



## 2022 State of the Town Address Mayor Howard Long

2022 was an exciting year! Our steady focus on infrastructure repair and replacement is paying dividends. Here at Town Hall, Staff and Officials continued tackling our longstanding infrastructure issues, addressing the barriers to land development, and creating a new policy perspective focused on the future of the Town. Town Volunteers and our Advisory Commissions are doing a fantastic job of managing our utilities, creating economic and environmental opportunities, and enhancing quality of life for our residents.

A huge amount of grant funding opportunities became available, this year. After a lot of hard work and preparation, we were ready to take advantage of those opportunities. As the saying goes, “the harder you work, the luckier you get.” We’re continuing to plan and prioritize the best uses of our \$3.1 Million in American Rescue Plan Funds (ARPA) and we’ve secured another \$11.9 Million in federal / state / county / private grants and budget requests. We have an opportunity to make a big impact, quickly. Usually, the numerous larger-scale capital projects we’ve worked to conceptualize and plan for, would need to be prioritized, phased, and completed one-by-one, as time and funding allows. Also, they would be paid for with debt service, tax rate, and utility rate increases. Fortunately, and unfortunately, we have plenty of areas to focus our capital spending on and long-term goals are now in our immediate reach. If we continue to work hard and be aggressive, in 2024, when our ARP funds must have been spent, we will be in an excellent position: more future-oriented, less reactive, less dependent on grant funds, and more self-sufficient.

Our hard work is paying off and we’re reaping the rewards. Our 2022 successes are evident in the following planned, ongoing, and completed projects/programs:

**MS4 NPDES PHASE II PERMIT:** At the beginning of 2022, the Town had restored 13.146 acres of the 29.62-acre, 2025 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Permit requirement. On the October 2022 Progress Report to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), we reported another 5.13 restored acres completed, for a total of 18.276 acres. With three years remaining on the first phase of the permit, we have completed 62% of our restoration requirement. I am proud to say that, for the first phase of the permit ending in 2025, we anticipate spending a total of \$686,000 to surpass permit compliance (48.84 restored acres planned). Approximately \$600,000 of those funds will come from grants, thereby minimizing the financial burden of an unfunded state mandate on our taxpayers. Also, when the next phase of the permit starts in 2026, we’ll have a 19.22 restored acre head start. In 2019, when our permit became active and our stormwater program was first developed, we used MDE’s data to estimate the cost of compliance at approximately \$1 Million (\$35k per restored acre), for the first phase of the permit. Our 2022 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System projects are listed, below:

- The 2022 Fall Tree Giveaway planted another 200 native species trees, providing 0.76 acres of restoration credit. This project was 50% grant-funded, through Potomac Edison (\$2,000) and the Chesapeake Bay Trust (\$2,264).
- In Spring 2022, working with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay and the MD Department of Natural Resources, we “reforested” grass fields near the WWTP and the Educational Campus, planting over-1,000 trees, earning 4.37 restored acres. This project is 100% grant funded and includes a 3-year maintenance plan for all plantings. There are similar open grassy areas, south of the Sycamore Run Subdivision, that we’ve targeted for future reforestation.

### ***For 2023, we have a couple of MS4 projects planned:***

- By partnering with the Washington County Soil Conservation District and working with their engineer, Ecotone, 75% of engineering and design is complete, for the “Little Antietam Watershed Stream Restoration & Reforestation” project. We have completed all state and county permitting requirements, and we’re waiting for

an MOU from DNR, to begin procurement and construction of a wetland area and 6 acres of reforestation, immediately adjacent to our Wastewater Treatment Plant. This public-private partnership (P3) project is estimated to cost \$503,000, is 100% grant funded through DNR, and is expected to earn 28.85 restored acre credits. Using the Town's contacts at Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, we were able to secure a "matching contribution" to complete the project's reforestation component.

- Working with the Antietam-Conococheague Watershed Alliance (ACWA), the Town's Tree Board was awarded a \$20,000 Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant, to plant 15-gallon trees, in urban areas and along roads. This project will pair well with the EDC's Downtown Beautification Project and provide approximately 0.20 restored acre credits.

