

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
Old State House, St. Mary's City
Monday, March 24, 2003**

Present: Commissioner President Thomas F. McKay
Commissioner Kenneth R. Dement
Commissioner Lawrence D. Jarboe
Commissioner Thomas A. Mattingly, Sr.
Commissioner Daniel H. Raley
Alfred A. Lacer, County Administrator
Donna Gebicke, Administrative Assistant to BOCC (Recorder)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 at the Old State House, St. Mary's City.

ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Commissioner Jarboe moved, seconded by Commissioner Dement, to draft a resolution in support of the war effort, our President, and troops. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF CHECK REGISTER

Commissioner Dement moved, seconded by Commissioner Jarboe, to authorize Commissioner McKay to sign the Check Register. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Mattingly moved, seconded by Commissioner Dement, to approve the minutes of the Commissioners' meeting of Tuesday, March 18, 2003, as amended. Motion carried.

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OVERVIEW:

Present: Larry Vote, Provost

Mr. Vote provided the Commissioners with a broad look at the history of the College, where it is today and plans for the future and thanked the Board for their continued support of the River Concert series and the scholarship program.

Martin Sullivan, Executive Director, Historic St. Mary's City, and Chip Jackson, Associate Vice President, reviewed the Commission's partnership with the College to preserve and protect the archeology and natural beauty of the landscape. Plans include

over a hundred million dollars for capital construction for the College and the City over the next 5-8 years. Current projects include a gym expansion, new housing, academic projects, a performance venue, and a new museum for the City. Mr. Sullivan requested that the County work together with the Commission on a joint road improvement project to meet safety concerns regarding Routes 5 and 584 and Mattapan Road.

Student Project: Grapes as an Alternative Crop

Present: Amy Forbes, Student of Economics, SMCM
Joan Poor, Assistant Professor, Economics, SMCM
Steve Purvice, Bushwood grape grower
Joe Dick, St. Michael's Manor, grape grower and wine maker

Information was provided on alternative crops for farmer participants in the Maryland State Tobacco Buyout. Professor Poor discussed crop budget comparisons for wine grapes vs. tobacco market potential. Her research indicates that grapes can be a profitable crop, and with proper planning, farmers can recoup start-up expenses in the third year. Miss Forbes shared preliminary results of her research project which surveyed tobacco buyout farmers to determine their interest in alternate crops. 45% of the 202 farming families surveyed responded. Overall, there was some interest in growth alternatives, but no particular crop was significant.

Area farmers discussed their experiences with grape growing. Mr. Purvice realized 4 tons of grapes per acre in 2002 which brought \$900 per ton. Mr. Dick explained that wineries are great tourist attractions. He suggested that the County focus on establishing a winery to help make grapes an attractive alternative crop. The best way to do this is to establish cooperatives where farmers could be invested together. Commissioner President McKay suggested that the local government may need to partner with farmers to get a winery/coop project going. Mr. Dick recommended that Mr. Purvice be appointed to the Governor's Grape Growing and Winery Advisory Board.

ST. MARY'S CITY HISTORIC COMMISSION UPDATE

Present: Martin Sullivan, Executive Director, Historic St. Mary's City
Chip Jackson, Associate VP

The State budget deficit leaves HSMC looking at an 8-9% reduction in funding for FY04. Grants and contributions will be required to make up this deficit. Money earned from museum shop sales and rental of facilities will provide some income. However, due to local and international stresses, revenues have slowed. In 1997, the State Legislature made HSMC independent answering only to the Governor. Education is the highest priority for St. Mary's City. There are 30,000 children visiting HSMC each year.

HSMC will coordinate with St. Mary's County and other tourist anchors and infrastructure in their efforts to promote the County as a tourist destination.

ST. CLEMENT'S ISLAND MUSEUM REPORT

Present: Kim Cullins, Museum Marketing Specialist

The Museum will celebrate Maryland Day on St. Mary's County's 369th birthday, March 25, 2003. Ms. Cullins provided the board with an update on additional museum activities planned for the coming year. The museum division is accredited by The American Association of Museums. More volunteers are always welcome. Ms. Cullins also read a statement on behalf of the museum staff commemorating Michael Humphries' years of service as Museum Director. Mr. Humphries will retire after 28 years of service to the County.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Present: Alfred A. Lacer, County Administrator

1. Draft Agendas: April 1 and April 8, 2003
Human Resources will address the current military leave program and potential options on April 1. The draft Ordinance to allow property tax credit to the surviving spouse of a fallen rescue worker will be on the April 8 agenda.
2. Budget Amendments
 - a. Circuit Court (*Elaine Kramer, Director*)
To approve and authorize Budget Amendment transferring funds from BOCC Reserve Account for payment of contract court reporters, pending installation of digital audio recording system.

Commissioner Mattingly moved, seconded by Commissioner Jarboe, to authorize Commissioner McKay to sign the budget amendment to transfer funds. Motion carried.

3. Department of Finance (*Elaine Kramer, Director*)
 - a. To approve and sign the transmittal letter to the MD State Dept. of Education and authorize Comm. President McKay to sign the Submission of Excludable Non-Recurring Items for Maintenance of Effort FY2004 Budget

Commissioner Mattingly moved, seconded by Commissioner Dement, to sign the transmittal letter and authorize Commissioner McKay to sign the MOE. Motion carried.

