

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

August 5, 2025

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, with Commissioner Abbott 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) 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, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: a personnel update; hiring Samuel Swift as a heavy equipment operator, Jason Wilford as a general laborer/maintenance worker I, and Krysten Rybyzyske as a plant operator trainee within the Water and Wastewater Division, and Gabriela Giorgi as a communications specialist trainee within Emergency Services; promoting Kaylee Thornton from part-time recreation program monitor to part-time After School Zone supervisor and Trudy Gebhardt from part-time recreation program monitor to full-time recreation program manager II within Recreation and Parks, Adam Scott from IT technician to security analyst within Information Technology, and Christina Collins from senior corporal to sergeant and Russell Williams and Nathan Bratten from sergeants to lieutenants in the County Jail; transferring Tony Fascelli from superintendent within Water and Wastewater to project engineer within Public Works; discussing 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 Mitrecic, seconded by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:46 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 Bishop Mary Boyd of First Corinthians Holiness Church 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 July 15, 2025 meeting as presented.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments. There were no public comments, so he closed the floor.

The commissioners presented commendations to Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) students who took first place during the 2025 SkillsUSA State competitions and placed within the top 10 during the 2025 SkillsUSA National competitions. These included Lydia Beegle and Victor Rohrs who took third place in the Mobile Robotics middle school category; Jessica Liu who placed fifth in the Medical Math category; Heydein Flores, Matthew Lehr, and Lidia Serrano who placed seventh in the Occupational Safety and Health category; Jake Harner who placed eighth in the Related Technical Math category; Maddison French, Sydney Wade, and Chloe Waggoner who placed tenth in the American Spirit category; and Meara Emerick and Travis Sharar who placed tenth in the Robotics Urban S&R middle school category.

The commissioners also recognized WTHS instructors and students for representing Worcester County with such excellence that the school received the Chapter of Excellence Gold Award during the 2025 Skills USA Maryland State Championships and the National Chapter of Excellence Silver Award during the National Championships.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-20 as follows: FY26 Children's Justice Act Grant application of \$51,296 for the Sheriff's Office; Maryland Affordable Housing Plumbing Poverty Program Grant award of \$300,000 for the Housing Rehabilitation Program; State Opioid Response-IV Grant award of \$23,673 for the Local Behavioral Health Authority; Findings of Fact for both the Queponco Road Solar and Carey Road Solar utility scale solar projects; Findings of Fact and Resolution No. 25-17 for Rezoning Case 449; out-of-state travel request for two staff within Environmental Programs to attend the 2025 National Land Conservation Conference in Cleveland Ohio; an over-expenditure of \$25,559 to replace the retiring heroin and analysis coordinator within the Sheriff's Office; scheduling Hazardous Waste Day at the Central Landfill for November 10 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; purchasing three replacement water filters for the Assateague Point Water Treatment Plant from Peninsula Water Conditioning for \$58,965; accepting the proposal of \$29,750 from EA Engineering for the Ocean Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant storage lagoon bidding, construction administration, and inspection services; purchasing 10 Bull Litter Fences from Metta Technologies at a cost of \$79,600 for use at the Central Landfill; purchasing a mini skid steer with attachments from Burke Equipment Company at a cost of \$62,169.99; renewing certain annual contracts over \$25,000 within Emergency Services as approved in the FY26 budget; approving certain expenditures over \$25,000 within the Sheriff's Office as approved in the FY26 budget; renewing the Centripetal Security Contract within Information Technology for \$39,117.96; awarding eight leases for boat slips in the West Ocean City Commercial Harbor; transferring \$1,669.84 in Rural Legacy revenue back to services performed within Environmental Programs during FY25; and authorizing a Wicomico County employee to park a vehicle at the Isle of Wight Center in Bishopville.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Director Dallas Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously endorsed the Maryland Rt. 589 Water and Sewer Study.

The commissioners met with Mr. Baker to review the results of a speed study on Mulberry Road, which was conducted from July 1-8, 2025 at the request of a resident to address safety concerns and speeding vehicles. Based on the findings and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners concurred with staff's recommendation to reduce the speed limit from 50 mph to 30 mph and to post the new speed limit.

