

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

May 1, 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 Bunting, 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: hiring David Mathers as a Natural Resources Planner I for Environmental Programs; posting to fill vacancies for a Correctional Officer Trainee at the Jail and a Communications Clerk Trainee for Emergency Services; receiving legal advice from counsel; 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 minutes of their April 17, 2018 closed session meeting as amended and open session meeting as presented, April 3, 2017 budget work session as presented, April 4 special open and closed session as presented, and April 10 budget work session as presented.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Tourism Director Lisa Challenger and other Tourism officials from throughout the County recognizing the week of May 6-12, 2018 as Tourism Week in Worcester County to celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of Worcester County Tourism and its many state and local partners to grow tourism locally. Tourism officials from agencies throughout the County who joined Ms. Challenger for the presentation included Gregory Purnell, Michael Day, Donna Abbott, Susan Jones, Melanie Pursel, Denise Sawyer, Debbie Keitt, Ginger Flemming, Barbara Tull, Isabel Morris, Karah Lacey, and Stacey Weisner.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Worcester County Social Services Director Roberta Baldwin, Foster Care Supervisor Jamie Manning, Foster Care and Adoption

Unit Resources Supervisor Trina Townsend and other staff members recognizing May as National Foster Care Month and thanking them and area foster parents for their efforts to bring stability and a sense of self-worth back into the lives of youth in foster care. Ms. Townsend stated that it truly takes a village to raise a child, and she thanked the 18 families who have opened their homes to care for the 30 youth in foster care in Worcester County, and she advised that there is a great need for families who are willing to open their homes to teenagers in foster care.

The Commissioners presented a commendation to Tamra Shockley for being named the 2018 Worcester County Foster Parent of the Year by Social Services for her willingness to serve foster children living in crisis in the community. The Commissioners commended Ms. Shockley for her willingness to open her heart and home to nine total foster children with three currently in her home whose lives were in crisis. Commissioner Elder stated that it takes someone with a big heart to be a foster parent, and he thanked Ms. Shockley for doing just that.

Pursuant to the request of Heather Barton, Administrative Services Director for the Health Department, and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to waive the standard bid requirement and authorized Commission President Bunting to sign a year round Lease Agreement for an apartment at 12 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Unit No. 5 in Ocean City to be utilized primarily by the Health Department seasonal sanitarians, as well as visiting physicians in the off-season, from June 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019 at a cost of \$15,420, with funds available within the Health Department budget for this expense.

Pursuant to the request of Ms. Barton and upon a motion by Commissioner Lockfaw, the Commissioners voted 6-0, with Commissioner Mitrecic recusing himself from the discussion and the vote due to a potential conflict of interest, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to continue the contract with OC Solutions, LLC of Ocean City for cleaning services for the condominium at 12 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Unit No. 5 in Ocean City utilized by Health Department Environmental Health Specialists and seasonal Sanitarians for the sum of \$61.20 per cleaning. Ms. Barton explained that OC Solutions has provided satisfactory cleaning services for the County since 2009, and although other vendors offered nearly identical rates in the past, the Health Department preferred to work with the known vendor.

Budget Accountant Kim Reynolds advised the Commissioners regarding changes by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to consolidate the Homeless grant process effective July 1, 2018, with funding to be awarded under one umbrella to the 16 Maryland Continuum of Care organizations (CoCs), which will then sub-award funding to local non-profits. She stated that the Somerset County Health Department is the CoC for the Lower Eastern Shore, and the grants to be affected in Worcester County include Emergency Solutions Grant, Rental Assistance Grant, Emergency Transitional Housing Shelter, and Homeless Women's Grant. She concluded that the requested FY19 County Operating budget will reflect the omission of the revenues and expenditures generated by the DHCD grants, which previously passed through the County.

Ms. Reynolds advised that the Lower Shore CoC is applying to the DHCD on behalf of homeless shelters in Worcester, Wicomico, and Somerset Counties for Homeless Solutions

Grants for FY19 and counties are required to provide a 25% match for the organizations that have applied to the CoC for these funds. Following some discussion, pursuant to a recommendation by Ms. Reynolds in response to the written request of the Lower Shore CoC and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign a letter to Shannon Frey, Director of Behavior Health and CoC Programs for the Somerset County Health Department, that provides an estimate of requested grant funding to the two homeless shelters in Worcester County in FY19 which are Diakonia, with requested funding of \$55,000, and Samaritan Ministries, Inc., with requested funding of \$30,000 .

Pursuant to the request of Fire Marshal Jeff McMahon and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously approved an over-expenditure of \$2,000 to cover any additional overtime within the Fire Marshal's Office through the remainder of FY18. Mr. McMahon advised that \$10,000 was included in the FY18 budget for overtime, and with the pay period ending April 22, 2018, that budget will reflect a negative balance and his staff will have incurred over 400 hours of comp time, all of which is generated due to the high number of after-hours investigations.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign the FY19 Critical Area Grant Agreement awarding the County \$13,000 to cover a very small portion of the County's actual cost to administer the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Programs.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Recreation and Parks Director Tom Perlozzo at the request of Claudine Viperman of NextEdge Networks, LLC of Winter Park, Florida and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign a Lease Agreement between the County Commissioners (Landlord) and NextEdge Networks, LLC (Tenant), allowing NextEdge to lease space at the Public Landing Wharf to install an ESC sensor. Mr. Perlozzo explained that since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved usage of Citizens Broadband Radio in 2015, commercial users and carriers have been dominating usage of the signal, resulting in increased traffic, and the purpose of this receive-only sensor will be to provide government and military priority usage when needed for air and sea operations by relocating commercial users to a different part of the band, thereby freeing up the spectrum for government use. He further advised that the sensors will be installed every 20 to 25 miles along United States coastlines.

The Commissioners met with Public Works Director John Tustin to review staff's recommendation to reject the three bids received for the Court House jury assembly restroom renovation project. Mr. Tustin stated that the bids for renovating two restrooms and one custodial closet were too high due to labor costs to secure the prisoner transport area and basement, Court system noise restrictions, and the higher-end products specified by the architect for wall and floor finishes. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously rejected all bids and authorized staff to work with the low bidder, KB Coldiron, Inc. of Frankford, Delaware, to complete a comprehensive product evaluation to

determine alternate products, and to develop a summary of project selection, pricing, and recommendations to reduce the total project cost for the Commissioners' future consideration.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications for the purchase of one current-year tri-axle dump truck for use within the Solid Waste Division of Public Works. Mr. Tustin advised that funds of \$160,000 are available within the FY18 budget for this purpose.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously approved the additional work request for sewer cleaning and video inspection in the West Ocean City (WOC) Sanitary Service Area (SSA) under the sewer cleaning and inspection services contract with Mobile Dredging & Video Pipe, Inc. of Beltsville, Maryland. Mr. Tustin advised that the Commissioners originally awarded the contract on April 3, 2018 at a cost of \$23,955.35. He stated that staff identified approximately 7,600 linear feet of additional sewer lines in the Golf Course Road Area near U.S. Rt. 50 and Old Bridge Road in the Martha's Landing Area that were planned for inspection next year. However, because the sewer cleaning and inspection work is an ongoing program and because the low bid was so much lower than the funds allocated in the budget, it will be beneficial to include this additional sewer cleaning and video inspection to the project. He concluded that, based on the unit prices, this work would add approximately \$16,000 to the contract, bringing the contract cost to approximately \$40,000, which is less than the \$50,000 included in the FY18 budget for this work.

Public Works Deputy Director John Ross met with the Commissioners to discuss supplemental funding for the Mystic Harbour Effluent Disposal Project, noting that Commissioners awarded the contract for the final piping connections at Mystic Harbour to Somerset Well Drilling on January 16, 2018, contingent upon approval by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the funding agency for this project. Mr. Ross advised that to resolve concerns by the USDA that the increased cost of the pipeline connections would consume all project contingency funds, thus requiring a contribution from the service area, a pre-application was submitted for supplemental funding in the amount of \$250,000, in the form of a low-interest loan of \$163,000 and a grant in the amount of \$87,000 (contingent on final USDA approval). Commissioner Bertino suggested issuing a low-interest loan from the General Fund to pay for the project. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Ross stated that there would be no penalty for early repayment of the 40-year USDA loan, with a fixed interest rate of 3.125% and if financed in-house they would not receive the \$87,000 grant from USDA. Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins advised that the 1.44% interest rate for an intergovernmental loan, which will likely increase to 2% in the near future, is lower than the USDA loan; however, the General Fund should not routinely support enterprise fund operations, which by definition are funded entirely by users.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Bertino and Bunting voting in opposition, to authorize Commission President Purnell to sign the Application for Federal Assistance SF-424 for USDA funding for the project.

Pursuant to requests from Enterprise Fund Controller Jessica Wilson and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule public hearings on the requested FY19 Operating Budgets for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (Central Landfill), Water and Wastewater Enterprise Fund (Sanitary Service Area Budgets and Assessments), and Liquor Control Enterprise Fund on Tuesday, June 5, 2018, at 10:40 a.m.

The Commissioners met with Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Shannahan to review the Worcester County Sewer Committee report regarding a revised request from Attorney Hugh Cropper, on behalf of Sun Frontier, LLC, for allocation of an additional 34 equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) of sewer capacity from the Mystic Harbour Sanitary Service Area (SSA) for a proposed expansion of the Frontier Town Campground. This request is in addition to the 166 EDUs that Sun Frontier, LLC purchased on March 30, 2017 to serve the existing campground with sewer service in order to eliminate the existing septic system. Mr. Shannahan provided background regarding the additional EDU request, noting that on December 19, 2017, the Commissioners denied Mr. Cropper's initial request for the allocation of 71 EDUs of sewer service, as there is no remaining allocation available for the Frontier Town Campground in Area 2 south of the airport in accordance with the EDU allocation table, which the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) required to be incorporated into the County's Water and Sewer Plan for the Mystic Harbour Sanitary Service Area (SSA). On February 20, 2018, Mr. Cropper reduced that request to 40 EDUs, and on March 9, 2018 he further reduced that request to the allocation of 34 EDUs for the Commissioners' consideration today.

Mr. Shannahan advised that currently 52 EDUs are available in Area 2 and include 20 EDUs for Commercial Infill (for new development), 2 EDUs for Vacant or Multi-Lot properties (to replace septic), 6 EDUs for the Assateague Greens Executive Golf Course (to replace septic), 5 EDUs for the Church (to replace septic), and 19 EDUs for Single Family Dwellings (to replace septic); and 294 EDUs are available in Area 1 and include 148 EDUs for Infill and Intensification (to replace septic and for new development), 80 EDUs for Vacant or Multi-Lot properties (for new development), 17 EDUs for Single Family Dwellings (to replace septic), and 49 EDUs for Commercial (for new development). He stated that the Commercial Infill category south of the Airport is the only category in this area designated for new development and which was not targeted to specific developed properties to enable replacement of septic systems. Therefore 20 Commercial EDUs could be allocated, while the remaining 32 EDUs should be retained for the removal of septic systems on properties south of the airport. He also urged caution with regard to potentially reallocating EDUs from the north area to the south area to serve new development, as doing so is not in accordance with the priorities established for the original allocation of sewer capacity and would require an amendment to the Water and Sewerage Plan, which would also require MDE approval. He then reviewed three potential options to address the request for allocation of 34 EDUs, including: Option 1 - to approve all 34 EDUs with 20 EDUs from the Commercial Infill category south of the airport and the remainder from a category north of the airport subject to a Water and Sewerage Plan amendment; Option 2 - to approve a portion of the request for 34 EDUs; or Option 3 - to deny the request for allocation of EDUs since there are no EDUs available for such new development south of the airport.

A motion by Commissioner Bunting to approve Option 3 to deny the request for the allocation of 34 EDUs of sewer service to Frontier Town failed 2-4-1, with Commissioners Bertino and Bunting voting in favor of the motion, Commissioners Church, Lockfaw, Mitrecic

and Purnell voting against the motion, and Commissioner Elder abstaining from the vote. The Commissioners took no further action at that time.

Commissioner Mitrecic suggested that the County should look into the possibility of requiring a license for property owners who use their premises for short-term rentals, following the recent similar efforts by the Town of Ocean City.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they recessed until 7:00 p.m. for the FY19 Requested County Operating Budget Public Hearing at the Snow Hill High School Auditorium.

The Commissioners conducted a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. at the Snow Hill High School Auditorium on the FY19 Requested County Operating Budgets. Commission President Purnell called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the FY19 Requested Operating Budget. The presentation included the following graphs and information: FY19 Budget Issues; General Fund Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for FY19; Worcester County Assessable Tax Base from FY16-FY19; General Fund Major Revenues - Property Tax, Income Tax, and Recordation and Transfer Taxes from FY16-FY19; General Fund Revenue and Expenditure Comparisons from FY16-FY19; FY18 Real Property Tax Rates of counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland of which Worcester County is 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest at \$0.835 per \$100 of assessed value; 2018 Income Tax Rates of Eastern Shore counties of which Worcester County is the lowest at 1.75%; the Worcester County Constant Yield Tax Rate of \$0.8270 per \$100 of assessed value to yield the current rate of revenue; and the Schedule of Upcoming Budget Work Sessions on May 8, 15, and 22, 2018 (if all are necessary); and the Budget & Tax Rate Adoption on June 5, 2018.

Mr. Higgins explained that the requested expenditures of \$211,611,999 exceed the County's estimated revenues of \$202,665,379 by \$8,946,620. He stated that this difference must be reconciled by the Commissioners either through reductions in expenditures, additional revenues or a combination of both. Mr. Higgins further explained that the Constant Yield Tax Rate (CYTR) 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 February the State informed Worcester County that, to fully offset the effect of increasing assessments, the real property tax rate would need to be decreased from the current tax rate of \$0.835 per \$100 of assessed value to the CYTR of \$0.8270 to remain constant with the current year, FY18. He stated that the CYTR would create no additional revenue above the current year's total, but explained that the County Commissioners are considering not reducing its real property tax rate enough to fully offset increasing assessments and instead will consider adopting a real property tax rate of \$0.886 per \$100 of assessed value to fully fund budget requests. This tax rate is 7.1% higher than the CYTR and would generate an additional \$8,948,296 in real property tax revenues.

Commissioner Purnell opened the floor to receive public comment on the department budget requests, proposed property tax increase, and the Board of Education budget request, in that order.

Sandy Sipes, Executive Director of Worcester GOLD (Giving Other Lives Dignity), thanked the Commissioners for their past support, noting that this will be the first time in six

years that Worcester GOLD has sought an increase in the annual County grant and that they are doing so to meet their objective for the coming fiscal year which is to increase the level of assistance to clients in need from \$100 to \$200 per a 12-month period and to continue to provide greater assistance to larger numbers of at-risk residents. She stated that Worcester GOLD works closely with the Department of Social Services to assess how best to assist clients to resolve urgent emergency situations, such as eviction, disconnection of utilities, hunger, vital medical necessities, seasonal-appropriate clothing, employment assistance, and vital basic needs for infants, children, vulnerable adults, homeless, and children transitioning from homes into foster care. She advised that in 2017, GOLD provided assistance for 3,799 individuals, 176 more than in 2016, and she thanked the Commissioners for their funding consideration to help them assist even more clients in need in FY19.

Worcester County Developmental Center (WCDC) Executive Director Jack Ferry thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support, which enables adults with disabilities to achieve their highest level of independence. He stated that the WCDC has been tasked with meeting a number of unfunded federal mandates that make it challenging to maintain and grow the level of quality services they are able to provide to their clients, particularly housing, but thanks to the County grant they have been able to meet those needs. He also thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing involvement with the program, noting that it is not possible to put a price tag on the joy his clients experience when they hang Christmas decorations with the Commissioners or take a photo with them, as it allows them to feel valued and important. He shared one example of how grant funding helped Tony, a new WCDC client, leave a bad housing situation and move into safe, supportive housing in Ocean Pines, and he expressed his hope that the Commissioners will continue providing this valuable support so WCDC can help more people like Tony reach their full potential as valued members of the community.

Debbi Anderson of Diakonia, stated that Diakonia has been in existence and doing good work to aid those in need locally for 45 years, and she thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support, which helps Diakonia provide emergency shelter and many other needed services that help area residents in crisis become stable and self sufficient. She stated that last year Diakonia provided 10,554 bed nights, and 24% of those who benefit from these services are children and the elderly with medical needs and little or no resources or family to support them. She stated that last year Diakonia staff helped 70% of their homeless clients secure permanent housing, fed 9,500 individuals from over 3,000 households, and helped 59 military veterans find or remain in permanent housing. She stated that Diakonia recognizes the value of every County dollar. She advised that that last year Diakonia worked with community partners and 100 volunteers to raise funds to cover operational expenses, and staff have become experts at stretching those dollars to use in programs that do the most good in the community. In closing, she asked the Commissioners to continue their support of Diakonia and other vital social service programs in the County.

Delmarva Discovery Center (DDC) Executive Director Stacey Weisner thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support. She stated that the DDC, which is officially changing its logo and name to "Delmarva Discovery Museum," (DDM) is seeking limited funding to assist with accessibility issues, noting that the DDM is not only a field trip destination for numerous public and private schools, but that they are also attracting greater numbers of senior citizen bus tours, and they are striving to assure that the DDM is equipped to meet their needs. She stated that the DDM leverages every grant-funded dollar from the County, and that the DDM is making

strides toward becoming self sufficient in the future. She advised that the DDM has received a number of prestigious awards, including the Richard A. Henson Award for outstanding contributions to the community and the Heritage Interpretation Award from the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Area Foundation. She concluded that the DDM strives to continually improve upon its existing business model and to be a valuable part of tourism growth both in Pocomoke and all of Worcester County, and expressed her hope that the Commissioners would consider the DDM's grant request to be a worthy cause again in FY19.

Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor thanked the Commissioners for their partnership with the Board of Education (BOE), for striving to keep the lines of communication open between the two entities, and for making education funding a top priority for the 6,700 public school students in Worcester County. He also thanked BOE faculty and staff for their dedication, noting that it is because they put students at the heart of everything they do that Worcester County has the lowest drop-out rate and the highest on-time graduation rate in the State, and the students consistently outperform their peers across the State in all areas of assessment. "Is it good for the kids?" He stated that this singular question is at the root of every decision the BOE makes, and the requested FY19 BOE budget reflects that core initiative. Therefore, he asked the Commissioners to support their budget request as presented, which will allow them to offer competitive salaries and benefits, maintain small class sizes, purchase appropriate materials of instruction and innovative technology, provide after school and summer enrichment programs, improve school safety, cover rising insurance and transportation costs, and fund critical capital projects. He concluded by thanking the County Commissioners for their partnership with the BOE and for putting the kids first in the County Operating Budget.

Maya Batson, an alumni of Pocomoke Elementary School (PES), Pocomoke Middle School (PMS), and Pocomoke High School (PHS), stated that she attends Salisbury University, where she is currently majoring in education and minoring in geography, and she plans to return to teach in Worcester County public schools after she graduates. She thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support of education and asked them to fully fund the requested FY19 BOE budget.

Debbie Lambertson, of Stockton who spoke on behalf of the public schools in Snow Hill as well as Worcester Technical High School (WTHS), stated that she has permanent custody of her granddaughter, who after years of irregular school attendance under her mother's care is now thriving at Cedar Chapel Special School (CCSS), and because of the tremendous amount of speech therapy and other assistance from caring individuals, she will be attending Snow Hill High School (SHHS), as part of CCSS specialized program. She stated that advances like this can be attributed to the ongoing and consistent support provided by the BOE and the Commissioners, and she asked them to continue that support by fully funding the requested FY19 BOE budget, which makes staff salaries a priority in order to retain excellent teachers and support staff.

