

AGENDA

WORCESTER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

December 7, 2016

4:00 PM - Strategic Planning Session at the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Hotel in Cambridge, Maryland in the Brigantine Boardroom

County Commissioners Strategic Planning and Brainstorming Session Process

Scheduled for Wednesday, December 7, 2016 from 4:00 to 5:30 pm
in the Brigantine Boardroom (2nd Floor of the Hyatt Conference Center)
during the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference
at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Hotel in Cambridge, MD - December 7-9, 2016
(copy of the current Strategic Plan from 2015 attached for your reference)

1. **Determining the Issues to be Considered -**

The County Commissioners will employ the nominal group technique in order to reach consensus on the priority issues to be addressed during their current term in office. Through the nominal group technique, the Commissioners each take turns listing one issue that they believe worthy of consideration as a priority issue to be addressed during their four-year term in office. After each Commissioner has presented their first proposed issue, the process continues with a second round of proposed issue, and so forth until all proposed issues are on the table.

2. **Determining the Top 5 Issues -**

Once all issues have been listed, the written list will be provided to each Commissioner to choose and rank their Top 5 issues (1 through 5), with #1 being the highest priority.

The lists are then tabulated by staff and issues are scored with each #1 issue receiving a score of 10, #2 issues receiving a score of 8, #3 issues receiving a score of 6, #4 issues receiving a score of 4 and #5 issues receiving a score of 2. Scores are then tabulated for each issue to determine the overall Top 5 Priorities.

Each of the Top 5 issues are then presented to the Board of County Commissioners to ensure that each of these proposed initiatives is supported by a majority of the Board of County Commissioners. Any issue which is not supported by at least 4 County Commissioners will be removed from the list and the next highest scoring issue will be added to the Top 5 issues.

3. **Defining the Top 5 Issues and Intended Outcome -**

Once the Top 5 Priorities are determined, further discussion helps to better define the issues and the intended outcome. This discussion will assist staff in determining the best approach to address each priority.

4. **Adopting the Worcester County Commissioners Strategic Plan -**

The results of the Brainstorming Session are then written in summary format for later adoption by the County Commissioners to be known as the "Worcester County Commissioners Strategic Plan"

5. **Implementing the Strategic Plan -**

Staff will develop specific implementation plans to address each of the Top 5 Priorities identified in the Worcester County Commissioners Strategic Plan and, once approved by the County Commissioners, will focus County resources and staff to carry out the plan in order to achieve the intended outcomes over the final 2 years of the County Commissioners' current term.

Worcester County Commissioners Strategic Plan 2015

Executive Summary: The Worcester County Board of Commissioners held a brainstorming session at the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference in Cambridge, Maryland on January 8, 2015 to determine priority issues to be addressed during their current term in office. As a result of this brainstorming session, the following issues listed in order of priority were agreed by consensus to receive priority attention:

1. **Replace Showell Elementary School with a Cost-Effective and Affordable Structure**
2. **Review Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses and U.S. Route 50 Transportation Corridor Plan - (* tied for 2nd)**
3. **Develop Exit Strategy for Liquor Control - (* tied for 2nd)**
4. **Develop Efficient Plan for Solid Waste Operations - (** tied for 4th)**
5. **Pocomoke Area Industrial Park - (** tied for 4th)**

Brainstorming Process: The County Commissioners employed the nominal group technique in order to reach consensus on the priority issues. Through the nominal group technique, the Commissioners each took turns listing issues that they believed worthy of consideration as priority issues. Once all issues had been listed, each Commissioner was asked to rank their Top 5 issues. Issues were then scored with each #1 issue receiving a score of 10, #2 issues receiving a score of 8, #3 issues receiving a score of 6, #4 issues receiving a score of 4 and #5 issues receiving a score of 2. Scores were then tabulated for each issue to determine the overall Top 5 Priorities.

