

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

March 22, 2022

Work Session

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

The commissioners met at 9:00 a.m. with Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, Budget Officer Candace Savage, and Finance Officer Phil Thompson to conduct a work session to review the Worcester County Departmental Operating Budget Requests for FY23, as presented to the commissioners during their March 15, 2022 meeting. The requested FY23 Operating Budget currently reflects estimated revenues of \$218,040,884, and requested general fund operating expenditures of \$229,285,111, which leaves a shortfall of \$11,244,227 that must be reconciled by either reductions in expenditures, additional revenues, or a combination of the two. Mr. Young announced that department heads have been informed of the need to reduce their budgets.

Commissioner Mitrecic called the meeting to order and announced the topics discussed during the March 3, 2022 afternoon closed session.

The commissioners met with Circuit Court Judge Brian D. Shockley and Court Administrator Ilene Muhlberg to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Operating Budget of \$1,439,592 for the Circuit Court, representing an increase of \$7,324 or 0.5%.

The commissioners met with Emergency Services Director Billy Birch to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Emergency Services Operating Budget of \$3,703,761, representing a decrease of (\$170,471) or -4.4%.

Public Works Director Dallas Baker reviewed the proposed FY23 Enterprise Fund Operating Budget of \$4,810,926 for the Solid Waste Division of Public Works, representing an increase of \$1,335,743 or 38.4%. Mr. Baker then reviewed the proposed FY23 General Fund Operating Budgets of \$793,992 for the Homeowner Convenience Centers, representing a decrease of (\$8,556) or -1.1%; \$942,809 for Recycling, representing an increase of \$66,295 or 7.6%; and \$13,787,289 for the Water and Wastewater Division of Public Works, representing an increase of \$856,342.

The commissioners met with Board of Elections Director Pattie Jackson to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Operating Budget of \$1,355,240 for the Board of Elections, representing an increase of \$130,084 or 10.6%.

In a related matter, Commissioner Nordstrom expressed concern that the only early voting site is located in Ocean City rather than a central location that would increase the ease of access for all residents. Ms. Jackson advised that the Ocean City site meets all State requirements. She also advised that a secure voter drop box will be available at the Pocomoke Community Center roughly 30 days prior to the election.

The commissioners met with Finance Officer Phil Thompson and Assistant Finance Officer Jessica Wilson to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Treasurer's Office Budget of \$1,308,580, representing an increase of \$26,631 or 2.1%; Other General Government – MIS (Document Imaging) of \$175,500, representing an increase of \$6,310 or 3.7%; and Debt Service of \$14,486,078, representing an increase of \$798,147 or 5.8%.

The commissioners met with Development Review and Permitting (DRP) Director Jennifer Keener to review and discuss the proposed FY23 DRP Operating Budget of \$2,075,878, representing an increase of \$137,063 or 7.1%.

The commissioners met with Human Resources Director Stacey Norton to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Human Resources Operating Budget of \$519,825, representing an increase of \$40,099 or 8.4%.

The commissioners met with Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Operating Budget of \$1,593,459 for Environmental Programs, representing an increase of \$57,214 or 2.4%.

The commissioners met with Information Technology Director Brian Jones to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Information Technology Budget of \$644,914, representing an increase of \$68,443 or 11.9%; and Other General Government – IT budget of \$934,742, representing an increase of \$29,140 or 3.2%.

The commissioners met with Mr. Young to review FY23 Operating Budget requests of \$36,400 for Orphan's Court, representing an increase of \$7,500 or 26%; and \$612,489 for Other Natural Resources, representing an increase of \$102,235 or 20.1%.

The commissioners adjourned for lunch.

The commissioners met with Library Director Jennifer Ranck to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Operating Budget of \$2,877,546 for the Library, representing an increase of \$16,829 or 0.6%.

The commissioners met with Warden Fulton Holland, Jr. and Assistant Warden Shytina Drummond to review and discuss the proposed FY23 County Jail Operating Budget of \$9,740,911, representing a decrease of (\$30,216) or -0.3%.

The commissioners met with Health Officer Becky Jones to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Operating Budget of \$5,999,817 for the Health Department, representing an increase of \$322,842 or 5.7%.

Recreation and Parks Director Kelly Rados reviewed the proposed FY23 Operating Budget of \$1,850,067 for Recreation, representing a decrease of (\$494,269) or -21.1%; and Parks budget of \$1,625,297, representing an increase of \$499,564 or 44.4%; and Parks Superintendent Jacob Stephens reviewed the Boat Landings budget of \$381,250, representing a decrease of (\$5,905) or -1.5%.

The commissioners met with Commission on Aging (COA) Director John Dorrrough to review and discuss the proposed FY23 COA Operating Budget of \$1,514,783, representing a decrease of (\$89,000) or -5.5%.

The Commissioners met with Sheriff Matt Crisafulli and Chief Deputy Doug Dods to review and discuss the proposed FY23 Sheriff's Office Operating Budget of \$10,203,690, representing an increase of \$753,326 or 8%.

The commissioners met in open session.

The commissioners met with Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell to discuss recent actions by the Maryland Department of the Environment to deny an amendment to the County's Comprehensive Plan for Water and Sewerage Systems that impact the Riverview Mobile Home Park. Mr. Mitchell advised that MDE's actions would severely impact the property owner and jeopardize a secure future for the 66 families that reside in this park. Mr. Young advised that the proposed wastewater treatment plant would remove 1,000 pounds of nitrogen from the Bishopville Prong, an impaired waterway, but was originally thought to add a trace amount of phosphorous, which caused MDE to deny the amendment. However, the developer has agreed to implement best management practices in the ditches, which should actually result in a net reduction of phosphorous. However, MDE staff has since denied the revised proposal too.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter to Secretary Benjamin J. Grumbles seeking to meet with him and his staff to discuss options to approve the amendment.

The commissioners answered questions from the press.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 2:34 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(1) and (7) of the General Provisions (GP) Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform administrative functions permitted under the provisions of Section GP 3-104. Also present at the closed session were Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Joe Parker, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton. Topics discussed and actions taken included considering the acquisition of real property

for a public purpose; to receive legal advice from counsel; and to perform administrative functions.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 3:16 p.m., after which they adjourned to meet again to conduct a budget work session on March 29, 2022.