

## Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

May 5, 2009

Louise L. Gulyas, President  
James C. Church, Vice President  
Judith O. Boggs  
Linda C. Busick  
Robert L. Cowger, Jr.  
James L. Purnell, Jr.  
Virgil L. Shockley

Following a motion by Commissioner Purnell, seconded by Commissioner Boggs, the Commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 10-508(a)(1), (7) and (8) of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform executive actions. Also present at the closed session were Gerald T. Mason, Chief Administrative Officer; Kelly Shannahan, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Sonny Bloxom, County Attorney; Kim Moses, Public Information Officer; and George Bradley, Director of Human Resources. Topics discussed and actions taken included: personnel matters, including an employee disciplinary action; considering appointments to various County boards and commissions; reviewing potential and pending litigation; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing executive actions.

After the closed session, the Commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Gulyas called the meeting to order and announced the topics discussed during the morning closed session.

The Commissioners reviewed and approved the minutes of their April 21 and April 24, 2009 meetings, as presented.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Worcester County Social Services Director Peter Buesgens, Foster Care Supervisor Roberta Baldwin and other staff members along with foster parent Sharron Chambers recognizing May as National Foster Care Month and thanking area foster parents who have opened their homes to help children involved in crisis situations. Mr. Buesgens stated that the foster care program in Worcester County has grown from 12 to 20 foster families, with a goal of reaching 27 families. He stated that families are the fabric of Worcester County, and foster parents help keep that fabric together.

The Commissioners presented a commendation in recognition of outstanding volunteer service to the following six veterans who have devoted themselves to the upkeep and maintenance of the Worcester County Veteran's Memorial: John Henglein (US Navy), Al Bridgman (US Coast Guard), Jim Coyne and William Bowers (US Air Force), Bill Lee (US Army), and Dave Smith (US Marine Corps). The Commissioners further noted that these individuals have been named among Maryland's Most Beautiful People of 2009 by Worcester County and the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism.

The Commissioners presented a commendation to Louise and Phillip Lassiter of Ocean Pines in recognition of their outstanding volunteer service to the community and for being named among Maryland's Most Beautiful People of 2009 by Worcester County and the Governor's Office of Service and Volunteerism.

The Commissioners presented Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS) Principal Dr. Mel Ross with a check in the amount of \$1,000 and a commendation honoring Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS) for being named as a Maryland Blue Ribbon School of Excellence for 2008.

The Commissioners conducted a public hearing to obtain the views of citizens on an application the Commissioners propose to submit to the State on or before May 29, 2009 for Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds of \$300,000 for the rehabilitation of 18 owner-occupied homes in Worcester County, with a County matching fund commitment of \$75,000 in-kind services or 25% from the County over the two-year grant period to continue the Housing Rehabilitation Program, which assists low to moderate income persons and households. Housing Program Administrator Jo Ellen Bynum outlined the grant application. She stated that under the County's current CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Grant, all funding has been obligated and all expenditures will be complete by the grant deadline of July 31, 2009, at which point a total of 21 rehabilitations of owner-occupied homes throughout the rural areas of Worcester County will have been completed. She advised that the State CDBG Office is accepting applications until May 29 from local jurisdictions for FY10 funding from the total allocation of \$7,932,564 designated to Maryland by the federal government. Ms. Bynum stated that 100% of the grant funds awarded benefit low to moderate income families. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Ms. Bynum stated that possible applicants are referred to the program through Worcester County Social Services and Environmental Programs. She stated that to date 214 homes have been rehabilitated through this program at an average repair cost of \$46,000 per home.

Commissioner Gulyas opened the floor to receive public comment.

In response to questions by Ellie Diegelman of Ocean City, Ms. Bynum stated that the Census Bureau would not be able to provide referrals for the housing rehabilitation program due to confidentiality issues and explained that there are more applicants for housing repairs than the program can accommodate. She stated these CDBG funds could not be used to abate nuisance conditions, but must be used for housing rehabilitation. She further advised that the homes must be owner-occupied, not rental properties. Ms. Bynum explained that lead abatement work is performed only by licensed contractors under strict procedures to ensure safety.