Overall List of Issues: Following is the full list of issues followed by the total score and number of Commissioners which listed that issue in their Top 5 list. To the left is the final consensus ranking of the Top 5 Issues:

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Suggested Project/Initiative</u>	<u>Score - # of votes</u>
1	- Replace Showell Elementary School with a Cost-Effective and Affordable Structure	28-5
2	- Review Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses and U.S. Route 50 Transportation Corridor Plan - (* tied for 2 nd)	22-3
3	- Develop Exit Strategy for Liquor Control (* tied for 2 nd)	22-3
4	- Develop Efficient Plan for Solid Waste Operations - (** tied for 4 th)	20-4
5	- Pocomoke Area Industrial Park - (** tied for 4 th)	20-3
	- Expand Economic Development Efforts	16-3
	- More Open Government - Transparency	12-3
	- Plans to Protect Farms and Agriculture	10-2
	- More Collaboration with Board of Education on Capital Improvement Plan	10-1
	- Worcester County to Become a Destination for Seniors	10-1
	- Tax Differential Agreement with Municipalities	10-1
	- Improve West Ocean City Fire and Ambulance Service	8-1
	- Private-Public Sports Complex for Indoor/Outdoor Events	6-2
	- Sidewalks in West Ocean City	6-1
	- Economic Development Plan for Entire County	6-1
	- More Medical Curriculum Offered at Career & Technical High School	4-1
	- Municipalities to Answer their own 911 Calls	0-0
	- Provide Training Opportunities for Jobs in Wind Turbine Support	0-0
	- Dualize Maryland Route 90 - Ocean Expressway - into Ocean City	0-0
	- Provide Countywide Broadband Internet Service	0-0
	- Evaluate Procedure for Considering Non-Profit Funding Requests	0-0

Top 5 Issues:

As a result of the brainstorming session, the following issues, listed in order of priority, were agreed by consensus to receive priority attention:

1. Replace Showell Elementary School with a Cost-Effective and Affordable Structure

Showell Elementary School was built nearly 40 years ago in 1976. Although structurally sound, it requires major health, safety and energy code upgrades, as well as state and county educational standard upgrades. As a result, a feasibility study has been completed and approved for the replacement of Showell Elementary School by the Board of Education in May 2014, the County Commissioners in August 2014 and the State Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC) in September 2014. According to the architect and the Board of Education, a new school is currently estimated to cost just under \$49 million, with an estimated state share of \$3.2 million, leaving the county to shoulder the remaining cost of \$45.7 million which is unavailable at this time. The next step in the process is to begin the Educational Specifications and Schematic Design phase of the new school, however the project has been placed on hold pending the identification of funding for continuation of the project through to construction. The County Commissioners are committed to designing and funding the new school subject to development of a cost-effective and affordable approach as determined collaboratively by the County Commissioners and the Board of Education. Given that the new Ocean City Elementary School was constructed less than 10-years ago (in November 2005) at a total cost of roughly \$18 million, it is the County Commissioners sincere hope that alternatives can be agreed upon to reduce the total cost of the project while still providing the necessary upgrades and latest technology to create an exceptional learning environment.

2. Review Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses and U.S. Route 50 Transportation Corridor Plan - (* tied for 2nd)

In March 1997, the Worcester County Commissioners adopted a “Transportation Corridor Plan for the Southerly Side of U.S. Route 50 between Seahawk Road and Holly Grove Road” in order to create and maintain a safe and efficient transportation network to address the future commercial development demands in the corridor. Furthermore, in November 2009 the Commissioners adopted “Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses” throughout Worcester County in order to promote appropriate design as envisioned by the Worcester County Comprehensive Plan (2006) to maintain the County’s rural and coastal character by providing direction for developers with respect to architectural styles and features indicative of Worcester County’s heritage. Since that time, the County has invested considerably in new infrastructure in the vicinity of the US Route 50 Service Road, Samuel Bowen Boulevard, to attract commercial development in this area. The development of this corridor as envisioned is now beginning to take shape. However, it has been reported that some desirable commercial development may have been discouraged by the perceived uncertainty of approval due to the Design Guidelines and Corridor Plan. As a result, the County Commissioners wish to review both documents to determine if amendments are necessary that would alleviate developers concerns while still encouraging responsible economic development in keeping with the rural and coastal character of Worcester County. To that end, the County Commissioners will establish a diversified Task Force to review and recommend revisions to these documents, if necessary, to encourage desirable economic development.

