

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

January 16, 2018

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, 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), (7), and (8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform administrative functions. Also present at the closed session were Harold L. Higgins, Chief Administrative Officer; Kelly Shannahan, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Maureen Howarth, County Attorney; Kim Moses, Public Information Officer; and Stacey Norton, Human Resources Director. Topics discussed and actions taken included: scheduling interviews for the position of Director of Recreation and Parks; promoting Missy Mason from IT Technician within the IT Division of Emergency Services to MIS Document Imaging Supervisor for the Treasurer's Office, considering a proposed reclassification in Environmental Programs; posting to fill vacancies for an Accounting Clerk III in the Treasurer's Office, an Office Assistant III in Tourism, and an Economic Development Director; receiving legal advice from counsel; discussing potential litigation; and performing administrative functions.

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

The Commissioners reviewed and approved the open and closed session minutes of their January 2, 2018 meeting as presented.

The Commissioners presented a commendation to the Berlin Pop Warner Junior Varsity Football Team, the Seahawks, for exemplifying excellence during their season to win the 2017 Eastern Region Division III Championship Title at the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Florida in December 2017.

Pursuant to the request of Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously approved the release of \$375,000 to the Board of Education (BOE) for pre-construction and bidding phase services by the Construction Manager, Oak Contracting, for the new Showell Elementary School. Mr. Taylor stated that bid results will be released in April 2018 and bids are to be opened on June 13, 2018,

after which BOE officials will seek bid approval and authorization to proceed with construction from the Commissioners.

Atlantic General Hospital (AGH) President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Franklin met with the Commissioners to discuss the Atlantic General Hospital and Health System 2017 Community Update. Mr. Franklin presented a PowerPoint, which covered AGH's mission; health ranking; healthcare assessment for the community; number of unintentional intoxication deaths in Maryland from January to March each year from 2007-2017, including opioid and opioid-related deaths; behavioral health; 2020 strategic vision and care coordination; AGH 2018 goals and strategic planning; strategic investment in the community; new bond financing (\$20 million refinance and \$20 million new bond funds) for the new John H. "Jack" Burbage Regional Cancer Care Center, Comprehensive Women's Health Center, and modernized patient-care areas; AGH succeeding in the current Maryland system; how triple aim achieved (telemedicine, transition in care program, and prescription concierge service, Condition R program, population health education, and IT systems and infrastructure); access to primary and specialty care (through the recruitment of primary and specialty care physicians); pioneers in health literacy improvement; AGH awarded Best in Benefits; year over year comparison for FY16/FY17; State "Sick Tax" Medicaid assessments; community impact, with a total payroll of over \$48 million; \$12,339,177 community impact; and AGH & Health System vision. Mr. Franklin stated that AGH now has a full compliment of surgeons and specialty care physicians, including pain management specialists who are helping patients manage pain without opioids, and without the use of opioids in pain management there will be less addiction. He stated that AGH is doing a good job keeping people healthy, though corporately the County ranked only fifteenth in the State, placing them on the wrong end of the middle on the 2017 County Health Rankings for Maryland, so the health community still has a lot of work to do, work that includes increasing access to mental health professionals, an area of public health that is still vastly underserved in the County. He urged the Commissioners to support AGH's request for a \$1 million grant for the cancer center and asked them to leverage their influence at the State level to end the "Sick Tax," which will result in total State-mandated hospital assessments of \$3.6 million for AGH in 2018.

Commissioner Bertino congratulated Mr. Franklin for decreasing AGH's health insurance costs while increasing its employee base and asked him to share any pertinent strategies with Human Resources Director Stacey Norton. Mr. Franklin stated that the hospital has implemented a wellness plan in the workplace that has resulted in a 1.2% decrease in employee benefits costs.

In a related matter, in response to a request by Mr. Franklin and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously authorized AGH to utilize parking at the West Ocean City Harbor to accommodate AGH's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration to take place at the Gudelsky home on the evening of Thursday, May 17, 2018.