There being no further public comment, Commissioner Gulyas closed the public hearing.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Shockley, the Commissioners unanimously adopted Resolution No 09-10, authorizing the filing of a CDBG Application to fund a Housing Rehabilitation Program in Worcester County in FY10 and FY11 and authorizing Commission President Gulyas to sign all appropriate documents.

Liquor Control Board (LCB) Chairman Don Hastings and members Joseph A. Jackson

and Larry Wilkinson and LCB Executive Director Brian Sturgeon presented the Commissioners with the Fiscal Year 2010 LCB budget. Mr. Hastings thanked the Commissioners for meeting with them. Mr. Jackson reviewed budgeted revenues and expenses, noting the LCB's wholesale revenues were down by \$621,331 from FY09 due to the economic downturn in the economy and value pricing. However, retail sales have increased. He stated that the LCB is operating at a 3% profit margin and projects to generate a net income of \$422,428 in FY10. In response to a question by Commissioner Shockley, Mr. Wilkinson explained that revenue figures for December 2008 include the payout of one-time retirement benefits. In response to a question by Commissioner Cowger, Mr. Wilkinson stated that the LCB passes 100% of the cost savings received on the purchase of alcohol at discounted prices to the liquor licensees during the period of reduced prices available to the LCB, but not beyond. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Cowger, the Commissioners unanimously approved the proposed budget as presented. The Commissioners thanked the LCB for their presentation.

Health Officer Debbie Goeller, Dr. Andrea Mathias and Operations Chief Debra Stephens of the Health Department and Emergency Services Director Teresa Owens presented a PowerPoint presentation defining and outlining the following key points related to Swine Influenza A (H1N1): Status of Cases; Diagnosis; Treatment; Testing Recommendations; Health Department Response; General Guidance for the Public; What to do if You Have a Flu-Like Illness; Community Mitigation; Isolation of Cases; Quarantine; School Dismissal and Child Care Facility Closure; Other Social Distancing; Interventions; and Current Recommendations. Ms. Goeller advised that none of the four confirmed or 11 possible cases in Maryland occurred in Worcester County. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Ms. Goeller advised that suspected flu cases are being tested by the State rather than the Center for Disease Control (CDC) due to the overwhelming backlog the CDC is currently experiencing. She advised that the County has pandemic flu plans, isolation and quarantine plans and a continuity of operations plan in place in the event of an outbreak of Swine Influenza in the area. In response to a question by Commissioner Gulyas, Ms. Goeller advised that Worcester County is eligible to receive antiviral medications from the Strategic National Stockpile, understanding that such supplies must be dispensed at no cost to the public. Ms. Goeller stated that the Health Department, with only four communicable disease nurses working to address this new health risk while mediating existing case loads and State mandated furlough days, is currently understaffed. She stated further concern that it would take a minimum of three months to fill a vacant nursing position, even if the State gave her the go ahead to hire an additional nurse today. She asked the Commissioners to use the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) as a platform to advocate for State funding to fill one vacant nurse position and other resources needed to address local public health. She also recommended the Commissioners reconsider the purchase of anti-virals through the Maryland Antiviral Purchase Partnership Program and to continue to provide support to the Health Department from various County departments. Ms. Goeller concluded that regardless of whether the virus dissipates in one month or comes back with renewed strength at a later time, she commended her staff for the excellent job they have done to orchestrate an approach to addressing this virus using limited resources.

Ms. Owens advised that Emergency Services is prepared to provide emergency medical service providers with information on possible Swine Influenza cases, so that they will be

prepared to take the proper precautions before arriving on the scene. In response to a question by Commissioner Shockley, Dr. Mathias advised that youth currently account for the largest percentage of the population affected by the flu only because they were the first to be exposed to the virus. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Ms. Goeller explained that the flu is currently being classified as an epidemic because it has only been identified on the North American continent. However the virus could be elevated to pandemic status if sustained cases are confirmed on two or more continents. Following much discussion, the Commissioners thanked staff for their presentation and requested to be informed as further details become available.

Pursuant to the request of George King, Agency Procurement Specialist for the Health Department, and upon a motion by Commissioner Shockley, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Gulyas to sign a lease agreement for an apartment at 405 Lark Lane in Ocean City at a cost of \$8,000 that is to be used to house the Hot Boards Assessment Unit for the Ocean City Youth Health Center during the summer of 2009. The lease is funded by a grant from the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration.

