

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

May 7, 2019

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Nordstrom, with Commissioner Mitrecic temporarily absent, 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 (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 Kelly Shannahan, County Attorney Maureen Howarth, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton; and two candidates for Economic Development Director. Topics discussed and actions taken included: conducting interviews for Economic Development Director; promoting Jared Belka from Maintenance Worker II and John "Dylan" Partridge from Maintenance Worker I to Plant Operator Trainees and posting to fill the position of Water System Supervisor within the Water and Wastewater Division of Public Works; rehiring David Waters as a part-time temporary Roads Worker IV for the Roads Division, Brendan Harrigan and Jacob Kvarda as Landfill Operator II's and posting to fill the vacant position of Landfill Operator I for the Solid Waste Division of Public Works; posting to fill the position of Communications Clerk Trainee for Emergency Services; hiring John Znamirowski as a Correctional Officer Trainee and posting internally to fill the position of Sergeant/Kitchen Manager within the Jail; reviewing personnel matters in the Sheriff's Office; consulting with staff about pending litigation; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including: dispatcher schedule change within Emergency Services.

Following a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 10:05 a.m.

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

The Commissioners reviewed and approved the open session minutes of their April 2 and 9, 2019 budget work sessions and their April 16, 2019 open and closed session meeting minutes as presented.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Tourism Director Lisa Challenger and other Tourism officials recognizing the week of May 5-11, 2019 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 Denise Sawyer, Melanie Pursel, Karah Lacey, Jordy Figgs Kuczak, Kerry Bunting, Ivy Wells, and Liz Walk.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Local Management Board (LMB) Director Jessica Sexauer recognizing May 5-11, 2019 as Children's Mental Health Matters Week and May 9 as National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day to raise awareness about and reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness. Representatives from the LMB, Health Department, Department of Social Services (DSS), Board of Education's (BOE) school-based wellness team, and Maryland Coalition for Families joined Ms. Sexauer for the presentation.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Department of Social Services (DSS) Director Roberta Baldwin and other DSS foster care professionals and foster parents recognizing May as National Foster Care Month and thanking them for their efforts to bring stability and a sense of self-worth back into the lives of young people whose lives have been disrupted through no fault of their own.

The Commissioners presented a commendation to Alison and Terry Tinker for being named the 2019 Worcester County Foster Parents of the Year by DSS for their willingness to serve foster children in the community. The Commissioners commended the Tinkers for opening their hearts and homes for more than 30 years to bring hope and stability to children whose lives are in crisis.

The Commissioners conducted a hearing on Nuisance Abatement Order No. 19-1 on property located at 2844 Byrd Road in Pocomoke City, Maryland, and more specifically identified on Tax Map 84 as Parcel 379. The specific nature of the nuisance includes the uncontrolled growth of grass, weeds and other vegetation, the outdoor storage and accumulation of personal property occupying greater than 100 square feet of land area, and an accumulation of junk vehicles, which constitutes a nuisance under the provisions of Subsection PH 1-101(a)(1), (4), and (14) of the County Code.

Neither Ralph Webb, Jr. or Karen Brown (property owners), or Michael Louis Parrett (tenant) were present during the hearing that Mr. Parrett requested¹.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously upheld their prior decision to require abatement of the nuisance by the May 18, 2019 deadline.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously authorized

¹ Mr. Parrett arrived at the meeting at 11:00 a.m., 30 minutes after the scheduled hearing had concluded.

Commission President Purnell to sign the FY20 Critical Area Grant Agreement awarding the County \$10,000 to cover a very small portion of the County's actual cost to administer the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area programs.

Library Director Jennifer Ranck informed the Commissioners that the State awarded the Library an FY20 County Public Library Capital Grant of \$120,000 for the design phase of the Pocomoke Branch Library. Ms. Ranck advised that \$500,000 is available within the Assigned Fund Balance for the Library project to cover the required County match of \$120,000. She further stated that the Library plans to pursue an FY21 County Public Library Grant to cover construction costs, and Gipe Associates, Inc. completed the preliminary design and engineering analysis/feasibility study for the branch, which will be presented to the Commissioners along with a current cost estimate for the project on May 21, 2019.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign a letter to State Librarian Irene M. Padilla of the Maryland State Library committing FY20 County matching funds of \$120,000 for the Pocomoke Branch Library design phase.

In a related matter, Commissioner Bertino thanked Ms. Ranck for her efforts regarding recent improvements to the Ocean Pines Branch Library, noting that the facility looks great.