Board of Elections Director Patti Jackson met with the Commissioners to request to lease 8,000 square feet of warehouse and office space at the Royal Plus building in Snow Hill to accommodate voting equipment and staff of the Board of Elections, since they have outgrown their current facility at 100 Belt Street in Snow Hill. Ms. Jackson noted that the County staff recommendation to negotiate a three-year lease for 4,500 square feet of warehouse and office space at Royal Plus is not long enough and would relegate the Board of Elections to roughly

1,000 square feet less warehouse and office space than they have currently. Therefore, she suggested a compromise to secure a five-year lease, effective February 2018, for 6,000 square feet of office space to allow for a 10% increase in elections equipment in keeping with the population growth in the County. In response to a question by Commissioner Church, Mr. Higgins stated that once the lease is secured he recommends completing an assessment of the current Board of Election building at 100 Belt Street to renovate and potentially expand this facility, noting that funds are available in the budget for this study.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Mr. Higgins to begin negotiations to lease up to 4,500 square feet of space in the Royal Plus building for a period of three years for their consideration at a future meeting, and for at least one Commissioner to attend future meetings between County staff and the Elections Board to represent the Commissioners on the proposed lease. Ms. Jackson agreed to schedule a special meeting of the Elections Board if necessary to expedite approval. In response to a question by Ms. Jackson, Mr. Higgins explained that the County would hire an architect to determine the needs of the Election Board on how best to renovate the 100 Belt Street facility to meet their needs.

Pursuant to the request of Housing Program Administrator Jo Ellen Bynum and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the low bid for the general rehabilitation work to be performed on a single family home in the Stockton area to Shoreman Construction of Delmar, Maryland at a cost of \$19,400.

Pursuant to the request of Ms. Bynum and upon a motion by Commissioner Lockfaw, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the best bid for septic work, to be performed in conjunction with the construction of a replacement home in the Berlin area, to ASAP Services Corp of Salisbury, Maryland at a cost of \$6,526. Ms. Bynum explained that the apparent low bid of \$6,400 from Lighthouse Self Storage/Clark Disposal of Selbyville, Delaware did not include the cost of electric, which was part of the scope of work identified in the bid documents.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Development Review and Permitting Director Ed Tudor and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously adopted the Findings of Fact and Resolution No. 18-3, for the establishment of a residential planned community (RPC) floating zone for the proposed RPC project known as Shady Side Village on approximately 4.82 acres of land shown on Tax Map 26 as Parcel 157, located on the southerly side of MD Rt. 707 (Old Bridge Road), west of Greenridge Lane, in the Tenth Tax District of Worcester County, Maryland.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tudor and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously approved out-of-state travel for Zoning Administrator Jennifer Keener to attend the American Planning Association (APA) National Conference in New Orleans from April 21-24, 2018 at a total cost for travel, hotel, and meals as budgeted at \$2,291. In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Tudor stated that Ms. Keener will pursue development credits at the conference and plans to seek certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) in the future.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Tudor and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule a public hearing on February 20, 2018 to receive public comment on the Commissioners' proposed adoption of the 2017 National Electrical Code, with local amendments, as recommended by the Board of Electrical Examiners.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Deputy Director John Ross and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners voted 6-0, with Commissioner Mitrecic recusing himself from the discussion and vote due to a conflict of interests, to waive the standard bid process and to accept the contract from Delaware Elevator of Salisbury, Maryland at an annual fee of \$20,448 to provide monthly elevator inspections, maintenance, and repairs to continue to maintain eight County elevators. Mr. Ross confirmed that Delaware Elevator has been providing this service to the County since 1992, and the renewal contract reflects a 10% reduction in the cost of the prior annual fee of \$22,764, and establishing an annual rate increase of 5% rather than 7.5%.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Ross and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the bid to Somerset Well Drilling of Westover, Maryland at a total cost of \$687,988 for construction of a three-pump system for the Mystic Harbour effluent discharge disposal connection, including pumps, piping, and operational controls needed to convey effluent from the Mystic Harbour Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to the Eagle's Landing Golf Course for reuse. The award of this bid is subject to approval by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which provided a grant and low-interest loan funds for this project. Mr. Ross advised that the project should be complete in time to begin spraying treated effluent on the Eagles Landing Golf Course by summer 2018.