Pursuant to the request of Election Director Patricia Jackson and upon a motion by Commissioner Shockley, the Commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Gulyas and Boggs voting in opposition, to approve out-of-state travel for Ms. Jackson and Teresa Riggin to attend the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual National Election Center Conference in San Diego, California from August 11-15, 2009 to renew their Certified Election/Registration Administrator (CERA) status. In response to a question by Commissioner Gulyas, Ms. Jackson stated that they must attend the conference to maintain their CERA status, as there are no online courses or other options available to them to meet the continuing education requirements. In response to a question by Commissioner Busick, Ms. Jackson advised that staff would be busy preparing for the 2010 elections and, therefore, unable to attend the conference in Washington, D.C. in January 2010. Commissioner Cowger stated that he would vote to approve out-of-state travel only if it meant not doing so would jeopardize the election staff's CERA status. In response to a question by Commissioner Boggs, Ms. Jackson stated that most counties require both the Election Director and Deputy Director to maintain CERA status. County Attorney Sonny Bloxom stated that such a requirement may be imposed by individual counties; however, the State makes no such requirement that he is aware of.

Public Works Director John Tustin updated the Commissioners on the results of the County's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) & E-Cycling Day event, which was held at the West Ocean City Park and Ride on Saturday, April 25, 2009. He advised the Commissioners that 281 vehicles responded to the event, dropping off 10,540 pounds (lbs.) of HHW products and 357 electronics items totaling 4,760 lbs. Mr. Tustin stated that even with the effects of the depressed economy this year's event was a success. He reminded those in attendance that Public Works would conduct the annual Citizens Scrap Tire Drop-off Day this Saturday, May 9, 2009, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Central Landfill Recycling Facility in Newark.

The Commissioners met with Mr. Tustin to review bid recommendations for the

construction of the North Worcester County Homeowner Drop-off Facility in Bishopville. Mr. Tustin reviewed the bids, noting that the lowest bidder was A.P. Croll & Son, Inc. of Georgetown, Delaware at a cost of \$414,850. However, keeping in mind that the Commissioners would like to stimulate the local economy, it was determined that the lowest bidder within the County was Hegarty & Associates, Inc. of Berlin, Maryland at a cost of \$481,250. Mr. Tustin stated that the difference of \$66,400 between the two companies should be considered before awarding the bid. Commissioner Cowger stated that due to the current economic conditions and solid waste budget challenges due to reduced volume, the Commissioners should postpone any further discussion on this project until after the FY10 Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Budget is adopted. Commissioner Busick concurred and requested that the recycling bins be returned to the Bishopville Park during the interim. In response to comments by Commissioner Busick, Mr. Tustin stated that County staff should be able to complete some of the work associated with the project, such as tree plantings, in-house to help reduce costs. Following much discussion, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to postpone award of the project until after the FY10 Solid Waste Enterprise Fund Budget is adopted, determine items that can be performed in-house to save money, and further directed staff to ask the low bidder to hold the current bid price through July until a final decision is made on whether to move forward with the project during the upcoming fiscal year.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Shockley, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications for purchase of propane gas to be provided to 15 locations throughout the County for a period of two years commencing with the date of award and ending May 31, 2011.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Cowger, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications for Generator Preventive Maintenance Service on 73 generators located throughout the County. In response to a question by Commissioner Shockley, Mr. Tustin stated that even though Curtis Engine has done an excellent job providing preventive maintenance on the County's generators for the past three years, the County should update the price of such services by soliciting bids.

The Commissioners met with Mr. Tustin to review a letter from Bridget Ketcham, General Manager of The Parke at Ocean Pines, requesting the County post 25 mile per hour (mph) speed limit signs at each entrance to The Parke, which include Manklin Creek Road entrance, Central Park West entrance, Potomac Avenue entrance and Chatham Court entrance. Mr. Tustin concurred with Ms. Ketcham's request and recommended lowering the posted speed limit on Manklin Creek Road, which is included in the County Inventory of Public Roads, from 30 mph to 25 mph. He advised, however, that the other three roads are owned and maintained by the Ocean Pines Association (OPA). Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Boggs, the Commissioners voted unanimously to lower the posted speed limit on Manklin Creek Road from 30 mph to 25 mph and to suggest that Ms. Ketcham contact the OPA with regard to lowering the posted speed on the other three roads in The Parke at Ocean Pines.

