

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

March 1, 2022

Joseph M. Mitrecic, President
Theodore J. Elder, Vice President
Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.
Madison J. Bunting, Jr.
James C. Church
Joshua C. Nordstrom
Diana Purnell

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Elder, 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 3-305(b)(1) and (7) of the General Provisions (GP) Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform administrative functions permitted under the provisions of Section GP 3-104. Also present at the closed session were Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Joe Parker, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: hiring Matthew Clark as a fire marshal investigator II in the Fire Marshal's Office, Nancy Schwendeman as a workforce engagement and development specialist in Tourism and Economic Development, and Caleb Jackson as a roads worker III within the Roads Division of Public Works; advertising to hire a benefits specialist within Human Resources, and other personnel matters; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing FY23 benefits recommendations and board appointments.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:43 a.m.

After the closed session, the commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Mitrecic called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Commissioner Purnell and pledge of allegiance, announced the topics discussed during the morning closed session.

The commissioners reviewed and approved the open and closed session minutes of their February 15, 2022 meeting as presented.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing March as Women's History Month to Commission for Women Chair Tamara White, Co-Chair Coleen Colson, and other CFW members.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing March as March for Meals Month to Commission on Aging (COA) Executive Director John Durrough and other COA staff.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing March as Professional Social

Work Month to Department of Social Services (DSS) Assistant Director Tammy Jones, Worcester County Health Department staff Julie Rayne and Trudy Adkins, and Life Crisis Director Jamie Manning and others.

The commissioners presented a proclamation retroactively recognizing February 15, 2022 as School Resource Officer Appreciation Day to Lieutenant Bob Trautman of the Sheriff's Office.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-6 as follows: authorizing Recreation and Parks to apply for a Maryland Heritage Areas Authority Non-Capital Project Grant not to exceed \$20,000 to host the annual Harbour Day at the Docks festival in West Ocean City (WOC); authorizing the use of a portion of the WOC commercial parking lot and boat ramp by the Maryland Coastal Bays Program on October 2, 2022 for Marine Debris Plunder, a community cleanup event; approving out-of-state travel for Recreation and Parks Director Kelly Rados and Recreation Superintendent Allen Swiger to attend the Sports Events and Tourism Association annual meeting in Fort Worth, Texas from May 2-5, 2022; approving a Memorandum of Agreement to clarify the relationship between the Commission on Aging, the commissioners, and the Specialized Statewide Transportation Assistance Program for FY23 funding of \$126,975, with a County match of \$42,325; and establishing an expedited Housing Rehabilitation Program application and approval process to use Community Development Block Grant funds in certain circumstances for emergency well and septic system projects.

The commissioners met with Public Works Director Dallas Baker to review the draft FY23 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) letter to the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), which outlines the County's priority transportation projects. These include three major projects, which include the dualization of MD Rt. 90 and MD Rt. 589, and a new U.S. Rt. 50 drawbridge, and additional short-term projects, which include signaling the intersection at MD Rt. 611 and MD Rt. 376, signaling the intersection at MD Rt. 367 and MD Rt. 368, eliminating flooding on MD Rt. 12 north of Snow Hill, construction of a dedicated right turn lane on south bound St. Martin's Neck Road at MD Rt. 90; construction of APS/CPS pedestrian to cross U.S. Rt. 113 at MD Rt. 346; developing an access management strategic plan for the MD Rt. 611 corridor; and construction of a shared use path on MD Rt. 611 from U.S. Rt. 50 to Assateague State Park. Commissioner Bertino requested the term "prioritized list" be eliminated from the letter, as the commissioners have not prioritized the order of the first three major transportation projects identified in the letter.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted unanimously to eliminate the terms "prioritized list" and approve the letter as revised.

Following a January 18, 2022 public hearing and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously approved a request from Attorney Hugh Cropper on behalf of Ayres Creek Family Farm, LLC to reclassify 8.34 acres of land located at 8219 Stephen Decatur Highway, on the westerly side of MD Rt. 611, east of Ayres Creek, and identified on Tax Map 33 as Parcel 80, Lot 1, from Resource Conservation Area (RCA) to Limited Development Area (LDA).

