

## **Open Work Session**

**April 18, 2017**

### **Town of Willards to Waive County Property Taxes**

Request Submitted by the Town of Willards to Waive County Property Taxes on property located at 7466 Main Street, Willard, MD 21874- Mr. Wayne Strausburg, Director of Administration, came before Council. He said this is a derelict property, and the Town would like to have the taxes waived. He said he thought it was appropriate, and it needs Council approval to waive the taxes. Mr. Cannon asked if the property ever went to tax sale. Mr. Strausburg responded yes, it is one of those properties where the value of property is such that the back taxes exceed the value, so it is one of those eyesores that you want to get rid of. He said the Town asked for the waiver, and Administration supports the waiver. Mr. Joe Holloway said he is familiar with it as he went out and looked at the property. He asked if the Town wanted to acquire it for the Town, or are they going to demolish and resell the property, to which Mr. Strausburg responded he did not know. Mr. Kilmer asked if the County has done this before for other towns, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, yes. Mr. Kilmer said there are other houses that would qualify. Mr. Joe Holloway said they would pay \$10,000-\$12,000 to tear this house down. Mr. Strausburg said it does not happen often, but in these kinds of circumstances it is appropriate. Mr. Kilmer said maybe some other towns, if this happens would want waivers. Mr. Cannon clarified that it will end up being property of the Town of Willards, to which Mr. Strausburg responded, yes. Mr. Cannon said he was worried about the precedent it might set. He said the City of Salisbury also has a lot of dilapidated properties that it is working very hard towards actually tearing them down through their own efforts. Mr. Strausburg said he thought when you have properties that are derelict properties, and the municipality has a utilization for those properties, even if it is just open space, he said he thought it is appropriate to cooperate because these properties are eyesores. They are not serving any public need, any public good, as a matter of fact they are probably a detriment. He said to the extent that they can clear these types of property from landscape, and intentionally put them to better use, he said he thought it was appropriate. Especially when realistically you know you are never going to collect those back taxes. They are on the books but collection is not going to happen. Mr. Joe Holloway said if this property were in the County and the County was going to demolish it, what they would do is put the cost of the demolition on the tax bill and it is a possibility that the County would never get paid for it. He said if they have a property not worth anything, it has a \$12,000-\$15,000 lien on it, you might not ever sell, so the County is ahead of the game here. Mr. Strausburg said it gives you a better opportunity to put the property to productive use and to eliminate an eyesore and a detriment. Mr. Cannon said he would just be concerned about precedent. He said the City of Salisbury has at least 100 dilapidated houses. He said he knows they are going through measures right now to try to address those concerns in some of the areas, some specific areas, and they are using funding through the federal government. He said it was a precedent issue for him. Mr. Matt Holloway said he understood, but it is money that the County is never going to receive basically. He said it is on the books, but they cannot count those as receivables. Mr. Joe Holloway said, if it was in the County they would be paying the demolition cost. Mr. Culver said, if it is ever sold, it goes back on the tax record. Mr. Cannon asked what is requested on Council's part, is this something that has to be done


through a resolution. Mrs. Hurley said it will have to be authorized through Council in the form of a resolution. She asked if the Town of Willards is going to have this property transferred to their name before Council approves the dollar amount that is going to be waived. Mr. Cannon said he would think that would make most sense because Council is making a waiver for the Town, so the transfer would have to be made before they did that, yes. Mr. Strausburg said he thought the Town wants assurance that it is going to be waived before they take title to the property. Mr. Cannon said Council needs a consensus, Council unanimously agreed to waive the taxes for the Town of Willards.

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John T. Cannon, President

\_\_\_\_\_(absent)\_\_\_\_\_  
Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Ernest F. Davis, District 1

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marc Kilmer, District 2

\_\_\_\_\_(absent)\_\_\_\_\_  
John B. Hall, District 4

  
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Joe Holloway, District 5

  
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Matt Holloway, At-Large

  
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Laura Hurley, Council Administrator