Development Review and Permitting Director Ed Tudor updated the Commissioners on

the success of recent public workshops on the draft Zoning and Subdivision Control Article, Zoning Maps and Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses. Mr. Tudor advised that over the next couple of weeks staff will compile a summary of the comments submitted by the workshop attendees for the Planning Commission and Commissioners to review. He further advised that in preparing for the workshops, several minor, inadvertent errors made by staff were discovered on the draft Zoning Maps that he recommended correcting as follows: Map 9, Part of Parcel 158 - westerly side of St. Martins Neck Road, south of Bishopville - currently shown as A-1 Agricultural District, but should be R-1 Residential District; Map 10, Parcel 68 on the easternly side of St. Martins Neck Road at Mumford Road, which is currently shown as E-1 Estate District but should be A-1; Map 18, Parcel 20 on the southerly side of US Rt. 50 east of Dale Road, which is currently shown as A-1 but should be A-2 Agricultural District; and Map 27, Parcel 592 on the westerly side of MD Rt. 611 at the southerly side of MD Rt. 707 in West Ocean City, which is currently shown as C-2 General Commercial District but should be R-4 General Residential District. Following some discussion, the Commissioners concurred with staff's recommendation to correct the errors made on the draft maps to reflect the intended zoning recommended by the Planning Commissioner and County Commissioners upon introduction. The Commissioners further agreed to declare their meeting of June 2, 2009 as a special legislative session and scheduled the hearing on Emergency Bill 09-1 (Zoning and Subdivision Control Article), the Zoning Maps and Design Guidelines and Standards for Commercial Uses to begin at 7:00 p.m. on June 2, 2009 in the County Commissioners meeting room at the Government Center in Snow Hill.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Chief Administrative Officer Gerald T. Mason and upon a motion by Commissioner Boggs, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Cowger voting in opposition, to lift the hiring freeze to fill current vacancies in the Emergency Services Department to alleviate scheduling problems and overtime for basic coverage of the 911 Center.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to reconvene at 7:00 p.m. for the FY2009/2010 Requested County Operating Budget Public Hearing at Snow Hill High School.

The Commissioners held a public hearing at Snow Hill High School on the FY2009/2010 Requested County Operating Budgets. The Worcester County Sheriff's Office Color Guard began the hearing with the presentation of colors. Commission President Gulyas called the meeting to order. Finance Officer Harold Higgins presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the Worcester County's Taxpayer's Guide to the FY2009/2010 Requested Operating Budgets, which included the following graphs and information: Statistics regarding What Drives the Current Budget; Consumer Price Index; Worcester County Assessable Tax Base 25-Year History; Property Tax Revenue Analysis; Worcester County FY10 Revenue Estimates for Recordation, Transfer and Income Tax, Interest Income and Highway User Revenue; Composition of General Fund Revenues and Expenditures; Property Tax Rates and Comparisons for Eastern Shore Counties; Income Tax Rates and Comparisons to Neighboring Counties; Combined Income and Property Tax Comparison to Neighboring Counties; Board of Education

Funding; School Enrollment History and Funding Per Student; Long-Term Debt Obligations Outstanding; Annual Debt Service for FY10 Budget; and FY09 Fund Balance Designations. Mr. Higgins explained that the County's estimated revenues are \$175,608,553, and the requested expenditures are \$181,794,045, resulting in a difference (shortfall) of \$6,185,492, which must be reconciled either through reductions in expenditures, the creation of additional revenues, or both. Mr. Higgins explained that the constant yield tax rate represents the property tax rate that would generate the same amount of revenues the County received in the current fiscal year. He noted that in past years as property assessments increased, the constant yield tax rate decreased. Mr. Higgins stated that in February, for the first time in the County's recent history, the State informed Worcester County that estimated assessments had decreased. Therefore, if Worcester County maintains the current tax rate of \$.70 per \$100 of assessed value, the property tax revenues would decrease by 5.2% resulting in \$6,683,343 of lost real property tax revenues. This year the constant yield rate has increased to \$.738.

Commissioner Gulyas opened the floor to receive public comments, first on the departmental and agency budget requests and then on the Board of Education budget requests.