**HUMAN RESOURCES / SAFETY & RISK:** Like many municipalities, we've had an enormous amount of employee turnover. Over the last five years, more than 20 employees have come and gone. We have a strong core group of employees, and we were able to effectively bridge the gaps. Important projects/programs to note:

- We made a couple of good hires at Public Works, with Mr. Ernie Mose and Mr. Logan Garrett joining our staff. I've heard multiple compliments from residents and volunteers, regarding their professionalism and effort. Boonsboro has great employees!
- Unfortunately, we recently lost our Safety & Risk Manager, but the committee will remain active/engaged and we were able to complete safety/security projects at South End Pump Station, continued a productive relationship with our Chesapeake Employers Insurance Representative, implemented an online continuing safety training program, and continued to update our COVID plan and provide our employees with the support/resources they need.
- We recently hired a new Administrative Assistant and Town Clerk. Mrs. Yvette May and Mr. Bryan Wachtel are both doing an amazing job and we're lucky to have brought on two bright and motivated employees, during a difficult time in the job market.
- A new position was created to support the EDC: Staff Liaison to the EDC. The EDC is a very active/involved commission, with numerous ongoing projects. Having a Staff Liaison to facilitate their projects and programs will be an invaluable resource and a force multiplier.

**WATER & WASTEWATER:** The FY22 Legislative Session went very well, and we were awarded \$1.5 Million in State Budget Allocations and Legislative Bond Initiatives. For the FY24 Legislative Session, we developed a Critical Water & Wastewater Funding Priorities Booklet, asking for \$12.2 Million to fund seven (7) water and wastewater projects. Many of those projects also have federal funding awarded or applied-for. We were ready, we were aggressive, we've shown we're a good investment and that we work hard, and I think we're likely to be awarded considerably more grant funding in 2023. Here are some ongoing water and wastewater projects we're proud of:

- *Drinking Water Reservoir Replacement Project:* We're currently in the design and engineering phase and we're scheduled to begin procurement/construction in July 2023. The funding plan we developed with Senator Paul Corderman worked out perfectly. We received \$1 Million from the County, \$1 Million from the State, \$1 Million through a Van Hollen CDS Application, \$100,000 through the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF), and the Appalachian Regional Commission has pledged another \$500,000. Unfortunately, inflation and supply chain issues have increased the total cost of the project, from \$4.1 Million to approximately \$7 Million. Luckily, our \$5 Million Congressionally Directed Spending Application, submitted early in 2022 through Congressman Trone's Office, was recently awarded and passed into law. I'm excited about the reservoir project and what it means for our 20-year water loss issue and long-term critical infrastructure. I'm very happy to report that we have \$8.6 Million in grant funding, this project is 100% grant funded, and will provide the Town with a 100-year water utility asset.
- *Wastewater Treatment Plant Sludge Dewatering Facility:* Engineering and design for this project is complete and we have County Building Permit and MDE Permit approvals. We're finalizing our stormwater permitting and we

anticipate procurement and construction to begin in January and February 2023. This project is expected to reduce operating expenses at the plant by approximately \$160,000/year. In addition to our \$325,000 in Appalachian Regional Commission grant funds, we were recently awarded a \$150,000 State Legislative Bond Initiative, through Senator Corderman's Office, a \$120,000 Rural Maryland Council Grant, and a \$250,000 Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund Grant. All told, we have \$845,000 in grant funding for WWTP Sludge Dewatering Project. One year ago, when the total project cost was estimated at a little over \$900,000, this would've been great news. Unfortunately, due to inflation and supply chain issues, the project cost was just re-estimated at \$2.3 Million. We'll likely use \$1.5 Million of our ARPA funds to bridge the gap.