- b. Provide direction on Recommended Budget for Public Hearing

The Board agreed to direct staff to proceed with the FY04 public hearing budget as presented. The draft budget reflects the Board's March 17th work session. The budget work session previously scheduled for March 25 was cancelled.

SENIOR CITIZEN TAX RELIEF

Present: Mr. Alan Brylawski, Citizen

Mr. Brylawski stated that senior citizens are beset by economic ills, including the high cost of pharmaceuticals and the instability of savings and retirement accounts that are forcing them to sell their homes due to real estate taxes. He proposed to return the present real estate tax for seniors to a tax of a previous year (e.g. 10 years). The senior would then pay the reduced tax as long as the home remains their principal residence and they remain in the home. The assessment and the tax due the County would remain the same and would fluctuate up or down as the assessment and tax rate would dictate. The monies not paid by the senior (the difference between the regular tax and the lesser sum paid by the senior) would become a lien on the senior's property, with the lien bearing interest at prime rate to be calculated and added to the lien at the end of each tax year, or if the property transfers, at the time of any transfer. This would establish a savings account for the County that could enhance the County's bond rating, while setting a precedent that could be adopted by the entire state. The coverage would be voluntary, and only one person in the home will be needed for eligibility. Spouses surviving the death of their partner would continue under the program until the property is transferred.

COMPREHENSIVE WATER & SEWERAGE AMENDMENT: LEXINGTON PARK CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Present: John Norris, County Attorney
George Forrest, Deputy County Administrator
Chad Holdsworth, DPZ
Jeff Jackman, DPZ

Commissioner Dement recused himself from this discussion of the proposed resolutions and ordinances. The area the County is asking to be serviced by water and sewer is outside the County's priority funding area. The Comprehensive Plan and the Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan would have to be amended or the sewer treatment plant that serves this area would not be eligible for priority funding to expand in the future. The Ethics Commission advised the Board that a decision to dismiss the Ethics Complaint regarding this action has been rendered and they see no conflict of interest in any decision made by the Planning Commission regarding this decision.

Commissioner Mattingly moved, seconded by Commissioner Jarboe, to amend the Comprehensive Plan to extend the boundaries of the Callaway Village Center to include the part of the Lexington Park Christian School property that has been approved by the Board of Appeals as a conditional use for a school, as recommended by the Planning Commission. Commissioner Dement abstained from the vote. Motion carried.

Commissioner Mattingly moved, seconded by Commissioner Jarboe, to amend the Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan to change the service area categories for the part of the Lexington Park Christian School property that has been approved by the

Board of Appeals as a conditional use for a school, as recommended by the Planning Commission, from NPS (No Planned Service) to S-3D (Sewerage Service in 3-5 years) and W-3D (Water Service in 3-5 years). Commissioner Dement abstained from the vote. Motion carried.

It was agreed to defer the adoption of the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance to change the zoning classification from RPD to VMX until it is clarified that all required public hearings have been held.

COMMISSIONERS' TIME

Commissioner Dement

- Attended the Disability Awareness Day and kite flying event held at the Governmental Center.
- Attended the Leonardtown Fire Department's 75th anniversary celebration.
- Enjoyed the Maryland Day festivities at St. Mary's City. The St. Mary's College staff arranged a great event and should be congratulated for their efforts.

Commissioner Mattingly

- Attended the Breton Bay Restoration meeting.
- An interesting historical review was part of the Leonardtown Fire Department's 75th anniversary. It's the oldest fire department in the County. Pleased to participate and appreciated all those who attended.

Commissioner Jarboe

- The proposed expanded parking lot for the Charlotte Hall Library could not be funded through the Rails to Trails grant. However, Donna Sasscer, DECD, has identified \$7900 for the parking lot construction. Amish farmers have offered to provide labor as part of the match for these funds. Look forward to working with the Tri County Council to make this parking lot a reality.
- Visited the Veterans Home and walked the trail around the Home, Library, and Amish market with the Director of Recreation and Parks Department. It all ties in neatly.

Commissioner Raley

- Thanks to all who planned and participated in the Maryland Day ceremonies. Marty Sullivan, Dr. O'Brien, Captain Hill and staff went above and beyond to put on a great event. It was a fine day and a great time was had by all. The Governor and his family really enjoyed themselves.
- The St. Clements Island Museum visit will prove to be an equally great day.
- Congratulations to Company #1 on their 75th anniversary. They have worked hard to refurbish one of the country's oldest fire fighting apparatus.
- Commissioners are challenged to participate in the 5th Annual Adult Spelling Bee at Great Mills High School on Friday, March 28 at 7 pm.

Commissioner McKay

- Thanks to the superb staff of St. Mary's College, Historic St. Mary's City, the Public Information Office and others for helping the Board put this activity together today. It has been a great day for all of us.
- Congratulations to the community of Hollywood and to everyone from St. Mary's County who supported the Thompson family in raising funds to defray medical expenses for young Robbie Thompson. The turnout at the Hollywood Firehouse was between 800-1000 people and \$25,000 was raised.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Mattingly moved, seconded by Commissioner Dement, to adjourn the meeting at 2:15 p.m. Motion carried.

Minutes Approved by the
Board of County Commissioners on _____

Donna Gebicke, Administrative Assistant
to the Board of County Commissioners