Kevin Kirstein of Ocean City stated that the County is in a difficult financial situation this year and is likely to be in the same boat next year, so the color budget handouts should have been printed in black and white and double sided.

Harold Scrimgeour, a local developer speaking as a private citizen, stated that in this sagging economy building permits are down and staffing levels should decrease as well.

Kate McQueen of Berlin stated that Worcester County Government does not operate a homeless shelter. Rather local government gives grant funds to Diakonia to provide such services to help the downtrodden. She stated that while these grant funds reflect only a small portion of the shelter's overall budget, without those funds Diakonia would be unable to qualify for the federal and State grants that sustain the majority of the shelter's operating budget. She implored the Commissioners to rethink their decision to discontinue grants to the non-profit agencies this year if for no other reason than to assure their ability to remain eligible for federal grants. She asked the Commissioners to dip into their Rainy Day fund or raise taxes rather than balance the County budget on the backs of the poor and homeless citizens of Worcester County.

Mildred Ward of Ocean Pines urged the Commissioners to reinstate funding to the non-profits, particularly Diakonia. She stated that as a taxpayer she is willing to pay her share to help.

Diane Wayman of Berlin stated that the measure of a community's worth is found in how it cares for its most vulnerable citizens. She stated that the taxpayers of Worcester County can afford to help out because they enjoy a savings of nearly \$1,000 in income and property tax over those living in the neighboring counties.

Joan Roache of Ocean City asked the Commissioners to restore grants to Diakonia and the other non-profits, using rainy day funds or tax increases if necessary.

Mike McGarry of Ocean City thanked the Commissioners for their support of the Developmental Center, which provides service to over 90 developmentally challenged individuals. He asked them to continue that support to assure these individuals have a safe place to go to receive services.

June Walker of the Developmental Center stated that she and her staff recognize that the County is facing difficult economic times, and the Developmental Center strives to be part of the

solution to this crisis by doing more with less. She advised that the Developmental Center grant request for this year has been reduced by more than 60% from FY09, and asked the Commissioners to look favorably on this request.

Claudia Nagel, Executive Director of Diakonia, thanked each of the Commissioners for their support throughout the past years. She stated that she recognizes that this is a very difficult budget year, and for many who are hurting, Diakonia is their last ditch effort to keep their heads above water. She stated that requests for groceries from the shelter's food pantry have doubled from 2,000 bags last year to 4,000 bags this year; and many of those requesting food bags were former food donors. She stated that jobs are so hard to come by for those searching for work that the shelter has had to extend the number of nights individuals and families are eligible to receive services. She stated that it costs \$38 a night to shelter and provide services to an individual that will help them set a new course for their lives, but it costs much more to house that same individual in the County Jail. Ms. Nagel implored the Commissioners to provide flat funding to the non-profits, stating that County grants allow them to leverage state and federal funds.

Teresa Fields, Executive Director of Worcester Youth and Family Counseling Services (WYFCS), stated that she is well aware that this is among the worst economic times the nation has faced, making the services provided by non-profits more crucial than ever before. She stated that by the close of this fiscal year, WYFCS will have served more individuals and families in need than it has in the last three years combined. Ms. Fields advised that last year WYFCS used County grant funds to leverage more than \$1.5 million in federal and state funds for which they could not have applied without a County match. She advised that without County funds this year, WYFCS may be forced to close its office in Pocomoke. She invited the Commissioners to visit the WYFCS offices to see how their grant funds are used.

Chris Palmer of WYFCS in Berlin expressed her gratitude for past grant funds and asked the Commissioners to please reconsider their decision to cease funding to their organization and instead support all the non-profits.

Megan Kerrigan of WYFCS in Berlin stated that the rise in people being served by WYFCS is alarming, particularly as many who were formerly financially secure have been laid off from work, have no food in their homes and are unable to clothe their children. She stated that if County grant funding dries up, so does the hope that WYFCS is able to provide to these families.