The Commissioners met with Mr. Ross to review the proposed Lewis Road Sewer Extension Project Preliminary Engineering Report, which includes three alternatives as follows: Alternative I - gravity collection system at a project cost of \$1,604,583, an annual cost of \$9,152, and present worth of \$1,769,305; Alternative II - pressure sewer system using grinder pumps and small diameter force main at a project cost of \$947,709, annual cost of \$19,380, and present worth of \$1,315,579; and Alternative III - a hybrid system between Alternatives I and II using a gravity sewer system but serving properties on the ends with grinder pumps to reduce pipeline depth at a project cost of \$1,272,699, annual cost of \$12,114, and present worth of \$1,555,384. The report also addresses non-monetary issues, such as system reliability and long-term operational concerns. Given these issues, Mr. Ross recommended Alternative I, noting that though it is the most expensive option, it provides the most reliable system, while minimizing annual maintenance costs, as there would be no grinder pumps to replace every five to seven years. Furthermore, he stated that the County may qualify for grant and loan funding through the USDA for the project costs, as it had for the project recently completed in Newark, while no funding would be available for ongoing maintenance.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously accepted the report and authorized staff to investigate potential funding sources for Alternative I to extend sewer service to Lewis Road.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Ross and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the

Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign the Newark Water Tower Antenna Space Lease Agreement for a five-year agreement, with the potential for four additional five-year renewals, which provides that Verizon will pay the County \$24,000 the first year, with annual increases of 2% each year thereafter for the term of the agreement.

In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Ross stated that Verizon may have interest in other County facilities, which may help to improve cell phone service in South Point and Assateague Island.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Emergency Services Director Fred Webster and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Wicomico County and Worcester County regarding the interoperability and sharing of system information to improve the efficacy of radio communications between responding public safety agencies.

The Commissioners met with Emergency Services Director Fred Webster to discuss his recommendation to reject the five bids received on December 4, 2017 for the provision of one Anritsu Master Land Mobile Radio Modulation Analyzer for Emergency Services, as all bids exceed the \$35,000 budget for this project. Commissioner Bertino made a motion to reject all bids, which he withdrew after determining that this piece of equipment is needed on a regular basis and would cost the County upwards of \$1,500 per week to rent. In response to a question by Commissioner Elder, Mr. Higgins advised that undesignated funds could be used to cover the \$2,155.20 shortfall in funding to purchase this needed piece of equipment. Following some discussion and upon a subsequent motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners voted unanimously to award the low bid, which met all specifications for the purchase of one Anritsu S412E LMR Master Land Mobile Radio Modulation Analyzer at a total cost of \$37,155.20, from Talley, Inc. of Santa Fe Springs, California.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Webster and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously rejected all bids for the purchase and installation of an audio-visual system for the third floor training room in the Worcester County Government Center in Snow Hill, as all bids (ranging from \$19,639 to \$91,313) exceeded the \$16,000 budget for this project. Mr. Webster stated that staff would reevaluate the audio-visual needs for the training room and present a modified bid package or perhaps an in-house solution for the Commissioners to consider at a future meeting.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Webster and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to waive the standard bid process and award the contract to supply and install a raised access, wood-paneled flooring system for the 911 Center to Bergvik North America, Inc. of Salisbury, Maryland, at a total cost of \$23,900. In response to a question by Commissioner Bunting, Mr. Webster stated that County staff will remove the current flooring, after which Bergvik will install the new system. In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Webster advised that it will take a couple of months to renovate the 911 Center, during which time the 911 Center will operate at the backup center, which is located at the Fire Training Center in Newark, and in the event of some failure at that location, they would operate out of the County's second backup site, the Public Safety Building in Ocean City.

