

# Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

May 10, 2022

## Budget 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 with Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, Budget Officer Candace Savage, and Finance Officer Phil Thompson to discuss issues pertaining to the FY23 Requested Operating Budget, which currently reflects estimated revenues of \$222,739,139 and requested general fund operating expenditures of \$227,800,656, which leaves a shortfall of \$5,061,517. Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young reviewed significant changes in the Committee Reviewed and Recommended Budget worksheet since the commissioners met with department heads in March. These changes reflect increased income tax estimates from the State of \$3.5 million, suggested use of casino funds of \$610,000 for capital purchases, and department proposed reductions of \$2,881,021. He advised that with cuts today and the proposed of prior year surplus funds they will be able to balance the budget.

The commissioners briefly reviewed requests for 12 new positions for FY23 for General Fund employees totaling \$724,080 for salary and benefits and one new position totaling \$146,390 for salary and benefits for an Enterprise Fund employee. They also reviewed requested promotions totaling \$123,185 for General Fund employees and requested promotions totaling \$55,244 for Enterprise Fund employees, as well as a request to increase call pay from \$125 to \$200 per week for General Fund employees totaling \$24,648 and Water and Wastewater employees totaling \$27,300, a request to reclassify Jail positions at a total of \$269,880 without benefit costs, and a request to increase hours for part-time employees within the Parks Department totaling \$19,032 and the Sheriff's Office totaling \$91,419. The commissioners agreed to table taking action on these requests until after their closed session meeting.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:35 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(1) 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 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 discussing individual personnel matters and salaries for the FY23 Operating Budget.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:45 a.m.

The commissioners resumed their review of proposed expenditures for each department and agency within the requested operating budget.

The commissioners concurred with the Committee Reviewed FY23 operating budgets, which reflect earlier personnel decisions, as follows: County Administration budget of \$1,132,245; Circuit Court budget of \$1,435,592; Orphan's Court budget of \$36,400; State's Attorney's Office budget of \$2,595,551; Treasurer's Office budget of \$1,308,580; Elections Office budget of \$1,335,431; Human Resources budget of \$514,575; Development Review and Permitting budget of \$2,062,598; Environmental Programs budget of \$1,580,339; Information Technology budget of \$635,914; Other General Government budget of \$3,670,628; Sheriff's Office budget of \$9,870,835; Emergency Services budget of \$3,217,811; Jail budget of \$9,526,305; Fire Marshal's Office budget of \$610,470; Volunteer Fire Departments budget of \$9,544,370; Maintenance Division budget of \$1,493,278; Public Works budget of \$699,511; Boat Landings budget of \$381,250; Homeowner Convenience Centers budget of \$728,992; Recycling budget of \$887,609; Health Department budget of \$5,758,611; Mosquito Control budget of \$157,946; and Commission on Aging budget of \$1,536,683.

The commissioners approved the Committee Reviewed FY23 Roads Division budget of \$4,198,398. A motion by Commissioner Bunting to reduce Account No. 614.010 Road Maintenance Materials Blacktop for Overlay from \$1 million to \$750,000 failed 5-2, with Commissioners Bertino and Bunting voting in favor of the motion and Commissioners Church, Elder, Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in opposition.

With regard to the Committee Reviewed FY23 Other Social Services budget, the Commissioners made the following approvals, denials, and adjustments:

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Church and Purnell voting in opposition to approve funding to Account No. 7100.010 County Grants to Atlantic General Hospital (AGH) of \$100,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to flat fund Account No. 7100.017 County Grants to Big Brothers/Big Sisters for \$1,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat fund Account No. 7100.020 County Grants to BRAVE Program for \$3,500.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Nordstrom voting in opposition, to deny funding for Account No. 7100.021 County Grants to Chesapeake Housing Missions of \$25,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding Account No. 7100.022 County Grants to Coastal Hospice at the Ocean for \$10,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 4-3, with Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Mitrecic, and Nordstrom voting in favor and Commissioners Church, Elder, and Purnell voting in opposition to approve funding to Account No. 7100.023 County Grants to the Cricket Center for \$25,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied

funding for Account No. 7100.024 County Grants to the Child and Family Foundation, Inc. for \$2,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7100.030 County Grants to the Worcester County Developmental Center (WCDC) for \$219,497.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition, to approve funding to Account No. 7100.035 County Grants to Diakonia for \$50,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7100.040 County Grants to Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council for \$9,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied funding for Account No. 7100.074 County Grants to First State Detachment, Inc. for \$5,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved flat funding to Account No. 7100.077 County Grants to Jesse Klump Memorial Fund, Inc. for \$1,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied funding for Account No. 7100.082 County Grants to Kenille's Kupboard for \$2,500.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7100.085 County Grants to the Life Crisis Center for \$8,500.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously approved funding to Account No. 7100.100 County Grants to Maryland Food Bank for \$10,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied funding for Account No. 7100.111 County Grants to Next One Up for \$40,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7100.120 County Grants to Oasis Ministries for \$9,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Nordstrom voting in opposition, to deny funding for Account No. 7100.138 County Grants to Project Linus of Lower DelMarVa for \$1,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied funding for Account No. 7100.154 County Grants to St. Peters Lutheran Church for \$10,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to flat fund Account No. 7100.160 County Grants to the Samaritan Shelter for \$20,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied funding for Account No. 7100.175 County Grants to Social Services Pharmacy Grant for \$15,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied funding for Account No. 7100.194 County Grants to United Way for \$5,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7100.202 County Grants to Worcester County 4H & FFA Fair for \$10,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7100.210 County Grants to Worcester County GOLD (Giving Other Lives Dignity) for \$15,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Bunting and Elder voting in opposition, to flat fund Account No. 7100.220 County Grants to Worcester Youth and Family Counseling for \$95,000.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Account No. 7130.005 County Matching Grants to DHMH Development Disabilities Administration (DDA) for \$28,871.