- **USACE Asset Inventory Project:** With 50% grant funding from the US Army Corps of Engineers (\$42,000), we continue working on a physical inventory and condition assessment of the Town's water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure. This is the first big step towards creating much-needed Asset Management and Capital Improvement Programs. This will replace our current "when it breaks, fix it" approach, and improve planning, budgeting, transparency, reporting, and will make us more competitive for grant awards. We also need to rely less on the institutional knowledge of our wonderful employees. We wish they could work here forever, but we need a better way to "pass the torch" and create better continuity.
- **Geographic Information System Survey & Modeling:** Recently, we hired an engineering firm to complete an inventory of all our MS4 NPDES tree plantings and model ArcGIS database dashboards for our stormwater assets. This is another next step in the development of an Asset Management Program. As an MS4 Permittee, we need to begin treating the trees we plant like assets.
- **Alt. 40 Waterline Looping:** Since the Alt. 40 Waterline Extension was installed, in 2009, we've had to "flush" treated water, almost every day, to maintain a minimum acceptable level of chlorine in that section of the distribution system. Until recently, we were flushing approximately 3.2 million gallons of treated water, every year. That process has since been analyzed and improved, and we flush approximately 1 million gallons, annually. In September 2022, ARC invited the Town to complete a full grant application, for \$200,000, to loop the Alt. 40 Waterline and eliminate the need for flushing. We've also applied for \$1.2 Million in State funding and another \$1.2 Million in Congressionally Directed Spending funding. We just completed a Preliminary Engineering Report, and the total cost of the project is estimated to be \$2.8 Million. This project will reduce water loss, reduce operational expenses and lost revenue, and hopefully promote development as the new water mains are expected to pass through the Lakin and Flook Parcels.
- **Crestview Well Decommissioning & Demolition:** The water produced at the Crestview Well, located off Brookridge Drive, has high turbidity and is prohibitively expensive to treat/filter. We don't use the well and "if it's not an asset, it's a liability." Before the Christmas Holiday, we decommissioned the well and we'll demolish the building in the new year. A local well drilling company, Phillips Well Drilling, donated the decommissioning services and some of the equipment needed for demolition. This is another big step in becoming a well-managed and responsible utility system. We'll likely use the open ground for another MS4 reforestation project.
- **Shafer Park Well Replacement:** When the Keedysville Spring Weir Wall failed, in late 2020, we learned a few lessons about better asset management and the need for source water redundancy. After doing a water source redundancy analysis, it was revealed we would quickly experience water shortages if the Keedysville Spring (40% of Boonsboro's Water) failed or needed to be taken offline for repair/maintenance. The weir wall failure and the Alt. 40 aquifer contamination incident have shown us these are real possibilities that must be planned for. The project recently completed permitting, it will cost approximately \$260k, we have \$100k in ARC grant funds, Keedysville will pay for approximately 15%, and construction will begin in Spring 2023.
- **Advanced Metering Infrastructure & New Utility Billing Software:** The reservoir is estimated to be 10-20% of our 40MG annual water loss. Installing radio towers and zonal meters in strategic locations around the water distribution system will allow us to better understand our water loss and usage, quickly identify/repair new distribution leaks, quickly inform ratepayers when they have a water leak on their side of the water meter, and more efficiently read meters for billing. Keedysville has joined the project, too. Our meter vendor conducted both

physical and computer model testing, to determine how many towers we'll need and any residential meter replacements. Currently, our engineering consultant is working on a Preliminary Engineering Report, to create zones in the distribution system and determine where to deploy master meters. The cost of this project is estimated at \$700,000 and we plan to use ARPA funds. This project will immediately identify water loss, both on the customer side and in the distribution system. In the distribution system, it will isolate water loss and allow for faster and more accurate detection and repair.