The Commissioners extended their sincere appreciation to County employees for their team approach to clearing County roads and properties of ice and snow during the recent winter storm. Those in attendance from Emergency Services and Public Works at the meeting included Public Works Deputy Director John Ross, Emergency Services Director Fred Webster and Assistant Director James Hamilton, Roads Superintendent Frank Adkins and Roads Supervisor Keith Berdan, Solid Waste Superintendent Mike Mitchell, Maintenance Superintendent Ken Whited and Maintenance Supervisor Michael Hutchinson.

Mr. Adkins stated that accomplishing this operation was only possible thanks to the dedication of the entire Public Works team who pitched in and worked across divisions to complete the monumental task of assuring safe passage for those traveling on County roads and accessing County properties. He also recognized Warden Donna Bounds and her team for providing hot meals to all the workers.

Mr. Whited thanked the Commissioners for their efforts during the annual budget process to assure Public Works crews have the equipment they need to provide clear, safe access to County buildings, and he thanked the Maintenance Crews, whom he recognized as unsung heroes, for working in frigid temperatures for hours on end shoveling snow and addressing heating concerns in County buildings.

The Commissioners met with Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Shannahan to review the proposed 2018 schedule of County-sponsored events and programs for Worcester County Government employees, which have been conducted over the past several years to improve morale and demonstrate the Commissioners' support and appreciation of County staff. Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously approved the following Worcester County Government Employee Appreciation events and programs for 2018: Night at The Shorebirds Friday, June 8, at 7:05 p.m., with free tickets available for each employee and additional tickets for family and friends sold for \$5 each, at a total County cost of \$1,000 (for 200 tickets), less income from ticket sales; Jolly Roger Day, Saturday, July 14, from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m., at no cost to the County, with wristbands available for purchase to County employees and their family and friends at \$12 per person for the day at Splash Mountain, with add-ons available, including 2-hour Go-Kart rides (\$12), Extreme Rides (\$12), Amusement Rides and Mini Golf (\$7) and/or Mini Golf (\$3); and the County Commissioners' Outstanding Employee Recognition Program at a total cost of \$1,200 annually, with the Commissioners randomly choosing a County staff member at each of the 24 meetings from those nominated by his or her department head or supervisor for exemplary County service to receive a \$50 gift card to a local restaurant, which is personally presented by the Chief Administrative Officer (and County Commissioners if they wish) along with a "Thank You" from the County Commissioners, with Public Information Officer Kim Moses to provide a write-up for each employee in the County Employees' Newsletter.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon nominations by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to reappoint Cathy Gallagher to the Social Services Board and Donna Dillon to the Housing Review Board for three-year terms each expiring June 30 and December 31, 2020, respectively; reappointing Frederick Stiehl to the Water and Sewer Advisory Council for the Ocean Pines

Service Area for a four-year term, which runs from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2020, and Jim Rosenberg to the Local Development Council for the Ocean Downs Casino for a four-year term expiring December 31, 2021; and appointing Vanessa Alban to the Commission for Women for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2020, to replace Charlotte Cathell whose term expired.

The Commissioners adjourned for lunch.