Debbie Dotson, Lori Carson, Winona Parker and Donna Taylor of the WYFCS office in Pocomoke stated that their office provides a holistic approach to serving those in the community. They advised that their staff of only four served 440 families this year by not only helping to meet physical needs but by empowering them to break the cycle of economic turmoil through education, budgeting, job searches and resume writing. Ms. Dotson stated that WYFCS has been able to help a two-parent family thrown into financial turmoil when it was discovered that the mother had brain cancer. She stated that her office worked with faith-based institutions in the community to help cover the cost of her health insurance, medical bills, food, gas to travel across the State for health services, money for hotel rooms so the family could be near her as she underwent surgery, and much more. She stated that if the Pocomoke office closes, so does the help and hope that families like this one need to survive when their worlds crumble around them. She concluded that last year alone WYFCS collected \$53,000 for families in need, and this year they have collected over \$100,000. She asked the Commissioners to please reconsider and

rethink their prior decision not to provide critical funding to the non-profits this year.

Katherine Smith, Director of WYFCS Strengthening Adolescent Girls with Education and Support (SAGES), stated that with grant funds from the County SAGES is able to provide comprehensive, emotional and educational support for girls who are experiencing difficulty or conflict in school and at home. She asked the Commissioners to provide the funding needed to help keep this program open.

Robin Bunting of WYFCS stated that WYFCS helps to keep children out of foster care by providing intensive case management to families in crisis. She stated that County grant funding is invaluable to them in their efforts to keep kids safe in their communities and in their homes.

Brigitte Saulsbury, Director of WYFCS Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), stated that CASA uses County grant funds to advocate for abused and neglected children and their families. She stated that last year volunteers spent 1,800 hours advocating for 41 children, and asked the Commissioners to provide grant funding to help them continue to provide this service.

Carolyn Cordial, Assistant Director of WYFCS in Berlin, stated that the funds the Commissioners provide to WYFCS gives her and her staff the ability to say "yes" when calls come in like the one seeking adoptive placement for three children who otherwise would have no place to live, or a call to provide counseling services during the school day to a child struggling with emotional issues, or to respond to a call from the court system to complete an in-home study. She advised that referrals for WYFCS are up by 500% this year, and in her 13 years with WYFCS she has never before seen so many people in pain and desperate for help.

Reverend George Tasker of Pocomoke asked the County to fund the grant requests of both WYFCS and Samaritan Shelter in Pocomoke.

Richard Blevins, of Stockton, stated that one way or another the County will pay for services for the needy, either through the non-profits or through public safety at the County Jail.

Garry Mumford, Assistant Warden for the County Jail, clarified that it cost \$59 per night to house each inmate at the jail.

Chris Welch, of Snow Hill, asked the Commissioners to provide grant funds to the Worcester County Arts Council, which last year alone awarded \$30,000 to help area agencies fund arts programs and scholarships for graduating seniors, and provides free programs and exhibits that foster arts in under-served areas of the community.

Meg Arnold, of Snow Hill, thanked the Commissioners for their past support of and participation in the Worcester County Fair (WCF). She stated that thanks to the County, which provides the lion's share of support for the WCF, admission is free. She stated that last year alone some 12,000 residents and visitors attended and participated in a myriad of activities at the fair. She stated that other sources of funding for the WCF have been cut, making County grant funds even more crucial to the continued success of the fair.

John Medlin, of Ocean City, asked the Commissioners to raise the food and beverage tax one-half percent to help balance the County's Operating Budget.

Dr. Jon Andes, Superintendent of Schools for the Board of Education (BOE), thanked the Commissioners for their past support and reviewed the various achievements of his children who attend the County public school system. He stated that it is no accident that Worcester County public schools serve as a model of excellence throughout both the State and the nation. He asked

the Commissioners to fund the BOE at the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) level to help keep schools strong. He stated that education is a legacy that those in the County can provide to the children.

Michelle Schachter, of Bishopville and a parent volunteer at Showell Elementary School (SES), thanked the Commissioners for withdrawing the MOE waiver application, stating that it was the right thing to do.

Ginger Gillis, of Berlin and an alumni parent, stated that she has two children who have graduated from public schools in the County and are now both taxpayers. She thanked them for everything they have done for the children of Worcester County and advised that she supports funding the BOE at the MOE level.

Joellen West, of West Ocean City, thanked the Commissioners for their funding and support of Cedar Chapel Special School (CCSS). She stated that her son, who has tubular sclerosis, is a happy and healthy boy thanks to the help and caring he receives from his teachers and aids.