Pursuant to the recommendation of Senior Budget Accountant Kim Reynolds and upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Bertino and Bunting voting in opposition, to adopt the Amended Capital Improvement Plan for FY23-FY27, which includes projects totaling \$200,321,677 over the five-year period. Of these projects, \$41,832,684 will be funded through general obligation bonds in FY23 and FY24, and the CIP has been amended to accurately reflect the projects that will be bonded for FY23 and FY24. Ms. Reynolds advised that the most significant changes include the removal of the Ocean Pines spray irrigation project (\$3.25 million), and the updated Ocean Pines belt filter press project, which reflects a cost increase from \$3.55 million to \$4.6 million.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Janis Chiampa to the Social Services Board.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to reappoint Norman Bunting, Jr. to the Recreation Advisory Board, Bruce Spangler to the Ethics Board, Duane Duncan to the Board of Electrical Examiners, and Todd Ferrante to the Water and Sewer Advisory Council for the West Ocean City Service Area.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to reappoint Robert Clark to Economic Development Advisory Board.

The commissioners met with representatives from the towns of Berlin, Ocean City, Pocomoke, and Snow Hill, as well as the Ocean Pines Association (OPA) regarding their FY23 grant requests from the County.

Pocomoke Mayor Susan Marshall-Harrison and City Manager Jeremy Mason expressed their hope that the County would once again grant the town an infrastructure grant to help fund needed infrastructure improvements, and then reviewed their request for the County provide funding totaling \$1,914,617 for FY23, including categorical funding, shared revenues, and pass-through grants.

Berlin Mayor Zack Tyndall reviewed plans to develop a new community center and round-about on Flower Street. He then requested County funding totaling \$2,601,565 for FY23, including categorical funding including \$122,000 for phase one for a roundabout on Flower Street and \$73,796 for Rails to Trails funds, as well as shared revenues, and pass-through grants. Commissioner Bertino requested County staff determine if Program Open Space funds can be used for the Rails to Trails project.

Snow Hill Mayor Jennifer Jewell and Town Manager Rick Pollitt provided an update on the Black Eyed Susan riverboat and reviewed a request for County funding totaling \$2,238,142 for FY23, including categorical funding to include \$225,000 for wastewater treatment probes, as well as shared revenues, and pass-through grants. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Mayor Jennifer Jewell advised that the town is not planning to increase Snow Hill Sanitary Service Area (SSA) rates to cover the cost of wastewater upgrades. Commissioner Bertino advised that service area residents, not County-wide tax payers, are responsible for improvements within the individual SSAs.

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan requested County funding totaling \$8,466,105 for FY23, including categorical funding, shared revenues, and pass-through grants, which mirrors the town's FY22 request and also includes a grant request of \$100,000 for the Ocean City

Development Corporation for downtown redevelopment. He further urged the commissioners to support potential upcoming seasonal housing project proposals that may be located off the island.

OPA Board President Dr. Collette Horn requested County funding totaling \$1,864,340 for FY23, including categorical funding to include funds of \$150,000 for roads and bridges repairs and \$25,000 for Tourism, shared revenues, and pass-through grants mirroring the FY22 request. In response to comments by Commissioner Bertino, County staff confirmed that the County did not issue grants for tourism or roads and bridges to the OPA in FY22. Following some discussion, the commissioners thanked representatives from the municipalities and OPA for meeting with them to present their budget requests.

The Commissioners met with Development Review and Permitting (DRP) Director Jennifer Keener to review a text amendment application submitted by Attorney Hugh Cropper on behalf of Kathy Clark, to amend ZS 1-313(b) Townhouses to modify a section of the bill establishing the maximum length and overall number of units that an individual townhouse building may contain to make it a design recommendation, rather than a requirement.

Following some discussion, Commissioners Church, Mitrecic, Elder, and Nordstrom, and Purnell introduced the aforementioned text amendment as Emergency Bill 22-01 and agreed to schedule a public hearing on the bill.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on March 15, 2021.