The Commissioners conducted a salary work session to consider a proposal from Human Resources Director Stacey Norton to reclassify certain positions as Phase I of the Comprehensive Compensation Analysis and Action Plan. This plan was developed by Ms. Norton at the request of the Commissioners. Ms. Norton advised that the County continues to lose good employees to higher paying jobs and is having difficulty attracting qualified candidates to fill certain positions. She stated that the proposal before the Commissioners is the result of a comparison study that identified the hourly rate of 32 County positions against those of other surrounding employers. Furthermore, this study was developed as part of an effort to improve the County's recruitment and retention rates. With regard to the Phase I proposal, she identified the following priorities for reclassifications: ensure compliance with the minimum wage of \$9.25 per hour, which will increase to \$10.10 per hour on July 1, 2018; focus on the hourly positions with the highest turnover rate; focus on the lowest-paid positions, with a goal to compensate all staff at a minimum of Grade 8; and to compensate all hourly supervisors at a minimum of Grade 15. She then reviewed the proposal to reclassify the following positions: to Grade 7 - Document Imager I within the Treasurer's Office; to Grade 8 - Swim Aide within Recreation and Parks, Document Imager II and Accounting Clerk I within the Treasurer's Office, Custodial Worker I and Maintenance Worker I within the Maintenance Division, Library Services Assistant I within the Library, Welcome Center Greeter within Tourism, Roads Worker I within the Roads Division, Recycle Worker I and Transfer Station Attendant within the Solid Waste Division, and Maintenance Worker I within the Water and Wastewater Division (WWW); to Grade 9 - Document Imager III within the Treasurer's Office, Maintenance Worker II within both the Maintenance and WWW Divisions; to Grade 10 - Roads Worker II within the Roads Division and Maintenance Worker III within the Maintenance Division; to Grade 11 - Roads Worker III within the Roads Division and Building Maintenance Mechanic I within the Maintenance Division; to Grade 12 - Roads Worker IV within the Roads Division, and Maintenance Worker IV within the Maintenance Division; to Grade 13 - Roads Worker V within the Roads Division; to Grade 15 - Welcome Center Manager within Tourism, Grounds Crew Leader, Chief Custodian, and Building Maintenance Mechanic II within the Maintenance Division, Crew Leader, Construction Crew Leader, and Construction Expediter within WWW, Foreman within the Mosquito Control Division, Accounting Manager within the Treasurer's Office, Recreation Program Manager I and Parks Crew Leader within Recreation and Parks, Building Housing Inspector/Plan Reviewer I within Development Review and Permitting (DRP), and Communications Clerk III within Emergency Services; to Grade 17 - Building Housing Inspector/Plan Reviewer II within DRP, and Building Maintenance Mechanic III within the Maintenance Division; and to Grade 20 - Benefits Manager within Human Resources. In conclusion, Ms. Norton requested an immediate reclassification for these positions based on each reclassified grade, with all employees to remain at their current Step, at an approximate cost of

\$222,589 for 32 General Fund employees and an approximate cost of \$68,248 for seven Enterprise Fund employees, for a total Phase I implementation cost of \$290,837. She stated that these reclassifications can be funded in the current budget due to savings from employee retirements and vacant positions. She concluded that these reclassifications are separate from any Step or Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA), which may be requested in the FY19 budget, and staff will continue to evaluate and request additional reclassifications in the requested FY19 budget, as Phase II of the Comprehensive Compensation Analysis and Action Plan.

Commissioner Bunting agreed that the wages for lower-paying positions needs to be addressed, but stated there is no epidemic of people leaving the County, and it would not be responsible to spend \$290,000 now that might be needed at budget time. Furthermore, he emphasized that the Commissioners have worked to save money and reduce the cost of government through attrition, bringing on new employees at a lower salary than more experienced employees who retire or resign. In response to questions by Commissioner Bunting, Mr. Higgins advised that County staff have not begun to delve into the details of anticipated FY19 revenues and expenditures; however, current trends indicate that revenues and expenditures will remain parallel with the current fiscal year. He confirmed that two issues that will need to be addressed in the FY19 budget include the the escalator clause built into the Maintenance of Effort (MOE) budget for the Board of Education (BOE), and health benefit costs are expected to increase. He confirmed that the County is experiencing a high turnover rate in certain low-paying positions, including Maintenance Worker I's and Roads Worker I's, during the past six months, and a primary initiative in the FY19 budget will be to address salary disparities. Ms. Norton advised that 90 employees retired or resigned in FY17, and 46 have retired or resigned to date in FY18. She further stated that County staff were able to negotiate the health benefits increase for Carefirst down from 10% to 7% for FY18, and she anticipates a similar scenario in the coming year, with staff to provide the Commissioners with an actual cost estimate once that information is available.

Commissioner Elder questioned whether the current Grade and Step system will eventually become obsolete. In response, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Shannahan agreed that the salary scale set up 20 + years ago needs to be overhauled in the future, but the proposal before them today was an attempt to phase-in the necessary changes at a total cost, which would be more affordable for the Commissioners to implement, rather than a wholesale revision, which would be cost prohibitive.

