

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CAROLINE COUNTY
109 Market Street, Room 106, Denton, Maryland

Minutes
March 16, 2020

Present: President Larry C. Porter; Vice President Daniel J. Franklin; Commissioner Wilbur Levensgood, Jr.

The meeting began at 9:00 AM via conference call.

Commissioner Porter introduced himself as well as staff. He gave an overview of how the Budget hearing would occur via conference call. He stated that there would be two public hearings, each of which is required by State or local law. The first hearing is for the budget requested for the Operating and Capital budgets. The second hearing is for the Municipal Property Tax Differential Rates.

Hearing #1 Requested FY2022 Operating and Capital budgets: President Porter gave a brief description of the requested the Office of Finance has received for the upcoming budget. He stated that the public hearing remains virtual and written testimony is the only way to comment.

Ms. Roe stated that four pieces of testimony had been received regarding the FY2022 Operating and Capital Budgets. A summary is listed below:

Caroline County Human Services Council, Susan Runnels, president, thanked the Board for their continued support to the Human Services Council and stated that due to the COVID-19 pandemic they have directed more of their funds to help families struggling in the community. Ms. Runnels stated that the past few years the Commissioners have given a generous \$20,000 to the HSC and they hope the County will continue to allocate those funds to help with their growing programs.

Men for Change, Stanford Ricks, President stated that the Caroline County organization Men for Change is requesting \$10,000 to help sustain their growing programing for the youth of Caroline. Mr. Ricks stated that they provided mentoring, and educational services.

Caroline County Office of Tourism, Tara Hill-Coursey, Director, thanked the Commissioners for their continues support for County tourism. She stated that she is aware the global pandemic caused some constraints on the County budget; however, she will continue to be active and motivated to boost the future for Caroline County Tourism.

Chesapeake College, Cliff Coppersmith, President, thanked the Board for their continuing support and funding of Chesapeake College. He stated that the College has submitted a flat budget nearly identical to the FY2021 budget. Mr. Coppersmith stated that he looks forward to working with the Commissioners in the upcoming year.

There being no further testimony the Commissioners moved to Hearing #2

Hearing #2 Municipal Property Tax Differential: Cathie Moore, Comptroller, stated that the proposed Tax Differential rate is set for 75% for the FY2022 year. She stated that the total amount of funds that would be allocated to the municipal towns in Caroline County sits at \$505,682.99.

She stated that no public comment or testimony had been received regarding the municipal rates at this time.

Commissioner Porter stated that that both public hearings would remain open to receive any public testimony. He stated that testimony can be sent via email to info@carolinemd.org or mailed to the Caroline County Commissioners Office at 109 Market Street, Denton Md, 21629.

COVID-19 Response update: Laura Patrick, Health Officer, informed the Board that Caroline County's positivity rates remains low and is currently at 2.7%. She stated that two county residents remain hospitalized and the total number of deaths remains at 23. She explained that testing continues to slow down, however they will remain offering testing every Tuesday from 1-4PM at the Caroline County Health Department.

She announced that over 6,600 County residents have been vaccinated. She informed the Commissioners that the vaccination process continues to run smoothly and adapt to the weekly vaccine allocation received from the State. She reminded the Board the State of Maryland would be opening up the phases to include 16 and older as of April 27th.

Commissioner Porter mentioned that the State had opened a mass vaccination site in Salisbury, which he feels does little to help vaccinate the Eastern Shore counties. He suggested on the State call to open a site at Chesapeake College. Ms. Patrick stated that she has brought the suggestion up on her Health Officer calls, and she stated that she hopes the request will be granted if pushed hard enough. Sara Visintainer added that she has been in contact with Ken Kozel, CEO, Shore Regional Health Systems, who is ready to start running mobile sites in Denton, Easton, and at the college to help saturate the area. She stated that this would be a partnership between the counties and the hospital.

Ms. Visintainer moved forward with her PIO updated and stated that they are continuing to push county residents to fill out the Vaccine Eligibility Form. She stated that ads have run in the newspaper, Caroline Review, and a mailer will be coming in April. She reminded all that the main issue the Call Center is continuing to have is successful contact with residents when it comes time to schedule their appointments. She informed the Board that citizens need to answer their phones for unrecognizable numbers as well as keep their voicemail up to date. She stated that Jenn Farina and Lucie Hughes have pushed educational and FAQ's for the Johnson and Johnson vaccine which the county will be getting allocations of soon. Ms. Visintainer stated that the county's Equity Team is working hard on distribution of the hard to reach populations and they are working with the PIO team to develop and distribute educational and fact sheets in multiple languages.

Dr. Saelens, Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools, proudly informed the Commissioners that both students and faculty are smoothly transition into a normal routine in the classrooms. She stated that athletic practices and games have started to resume with spectators allowed at all fields for free. The Governor announced last week that districts could move forward with events such as graduations. Ms. Saelens again thanks the Board and Ms. Patrick for continuing to keep a close and tight relationship with the Board of Education during these tough times.

Consent Agenda: the following were approved by unanimous consent

- P.O #2021-0325, Sustainable Science, Engineering for Stream Tributary \$50,000.00
- P.O # 2021-0329, Shore Strategies LLC, to Complete 2022 Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Master Plan, \$35,055.00
- Reappointments to the LOSAP Committee
- Appointment to the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board
- 21st Center Community Learning Centers Grant Application for Recreation and Parks

Commissioners Open Discussion Period:

Commissioner Levensgood stated that he is extremely proud of the employees in Caroline County. He stated that he has watched how other states and manipulates have tackled the vaccine distribution process and nothing comes close to the hard work and dedication provided by the team at Caroline.

Commissioner Franklin echoed Commissioner Levensgood remarks and stated that he had the privilege of helping transport an elderly resident to the vaccine clinic. He stated that the citizen was thrilled to receive the vaccine and felt the process ran smoothly.

Commissioner Porter stated that he would like staff to move forward with purchasing a software that would allow Commissioner Meetings to be streamed live for residents to easily access and view.

There being no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.



Jennifer M. Farina
Administrative Coordinator