

Open Work Session
Stormwater Management and Winter Storm Grayson Update
January 16, 2018

Mr. Dallas Baker, Director of Public Works, and Mr. Lee Outten, Roads Superintendent, came before Council. He said he will start with the stormwater management side. He said it has been a short month with the holiday, and the snow has taken up the majority of their time. He said the Pratt Road drainage study has been awarded, and that has started. He said there was also a smaller survey project where they had several locations throughout the County they needed to get surveyed so they could provide better drainage throughout those communities. He said there were six roads, that study has been completed, and they are expecting the survey results back later this week. He said, just a refresher, that included Brown Road, Douglas Road, Fawn Drive, Largo Terrace, Havassy Drive, and he cannot remember the sixth one at this time. He said they have been seeing progress on moving forward with improvements, and knowing what improvements they need to make for the drainage systems in those areas. Mr. Cannon asked Mr. Baker where they left off the last time with the hiring of the engineering company, to which Mr. Baker responded, that has been awarded to Davis, Bowen and Friedel. Mr. Cannon asked if part of their efforts will be to seek out a grant to help pay for the total cost, to which Mr. Baker responded, yes.

Mr. Baker said, moving on to snow removal, they got a little over a foot of snow about a week ago. He said they sent the salt crews out starting at 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, and, basically, they had everyone running from 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday until about 4:00 or 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. He said the first two days they had everyone on staff with some of the guys working 18, 24, and 36 hours. He said, in the evenings, they had skeleton crews out trying to keep the roads open. He said, on Saturday and Sunday, they switched over to shiftwork, and had three eight-hour shifts, so, again, folks were going 24/7. He said Mr. Lee Outten and Mr. David Candy were out driving trucks from 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., Mr. Joe Holloway was driving a truck, and Executive Culver was driving a truck, so it was all hands on deck. He said they had a lot of problems with the wind. He said it was a light snow, but he can tell Council that he and Mr. Mark Whitelock plowed Rockawalkin Road from Route 349 out to Route 50, and, by the time they got back, Route 349 looked like they had not plowed anything. He said all they were doing was going up and back, and they did that four times. He said they had sections of road where they used a large V-plow that gets attached to their grader to open up some of the roads. He said the problems really were around the farms in the outlying areas where the wind was just taking the snow back out onto the roads. He said they also had issues with folks being out on the roads, as the public gave very little heed to the state of emergency. He said they were out on the roads, they were getting stuck, they were blocking their plows, and they just could not get around them. He said they were getting calls from communities saying the County had not touched their road, but that was because somebody drove out, took a right and got stuck, and then the person behind them came out, saw that person was stuck so took a left, and they got stuck, and then the County could not get in. He said they were out trying to clear Robins Avenue, and working with the Sheriff's Department. He said there were three vehicles stuck on the Dykes Road side, and there were two vehicles stuck on the Snow Hill Road side. He said the Sheriff's Department came out and was going to tow the two vehicles out of the way. He said, as they were standing there, a pickup truck drove around them, drove out into the farm field and back onto Robins Avenue, and then proceeded to get stuck. He said they thought they were coming in from the short side, and they then had three vehicles in the middle each way. He said, fortunately, they were able to get the V-plow in there by coming in from the Dykes Road side. He said there was enough room there because the folks who had gotten stuck were all on one side, and they were able to get around them. He