Pursuant to the request of Recreation and Parks Director Tom Perlozzo and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Purnell to sign the USA Softball National Championship Tournament Agreement between USA Softball, Inc., the Worcester County Commissioners, and USA Softball of Maryland DC Delaware to host and sponsor the Girls 18U National Eastern Championship Tournament from July 24-27, 2019 at the Showell Park and Berlin Little League fields, as well as similar contracts for the Girls U10, U12, and U14. Mr. Perlozzo stated that 21 teams from five states have already registered for the 18U event, and this event is expected to generate \$10,000 in net revenues for the County. Mr. Perlozzo also explained that this event will continue for three years, and attendance can be estimated based on the housing provided at local hotels.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Rodney Bailey to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee for the remainder of a four-year term expiring December 31, 2021, to fill the position created by the death of Wendell Purnell.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously adopted Resolution No. 19-14 to amend the Worcester County Government Personnel Rules and Regulations regarding the retiree medical insurance payment process and delinquent accounts, as conceptually approved by the Commissioners at their April 16, 2019 meeting and after having been posted for 15 days and receiving no comment. The amendment states that all insurance payments are due on the fifteenth of the calendar month for the next calendar month's coverage, and the insurance shall be cancelled permanently for those whose payments are not received within 90 calendar days of the due date. Furthermore, beginning July 1, 2019 medical insurance premiums will automatically be deducted from Maryland State Retirement System (MSRS) checks for those eligible retirees and retiree dependents receiving MSRS retirement checks.

Pursuant to the request of Ms. Norton and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved the May 8-17, 2019 collection schedule for the County's annual Operation We Care program to send care packages for Armed Forces' Day and Veteran's Day to troops related to someone that lives on the Eastern Shore.

Ms. Norton advised the Commissioners that the next County Blood Drive will take place at the Worcester County Recreation Center (WCRC) in Snow Hill on June 12, 2019 from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Pursuant to the request of Ms. Norton and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to host the annual Volunteer Spirit Award Dinner at the Atlantic Hotel in Berlin on August 21, 2019 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Ms. Norton advised that funds of \$3,500 are available within the budget for this event.

Pursuant to the request of Finance Officer Phil Thompson and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Designated Funds transfer of \$1 million to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) trust accounts. Mr. Thompson stated that the funds have and will continue to be allocated equally between the trusts for County Government and the Board of Education (BOE).

Pursuant to the request of Enterprise Fund Controller Jessica Wilson and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule the public hearing on the requested FY20 Operating Budget for the Water and Wastewater Enterprise Fund (Sanitary Service Area Budgets and Assessments) on Tuesday, June 4, 2019, at 10:40 a.m.

Pursuant to the request of Ms. Wilson and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule the public hearing on the requested FY20 Operating Budget for the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund on Tuesday, June 4, 2019, at 10:40 a.m.

Pursuant to the request of Ms. Wilson and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule the public hearing on the requested FY20 Operating Budget for the Liquor Control Enterprise Fund on Tuesday, June 4, 2019, at 10:40 a.m.

The Commissioners reviewed correspondence from State representatives commenting in response to a letter from the Commissioners on February 19, 2019 to Norman C. Wang, Building Codes Administration Director of the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR), advising of the Commissioners' intent to institute a revised Building Permit Application form and a Single-Family Home Residential Fire Sprinkler Waiver form, which would allow property owners to opt out of the State requirement to install fire sprinklers in all new single-family homes effective July 1, 2019 and seeking State comment on their proposal on or before May 1, 2019. State correspondence included a response letter from DLLR Labor and Industry Commissioner Matthew Helminiak to the Commissioners; an email from District 38 Delegate Wayne Hartman to the Commissioners, fully supporting their efforts to make this

change in Worcester County; a letter from Daniel Davis, Jr., State Fire Prevention Commission Chair to the Attorney General regarding Allegany County and Worcester County not enforcing or upholding the Maryland Building Performance Standards (Standards) requiring automatic fire sprinkler systems in newly constructed one- and two-family houses; and a letter from Assistant Attorney General Jeremy M. McCoy to Delegate Dana Stein advising that, except under limited circumstances, a local jurisdiction may not adopt local amendments to the Maryland Building Performance Standards (Standards) that weaken or opt out of the automatic fire sprinkler systems provisions of the Standards for townhouses and one- or two-family dwellings in the local jurisdictions. Mr. Higgins stated that staff is seeking guidance from the Commissioners on how to proceed.

In response to a question by Commissioner Bunting, County Attorney Maureen Howarth stated that it would require the passage of new State legislation for the County to opt out of the State sprinkler requirement. Commissioner Bunting, therefore, suggested modifying House Bill 19 - Public Safety - Building Performance Standards - Local Amendments to Fire Sprinkler Systems Provisions, which was introduced in 2016 by Delegate Christopher Adams and others to repeal the State requirement that fire sprinklers be installed in new and renovated one- and two-family homes, to exclude only single-family homes, and to ask the Eastern Shore Delegation to introduce the legislation during the 2020 General Assembly session.

Commissioner Mitrecic stated that even one life lost to a fire is too many, but the State requirement is an overreach of power and places a significant burden on new home buyers, especially those in rural areas where public water systems are not available. He noted that there are more deaths due to a lack of working smoke detectors in homes, and the County should focus on ensuring that each home has working smoke detectors, as required in the County Code, and more specifically interconnected smoke detectors, so that if one is activated, all of the detectors' alarms will sound.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners voted unanimously to request that the Eastern Shore Delegation introduce legislation to allow for a single-family residential fire sprinkler waiver provision in the State Code. The Commissioners further agreed to send a copy of the letter of request and background information, including the County's draft building permit and draft waiver form, along with a letter seeking support to the executives and commissioners/council presidents of all 23 Maryland counties and Baltimore City, the Maryland Rural Counties Coalition, all State legislators, and Governor Larry Hogan.

Commissioner Elder strongly supported the proposal, but clarified for the public that individuals may still chose to voluntarily install fire sprinkler systems in their single-family homes if they choose to do so, but they would not be required to do so as currently required by the State at significant expense.

In response to an earlier request by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners reviewed the results of a recent speed study that was conducted by the Roads Division of Public Works on Dixie Drive from April 11-15, 2019. Commissioner Bunting noted that the posted speed limit on Dixie Drive is 30 miles per hour, though results of the speed study found that only 37.3% of the observed drivers were obeying the speed limit.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to request that the Sheriff's Office increase enforcement of the posted speed limit on Dixie Drive.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet in closed session.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 10:58 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 (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 Kelly Shannahan, County Attorney Maureen Howarth, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton. Topics discussed and actions taken included: reviewing personnel matters in the Sheriff's Office; consulting with staff about pending litigation; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including: reviewing the schedule for the public hearing on the FY20 County Operating Budget.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 11:30 a.m.

After their closed session, the Commissioners recessed until 7:00 p.m. to host the public hearing on the FY20 Requested County Operating Budget at the Stephen Decatur High School auditorium.

The Commissioners conducted a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. at the Stephen Decatur High School auditorium on the FY20 Requested County Operating Budget. Commission President Purnell called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the FY20 Requested Operating Budget. The presentation included the following graphs and information: FY20 Budget Issues; General Fund Estimated Revenues and Requested Expenditures for FY20; Worcester County Assessable Tax Base from FY16-FY20 from \$14.9 billion to \$16.4 billion; General Fund Major Revenues - Property Tax, Income Tax, and Recordation and Transfer Taxes from FY17-FY20; General Fund Revenue and Expenditure Comparisons from FY17-FY20; FY19 Real Property Tax Rates of counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland of which Worcester County is 2nd lowest in Maryland at \$0.835 per \$100 of assessed value; 2019 Income Tax Rates of Eastern Shore counties of which Worcester County is the lowest in Maryland at 1.75%; the Worcester County Constant Yield Tax Rate of \$0.8231 per \$100 of assessed value to yield the current real property tax revenues; and the Schedule of Upcoming Budget Work Sessions on May 14, 21, and 28, 2019 (if all are necessary); and the Budget & Tax Rate Adoption on June 4, 2019.

Mr. Higgins explained that the requested expenditures of \$202,683,755 exceed the County's estimated revenues of \$195,891,813 by \$6,791,942. 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 \$0.8231 to remain constant with the current year, FY19. 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 up to \$0.8666 per \$100 of assessed value to fully fund budget requests. This tax rate is 5.3% higher than the CYTR and would generate an additional \$6,793,232 in real property tax revenues.

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

Harold Scrimgeour of Stockton stated that the County should place an Economic Development officer over Development Review and Permitting and Environmental Programs to create a growth plan that provides jobs for County students upon graduation and doesn't result in the continued proliferation of chicken houses.

Tim Jerscheid of Stockton stated that no price tag can be placed on the service provided by the volunteer fire companies and asked the Commissioners to work to increase funding and improve the lines of communication with them.

Trey Heiser of Snow Hill stated that the volunteer fire companies provide a multi-million dollar savings to the County for the services they provide, but they have seen very little increase in the annual grant for fire and emergency medical services in the past years, and he asked the Commissioners to reconsider the current funding formula.

Steve Grunewald of Ocean Pines thanked the Commissioners for their past funding to the volunteer fire companies and asked them to do all they can to increase future funding.

Diakonia Board President Allyson Bernard Church stated that Diakonia does a lot to raise money to operate the shelter, and she thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support, which allows Diakonia to leverage needed State, federal, and even private funding. She advised that Diakonia provides 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 13,714 bed nights for Eastern Shore residents from Worcester County (61%), Wicomico County (37%), and Somerset County (2%), helped 29 military veterans, provided emergency solutions to 146 households, and helped almost 400 individuals avoid homelessness. She stated that Diakonia recognizes the value of every County dollar allocated and asked the Commissioners to continue their support of Diakonia and other vital social service programs in the County.

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 receives 85% of its funding from State and federal programs, but this funding does not cover all costs, which makes continued County and other local funding vital. He asked the Commissioners for their continued stable support of the WCDC, and he invited them to come to the WCDC and meet the clients, who are the real dividends.

Steve Taylor of Worcester Youth and Family Counseling (WYFC) stated that WYFC has been providing needed services, including mental health and youth enrichment services, to the community since 1975, but due to budget constraints and an increased demand for services there

is a three-week to two-month wait for services to families that need immediate assistance. He stated that WYFC utilizes County grant funds to leverage State and federal funds, and he urged the Commissioners to continue this much-needed support.

Mar-Va Theater Board President Rob Clarke stated that the Mar-Va Theater strives to raise the funding needed to cover an operating budget that provides a full lineup of community activities, including feature movies at low prices, plays, summer theater academies, and opportunities for high school students to earn community service hours. He advised that they have raised \$58,000 to replace the failing heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) unit this year; however, another \$56,000 is needed to cover that cost, and he urged the Commissioners to grant their \$20,000 funding request to help cover operating and a portion of the HVAC replacement.

Jeffrey Bacon of Furnace Town stated that the Commissioners have and continue to be a lifeline to Furnace Town, beginning in the late 1970s with the restoration of the bog furnace to today with grant funds that allow them to serve the community. He urged the Commissioners to restore funding to the level of up to \$70,000 annually, which they had previously granted to Furnace Town.

Ron Geesey of Snow Hill stated that last year's County funding cut to Furnace Town in the amount of \$30,000 hurt operations. He reviewed the numerous community events Furnace Town hosts each year (including the 9th annual Iron Furnace 50 Bicycle Ride, which will draw 350 cyclists to Snow Hill this Saturday), in addition to the programs and services to residents, visitors, and school children, and he stated that they need the County to restore funding to help subsidize these costs, which will draw more people to the County and benefit the local economy.

Newton Weaver, President of the Worcester County Historical Society and speaking on behalf of Furnace Town, stated that this is National Tourism Week. He stated that, because museums in Worcester County play a significant role in generating tourism dollars, totaling \$1.6 billion last year, it is imperative that the Commissioners fund Furnace Town's grant request.

Furnace Town Director Jessica Evans stated that Furnace Town is an asset to the County, and they need support from the County to continue to provide vital educational programs and resources to school students.

Rina Thaler, Executive Director of the Art League of Ocean City, stated that the Art League has grown from opening its doors in 1963 to serve Ocean City to opening the new art center in 2013 and has also grown partnerships that help to build communities through the arts and extending programs. These programs include a nationally recognized Film Festival, Artists Paint OC, scholarships for students, fundraisers that help support programs for Diakonia, homeless veterans, and the Humane Society, programs for seniors, and Arts as Healing to help those recovering from opioid addiction. She stated that partnerships have helped the Art League extend programs and services to all of Worcester County, 365 days per year. Ms. Thaler noted that the Art League also plays a significant role in tourism, and recently she had received calls from three travel writers because the Art League attracts many visitors to Worcester County each year. She concluded that when you touch people through art, you build better citizens. Therefore, she thanked the Commissioners for their past support and urged continued funding in the future.

Stacey Weisner, Executive Director of the Delmarva Discovery Museum (DDM) in Pocomoke, thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing investment in the DDM. She stated that the DDM, which is a hands-on museum, plays a significant role in attracting school students and

visitors to Worcester County, noting that the Washington Post recently contacted her for information, so they could include the DDM in a list of things to do in Worcester County. She stated that they are currently updating the museum to make every station handicap accessible to improve the visitor experience, and she appreciates the Commissioners' continued funding, as they can't make it without support from the County.

Superintendent of Schools Lou Taylor thanked the Commissioners for supporting the Board of Education (BOE) and recognized today as National Teacher Appreciation Day. He stated that this year marks the BOE's 150th anniversary, and he recognized the Commissioners' wise investment in education and commitment to open dialogue as significant to their success. He stated that the BOE leads the State in college and career readiness and maintains the highest kindergarten readiness rate, along with the highest graduation rate and lowest drop out rate. Mr. Taylor advised that the BOE's top priorities are to maintain an exceptional school system, maintain small class sizes, materials for instruction, after school and summer programs, school safety, and a competitive salary and benefits package to attract and retain highly qualified staff. Because kids are at the heart of every decision the BOE makes, he asked the Commissioners to fully fund the requested BOE budget, to allow them to offer competitive salaries and benefits, keep class sizes small, cover transportation costs, and fund needed capital projects.

Beth Shockley-Lynch, mother of three and President of the Worcester County Teachers Association (WCTA) and a Snow Hill Elementary School Science Teacher, requested the Commissioners fully fund the FY20 BOE Budget, which provides proper compensation for teachers, as well as adequate funds to purchase materials of instruction and other classroom essentials to help Worcester County public schools remain the best in the State. She stated that teachers are magic makers, educational rock stars, and she asked the Commissioners to help keep that magic alive by fully funding the requested BOE budget to provide competitive salaries and benefits. She also thanked Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and the Health Benefits Committee for holding health care costs for FY20 at FY19 levels, with no change in benefits, and she thanked the Commissioners for providing her a seat on the committee. She also expressed concern that the State fails to fund Worcester County schools at a fair level and agreed that the State funding formula needs to be revised.

Melody Smith of Pocomoke spoke on behalf of all Pocomoke schools. She thanked Commissioner Nordstrom and all of the Commissioners for their visibility in the schools and for their ongoing support. She asked the Commissioners to continue that support by fully funding the requested BOE budget to provide a competitive salary package, funding for capital improvements, and to put students first.

Keri Payne, of Ocean Pines and speaking on behalf of Showell Elementary School (SES) and all north-end schools, thanked the Commissioners for their past support, particularly for the new SES that is currently under construction. She then asked the Commissioners to fully fund the requested BOE budget, noting that she trusts Superintendent Lou Taylor and hopes that the Commissioners trust him too.

Debbie Lamberton of Stockton advised that she is the proud grandparent of a Cedar Chapel Special School (CCSS) student who has made remarkable progress during her first five years at CCSS. She thanked the Commissioners for the funding that makes her granddaughter's education possible. She stated that children are the County's greatest asset, and she urged the Commissioners to fully fund the requested BOE budget to keep staff salaries competitive, class sizes small, and technology current, to include replacing nine whiteboards at CCSS.

Gina Alther, of Berlin and speaking on behalf of Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS) and Buckingham Elementary School (BES), thanked the Commissioners for their ongoing support, and she asked them to fully fund the requested BOE budget to provide a competitive salary package, materials of instruction, after and summer school programs, and new technology to prepare students for success, which is the best long-term investment.

Diana Hurney of Snow Hill stated that she has three boys in Snow Hill area schools, including Snow Hill High School (SHHS) and Worcester Technical High School (WTHS). She thanked the Commissioners for their past support and for providing the funds needed to remodel and expand SHHS, and she asked the Commissioners to continue that support by fully funding the requested BOE budget to enable the BOE to continue providing a world class education, which draws people to our area, boosts the local tax base, and helps make every child a success story.

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

Commissioner Purnell thanked everyone for attending the public hearing on the FY20 Requested Budget. She stated that the Commissioners would consider all the comments and 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 14, 21, and 28, 2019 if needed.

Commissioner Purnell advised that the Commissioners will adopt a balanced FY20 County Operating Budget on June 4, 2019.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners adjourned to meet again at their budget work session on May 14, 2019.