of this County, and they are not being met. She said, moving forward, she is hoping the school Administration and Superintendent will be able to work through this and provide meals for those students. She said it is definitely a concern in her District, and needs to be addressed.

Mr. Holloway asked if Council should possibly write a letter with Mrs. Acle's concerns about the schools not serving lunches, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, if that is what Council would like to do. Mr. Dodd asked for a consensus. Mr. Davis said Mr. Stauffer is in the audience and has a comment about that.

Mr. Micah Stauffer, Chief Finance and Operations Officer for Wicomico County Public Schools, then came to the podium and said the information has been coming out very quickly regarding this as of 5:00 p.m. on Thursday. He explained, they started off with the summer sites that they originally schedule each and every summer, and then reached out to their community partners and have just been awaiting for some of them to get back with them. He said he sent an email while he was sitting in the audience just now to Mrs. Acle and some others, but, just so Council is aware, as of yesterday they have also added the Delmar Renovate Church, the San Domingo Zion United Methodist Church, the Hebron Epoch Dream Center, the Bivalve Westside Fire Department, and they are working with one of their Board Members, Mrs. Lewis, to add Pittsville and Willards as well. He said they are also gauging the response from today because today is the first day. He said they found out yesterday they would have the resources necessary to offer three meals starting today, so they will have breakfast, lunch, and supper that are also being added today to each of those sites as well. Mrs. Acle thanked Mr. Stauffer.

Mr. Hastings added, the owner of Vittles reached out yesterday and wanted to help the Mandela folks, so that is just another business that has reached out to help, and that is really great to see.

Mr. Cannon said he is curious as to how the schools are managing to distribute the food because this is quite out of the ordinary to be distributing food throughout the County, and it must be quite an undertaking. Mr. Stauffer said it is quite an undertaking, especially considering the circumstances. He explained, they have utilized all available staff they can to work out of six school sites in preparing all of the meals, and then from there they are distributing them using staff, facilities, and also their volunteers in some cases where they can distribute them to the site, but they just need volunteers to work the site. He said in many cases the areas they have added recently that he just listed are being worked by volunteers, so they do appreciate the community support they are receiving there. He said they have had a lot of responses and a lot of people reaching out to help with that. He clarified, as he said, they will gauge the response and know a lot more after today since this is the first day that the feedings will start, and they will be able to work off of that response as well if they need to add additional sites. He said it has been made clear by the support from the community as well as from the Governor and MSDE that they will do whatever they can to meet the needs in their community.

Mr. Cannon said he would like to thank the Board of Education for the excellent work. He said this is completely unexpected and, without question, unprecedented, and for them to be able to respond as quickly as they have to the degree that they have, he finds that absolutely amazing, to which Mr. Stauffer responded, he appreciates that recognition, and all the thanks and recognition goes back to the team of individuals who are working on this. He said they found out about this situation at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday when everyone else did as well, and they have been working as a team and collaborating together on a variety of different issues and concerns on this, from the cleaning of the schools, to the feeding of the community, to make sure they are doing what they can.

Mr. Holloway said he has an update from the east side. He said April 4<sup>th</sup> was supposed to be Mt. Hermon Plow Days, and all the Councilmembers as well as the State Delegation were invited, but he received information last night that even though it is an outdoor event, it has been cancelled, and he is sure there will be other cancellations coming along for events. He said everybody take care and be careful.

**Council President Comments:**

Mr. Dodd addressed Mr. Hastings and clarified, they did not really ask anybody to stay home, they encouraged everybody to stay home, but they were still allowed to come to the meeting, and they were encouraged to send emails if they wanted to. He then thanked everybody involved with these lunches for the students. He said he has been following a lot of it on social media where people are asking to volunteer, and Board Member Lewis stated she was making deliveries, and that is a good option, so it is good that this is happening. He said, unfortunately, this is creating a hardship on a lot of the families where they have to find daycare and they still have to feed their kids during the day, even if they are working or not, so hopefully they as a community can work through this.

Mr. Dodd said the Hebron Easter Parade is cancelled, but he does not know if the Fruitland Parade is cancelled. He said the Farm Bureau Annual Dinner next week has been cancelled, and he guesses Council can post different cancellations as they come. He said he appreciates everybody who is bearing with them through these tough times. He said it is tough for everybody, but they do have an obligation to continue business, so he thanks everyone for bearing with them. Mr. Holloway added, the DPI Banquet was cancelled. Mr. Dodd said that is a pretty big banquet, and that has been cancelled as well.

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On motion by Mr. Hastings, seconded by Mr. Holloway, and unanimously approved, an Open Work Session was added to the Agenda to discuss a one-time funding request from the Wicomico County Board of Education.

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On motion by Mr. Hastings, seconded by Mr. Holloway, and unanimously approved, an Open Work Session was added to the Agenda to discuss an Emergency Declaration with the Director of Administration.

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There being no further business, on motion by Mr. Hastings, seconded by Mr. Davis, and unanimously approved, the Legislative Session was adjourned to go into Open Work Sessions followed by a Closed Work Session pursuant to General Provisions Article, Section 3-305(b)(1) to discuss personnel matters involving the County Attorney and the Director of Finance to protect sensitive information.

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The Wicomico County Council met in a Closed Work Session on Tuesday, March 17, 2020 at approximately 12:45 p.m. in Council Chambers, Government Office Building, Salisbury, Maryland.

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


Present: Laura Hurley, Council Administrator; Robert Taylor, Council Attorney; and Lynn Sande, Executive Office Associate.

The purpose of the Closed Work Session was to discuss personnel matters involving the County Attorney and the Director of Finance to protect the sensitive information. No formal action was taken.

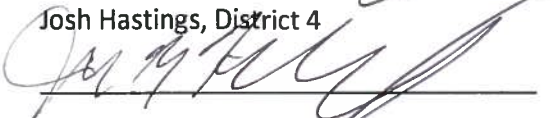
There being no further discussion, on motion by Mr. Hastings, seconded by Mr. Davis, and unanimously approved, the Closed Work Session was adjourned at approximately 1:55 p.m. The legal authority for the Closed Work Session is General Provisions Article, Section 3-305(b)(1).

  
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Larry Dodd, Council President


  
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John T. Cannon, Council Vice President

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Ernie Davis, District 1  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Nicole Acle, District 2

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
absent

William R., McCain, At-Large  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura Hurley, Council Administrator