reiterated, that has been a large part of the challenge. He said he knows there have been a lot of calls about folks saying the County forgot to plow their roads. He said, in almost all of those cases, they can go into their GPS system and see the truck that went through, and the day and time it went through. He said he knows there are people who will disagree with that, and he is sure there probably are a couple roads out there that did not get hit as much as they should have. He said, however, he can tell Council that for almost every call they have received about a road not getting touched, they have GPS data to show otherwise. He said the GPS data is on their larger trucks, but is not on all of their pickups. He said he would like to expand that to include the pickups so they can provide better data to the citizens when they call about when a truck has gone through their street. He said he knows there have been a lot of calls about folks whose driveways were plowed closed, and mailboxes getting plowed closed, and a lot of that relates back to what vehicle goes through the community. He said their pickup trucks have articulating plows, which means they can form a spike, they can send it to one side, and they can form a cup. He said, if they have that articulating plow on their truck, when they go by the driveway, they cup it up, push it away from their driveway, and then drop it back off in front of their yard, and that is great. He said the larger trucks, the tandems, have fixed-wing, and the only place they can send it is to the right. He said they have tried to help out when they received calls from folks who were having medical emergencies and they sent the plows back out there, but there were some folks they just were not able to help. He said they were out trying to keep the roads open and clear, and they did their best to prioritize it. He said they put down about 250 tons of salt over this last storm, and they had a very large problem with their vehicles breaking down. He said they had 16 vehicles break down, some of them multiple times. He said they had one vehicle in particular that broke down six times, and it was things ranging from the windshield wiper motors burning out because they had been running for so long without a break, they had wiring harnesses melt on their snowplows so they were not able to articulate them, and they had an axle break on one of their trucks out on Pemberton Drive, so they experienced the full gamut, again, at some point or another. He said they have seven trucks that can salt their roads, and, at one point, they had four of those trucks broken down, and a lot of that has to do with the age of the fleet. He said when they are putting their budget together later this year he is going to propose to start replacing some of these larger trucks because they have some that are from 1994. He said, looking at them, they may only have 50,000 miles on them. But it is 50,000 miles of plowing snow with salt in the back of it, and that is very, very hard on a vehicle, and those older vehicles just cannot take the continuous operation from these types of things. He said they started on Wednesday and did not stop, even for a small break, until Sunday evening. He said the guys were still back out on Monday and Tuesday, but the Wednesday to the end of Sunday time period was the continuous operation. He said everybody went home Sunday night, and got some sleep. He said he knows there was some criticism of why the plows were back in there, but they were back out Monday morning still trying to plow and reopen roads. Mr. Dodd asked if the County farms out any of the plowing. He said he knows the State used to, to which Mr. Baker responded, no, they do it all themselves. Mr. Outten said the State has the pocketbook to do that. Mr. Cannon asked if the budget accounts for the anticipation of storms of this nature. He said he assumes they do, to a certain degree. He then asked if this puts them over and above what they budget for, to which Mr. Baker responded, they have money in their budget for overtime, and money in their budget for what they call winter maintenance, which includes buying salt, and that type of thing. He said they have about 500 tons of salt despite having used what they did. He said they have just placed another order so they are good on salt for the next storm. He said all of those vehicles, by the way, are back up and running. Mr. Hall asked how many vehicles the County has, to which Mr. Baker responded, they have 45 plows. Mr. Hall asked if they were able to staff them all, to which Mr. Baker responded, yes and no. He said they have to give the guys a chance to get some sleep. He said they could not have all 45 trucks running constantly with their current staff level, but, realistically, how often do they get these larger snow events? He said the snowstorm back in the beginning of December, he

thinks, they handled pretty smoothly, and he thinks everybody was pretty happy with that. He said that was a wet snow that broke a lot of limbs, so, after they got the snow off the roads, they were out clearing limbs off the roads as well.

Mr. Joe Holloway said he wants to thank everybody, which he has done already, but he wants to thank everybody for all the work they did, and he wants to thank Executive Culver for letting him help the guys out. He said he does not know how much help he was, but it opened his eyes to some of the things the County Roads Department goes through when they have an event like this. Mr. Baker said he would like to point out this was a Public Works event. He said he knows people say County Roads, but the Solid Waste guys were out there every bit, and he just wants to make sure the whole team is recognized, to which Mr. Joe Holloway added, and the Sheriff's Department. Mr. Joe Holloway said, as he mentioned in his email, this was called the perfect storm with high winds, cold temperatures, and a lot of snow. He said in 1978 they started off with a wet snow that started out as rain and turned to snow, and got continuously worse, and then a lot of people went for three and four days without electric. He said they were real fortunate this time that they did not have those problems. He said going three and four days without electric, people would not have been worried too much about the roads. Mr. Baker said, if they wind up with a light snow, the winds can mess them up, and then, with a wet snow, they will lose their power lines. Mr. Joe Holloway said this added a whole new perspective for him as to what goes on in an event like this. He said he does not know if they can do anything to improve what they did this time. He said they learn every time they have an event, he thinks, and he is sure there will be things they will look at differently that make things better the next time. He said, fortunately, they do not have these events all that often.

