
Letters and Commentary

GCAC and the city

The Greater Crisfield Action Coalition is completing with this column its series on its action plan with a hope that it has been informative and educational to the community at large.

* * *

The Greater Crisfield Action Coalition (GCAC) went before the City Council on August 24th, 2016 asking for an endorsement from the City in support of their corporation, mission, and core values. This was done because both state and county officials have acknowledged there is funding available that GCAC could pursue once it gains the City's endorsement.

Before a standing room only crowd of supporters, the Council voted 2-2 with Council member Charlotte Scott unable to vote due to her position as President of GCAC. The night of the meeting, Council Vice President LaVerne Johnson agreed to hold a Work Session to better understand the work of the coalition and to discuss how the City and the coalition could work together.

Following the August 24th meeting, questions were raised about how to deal with the potential conflict of interest on the part of Councilwoman Scott, which some felt needed resolved before moving forward with the Work Session. According to City Manager Rick Pollitt, "Questions were raised as to whether Councilwoman Scott could vote or speak in regard to GCAC matters at Council meetings or Work Sessions because

of her position as GCAC President." As a result, in an effort to obtain completely unbiased legal advice, the City selected Salisbury attorney Dirk Widdowson of Widdowson and Dashiell to research the matter and work with the Crisfield Ethics Commission to rule on the questions raised.

The City's attorney has sent Mr. Widdowson relevant information concerning the matter, and is advised that Mr. Widdowson will contact the Ethics Commission directly to arrange a meeting. It was originally thought that this could be done during the month of September and that a finding would be made by October 1st. However, at this point, the City has not indicated when they expect the matter to be resolved.

During this waiting period, GCAC has used this time to educate the community and continue to build support. They published a series of weekly articles in the *County Times* outlining the history and mission of the organization, summarizing the recommendations in the Lofton Report to start a community development corporation (CDC) for Crisfield, and highlighting each component of the Action Plan to explain and summarize the goals. Finally, last week's article focused on research about CDCs nationwide and cited facts proving that CDCs are common, and they work.

At the same time, GCAC has been working on reorganizing and expanding its board for the New Year, and will announce its Board of Directors and vote for new officers at

its Jan. 9 meeting. GCAC has also secured a number of Advisors who will assist the corporation in their area of expertise, as needed. This list will be announced in January as well. Re-energized by an expanded Board of Directors and a group of skilled Advisors, GCAC will take up the matter of its ongoing relationship with the City early in the year as well as set forth plans for moving forward in 2017.
