



City of Bowie

15901 Fred Robinson Way
Bowie, Maryland 20716

REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, MAY 1, 2023

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The Regular Meeting of the Bowie City Council was held on Monday, May 1, 2023, in the Council Chambers at City Hall. Mayor Adams called the meeting to order at 8:03 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:

Mayor Adams led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

QUORUM:

In attendance were Mayor Adams, Councilmembers Esteve, Gardner (Virtually), Ndebumadu (virtually 8:11 p.m., in person 8:37 p.m.), and Woolfley, City Manager Lott, Assistant City Manager Mears, City Attorney Levan, City Clerk Hernandez, and Staff.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mayor Pro Tem Ndebumadu thanked City's IT Director Todd Peterson, for his support during a Smart Cities meeting.

Mayor Adams thanked staff for a great Arbor Day celebration over the weekend.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilmember Woolfley made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items: A) Approval of April 17, 2023 Meeting Minutes; B) Adoption of Proclamation P-6-23 Proclaiming April 30 Through May 6, 2023 as Professional Municipal Clerks Week in the City of Bowie; C) Adoption of Proclamation P-7-23 Proclaiming May 16, 2023 as "I Love to Listen Day" in the City of Bowie; D) Adoption of Proclamation P-8-23 Proclaiming the Week of May 7-13, 2023 as Children's Mental Health Awareness Week in the City of Bowie; E) Adoption of Resolution R-27-23 Awarding a Contract to Bry's Lawn Care and Landscaping, LLC for Vinyl Chain Link Fence Installation; F) Introduction of Ordinance O-6-23 Supplemental Appropriations for the Annual Budget for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2023; G) Approval of Tanglewood Natural Area Master Plan. Councilmember Estève second the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS:

A. Adoption of Ordinance O-4-23 Amending the Code of the City of Bowie, Chapter 21A to Amend the Title of the Chapter and the Name of Article I Thereof, to Amend Sec. 21A-9 "Permits – Requirements, Expiration and Renewal" to Provide That Erosion and Sediment Control Permits Shall be Valid for Three Years, and to Amend Sec. 21A-28 "Municipal Grading Permits – Term" to Provide that Grading Permits

Shall be Valid for Two Years – City Attorney Levan summarized the staff report and Ordinance. The amendment as proposed are based on State mandated laws.

Public Hearing:

Since there was no one signed up to speak, Mayor Adams declared the public hearing to have been held.

Councilmember Woolfley motioned to adopt Ordinance O-4-23. Councilmember Estève second the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

B. FY 2024 Budget, CIP and Constant Yield Tax Rate - Finance Director, Mr. H. Byron Matthews, reported that municipalities are required by State law to place an advertisement in a local newspaper and to hold a public hearing on the Constant Yield Tax Rate. The City has complied with those requirements and is proposing to raise the current tax rate to \$0.45 per \$100 of assessment. This tax rate is 17.7% higher than the Constant Yield Tax Rate and will generate \$5,876,014 in additional property tax revenues for the City. Given the cost rates and revenue constraints the City faces, staff recommends the increase in the tax rate.

Public Hearing:

City Clerk Hernandez stated that one comment was received via email for this item and it is attached to the minutes as part of the record.

1. John Teasdale, Midwood Ln. – Copy of comment attached.
2. Bob Bapczynski, Maple Ave. – Requested Council's support in funding for the Old Town Bowie Railroad Museum.

Since there were no other speakers signed up to speak, Mayor Adams declared the public hearing to have been held.

Mayor Pro Tem Ndebumadu motioned to table the vote of the Constant Yield Tax Rate to the May 15th meeting and hold another Public Hearing that evening as well. Councilmember Gardner seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-2 (Estève, Woolfley).

C. Economic Development Roundtable – Economic Development Director, Mr. John Henry King summarized the memorandum to Council. At the March 6, 2023 Council meeting, Council instructed staff to work with the City's Economic Development Committee to devise a plan that would include input from existing developers, current business owners, County officials and City officials on repairing the lines of communication and strengthen the partnership between all.