Mr. Hall asked Mr. Baker how he determines what areas are priority areas that need to get done first, to which Mr. Baker responded, they have 20 different sections within the County. He said they do have a priority map in terms of what roads are salted. He said they have over 700 miles of road, and they salt about 220 miles of those. He said it is really just based off of the volume of traffic, and the size of the communities they are serving. He said it is the collector roads, and the major roads. Mr. Hall asked if it is complaint driven also, to which Mr. Baker responded, no. He said, in general, they will get calls in the middle of the night from the Fire Department, or someone asking them to come out and salt a road. He said it will be a small road in the middle of nowhere that is not on their salt route, and they typically do not do that because they only have so much salt. Mr. Hall said his concern, of course, was the Airport Access Road, which was plowed early, and they had the problem with the winds blowing. Mr. Baker said Airport Road is on their drift list, basically, because of those fields. He said it would be really nice if they could plant some shrubs, some bushes, or something along those roads. Mr. Joe Holloway said he was going to bring up the issue of snow fences, which is something they used to do years ago. He said back in the 1960s and 1970s he remembers snow fences were wooden stakes that were wired together, and he thinks they have probably progressed now to be plastic. He said he knows they have Walston Switch Road, Whitesville Road, and Airport Road on the Eastside, and he then asked if there would be anything to work with trying to get snow fences in again. He said he knows they have to work with the landowner. Mr. Outten responded, that is one thing he has entertained, and he has looked at some things that are done out in the Midwest. He said he would have to talk with the farmers, and either pay them, or talk to them about leaving X number of rows of corn standing, because corn can act as a snow fence at times as well. Mr. Joe Holloway said they would only be able to do that every other year because most of the time they rotate their crops. Mr. Outten said the County does have limited right of way, and a snow fence works best at a certain offset from the road. He said, again, they do not have these types of snow events every year, or even every other year. Mr. Joe Holloway asked if it would be wise to do an experiment in maybe two or three places, to which Mr. Outten responded, Airport Road is

a perfect place, he thinks, to do it. He said they also have an issue on Gunby Road and North Schumaker every time, and then they have a place that is not farm but is a real problem, and that is Beaglin Park Drive between Mt. Hermon Road and Glen Avenue. He said that is a real big problem, and, with that type of road that gets 19,000 vehicles a day, it would be very worthwhile to explore something in there as an experiment.

Mr. Cannon said he is pretty sure the Governor established the Eastern Shore as an emergency area. He asked if they will receive funding from the State of Maryland, to which Mr. Baker responded, it is his understanding they will not. He said he knows the Governor declared the Eastern Shore a State of Emergency for the snow event, and it is his understanding that the money does not start trickling down until the Federal Government declares it, but he is not too sure about that. Mr. Outten said they also have to be at their threshold. He said, in other words, this event would have to be larger than any event they have had in the past in order to get FEMA reimbursement, so probably an event that cost more money was the blizzard they had in February 2010. He said they would have to exceed that dollar amount, and he is not sure that they did with this storm, so a lot of it has to do with that. He said it is the same thing with hurricanes where they look at the dollar amount in the State as a whole. He said, if they just get it on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, it is not throughout the whole State, so they are not going to meet that threshold. Mr. Baker said he knows they have certain billing codes they were using during this process so they will pull out how much the storm is costing the County. Mr. Cannon said he did not know if that designation just triggered funding right away, to which Mr. Outten responded, he thinks it allows them to open up the emergency declaration, and opens up the possibilities of garnering resources from other parts of the State to help the County, and that is one of the purposes of it. He clarified, when he says resources, he means assistance, not necessarily monetarily, but assistance from other parts of the State. There was no further discussion.

Signatures on next page



John T. Cannon, President



Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3



Ernest F. Davis, District 1



Marc Kilmer, District 2



John B. Hall, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Matt Holloway, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator