

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

July 7, 2020

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 Elder, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting 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 Harold L. Higgins, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer (CAAO) Kelly Shannahan, incoming CAAO Weston Young; County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton. Topics discussed and actions taken included: hiring Christine Watsky as a Transfer Station Attendant and Craig Koerner as a Landfill Operator I within the Solid Waste Division, and Preston Frey as a Roads Worker II within the Roads Division of Public Works, Wilna Cange and Demond Selby as Correctional Officer Trainees and temporarily promoting Jenna McGoogan from Corporal to Sergeant within the County Jail, and other personnel matters; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including: receiving the FY20 monthly financial update and discussing potential board appointments.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:49 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 Father John Solomon, of Holy Savior Roman Catholic Church in Ocean City, 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 June 16, 2020 meeting as presented and approved a correction to the previously-approved June 2 open session minutes.

The Commissioners presented Recreation and Parks Director Kelly Rados with a proclamation recognizing July as Park and Recreation Month and recognizing that summer is a great time to get out, get active, and discover all that Worcester County recreation programs and parks have to offer those of all ages.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Ivy Wells to fill the vacant business representative position on the Lower Shore Workforce Development Board for the remainder of a four-year term expiring September 30, 2021.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Sharon Dryden to the Social Services Advisory Board for the remainder of a three-year term expiring June 30, 2021 to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Wayne Ayer. Commissioner Mitrecic requested County staff issue a press release encouraging those interested in becoming more involved in the community to volunteer on a Worcester County board or commission.

Pursuant to the request of Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved the reallocation of \$82,000 within the Board of Education (BOE) budget to replace a failing, 30-year-old, gasoline underground storage tank with a new above ground tank. These funds were available due to cost savings in design engineering services for the Pocomoke Middle School (PMS) roof replacement project.

In a related matter, Mr. Taylor asked the Commissioners to pray for BOE member Bill Gordy who is battling leukemia at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Pursuant to the request of Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Mitrecic to sign the Agreement Reaffirming the Worcester County Bureau of Investigation (CBI). This agreement is between the Sheriff's Office, Maryland State Police, Berlin Police Department, Pocomoke City Police Department, County Commissioners, and the State's Attorney's Office, effective July 1 through December 31, 2020, with the terms of subsequent agreements to be effective throughout each calendar year. Sheriff Crisafulli advised that the last agreement was signed on May 13, 1997, and CBI has been operating without a formal agreement since that document expired.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Development Review and Permitting Director Ed Tudor and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously adopted the Findings of Fact and Resolution 20-20, establishing the Shady Side Village Residential Planned Community (RPC) floating zone for a proposed 37-unit townhouse development located on the southerly side of MD Rt. 707, west of Greenridge Lane, and more specifically identified on Tax Map 26 as Parcel 157, as conceptually approved after the public hearing on June 16, 2020.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tudor and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition to approve two sets of bid specifications for the demolition of a nuisance structure located at 2816 Snow Hill Road in Girdletree and identified on Tax Map 79 as Parcel 250. Mr. Tudor stated that one of two letters notifying the property owner to correct the nuisance was signed for; however, the owner has not requested a hearing before the Commissioners, and no work has been done to abate the nuisance.

He stated that, in response to a request by Commissioner Mitrecic on May 5, 2020 that the structure be removed in a manner that would allow for the repurposing of the wood material instead of conventional demolition, staff developed two sets of bid specifications, one is for the purposeful deconstruction of the structure, and the other includes standard demolition of the structure, in the event that the County receives no bids for the deconstruction and repurposing of materials.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Director John Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the low bid for the rehabilitation of treatment unit no. 3 at the Ocean Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to M2 Construction, Inc. of Landisville, PA at a total cost of \$469,476. Funding is included in the 2019 Bond Issue for this project.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously accepted the proposal from George, Miles, and Buhr (GMB) at a total cost of \$16,650 for construction administration and inspection services for phase one of the Ocean Pines WWTP treatment unit no. 3 rehabilitation project. Funding is included in the 2019 Bond Issue for this project.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved Change Order No. 1 with Baldwin Industries for the Ocean Pines north water tower rehabilitation project in the amount of \$33,095 to address leaks found in the tower after cleaning, increasing the original contract cost from \$297,200 to \$330,295. Mr. Tustin stated that future change orders are anticipated to fully rehabilitate the water tower. The 2019 Bond Issue included \$500,000 for this project.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the low bid for the rehabilitation of pump stations S and P at the Ocean Pines WWTP to Retallack and Sons of Easton, Maryland at a total bid price of \$390,719.63. The 2019 Bond Issue included \$500,000 for this project.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously accepted the proposal from EA Engineering, Science, and Technology (EA) at a total cost of \$39,280.39 for engineering services, construction administration, and inspection services during the bidding and construction phases of the Ocean Pines pump stations S and P rehabilitation project. Funding is included in the 2019 Bond Issue for this project. Mr. Tustin noted that this bid is higher than the bid awarded to GMB for the Ocean Pines WWTP treatment unit no. 3 rehabilitation project because this is a much more intricate and detailed project. The 2019 Bond Issue included \$500,000 for this project.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to waive the standard bid process and accepted the proposal from Hartwell Engineering of Stevensville, Maryland to pre-purchase pump control panels for Ocean Pines Sanitary Service Area (SSA) pump stations S and P at a cost of \$28,500 each. This proposal reflects a savings of \$4,200 per panel and is part of efforts by the Water and

Wastewater Division of Public Works to use this standardized control panel for all pump stations. Mr. Tustin advised that the 2019 Bond Issue included \$500,000 for this project.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications to replace the roof systems on the Commission on Aging (COA) Charles and Martha Fulton Senior Center and the Animal Control building, with funds of \$300,000 for the senior center and \$50,000 for the Animal Control building available within the FY20 budget for these expenses.

The Commissioners met with Mr. Tustin to review the results of a speed study on Fleetway Drive, which was conducted from May 26 to June 2, 2020 to address complaints of speeding vehicles. Mr. Tustin stated that the road is unposted; therefore, a speed limit of 50 miles per hour (mph) governs. He then reviewed the results and noted that 1,398 vehicles or 98.8% of drivers traveled at 35 mph or lower, and 17 vehicles or 1.2% of drivers traveled at 36 mph or higher on Fleetway Drive during the speed study, with one vehicle traveling at 70 mph. Therefore, Mr. Tustin recommended that Fleetway Drive be posted at 30 mph to provide a more uniform speed limit throughout the Cape Isle of Wight area.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners concurred with staff's recommendation to establish the 30 mph speed limit and post speed limit signs and agreed to request that the Sheriff's Office enforce the new speed limit on this previously unposted road.

The Commissioners met with Mr. Tustin to address an email from Bishopville residents Judy and Michael Evans regarding traffic concerns on Saturdays on Bishopville Road, a State highway, and St. Martin's Neck Road (SMNR), a County road that intersects with both Bishopville Road and MD Rt. 90. He stated that because MD Rt. 90 is controlled by a signal operated by the State Highway Administration (SHA) that gives preference to those traveling eastbound to Ocean City, weekend traffic on SMNR often backs up to Lighthouse Sound and further. He stated that last year SHA extended a short right turn lane for those heading towards Ocean Pines, but those taking SMNR are largely headed to Ocean City not Ocean Pines. He stated that the County has done everything possible to address traffic; however, this is predominantly a SHA issue. He noted that SHA has agreed to contact the GPS companies to request that they change the algorithms that direct beach traffic onto these roads. SHA may also consider installing a temporary speed message sign and/or a variable message sign to advise of heavy traffic on the road. He noted that this issue is not unique to Worcester County, but is a nationwide problem. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Tustin for the update.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Tustin in response to a request by Stephen Decatur High School (SDHS) Cross Country Coach Joseph Stigler and Principal Thomas Sites and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously authorized the SDHS Cross Country Team to use the Berlin Landfill from early September through mid-October 2020 for cross country training and as part of their home cross country course on Wednesdays when the Homeowner Convenience Center is closed. The Commissioners also authorized future requests to be approved by County Administration, as long as no major changes are made to the logistics. In response to a question by Commissioner Nordstrom, Mr. Tustin advised that the team has utilized a portion of the capped and closed Berlin landfill mound

in a very limited capacity and under tightly controlled circumstances.

The Commissioners met with law enforcement officials from agencies throughout the County to discuss the use of force and police training. Sheriff Matt Crisafulli thanked the Commissioners for inviting law enforcement to discuss recent incidents in the nation involving police actions, specifically the death of George Floyd, which was deeply disturbing and inconsistent with police training and protocols in this area. He stated that each state has different standards for hiring, training, and certifying police officers, noting that Maryland has some of the highest standards for training and selection in the nation. He also stated that in 1979 the Maryland Legislature established the 24-member Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission, which consists of police officers, civilians, and elected officials from across Maryland, to govern police certification and assure a consistent standard of training throughout the State. He then advised that every police officer in the State must receive and maintain certification from this commission, training is ongoing, and officers are required to treat every citizen with dignity and respect. Sheriff Crisafulli concluded that the agencies present today have worked to build strong ties with all of the communities in the County.

In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, John Moses, director of the Eastern Shore Criminal Justice Academy at Wor-Wic Community College (WWCC), which trains police and corrections officers from the nine Eastern Shore counties, discussed the training that officers receive at the academy, noting that law enforcement is constantly evolving in Maryland. Specifically, in 1995 the State moved from applying a knee on the neck (a standard Federal Bureau of Investigation technique) to a knee on the back technique to restrain resistant suspects. More importantly, they are now trained to assess a person's health and get that individual off his belly and onto his feet. He noted that officers only use force two percent of the time and are trained with the verbal skills necessary to de-escalate a situation. He stated that Maryland has not had incidences of police shooting unarmed individuals, and this is likely due to the amount of training that the officers receive. For example, he pointed out that the State of Georgia only requires an individual to complete 330 hours of training to become a certified police officer, while Maryland requires an individual to complete 950 hours of training, and those enrolled in the police academy at WWCC must complete 1,000 hours of training.

Commissioner Purnell expressed concern regarding institutional racism, specifically the disparity that exists between the treatment of white and black individuals. Mr. Moses shared her concerns, noting that recruits who come through the police academy are trained to treat every person fairly and impartially. He also advised that leadership from all the local law enforcement agencies meet twice a year among themselves and meet annually with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to have open conversations. He then urged the Commissioners and area residents to participate in the Citizens Police Academy, which is a program conducted by the Ocean City Police Department to learn more about community policing.

In response to a question by Commissioner Elder regarding the criteria behind the use of deadly force, State's Attorney Kris Heiser stated that feelings can be heightened, particularly on cases highlighted in the news; however, she cannot comment on a situation that occurs outside of her jurisdiction without having all of the facts involved in the case. She stressed, rather, that a discussion about police training is always important. She also noted that mutual respect, training and education are a two-way street for law enforcement and the public. She then reviewed the

numerous education programs that are available to the public to learn more about law enforcement training and actions. For example, Ms. Heiser noted that she teaches a segment on the State's Attorney's Office during the Citizens Police Academy. With regard to determining whether lethal force is permitted in an individual instance, she concluded that justice takes time. Mr. Moses stated that law enforcement personnel are taught that use of force is a last resort. However, for the average officer who has a gun pulled on him or her, that individual has less than 2.5 seconds to make a decision whether to use force. He further stressed that each police officer has the right to protect himself or herself. He then reviewed the testing, training, and tools used to shape a police officer's decision whether to use force.

Commissioner Bunting expressed his respect for law enforcement and thanked those officers present for meeting with the Commissioners to discuss this topic. In response to questions by Commissioner Bunting, Mr. Moses stated that 201 instructors from each of the police agencies on the Eastern Shore participate in the six-month, military-style police academy training program. He stated that, unlike the Maryland State Police (MSP) training program, which is funded by the State of Maryland, there are no live-in barracks for recruits completing the WWCC police academy, as Maryland law prohibits dorms on community college campuses. Furthermore, constructing barracks off-premise would increase program costs incurred by Worcester and Wicomico Counties by roughly 60%. He concluded that, after recruits graduate from the police academy, they are required to complete an additional one-hundred hours of field training with their respective law enforcement agencies.

Commissioner Church commended law enforcement personnel, noting that these are some of the most under-appreciated professionals in the country, and many citizens have no idea what their job responsibilities include on a daily basis. In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Church, Mr. Moses stated that local testing and training protocols are designed to identify individuals who are not fit to serve in law enforcement. For example, he noted only two out of every 10 applicants will meet the qualifications to be hired by area police agencies, and roughly six out of 25 students in each WWCC police academy class will quit or be dismissed from the program.

Following much discussion, the Commissioners thanked Mr. Moses, Ms. Heiser, and all law enforcement in attendance for meeting with them.

The Commissioners conducted a public hearing to receive public comment regarding the estimated cost of construction for the spray irrigation project in the Newark Sanitary Service Area (SSA). Public Works Director John Tustin reviewed the history and scope of the project, which includes constructing a spray irrigation site on 42 acres of County-owned farmland, north of the Worcester County Developmental Center (WCDC). He stated that the project will eliminate the surface water discharge to Windmill Creek from the Newark Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), as required through a 2014 consent order from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). He stated that the County has been awarded MDE funding of \$2.1 million, which includes a \$1.05 million low-interest loan to be repaid over a 30-year term and a \$1.05 million grant. He pointed out that the County successfully reduced anticipated construction costs from \$2.3 to \$1.6 million for a total project cost of \$2.1 million. In response to a question by Commissioner Elder, Assistant Finance Officer Jessica Wilson stated that 192 sewer EDUs have been assigned to serve existing properties, and one additional EDU was assigned for use during the completion of a State Highway Administration (SHA) project.

Mr. Tustin stated that the Newark WWTP is at maximum capacity and may need to be upgraded to serve additional homes.

Commissioner Mitrecic opened the floor to receive public comment.

Susan Age of Newark advised that this project will increase her monthly costs of \$27 per quarter for water by an additional charge of \$55 for sewer per quarter for a 30-year term. In response to a question by Commissioner Elder, Ms. Wilson stated that the average cost for sewer in the Mystic Harbour SSA is \$66 per quarter for 40 years. Ms. Age opposed the project costs, noting that the County is doing nothing to help Newark residents shoulder these project costs.

Joan Scott of Newark stated that neither she nor any of her neighbors were personally notified by the County about this hearing, and she stated that it would be appreciated if the County would send personal letters to those who will be impacted by future projects rather than simply advertising the hearing in the newspaper. She stated her understanding that the County is under a consent order to complete the project, but noted that the County never proposed alternatives to the exorbitant project costs the small Newark community is being asked to shoulder. She concluded that the cost increase is too much for her family to cover and asked the County to provide additional funding support for this project. In response to questions by Ms. Scott, Mr. Tustin reviewed the steps taken by County staff to reduce initial project costs. Ms. Wilson advised that 50% of project costs will be covered by the \$1.05 million MDE grant (loan forgiveness program). In response to questions by Ms. Scott, Commissioner Mitrecic confirmed that the Glen Riddle and West Ocean City SSAs pay the Ocean Pines and Ocean City SSAs to treat and then discharge effluent from their respective service areas. Commissioner Elder expressed concern that the County did not send individual letters to Newark residents informing them about the public hearing today.

John Kumer of Newark expressed concerns regarding existing water costs, how he thought those costs would be reduced by sharing expenses with the Arcadia subdivision, rust in the water, and now the lack of test results to identify the level of contaminants in the effluent being treated at the Newark WWTP and the environmental need for the spray irrigation project. In response to questions by Commissioner Elder, Mr. Tustin confirmed that County staff succeeded in securing a 50/50 mix of loan and grant funds from MDE, which substantially reduced the cost to residents to \$1.05 million.

In response to a request for clarification by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Tustin stated that 40 water EDUs were originally allocated for use by the Arcadia subdivision, and the property owners have been paying those costs since that time.

Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins read a letter submitted by Justin Bradford of Newark opposing rising infrastructure costs, stating that area residents already pay one of the highest wastewater bills, and opposing the rising infrastructure costs.

Mr. Higgins read a letter submitted by Lola Bradford of Newark opposing the rising sewer costs to Newark residents for the new system and stating that the County's first priority should be eliminating the brown tint in their water.

Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell advised that this project is designed to eliminate the discharge of treated effluent from the Newark WWTP into Windmill Creek to meet the State's reduced nutrient requirements. He noted that the sewer line from the Board of Education (BOE) to the Newark WWTP is a dedicated line, and agricultural properties along that route cannot hook into that line because they are ineligible for public water and sewer.

In response to a question by Commissioner Nordstrom, Public Works Deputy Director

John Ross stated that preliminary engineering selected the spray irrigation project as the most cost-effective alternative for the residents of Newark, noting that it would be far more costly to upgrade the WWTP to an enhanced nutrient removal (ENR) system, and there is no land available to build a new WWTP. Furthermore, the State covered the cost of the study to consider whether the spray irrigation site would be adequate to serve the existing 192 EDUs that had already been allocated to customers in the Newark SSA; however, a developer interested in new development could fund an additional study to determine how much additional growth that site could accommodate. Ms. Wilson confirmed that repayment of the \$1.05 million loan is based on distributing project costs among the existing 192 EDUs over a 30-year period. In response to an additional question by Commissioner Elder, Mr. Ross stated that the Newark SSA did not qualify for additional grant funds due to the results of a salary survey, and he reiterated that the MDE grant resulted in a 50% reduction in costs to the residents.

In response to a request for clarification from Commissioner Bunting, Mr. Tustin reiterated that MDE ordered the County to enter into a consent order, which required the County to make these improvements by 2020.

In response to additional concerns raised by Ms. Scott, Commissioner Mitrecic noted that Newark customers would pay \$220 per EDU annually for these improvements, while by comparison he pays well over \$300 a quarter for water and sewer service in Ocean City.

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

The Commissioners recessed until 12:30 p.m.

Pursuant to the request of Assistant Finance Officer Jessica Wilson and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Mitrecic to sign closing documents and Resolution No. 20-21 providing issuance of a \$170,000 Public Facility Bond for loan no. 2 from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Mystic Harbour effluent disposal and reuse project. Loan no. 2 is part of funding for this project that includes a mix of USDA loan and grant monies totaling \$3,450,000 as follows: loan no. 1 of \$2,450,000, grant no. 1 of \$750,000, loan no. 2 of \$170,000 and grant no. 2 of \$80,000.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell in response to a request by Ocean City Public Works Director Hal Adkins and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to waive the stormwater bond requirement of \$290,544 for the runway 14-32 project at the Ocean City Municipal Airport on MD Rt. 611.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Mitchell and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Elder voting in opposition, to schedule a public hearing to consider six applications to sell easements to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) in FY21 on the following properties: a 102-acre property owned by Freddie and Fay Fair and located on the west side of Steel Pond Road in Stockton and more specifically identified on Tax Map 93 as Parcel 41; a 210.13-acre property owned by Mark Gross on Harrison Road in Berlin and more specifically identified on Tax Map 32 as Parcel 217; a 53.8-acre property owned by Glenn and Jean Holland at Colona

Road and New Bridge Road in Pocomoke and more specifically identified on Tax Map 100 as Parcels 6, 55, and 84; a 139.97-acre property owned by Tom Wilkins et al. located on MD Rt. 364 near Pocomoke and more specifically identified on Tax Map 77 as Parcel 102; a 144.93-acre property owned by Aberdeen Farm, LLC on Sheephouse Road in Pocomoke and more specifically identified on Tax Map 92 as Parcel 69; and a 74.82-acre property owned by Jason and Kelly Lambertson at 3105 Sheephouse Road in Pocomoke and more specifically identified on Tax Map 92 as Parcel 8.

The Commissioners reviewed a letter from Craig Kuhn, Program Manager for the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) Office of Forest Pest Management (FPM), advising that his office plans to conduct a cooperative gypsy moth population survey in fall 2020, which will include conducting approximately 105 surveys on non-State land in Worcester County to predict the level of gypsy moth caterpillar populations the following spring. This would allow the FPM to identify developing gypsy moth infestations and respond appropriately before significant damage occurs. He further noted that, the County's estimated portion of the 50/50 cost share would be \$1,575. This cost estimate does not include the cost of aerial spraying if necessary.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously approved the 50% local cost share of approximately \$1,575 for the gypsy moth population survey to be conducted in Worcester County.