- *Crestview High Pressure Bypass*: Due to the Crestview Subdivision's lower elevation relative to the reservoir, the neighborhood experiences very high-water pressure, which remains steady around 120 PSI. For comparison, the American Water & Wastewater Association (AWWA) doesn't recommend pressures in the distribution system over 80 PSI. Crestview experiences peaks in pressure of 140 PSI. High static pressure and spikes result in regular leaks and undue wear on the local distribution system. Our consulting engineer has identified a solution, involving the installation of a parallel line around Crestview and pressure reducing valves lowering pressures entering the neighborhood. This project is estimated to cost approximately \$800,000. This project was included in our FY24 State Budget Request and Congressionally Directed Spending Application, through Senator Van Hollen's Office.
- *SERCAP Water & Wastewater Rate Studies*: After a year-long hiatus, we completed our utility rate study, with services and guidance from the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project (SERCAP). The goal of any public utility is to be sustainable and to fully recover the costs of operations, including capital expenditures, both self- and debt-funded, while creating a reasonable amount of "rainy day" reserves. The way in which these various costs should be recovered is embedded in our rate structure and the SERCAP study gave us the knowledge and foundation to move forward with a more responsible, future-oriented approach. SERCAP is a grant-funded non-profit and the study cost the Town only our admin time. The Utilities Commission is working on a new rate structure/program that will be 100% transparent, recover all costs, build necessary reserves, charge our ratepayers equitably, and move us a step closer to becoming a sustainable/responsible utility provider.
- *Utility Customer Audits & Fixed Fee Corrections*: While responding to SERCAP's data request, during development of the rate study, we discovered many "Equivalent Dwelling Unit" and fixed fee discrepancies in our customer billing software. Recently, Council voted to correct the residential billing error and we're working on a 3<sup>rd</sup> party audit of our commercial accounts. Identifying existing issues, ensuring we have equitable/correct billing practices, and having a clear understanding of revenues are vital for future rate change proposals.
- *Boonsboro Education Campus Sports Field Irrigation Well*: One of the Town's largest water utility users is the Boonsboro Educational Campus (Washington County Public Schools). To irrigate their sports fields, they were using approximately 4 million gallons of treated water, per year. To free up some water system capacity and reduce the amount of treated water used for irrigation, the Town worked with WCPS to install an irrigation well. In early 2022, the well was installed and should be online soon.

**SHAFER PARK PROJECTS:** As usual, a lot is going on at Shafer Park! The Park is arguably one of the most valuable assets we have, and we like to keep it in good condition for patrons and residents. Here's a few ongoing Shafer Park Projects:

- *Creek Masonry Repair & Renovation*: The stonework throughout Shafer Park is unique and original to the park's construction, in the late 1930s. To Staff's knowledge, the stonework has never undergone a renovation or largescale maintenance project. The stone bridges, streambanks, and patio are all in significant disrepair and need a major renovation. The total cost of the project is \$225,000 and we were recently awarded \$203,000 in Community Parks & Playgrounds (CP&P) grant funding. The project takes place in a "Maryland Waterway" and needed a special MDE permit. From our experience with the Keedysville Spring Weir Wall Project, we were able to complete the permit application, without consultation and cost from an engineer. This project will begin procurement / construction, Spring 2023.
- *Shafer Park Path – Phase IV*: We've completed the first three phases of the Shafer Park Walking Path Project. Recently, we were awarded \$150,000 to complete Phase IV. The total project cost is estimated at \$165k and will

install approximately 1,700 linear feet of pervious asphalt path, connecting the older and newer sections of the north side of Shafer Park. This project is in design and will begin procurement / construction, Spring 2023.

- *Boonsboro Environmental Commission's Community Garden*: This year, the BEC created a site plan and proposal for a community garden at Shafer Park. Since receiving approval from the Mayor & Council, the BEC created a "Community Garden Planning Team" and has applied for multiple funding opportunities. The Community Garden will likely begin construction, in 2023, and is sure to become one of the park's focal points and a great place to socialize with friends and community members.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** After the Economic Development Commission (EDC) lost all but one of its members in 2021, we worked hard to recruit new volunteers and inject new life into this important advisory body. Today, we have a hardworking and engaged group of volunteers, poised to make considerable contributions to the Town's economy and bring in new businesses.

The EDC stays busy! They revived and expanded their rack card program, after briefly stopping due to the pandemic. Thirty local businesses purchased "Love Your Local" banners and they hosted their first-ever "Boonsboro Commission Meet & Greet," where Town Officials, Employees, and Volunteers collaborated and reported on ongoing/completed projects. They've also provided free advertising and promotion to our local businesses, through ribbon cuttings and regular networking events. Of particular note, the EDC worked on the design and fundraising for the JFK 50 Miler Commemorative Bronze Starting Line Plaques, to be installed on Main Street in Spring 2023.

Speaking of 2023, the EDC received a "Façade Improvement Grant" for \$30,000, through the Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD), and they'll soon be accepting applications from local businesses to renovate their storefronts. Now that Boonsboro is a "Sustainable Community," this year, the EDC will begin working on our Main Street designation.