Megan Muller of Bishopville spoke on behalf of all six north-end public schools, including Showell Elementary School (SES), where her oldest son is a student, and Ocean City Elementary School (OCES), Buckingham Elementary School (BES), Berlin Intermediate School (BIS), Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS), and Stephen Decatur High School (SDHS). She thanked the Commissioners for everything they have done to support the public schools during the last several years, and specifically for funding to construct a new SES, which will give students a competitive edge for the future. In closing, she requested that the Commissioners

continue their ongoing support by funding the requested FY19 BOE budget in its entirety.

Sonji Romnarin of Bishopville spoke on behalf of BIS and all other north end schools. She thanked the Commissioners for their hard work and support over the years, and asked them to fully fund the requested FY19 BOE budget, which will allow them to provide salary increases to attract and retain highly qualified teachers, purchase materials of instruction, and meet the 1-to-1 initiative for computers in the classrooms, to allow students to be proficient in their use of technology which is critical in today's world.

Sarah Guy of Pocomoke spoke on behalf of PES and PMS, noting that her family moved to Worcester County due specifically to the quality of its public schools, and she is thrilled with the education her children are receiving. She thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support, noting that they couldn't be investing taxpayer revenues in a better place. She asked them to continue that support by fully funding the requested FY19 BOE budget, noting that the County can only maintain teacher excellence by offering competitive wages and benefit packages to attract and retain highly-qualified educators and support staff.

Beth Shockley-Lynch, of Snow Hill, speaking as a SHHS graduate, mother of three, Snow Hill Elementary School (SHES) science teacher, and Worcester County Teachers Association (WCTA) president, stated that half of new teachers quit teaching within the first five years of their careers, and therefore providing adequate compensation is key to retaining highly-qualified educators. She requested the Commissioners fully fund the FY19 BOE Budget, which provides proper compensation for teachers in the form of a Step and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for all teachers and an additional ½ percent salary increase for support staff to help them move toward the goal of providing them with livable wages. She stated that it takes the support of the BOE and the Commissioners to keep Worcester County public schools great, noting that together they can do great things.

Laura Rosenfeld of Snow Hill spoke on behalf of south-end public schools, including WTHS, CCSS, SHES, Snow Hill Middle School (SHMS), SHHS, PES, PMS, and PHS. She stated that she is a parent, a come-here from Chicago, and a part-time substitute teacher, and she chose to settle her family here because of the public schools, with class sizes akin to those of private schools. She stated that the public school experience has opened doors of opportunities to her children, noting that her youngest will graduate from the University of Maryland with a degree in chemical engineering this spring. She urged the Commissioners to continue providing the funds needed to maintain excellent schools and urged them to fully support the requested FY19 BOE budget.

Jessica Waters of Berlin spoke on behalf of OCES, SES, BIS, SDMS, and SDHS. She stated that her children are receiving an outstanding education at OCES, where the quality of the education being provided by highly-qualified teachers and staff shows that each child is valued. She stated that Worcester County offers parents one of the top school systems in the country and that is only possible because highly qualified teachers fill the classrooms. She urged the Commissioners to fully fund the requested FY19 BOE budget to attract and retain outstanding educators and support staff.

Vince Gisriel of Ocean City urged the Commissioners not to increase the real property tax rate to \$0.886 per \$100 of assessment as advertised in the Constant Yield notice but to instead retain the current property tax rate of \$0.835 which will be more affordable to those living on fixed incomes. He thanked the Commissioners for exercising fiscal responsibility in the past and urged them to continue this tradition.

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

Commissioner Purnell thanked everyone for attending the public hearing on the FY19 Requested Budget. She stated that the Commissioners would consider all the suggestions presented this evening. She further stated that everyone's needs are important and the Commissioners will do their very best to take care of the entire county. But she cautioned that the Commissioners will not be able to fund all of the requests. She then asked everyone present to clear their hearts and minds as they depart the hearing and pray for wisdom for each of the County Commissioners in all of their upcoming decisions. She also invited the public to attend the budget work sessions scheduled for May 8, 15, and 22, 2018 if needed. Commissioner Purnell advised that the Commissioners will adopt a balanced FY19 County Operating Budget on June 5, 2018.

The Commissioners adjourned to meet again at their budget work session on May 8, 2018.