Commissioner Mitrecic stated that reducing salary costs through attrition works well, particularly when replacing high Grade positions; however, it does not work when the salaries for low Grade positions are so low that they cannot even attract candidates to fill those positions. He pointed out that the increases being considered are a step in the right direction, but that these increases do not address the full weight of the disparity, with the County experiencing wholesale losses in employees to other agencies. He pointed out that the crews who cleared the roads and sidewalks during the recent snow storms were making roughly \$12.40 an hour, and he questioned how the County proposes to address future weather emergencies once these individuals retire or resign if they cannot attract new employees to maintain public safety.

Commissioner Lockfaw concurred with Commissioner Mitrecic, stating that the County also needs workers with Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDLs) to drive snow plows and operate other heavy machinery; however, County employees who are trained and certified at the cost of the County should be required to either remain in County employment for a certain period of

time thereafter or be required to reimburse the County for all training costs. He also suggested the possibility of contracting private employers to provide snow removal services to avoid paying benefits and to reduce the need for CDL-certified employees.

Commissioner Bertino questioned why the County staff was bringing this proposal to them now instead of at budget time. He stated that he could perhaps support the implementation of such a proposal today, provided it does not take effect until FY19. In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Ms. Norton stated that all but one of the 30 Roads Division employees have their CDLs. Mr. Higgins advised that there is a 20 to 40% loss in productivity to advertise and train to replace lost employees, noting that it takes about two years to fully train someone and determine whether that individual is a good fit for their position.

Commissioner Church stated the old adage, "You get what you pay for." He also noted that the more competitive the wage, the higher the caliber of applicant the County will attract, as evidenced by the fact that surrounding employers are recruiting their own staff to leave County employment for higher wages elsewhere.

Commissioner Purnell pointed out that it was the Commissioners who asked staff to review salary studies and to provide them with recommendations to adjust County salaries accordingly after recognizing that several County salaries are not competitive with similar employers locally. Furthermore, she stated that the proposal before them today is a good one, and the Commissioners should adopt it or be prepared to continue losing good employees to higher paying jobs and experiencing service shortages resulting from vacant positions.

Commissioner Bunting expressed further concern that some of the reclassifications would result in salary increases as high as \$7,000 annually, which he felt is too much of an increase.

Commissioner Elder left the meeting.

The Commissioners made closing comments. Commissioner Bunting stated that it would not be wise to consider increasing salaries until budget time, when they have a clear picture of anticipated revenues and expenditures for FY19. Commissioner Bertino concurred, noting that this staff's proposal is a good one, and while he wants to act on it, he cannot do so apart from the FY19 budget. Commissioner Mitrecic stated that Phase I is a good start, but that the Commissioners should review the salary and benefit package comprehensively to determine how the County measures up against other big employers in the area. He reminded the Commissioners that the County is in the service business, and it is the County employees who make that service happen. He stated that they may be able to rely on private contractors to cut grass, but that public safety services, such as clearing ice and snow from County roads, should remain firmly under County control. Commissioner Purnell stated that the Commissioners asked Ms. Norton more than once to bring them recommendations to correct salary inequities, and approving Phase I today would be a good step toward doing just that. Commissioner Church expressed concern that the Commissioners spent more money today to replace flooring in Emergency Services and other projects than they are proposing to spend to provide fair compensation for County employees in Phase I, and he urged his fellow Commissioners to adopt the proposal before them today.

Following much discussion, a motion by Commissioner Church to approve the Phase I reclassifications as presented failed 3-3, with Commissioners Church, Mitrecic, and Purnell voting in favor of the motion and Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, and Lockfaw voting in opposition.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bunting, seconded by Commissioner Mitrecic, with Commissioner Elder absent, the Commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 2:00 p.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform administrative functions. Also present at the closed session were Harold L. Higgins, Chief Administrative Officer; Kelly Shannahan, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Maureen Howarth, County Attorney; and Kim Moses, Public Information Officer. Topics discussed and actions taken included consulting with counsel to obtain legal advice.

The Commissioners adjourned to meet again on February 6, 2018.