The Economic Development Committee discussed this item at their April 12, 2023 meeting and proposes the following plan: 1) At a regular Council meeting, an industry expert in retail leasing, will provide Council with a briefing on retail center development, leasing, operation, and revitalization to provide a greater understanding of the business of shopping center retail; 2) At a second Council meeting, could be a Special meeting and it should be virtual, invite all thirteen (13) retail center owners/landlords and their leasing representatives, as well as invite specific Bowie shopping center located retail or restaurant businesses identified by City Council. This meeting should be held on a weeknight and with a possible start time of 6:00 p.m. The EDC Chair, Ms. Yolanda Muckle would be the moderator of the meeting.

Councilmember Esteve suggests inviting representatives of DPIE as well since they would be involved in some aspect of the permitting process for businesses.

Councilmember Woolfley has some restrictions on having a midday meeting due to his daytime employment, but is welcome to starting the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Ndebumadu thanked staff for this plan and is in agreement with Councilmember Esteve to include DPIE in the meeting, and representatives from District 4 in the County as well as a representative from the County Executive's office. Willing to look at possibly holding the meeting on a weekend.

Council concurred to have the Economic Development Committee proceed with scheduling the roundtable with business owners, City Council, County Council District 4 representative and representatives from DPIE on a Saturday to discuss Economic Development in the City.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Half Note Lounge – Mr. Derrick Thomas owner of the brand Half Note briefed Council on the potential opening of the lounge at Marketplace. He will not be opening/running this proposed location; he sold a license agreement to Ms. Kimberly Burke who will actually be running the lounge in Marketplace. The Half Note Restaurant and Lounge caters to crowds over 35 years of age, serves American cuisine and provides live musical entertainment. He originated the first lounge in 2008 off of Rt. 450 until about a week before the Covid pandemic started.

Council thanked Mr. Thomas for his briefing and look forward to having Ms. Burke come before them once her plans are finalized.

B. Detailed Site Plan DET-2022-018 – Mr. Joe Meinert, Planning Director, summarized the staff report. Berman Enterprises, owner of Bowie Marketplace, is seeking approval of a new proposal to build a multi-story consolidated storage facility and car wash on the vacant land behind the retail shopping center. The 4.94-acre development site, zoned Commercial-General-Office (CGO), is located on the west side of Superior Lane, approximately 700 feet south of MD 450. The plan includes a 275,100 square foot consolidated storage building complex consisting of two phases - a 132,300 square foot, three-story building (Phase 1) and a 142,800 square foot, four story building (Phase 2). In addition, a 4,575 square foot car wash building is proposed along Superior Lane. The proposed uses are listed as permitted uses in the CGO zone. Consolidated storage is a specifically named use. A car wash fits into the definition of a Personal Vehicle Repair and Maintenance Use. Accessory uses, such as related outdoor storage, are permitted to serve principal uses.

Staff recommends approval of Detailed Site Plan DET-2022-018 with the following conditions: 1) The DSP shall be revised to create appropriate pavement striping and markings for safety between the proposed consolidated storage building and the existing retail building; 2) The applicant shall examine the use of pervious paving in the less heavily traveled portions of the site, such as between the storage buildings and the southern property line, where stormwater bioretention is proposed. Another possible location might be in the parking area located east of the Phase 2 building, between the storage building and the car wash, where grass pavers could be used to enhance the green space and eliminate pavement in this portion of the parking lot.

Attorney Andre Gingles, representing the applicant stated that his client is in agreement with the proposed conditions from staff.

Public Hearing:

1. Larry Swank, Scarlet Ln. – Spoke in opposition of the proposed plan for the storage facility and car wash.

Since there were no other speakers signed up to speak, Mayor Adams declared the public hearing to have been held.

Council discussed the development at length. Councilmember Woolfley motioned to table this item to the May 15th Council meeting in order for the applicant to have a proper dialogue with the community members specifically the nature of the height and stair stepping of the structures; to address noise mitigation; to ensure there is the provision of non-profit space; and to allow the City Attorney to review arrangements that were entered into with the transfer of the property to ensure there is proper usage of the property with regard to parking. Councilmember Gardner seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

C. Adoption of Resolution R-26-23 Approving the Citizen Input and Proposed Projects for the Community Development Block Grant Program – Mr. George Jones, Grant Officer, summarized the resolution. The City of Bowie receives Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) through an entitlement. The City of Bowie's Consolidated Action Plan for Housing and Community Development (Plan), Fiscal Year 2024-2028 will analyze housing, human services, and non-housing community development needs throughout the City, identify and prioritize community needs, and include a strategy to address those needs. The City of Bowie is a HUD Entitlement Community and as such must develop funding priorities that address at least one of three National Objectives. CDBG projects must benefit low-moderate income persons, eliminate slums and blight, or fulfill an urgent need. This program allows communities to carry out a wide range of community development activities directed toward revitalizing neighborhoods, economic development, and providing improved community facilities and services.