Tom Perlozzo, Director of Recreation, Parks, Tourism, and Economic Development, presented the updated proposal to the Commissioners for the Workforce Back to Business COVID-19 Assistance Grant Program. Mr. Perlozzo stated that the County received \$2.28 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to help provide grant relief. He stated that \$2.18 million is proposed to be distributed in the form of grants and \$100,000 to administer the program as follows: \$60,000 to the Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) at Salisbury University to evaluate and execute grant funds, \$10,000 for advertising, \$14,000 for board meeting payments, \$2,000 for office supplies, \$10,000 for administrative assistance, and \$4,000 for contingency. He reviewed the proposed program timeline as follows: application period from July 8-22, 2020; review and scoring from July 23 to August 6; review and discussion of applications by BEACON and the review committee on August 10; marginal application review on August 11; and recommendations to be submitted to County Administration for funding release on August 12. He stated that the proposed process was developed to be fair, flexible, transparent, and objective to spur the Worcester County economy.

In response to questions by Commissioner Nordstrom, Mr. Perlozzo confirmed that, if approved by the Commissioners, BEACON will receive and score all of the applications, which will then be reviewed by the review committee, consisting of Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) members and County business experts, including Natasha Owens, Steve Habeger, Joseph Schanno, Jennifer Frock, Stacy LeMay, Ross Bergey, and Dana Bodley, along with John Hickman and County staff as non-voting members. He stated that review committee members would receive the standard expense allowance of \$50 per meeting for participating in this process.

Commissioner Bertino questioned whether BEACON is integral to successfully

executing the grant program or whether the County could do the intake and score the applications and use the \$60,000 savings to award additional grants. Mr. Perlozzo stated that the staff and review committee cannot take on a project of this magnitude without assistance from an objective, third-party with the skill set to process and score the applications. Commissioner Bertino expressed concern regarding subjective questions that could impact whether or not a business may receive grant funding through this program. Economic Development Deputy Director Lachelle Scarlato noted that BEACON's involvement assures a fair, transparent, equitable process that removes County employees from the award process. She stated that all applications will be submitted online to be date and time-stamped.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to eliminate subjective questions 31, 32, and 33, which would require judgement-based scoring, from the Workforce Back to Business COVID-19 Assistance Grant Application scoring sheet.

Commissioner Bunting stated that he too would prefer not to allocate \$60,000 to BEACON and instead use those funds to award additional grants. In response to a question by Commissioner Nordstrom, Ms. Scarlato advised that BEACON has the staff needed to dispense grant funds by August, whereas the process would be delayed by months if handled in-house by County staff and EDAB members. Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins concurred, noting for example that if the County receives 500 applications and spends just one hour on each application that would equate to 500 hours or 12.5 weeks for a County staff member to complete the review process. In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Purnell, Mr. Perlozzo advised that County staff will make every effort to assure that all County businesses are aware of this grant program.

Following much discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition, to approve the program as proposed, with the amended scoring sheet, and to enter into a contract with BEACON for assistant, and to appoint the eight proposed review committee members, and adding Wendell White of Pocomoke as an additional review committee member.

Commissioner Nordstrom addressed an allegation made by a citizen that it was a conflict of interest for him to vote on June 2, 2020 to award a grant of \$100,000 to Atlantic General Hospital (AGH) since his wife is employed by AGH. He stated that he takes such allegations very seriously, and he thanked County Administration and the Ethics Board for their quick response and finding that there was no wrongdoing on his part.

Commissioner Elder expressed concern that earlier in the meeting several Newark residents reported that no action had been taken on letters they sent to the County regarding nuisance properties in their community. Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Shannahan stated that County Administration has not received any such complaints, but agreed to investigate.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter to the State Highway Administration (SHA) seeking their assistance to resolve traffic issues on MD Rt. 589 at the ingress and egress points to the Peninsula Regional Medical Center's Ocean Pines Health Pavilion.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to send a card to Board of Education (BOE) member Bill Gordy and his family advising that they are praying for him.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned at 1:14 p.m. to meet again on July 21, 2020.