Pursuant to the request of Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the quote from Axon for the consolidation and renewal of the current body-worn camera and fleet camera systems, along with the inclusion of three existing taser bundles, in the amounts of \$411,542.14 and \$34,506, respectively.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Procurement Officer Nicholas Rice and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously accepted the proposal from Absolute Security of \$997,500 to replace the Countywide camera system.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Rice and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously authorized the purchase of networking equipment from Omni Partners at a cost of \$104,885.26.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter of support and appointment for Assistant Warden Shytina Drummond to serve on the Local Government Justice Reinvestment Commission.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Arron Lumpkin to the Solid Waste Advisory Board.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Dr. Mark Bowen to the Police Accountability Board.

The commissioners adjourned until 10:30 a.m.

The commissioners conducted a public hearing to receive comments on Rezoning Case No. 447 to change two separate, adjoining properties totaling approximately 22.86 acres of land located on the east side of MD Route 589 (Racetrack Road) at Taylorville Lane and identified on Tax Map 21 as Parcel 66, Lot 1 and Revised Parcel B from C-2 General Commercial District to R-3 Multi-family Residential District. County Attorney Roscoe Leslie swore in those individuals who planned to give testimony during the hearing. Ms. Keener reviewed the application, which received a favorable recommendation from the Planning Commission. She advised that the applicant's basis for rezoning is that there has been a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood since the Comprehensive Rezoning on November 3, 2009, as well as since the property was rezoned from A-1 Agricultural District to C-2 General Commercial District in Rezoning Case No. 392 in 2012. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Ms. Keener confirmed that residential uses generate less traffic than commercial, and she reviewed parking and lighting requirements, the 100-foot buffer, and confirmed that there is no Code requirement

for fencing between this property and the Ocean Pines community, and there would be no roadway access between the two communities.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comment.

Attorney Hugh Cropper reviewed the zoning history of the properties and the residential planned community process. He concurred with the Planning Commission's findings and asked the commissioners to accept the findings as his testimony as well. He concluded by asking the commissioners to grant the requested rezoning.

Land Planner Steve Engle concurred with the proposed rezoning. He then reviewed the Forest Conservation Easement, consisting of a 100-foot platted forested buffer to remain in place in perpetuity between the two communities, as well as a six-foot tall vinyl fence from MD Rt. 589 to the wetlands.

Carl Wilson of the Traffic Group reviewed January 2025 traffic counts and updated July 10 and 12 counts, stating that the impact of the proposed 137 multi-unit community would be minimal, with all intersections at same level of service with or without this development. In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Wilson confirmed that the development would use the existing traffic signal at the medical center and would not require an additional traffic signal. Mr. Cropper confirmed that the upkeep of the vinyl fence would be included in perpetuity within the Homeowners Association rules.

Yvonne Field of Little John Court in Ocean Pines thanked Mr. Cropper for the inclusion of the vinyl fence and forested buffer, and she requested assurance that there would be no access from the proposed community to her property. Commissioner Bunting pointed out that her property abuts nontidal wetlands, which along with the proposed buffer protection, should address all of her concerns.

Paul Bredehorst of 7 Little John Court opposed the proposed rezoning and the construction of the proposed RPC, stated that he only knew about the rezoning hearing because his neighbor had told him. He explained that MD Rt. 589 is already heavily impacted, and there is not enough room to accommodate the traffic that would be generated by this new development. In response to a question by Commissioner Elder, Ms. Keener stated that the Code only requires County staff to notify individuals whose properties abut the property being proposed for rezoning; however, County staff encouraged those individuals to notify their neighbors.

There being no further public comments, Commissioner Elder closed the floor.

In response to comments from Commissioner Mitrecic, Mr. Leslie stated that the commissioners do not have to include the traffic report or any other item with which they may disagree within the Findings of Fact. Rather, they may limit the findings to only those items that support their decision.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously approved the requested rezoning and adopted the Findings of Fact, excluding the traffic report.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on August 19, 2025.