The commissioners concurred with flat funding to Wor-Wic Community College (WWCC) for \$2,530,242.

The commissioners agreed to postpone discussions on the requested FY23 Board of Education Budget following an update on Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB).

The commissioners resumed their review of proposed expenditures for each department and agency within the requested operating budget.

The commissioners concurred with the Committee Reviewed FY23 operating budgets as follows: Recreation budget of \$1,792,117; Parks budget of \$1,589,297; and Library budget of \$2,850,888.

With regard to Other Recreation and Culture, the commissioners made the following adjustments:

A motion by Commissioner Bertino to deny funding for Account No. 7100.019 County Grants to Steve's Poor Girls Open Inc. for \$10,000 failed 3-4, with Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, and Elder voting in favor of the motion and Commissioners Church, Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in opposition of the motion.

A motion by Commissioner Nordstrom to approve funding for Account No. 7100.026 County Grants Costen House for \$6,939 failed 3-4, with Commissioners Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in favor and Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Church, and Elder voting in opposition.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously approved funding for Account No. 7100.050 County Grants to Furnace Town for \$40,000.

A motion by Commissioner Nordstrom to approve the Committee Reviewed budget for Account No. 7100.095 County Grants to Marva Theatre for \$20,000 failed for lack of a second. Upon a subsequent motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously approved flat funding to Account No. 7100.095 County Grants to Marva Theatre for \$15,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied the Committee Reviewed budget for Account No. 7100.128 County Grants to Ocean Pines Players of \$3,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously denied the Committee Reviewed budget for Account No. 7100.015 County Grants to Berlin Heritage Foundation of \$10,000.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved flat funding to Account No. 7100.135 County Grants to Delmarva Discovery Museum of \$15,000.

The commissioners concurred with the Committee Reviewed FY23 operating budgets as follows: Extension Services budget of \$242,678; Other Natural Resources budget of \$612,489; Economic Development budget of \$423,150; Tourism budget of \$1,329,579; and Taxes Shared with Towns budget of \$2,944,157.

With regard to Grants to Towns, the commissioners made the following adjustments:

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously approved the Committee Reviewed FY23 Grants to the Town of Pocomoke in the amount of \$1,835,627.

A motion by Commissioner Bunting to cut funding of \$122,000 for the Flower Street Roundabout – Phase One from the Committee Reviewed FY23 Grants to the Town of Berlin failed 3-4, with Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, and Elder voting in favor of the motion and Commissioners Church, Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in opposition.

A motion by Commissioner Nordstrom to approve additional grant funding of \$225,000 to the Town of Snow Hill for wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) probes failed 2-5, with Commissioners Nordstrom and Purnell voting in favor and Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Church, Elder, and Mitrecic voting in opposition. Upon a subsequent motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously approved the FY23 Grants to the Town of Snow Hill in the amount of \$2,238,142, minus grant funds of \$225,000 for the WWTP probes.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Committee Reviewed FY23 Grants to the Town of Ocean City in the amount of \$8,493,105.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the Committee Reviewed FY23 Grants to the Ocean Pines Association (OPA) in the amount of \$1,864,340, minus grant funds of \$150,000 for Roads and Bridge Repairs, \$25,000 for Tourism, and reducing the Recreation Grant by \$10,000.

The commissioners concurred with the Committee Reviewed FY23 operating budgets as follows: Benefits and Insurance budget of \$25,939,515; and Debt Service budget of \$13,648,343.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously agreed to allocate funding of \$9.5 million within Account No. 7170.040 Benefits & Insurance Other Post Employment Benefits as follows: \$7.6 million or 80% to the BOE and \$1.9 million or 20% to the County.

The commissioners recessed for 10 minutes.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners approved the Requested FY23 Board of Education (BOE) Budget of \$100,983,605, removing the reallocation of \$1 million to OPEB, with the caveat that any FY22 or FY23 fund balance be reallocated to the BOE's OPEB liability.

