

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

April 1, 2025

Theodore J. Elder, president
Eric J. Fiori, vice president
Caryn G. Abbott
Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.
Madison J. Bunting, Jr.
Joseph M. Mitrecic
Diana Purnell

Following a motion by Commissioner Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Purnell, with Commissioner Bertino temporarily out of the room, 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) 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 Candace Savage, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Public Works Director Dallas Baker, Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton, and Human Resources Deputy Director Pat Walls. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: personnel updates, transferring Office Assistant IV maria McVey within Development Review and Permitting; transferring Water and Wastewater Plant Operator I John Simmons to parks worker II within Recreation and Parks; hiring Irving Bailey as a correctional officer trainee, and Luke Condon and Arran Kelly as emergency communications specialist trainees; considering the acquisition of real property for a public purpose; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments

Following a motion by Commissioner Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 10:16 a.m.

After the closed session, the commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Elder called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Reverend Davida Washington 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 March 18, 2025 meeting as presented.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to representatives of Life Crisis, Worcester Child Advocacy Center, and Department of Social Services recognizing March as Child Abuse Prevention Month. They recognized that effective education campaigns and activities can prevent abuse from occurring, stop it where it already exists, and help children and families heal in the aftermath of abuse, and they urged everyone to learn more by visiting

<https://worcestercac.org/>.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to Housing Program Coordinator Davida Washington recognizing April as Fair Housing Month. Ms. Washington stated that since 1987, the Worcester County Housing Rehabilitation Program has rehabilitated or replaced 337 homes and is currently rehabilitating nine homes and replacing an additional 17 to assist the State in alleviating blight by targeting areas that need replacement homes. Qualifying property owners can receive grants and no interest rate loans to assure their access to suitable housing.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to Health Department officials recognizing April 7-13, 2025 as Public Health Week. During Public Health Week, the Health Department will sponsor the Debbie Goeller Excellence in Public Health Award on April 9 and host the Tortoise and Hair Dare 5K walk/run at Pocomoke State Park at Shad Landing on April 5.

The commissioners conducted a public hearing on amendments to the Water and Sewerage Plan, which includes a revision to a water service map and a revised water system for the casino to replace their existing 100,000-gallon elevated steel water tank with a 150,000-gallon bolted steel ground-level storage tank.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments.

There being no public comment, Commissioner Elder closed the public hearing.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Bertino and Bunting voting in opposition to adopt Resolution No. 25-06 amending the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan for Worcester County for the Ocean Downs Sanitary Area.

The commissioners conducted a public hearing on amendments to the Water and Sewerage Plan, which include certain water and wastewater system informational items for proposed capital projects and planned interconnection projects to include the addition of the following capital projects 1) Interconnection of the Mystic Harbour and Riddle Farm water systems with the Herring Creek Water Main Interconnection; 2) Mystic Harbour Treated Effluent to Riddle Lagoon; 3) Sunset Avenue Relief Sewer; and 4) Mystic Harbour Water Plant and Building Rehabilitation.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments.

There being no public comment, Commissioner Elder closed the public hearing.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously agreed to adopt Resolution No. 25-07 amending the Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan for Worcester County for the Mystic Harbour Service Area.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-11 as follows: the annual Department of Housing and Community Development Housing Bond Transfer; a special use of the South Point Boat Ramp the week of April 8, 2025; Matching Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation funds totaling \$144,000; a CREP Agreement of Sale for 41.85 acres identified on Tax Map 83 as Parcels 58, 59, and 60; awarding the bid for a new brine well at the Roads Division building to Somerset Well Drilling for \$55,000; a proposal from Mohawk Lifts to purchase a tire changing

and balancing machine for \$28,009.30; a contract with Verizon to relocate seven utility poles along Marshall Creek Road at a total cost of \$29,232; waving the Roads Division's roadside litter tipping fees in perpetuity; amending the Worcester County Government Personnel Rules and Regulations to allow non-classified employees to earn straight compensatory time; and transferring the construction crew leader position to the position of maintenance mechanic I or II within the Water and Wastewater Division.

Pursuant to the request of Superintendent Louis H. Taylor and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners voted 5-1-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition and Commissioner Bertino abstaining, to approve the Board of Education's one nonrecurring FY26 expense.

Ocean City Development Corporation (OCDC) Executive Director Zachary Bankert and Board President Joe Wilson updated the commissioners about the OCDC's revitalization efforts.

Pursuant to the request of Procurement Officer Nicholas Rice and Recreation and Parks Deputy Director Jacob Stephens and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously accepted the proposal from All Recreation of Virginia through their cooperative contract with GOVMVMT for \$500,000 for the purchase and installation of new playground equipment at Showell Park.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Director Dallas Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously accepted the contract from Lywood Automation, LLC of \$73,700 to replace two control panels at the Riddle Farm Water Treatment Plant.

Commissioner Bunting temporarily left the meeting.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Abbot, the commissioners voted 5-0-1, with Commissioner Elder abstaining and Commissioner Bunting temporarily absent, to approve certain over-expenditures within the Water and Wastewater Division for unanticipated FY25 repairs.

Commissioner Bunting returned to the meeting.

County Attorney Roscoe Leslie reviewed anti-camping legislation drafted at the commissioners' request to clarify the prohibition of camping on County and other property and to prohibit the storage of private property on such property. Following some discussion, Commissioners Abbott, Bertino, Bunting, Elder, Fiori, Mitrecic, and Purnell introduced the aforementioned text amendment and agreed to schedule a public hearing on the draft bill.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to reappoint Fred Stiehl to the Water and Sewer Advisory Board for Ocean Pines.

In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino regarding a motion made by the commissioners at their March 18, 2025 meeting explaining the proposed Water and Wastewater Service Area increases, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Candace Savage advised that County Administration received the document from the Treasurer's Office yesterday at 4:30 p.m. However, staff has not yet had a chance to review the 16-page document. Commissioner Bertino expressed his frustration that the document was not presented in a timely matter, so that it could be discussed by the commissioners and posted to the County website.

Following some discussion, a motion by Commissioner Bertino for an external audit of the Treasurer's Office within the next 60-90 days to determine if financial procedures are being carried out in accordance with the County Code failed 2-5, with Commissioners Bertino and Bunting voting in favor and Commissioners Abbott, Elder, Fiori, Mitrecic, and Purnell voting in opposition.

In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young updated the commissioners on a recent meeting with representatives from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at which DNR discussed ongoing work to attempt to develop some sort of package to partially compensate fishermen who will lose their businesses and livelihoods if US Wind succeeds in purchasing two properties in the West Ocean City commercial harbor that are owned by Martin Fish Company and Southern Connection Seafood, a move that would decimate the commercial fishing industry in Worcester County.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter to the Department of Legislative Services requesting a legislative audit of Worcester County Public Schools.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned for lunch and afterward to conduct a work session on the Worcester County Departmental Operating Budget Requests for FY26.