Public Hearing:

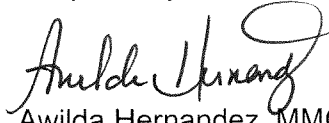
Since there were no speakers signed up to speak, Mayor Adams declared the public hearing to have been held.

Councilmember Esteve motioned to adopt Resolution R-26-23. Councilmember Woolfley seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-1 (Ndebumadu).

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Pro Tem Ndebumadu motioned to adjourn the Regular City Council meeting. Councilmember Esteve seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0. The meeting adjourned at 11:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Awilda Hernandez, MMC
City Clerk

Awilda Hernandez

From: John Durning <john.durning.jd@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, April 26, 2023 8:59 AM
To: cityclerk
Cc: balanceworksmail
Subject: {EXTERNAL}: Proposed Real Property Tax Increase

Hello,

We saw the notice of the proposed tax increase in the Homes section of the Washington Post. We were quite surprised to read of such a large proposed increase, 17.7%, without any mention of the justification for such an increase. As longtime residences of Bowie, since 1990, we have been very happy with the services provided by the city and the relative affordability of the city. We will be attending the public hearing and we would like to hear the justification for the increase and list of additional services that would be provided. As inflation is biting us all in the bottomline, weathering such an increase in taxes – and, as proposed, this increase is ~3x the current inflation rate – will be very difficult. As such, we are very skeptical that any justification will be support such a large increase.

PG county already suffers from a poor reputation as a safe and welcoming place compared to the surrounding counties and is at the highest tax rate already – 60%, same as Montgomery County. The newer residence in my area of Bowie, the “N” section, already have multi-generational or multi-family living arrangements because of the ever-increasing value of homes and expenses for living in Bowie. This proposed increase will only exasperate this situation.

In closing, unless there is some tangible benefit to each and every citizen of the city of Bowie, this proposed increase is ill timed and way out of step with the existing daily struggles of affordable living.

Regards, John & Pat Durning
3812 Northrop Place

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Support of Property Tax Rate Increases

I fully support the proposed \$0.05 increase in property tax rate in FY2024 and the planned increases in future years as outlined in the budget proposal. I want to highlight several points raised in the City Manager's budget letter. There is nothing new here, just an emphasis on what I feel are the main points.

First, "Property taxes are essential for the City to fund its expenditures." They represent 61% of revenues required to fund City expenses.

Second, "Providing reliable and efficient service has always been one of the hallmarks of Bowie City government. The City Council recognized this when it identified outstanding public service as one of its core values in the 2016 Strategic Plan."

Third, we all know about inflation. "In an inflationary spiral environment, it is challenging to balance the need to maintain service levels with the need to ensure adequate resources to operate." Inflation impacts the need to maintain attractive salaries and benefits to hire and maintain staff and to address the increased cost of supplies, materials, and equipment. I would add to that rising interest rates that will add to the burden of borrowing funds to support future capital projects. All of these factors will lead to a situation where "the cost of providing essential services such as road maintenance, capital equipment, waste management, capital improvements, public safety [and many other public amenities] becomes prohibitively expensive, straining the resources of the City."

The general fund balance has been declining for many years. Even with the proposed tax rate increases, this decline will continue, but will slow and eventually reverse itself in a few years. Without the tax rate increases, the general fund will be depleted, thus assuring the necessity of cutting City services. Such cuts in services will surely lead to a gradual loss of quality of life that has become the hallmark of this City. "The FY2024 budget is a reflection of our commitment to maintaining and improving our municipal services for the benefit of all our residents." Thus, the recommended tax increases are necessary to hold off depletion of the general fund balance while continuing to offer a high level of service to the community.

In conclusion, I see this as a turning point for Bowie. If we can't afford to maintain services, the City will begin a slow deterioration that may not be apparent at first, but that will become increasingly hard to stop in future decades. What side of this history do you want to be on?

Thank you,

John Teasdale,
12757 Midwood Lane