Lavion Harmon, of Pocomoke, stated that her son is on the honor roll at Pocomoke High School (PHS) thanks to the continued financial support of the Commissioners, and she asked them to fund the BOE's MOE budget.

Terry Springle, representing the 600 members of the Worcester County Teachers Association (WCTA), stated that the WCTA members understand the unique economic times the County is facing and realize that everyone must do his or her part, which is why the WCTA agreed to a contract that provides no increase in pay or cost of living adjustment. He asked the Commissioners to fund the MOE budget, and advised that cuts beyond that level would affect the students and compromise the ability of the teachers to do their jobs adequately.

Terri Batze, of Eden, stated that she and her husband made the right decision to send their daughter, Danny, to Snow Hill Middle School (SHMS), which is among the top academically performing schools in the State. She stated that she realizes the challenges the Commissioners face as they struggle to balance a shrinking budget, and asked them to support the MOE budget.

Beth Ridgeway, of Bishopville, thanked the Commissioners for doing the right things: recognizing who their voters are and listening when they called for the County to fund the MOE budget. She stated that her teenagers would say, "Commissioners, tonight you rock!"

Thomas Tyndall, of Berlin, stated that he has three children who attend Stephen Decatur High School (SDHS), Berlin Intermediate School (BIS) and Berlin Elementary School (BES). He expressed his gratitude to the Commissioners for agreeing to fund the MOE budget and for the support that they provide to the teachers and staff who serve his children.

Florence Terrill, of Snow Hill, stated that Snow Hill Elementary School SHES and SHMS are able to accommodate the unique learning styles of both of her children, and she thanked the Commissioners for supporting the requested MOE budget.

Nita Holliman, of Pocomoke, thanked the Commissioners for supporting public schools by funding the requested MOE budget in a challenging budget year. She personally thanked Commissioner Cowger for his support of Pocomoke Elementary School (PES) and announced that PES is a finalist for the Panasonic National School Change Award.

Kevin Kirstein of Ocean City stated that his son will graduate from SDHS this year. He stated that for the first year he can remember, he stands before the Commissioners empty handed, asking for nothing other than to fund the requested MOE budget.

Marilyn James, of Ocean City, expressed her thanks to Commissioner Church for all that he has done for Ocean City Elementary School (OCES) and its 563 students, and she thanked the Commissioners for funding the requested MOE budget.

Kathy Wool, of Snow Hill, stated that she is the mother of four boys, three of whom have graduated from Snow Hill High School (SHHS) and gone on to higher education, and one who currently attends SHHS. She thanked the Commissioners for supporting the requested MOE budget and for their past support of education.

Sabrina Iampieri, of Bishopville, stated that her two daughters attend Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS) and Berlin Intermediate School (BIS) where they and their fellow students receive numerous opportunities that help them to achieve academic success. She stated that she wants the very best for her children and thanked the Commissioners for supporting the requested MOE budget.

Julie Redden, of Ocean City, stated that her children attend SDMS and are receiving an outstanding education. She thanked the Commissioners and stated that funding the requested MOE budget was not an easy thing to agree to do, but it is the right thing to do.

Bill Cioccio, of Bishopville, stated that nine years ago he relocated his family from Pittsburgh to Worcester County because he wanted a better education for his children, who attend SES and BIS. He stated that both of his children have scored in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile on State tests, not because they are of exceptional intelligence, but because the school has prepared them well to meet such testing challenges. He stated that Pittsburgh schools are failing to properly educate children because the momentum to do so has slipped. He asked the Commissioners not to allow Worcester County schools to go down the same slippery slope by failing to maintain Worcester County schools.

There being no further public comment, Commissioner Gulyas closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Gulyas thanked everyone in attendance for their comments. She explained that the County is still facing challenging times, and are faced with making some tough decisions to balance this year's budget. She stated that the Commissioners hear and understand the requests of the parents and the BOE, but they also heard the requests of those who desperately need funding to help the poor. She declared that education is extremely important in Worcester County and will remain so, but the Commissioners are also going to take care of the people in need in this county. She invited those in attendance to attend the Commissioners' budget work sessions on May 20 and 26, 2009. On behalf of the Commissioners she thanked everyone for attending the hearing and stated that the Commissioners would do their best to approve a budget that would benefit everyone in these difficult times.

The board adjourned to meet again on May 19, 2009.