3. Develop Exit Strategy for Liquor Control - (* tied for 2nd)

Following State Legislation which abolished the former Worcester County Liquor Control Board (LCB) and created the Worcester County Department of Liquor Control (DLC) on July 1, 2011, the DLC has strived to achieve the goals set forth by the County Commissioners as follows: preserve jobs, preserve revenues to County and towns, preserve and restore fairness to licensees and customers, create transparency and accountability to citizens and licensees, and comply with all federal, state and local regulatory requirements. While the DLC has done an exemplary job achieving these goals since 2011, the sunset clause which became effective in July 2014 allowing licensees the choice of buying from the DLC or from other wholesalers in the State has proved challenging to the continued profitability of DLC operations. As a result, the County Commissioners have directed staff to develop an Exit Strategy that could be instituted at some point in the future to guide the orderly withdraw from wholesale and/or retail sales of alcoholic beverages in Worcester County. The Exit Strategy shall consider actions necessary to eventually wind down DLC operations with the least possible impact on DLC staff, the least cost implications to Worcester County and liquidation of current DLC holdings, and in a way that will ensure continued fair pricing of alcoholic beverages to Worcester County licensees and retail consumers.

4. Develop Efficient Plan for Solid Waste Operations - (tied for 4th)**

The Solid Waste Division of the Worcester County Department of Public Works is responsible for the proper operation of the Central Landfill and Recycling Center in Newark, Maryland. These facilities accept solid waste and recycling materials from commercial waste haulers and citizens upon the assessment of tipping fees. Homeowners may also dispose of their recycling materials and residential waste at regional facilities in Pocomoke, Snow Hill and Berlin, known as Homeowner Convenience Centers (HOCs), after which these materials are transferred to the Central Landfill by County staff for processing and disposal. Homeowners may either purchase an annual permit for unlimited use of the HOCs or purchase bag tags at a cost of \$1 for each bag of trash disposed at the HOCs. Solid Waste operations are fully self-supported as a County Enterprise Fund whereby tipping fees and the sale of HOC permits and bag tags must cover all expenses. In 2010, the Town of Ocean City discontinued use of the Central Landfill for solid waste disposal from the resort community resulting in significant reductions in the volume of waste disposal and significantly reduced tipping fee revenues. While staffing levels have been reduced as a result of the lost volume, fixed costs of operations remain. Therefore, the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund has been forced to borrow from reserves to balance the annual budget over the past few years. With construction of a new landfill cell looming for which reserve funds will be needed, the Commissioners have committed to establishing a more efficient and sustainable plan for Solid Waste and Recycling Operations to cover the cost of annual operations and to replenish the reserve funds in order to pay for future capital costs without having to bond such improvements.

5. **Pocomoke Area Industrial Park** - (** tied for 4th)

The southern portion of Worcester County has for years been designated in the Worcester County Comprehensive Plan as the preferred area for industrial development. Specifically, on page 19 the plan states that "Pocomoke City has and will continue to be the focus for the county's most intense industrial uses." The plan further recognizes that industrial uses need good road access, large sites, sufficient electricity, public water and sewer services, as well as rail, port facilities, and natural gas, all of which are available in the Pocomoke City area.

The Pocomoke Industrial Park was originally established in 1976 and currently comprises roughly 100 acres southwest of downtown Pocomoke City along Broad Street and the Pocomoke Beltway. Current businesses located in the Industrial Park include: Aurora Agronomy, Benelli, Inc., Bel-Art Products, NuTech Molding, and Ricca-East Chemical Company. There is also a small business incubator facility and an additional 42,000 square foot facility which previously housed the Mid-Atlantic Institute for Space and Technology (MIST) currently available for occupancy. Most recently, Cobb-Vantress, Inc. purchased an 8-acre parcel for construction of a new facility which will bring 30 new jobs to the area. There is still roughly 30 acres of property available for development in the Industrial Park which is served by existing utilities, including public water and sewer. The Town of Pocomoke City has recently requested financial assistance from the County for the construction of a 20 to 25,000 square foot speculative building to attract additional industrial tenants to the Pocomoke area. The Commissioners will consider partnering with Pocomoke City on the continued development of their industrial park and consider opportunities for expansion as surrounding properties become available for acquisition.