A subsequent motion by Commissioner Elder to allocate funding from the General Fund to increase funding to BOE bus contractors by increasing the hourly rate by \$1 from \$25 to \$26 per hour and the per-mile for the fuel and maintenance rate by \$0.03 from \$1.62 to \$1.65 failed 3-4, with Commissioners Elder, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in favor and Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Church, and Mitrecic voting in opposition.

In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Budget Officer Candace Savage advised that cuts made by the commissioners during the work session have reduced the FY23 Operating Budget shortfall to \$4,386,078.

The commissioners adjourned for lunch.

The commissioners resumed their work session.

The commissioners reviewed FY23 Capital Requests by Department, with public safety requests to be funded with Local Impact Grant revenues from the Casino at Ocean Downs, as

well as Fund Balance and Debt Service. Commissioner Nordstrom revisited his prior request for an updated list of police vehicles, including mileage, to determine the number of needed replacement vehicles.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously approved capital requests for Worcester County Emergency Services (WCES), less one F-250 to replace the 2005 truck with 107,000 miles.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the use of LIG funds to cover the remaining WCES capital requests.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Mitrecic voting in opposition to approve the capital vehicle requests within the Sheriff's Office utilizing LIG funds.

Mr. Young reviewed the FY22 year-end estimated fund balance, which reflects an estimated surplus of \$14,675,000. He advised that surplus funds of roughly \$4.08 million could be allocated as follows, leaving a remaining surplus of \$10.6 million: \$1.3 million to meet 12% reserve fund, \$1.6 million for OPEB reconciliation to FY22 income tax, \$125,000 for Buckingham Elementary School feasibility study, \$80,000 for Snow Hill Middle School and Cedar Chapel Special School roof design, \$50,000 for the Pocomoke Middle School evening program, \$416,777 for the Wor-Wic Community College Applied Technology Building; and \$500,000 for Road Paving.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition, to approve the Committee Reviewed FY23 Salary Increase for County employees of \$1,062,364, which includes a 4% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for classified and non-classified employees and one step increase for eligible employees.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 1:39 p.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(1) 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 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 discussing individual personnel matters and salaries for the FY23 Operating Budget and to receive legal advice from counsel.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 1:53 p.m.

The commissioners resumed their open session.

The commissioners reviewed requests for 12 new positions for FY23 for General Fund employees totaling \$724,080 for salary and benefits.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners approved the position of

procurement officer within County Administration.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners approved the positions of one building housing and zoning inspector and one plan reviewer within Development Review and Permitting.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners approved the position of natural resources inspector I within Environmental Programs.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners approved the position of technician within Information Technology.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners approved two support specialists positions within the Sheriff's Office.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners approved one specialist position, one communications supervisor position, and agreed to retain the placeholder for the unfunded call taker positions within Emergency Services.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners voted 4-3, with Commissioners Bertino, Church, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in favor and Commissioners Bunting, Elder, and Mitrecic voting in opposition to approve the position of deputy fire marshal – investigator II.

A motion by Commissioner Nordstrom to approve the position of outreach and partnership specialist within the Library failed for lack of a second.

The commissioners reviewed a request for one new position totaling \$146,390 for salary and benefits for an Enterprise Fund employee. Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously approved one superintendent position within the Water and Wastewater Division of Public Works.

The commissioners concurred with requested promotions totaling \$55,244 for Enterprise Fund employees, to increase call pay from \$125 to \$200 per week for General Fund employees totaling \$24,648 and Water and Wastewater employees totaling \$27,300, and to increase hours for part-time employees within the Parks Department totaling \$19,032 and the Sheriff's Office totaling \$91,419

The commissioners reviewed requests to reclassify Jail positions at a total of \$269,880 without benefit costs. Human Resources Director Stacey Norton stated that they have been unable to recruit to fill 15 current vacancies, as the salaries are not competitive with the local marker. Therefore, staff is requesting to adjust the pay grades for four positions. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Ms. Norton stated that the County Jail is still required to follow COVID-19 protocols, including quarantines and social distancing. She stated that once these restrictions are eliminated the County could consider eliminating positions at the Jail to reduce operating costs following the loss of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) revenues. In response to questions by Commissioner Bunting, Ms. Norton advised that the Jail employs 98 correctional officers. Commissioner Bunting stated that the County needs to eliminate more than 15 positions at the Jail to reduce operating costs. The commissioners directed Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Joe Parker to work with Warden Fulton Holland to develop an updated operating plan for the County Jail.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the

commissioners approved the reclassification of the following Jail positions to increase the starting salaries for correctional officers from \$43,056 to \$45,240, salaries for certified correctional officers from \$45,240 to \$47,466, salaries for private first class from \$47,466 to \$52,416, and salaries for corporal from \$49,878 to \$55,016.

In response to a question by Commissioner Mitrecic, Ms. Savage advised that the commissioners have reduced the budget deficit to \$3,998,421 deficit. Upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously approved the use of funds from the FY22 Fund Balance to balance the FY23 County Operating Budget. The commissioners advised that on June 7, 2022 they will vote on the FY23 BOE budget independent of the FY23 County budget.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on May 17, 2022.