Here are some of the other important projects/programs that the EDC is working on:

- *Downtown Beautification Project*: To increase the aesthetic and consumer appeal of the downtown commercial district, the EDC is working on a beautification master plan, with our consulting engineer and a local landscaper. The Town already has incredible history and culture. Adding landscaping to the downtown area and the Town's gateways will encourage shoppers, diners, and history enthusiasts to visit and local businesses to invest. Phase 1 will focus on the new traffic circle and the downtown area between Orchard Drive and Cemetery Lane. The EDC aims to increase the perception of Downtown Boonsboro as a remarkable area of commerce and history that creates a pleasant atmosphere for visitors to explore and visit/revisit. Once we have a master plan, we can begin applying for implementation grants. The EDC was awarded a \$5,000 Nora Roberts Foundation (NRF) Grant, to fund the drafting/design of the master plan.
- *AT Connector Trail*: The proximity of the Appalachian Trail represents an economic opportunity for the Town. Consumers are spending increasingly more money on recreation and hiking has become a popular activity. Connecting our downtown commercial district directly to the trail could have a significant impact on the downtown economy. Installing a "Heritage Trail" to the Washington Monument has cultural/historic value to the Town and offers our residents a recreational outlet. The EDC was recently awarded a \$90,000 grant from the Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF), to fund a feasibility study. With a preliminary study and a path forward, the EDC would begin design/procurement/construction. They're in the process of earning the designation of "Appalachian Trail Community," through the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and all the grant and economic opportunities that come with it. If all goes as planned, Boonsboro will be the FIRST Appalachian Trail Community in the State of Maryland. Well done, EDC!
- *Boonsboro Town Alliance*: The EDC understands that the Town needs a non-profit consortium of local businesses to increase commerce, host events, leverage our economies of scale, and to represent its members directly. The EDC drafted bylaws and will recruit the BTA's board and members, in 2023.

- 2022 Food Truck Festival: The EDC expanded on the success of the 2021 inaugural event, by adding live music, a garden tractor pull contest, an axe throwing game, and MORE food vendors. More than 3,000 people attended the event and the EDC raised over \$10,000 in sponsorship revenue. Two years in a row, the Food Truck Festival has been a huge success and it is quickly becoming part of the Town's cultural identity.

**MAYOR & COUNCIL PROJECTS:** Staff and Elected Officials are focused on much more than our utility infrastructure renewal projects. With an excellent understanding of our needs and what we want the future to look like, we've been able to work on several important capital projects and funding opportunities:

- Chase Six Boulevard - Campus Avenue Realignment & Intersection: Back in October 2021, we began an interagency project to build a controlled intersection at the intersection of Maple Avenue, Campus Avenue, and Chase Six Boulevard. We have a \$200,000 Legislative Bond Initiative, another \$200,000 from the Maryland Department of Transportation, and the County has expressed support for the project. The total project cost is estimated at \$800k and we plan to fund it entirely with grant funds. This project is still in the concept stage, but we hope to begin engineering and design, Spring 2023.
- Safe Routes to School Sidewalk Retrofits: A little over two years ago, the educational campus changed their dismissal routes and busses were routed through the older parts of Town, down narrow streets, and queued in front of the Fire Station while waiting for the traffic light, at the square. The sight of students walking home from school, on narrow roads next to busses and parent vehicles, was glaring and needed attention. The older section of Town, particularly Center Street, Orchard Drive, and Ford Avenue need pedestrian sidewalks for residents and students. Earlier this year, we applied for sidewalk retrofitting funding from MDOT SHA and recently we were awarded \$1.2 Million in grant funds to design sidewalks on Center, Ford, and Orchard. This project pairs nicely with the Intersection Project and provides better/safer infrastructure for our residents and their children.
- Lobbying Consultant & Maryland Rural Development Corporation (MRDC): Early in 2022, we started working with a lobbyist and it's been a force-multiplier, for grant funding awards, networking, and facilitating capital projects. Our lobbyist's numerous contacts, experience, and knowledge of the legislative system have been invaluable. His efforts, paired with the new resource of an MRDC grant writer have presented numerous new opportunities.
- JFK 50 Mile Ultramarathon Commemorative Plaques: Since 1963, the JFK 50 Mile Ultramarathon has started in Boonsboro. Coming up on the 60<sup>th</sup> running of the race, we decided to commemorate the starting line with two bronze plaques, inset into the sidewalks along Main Street. The total cost of the project is \$7,800 and we have matching grants from the Convention & Visitors Bureau (\$1,950), Middletown Valley Bank (\$1,950), and the JFK 50 Board (\$1,950). This is yet another important part of Boonsboro's rich history and I'm glad we were able to do something special for the JFK 50 Organization.
- MEA Streetlight Retrofit Project: In early Summer, we were awarded a \$26,000 Maryland Energy Administration Grant to replace 161 older, non-LED streetlight bulbs. Replacing the metal halide and high-pressure sodium bulbs with LED retrofits should reduce our electric expense by approximately \$4,000/year.
- MDE Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Comment Letter: With over \$800 Million in federal funds soon to be available to Maryland Municipalities, through the EPA and MDE, and Boonsboro perennially ineligible for grant funding because we're not considered a "Disadvantaged Community," we proposed new Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) grant eligibility criteria, that would account for the unique economic disadvantages we face as a municipality located in Appalachian Maryland. In September and December, we wrote formal letters to MDE, together with Keedysville, Smithsburg, and Sharpsburg, recommending that they adopt the Appalachian Regional Commission's eligibility criteria, for inclusion in the DWSRF grant program and the proposed Environmental Justice Screening Tool criteria. MDE received letters of support for our recommendation from Congressman Trone, Senator Corderman, and Delegate Wivell.

**FUTURE CAPITAL PROJECTS:** It's important to keep all this momentum moving forward. Stagnancy and indecision created the systemic issues we're working to correct, today. Here are some of the future capital projects we're working on:

- Wastewater Main Replacement (\$1,600,000): The Town's Wastewater Hydraulic Model & Master Plan identified several areas of the wastewater collection system that are over-capacity now or will be with future development. The mains in the collection system that are currently over-capacity, but not tied to future development, will have to be replaced by the Town. The cost of those replacements is estimated at \$1.6 Million. This project was included in our \$12.2 Million State Budget Request for Critical Utility Infrastructure.
- Wastewater Treatment Plant Lagoon Dredging & Repurposing (\$1,200,000): We still have one lagoon remaining at the WWTP, after the second was dredged and its contents placed in the first. A thick rubber liner holds the 175,000 cubic feet of sludge and slurry from entering the surrounding environment. We haven't used / maintained the lagoon since it was decommissioned in 2009, with the completion of the WWTP. Again, "if it's not an asset, it's a liability." Leakage or structural failure would be an environmental catastrophe. We've prioritized this project and included it in our \$12.2 Million State Budget Request.
- Drinking Water Distribution System Lead Component Removal (\$1,000,000): Just under a mile (5,000 linear feet) of our water distribution system is made of cast iron pipe, sealed at the joints with lead packing and oakum. The recently enacted EPA Revised Lead & Copper Rule requires public water systems to monitor and/or replace lead service lines, by October 2024. It's time to prioritize the removal of ALL lead components from our distribution system. We included this project in our FY24 State Budget Request and with our Van Hollen CDS application.
- Shafer Park Drive Extended (\$1,500,000): Shafer Park is our community's focal point, and we need improved infrastructure to accommodate the daily patronage and annual events. Finally finishing this piece of the park's infrastructure makes the park and downtown more accessible, provides much needed increased parking, and adding a "minor collector" will reduce traffic congestion on Main Street.

Moving forward into 2023, we will continue working on capital improvements, infrastructure repairs and maintenance, economic development, growth, public safety, and all the other functions that help make Boonsboro such a great place to live. We'll strive to become less reactive and more future-oriented. Better management and proper planning allow our residents to be more involved and invested and reassures them their tax dollars are well invested.

Staff and Elected Officials would like to thank all our generous community members and businesses for their kind donations and volunteerism. You and your families are our motivation and drive to do a good job. Boonsboro is an amazing community, and we'll continue working hard to keep it that way!

Sincerely,  
Mayor Howard W. Long  
Town of Boonsboro