

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

September 2, 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 Abbott, 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, Budget Officer Kim Reynolds, Senior Budget Accountant Lynn Wright, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls, and representatives from the Worcester County Waterman's Association. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: a personnel update; hiring Carol Sullivan as a part-time greeter at the Welcome Center in Pocomoke and Zamar Collins as a grounds worker II within the Maintenance Division; acquiring real property for a public purpose; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including receiving the June FY25 monthly budget report and capital projects update.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:59 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 Ken Ellingson of Spence Baptist 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 regularly scheduled meeting on August 19, 2025. Approved as is.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments.
There being no public comments, Commissioner Elder closed the floor.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing September as Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month to representatives for the Worcester County Health

Department and Life Crisis.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-9 as follows: a Joint Use Agreement between Recreation and Parks and Worcester Preparatory School for the fields at the Northern Worcester Athletic Complex and WPS for youth sports and recreational events; a Special Use Permit for the Maryland Coastal Bays Program to utilize South Point Boat Ramp to dismantle their nesting platform from September 3-5, 2025; Findings of Fact and Zoning Reclassification Resolution No. 25-20 in Rezoning Case No. 448 (Racetrack Plaza, LLC); purchasing a brush hog from Hooper, Inc. for \$28,357 for the Water and Wastewater Division; a \$15,442 over-expenditure within the Roads Division to install guardrail on Georgetown Road in Berlin; an agreement with CSG Forte Payments, Inc. for a credit card machine to process payments at the scales at the Central Landfill; awarding the HVAC replacement project at the Jail to T.E. Smith and Son for \$79,635; and scheduling a public hearing for a Critical Area Map Amendment/Refinement to reclassify 30.7 acres of land on the northerly side of Croppers Island Road and identified on Tax Map 40 as Parcel 240 from Resource Conservation Area to intensely Developed Area.

Pursuant to the request of Lieutenant Robert Trautman, commander of the School Resource Division within the Sheriff's Office and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the Board of Education (BOE), Sheriff's Office, and the County Commissioners to renew the School Resource Deputy Program within Worcester County Public Schools.

Pursuant to the request of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Annette Wallace and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved inter-category budget transfers within the FY25 BOE budget to cover higher than anticipated dual enrollment fees, computer software, and after school/summer school costs.

Pursuant to the request of Procurement Officer Nicholas Rice and Development Review and Permitting Deputy Director Matt Laick and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously accepted the proposal to purchase permitting and licensing software from Tyler Technologies for a one-time implementation cost of \$562,775 and a recurring annual cost of \$193,500 within Development, Review and Permitting. In response to a question by Commissioner Mitrecic, Mr. Laick said that this software, which will streamline the current application processes for residents and contractors, will allow users to see the progress of their applications and receive notifications if staff has questions or needs additional information or documentation. He stated that it will take approximately three months to get started and 12-18 months for all applications to be online. Commissioner Fiori stated that this creates a much more efficient permit application process.

The commissioners met with DRP Director Jennifer Keener to review the nuisance abatement request for a property located at 1444 Snow Hill Road in Stockton, and identified on Tax Map 86 as Parcel 173. Ms. Keener stated that the specific nature of the nuisance includes a deteriorated structure in significant danger of collapse, with the imminent risk and the threat of falling debris to the roadway and overhead utility lines.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners voted 6-0-1, with Commissioner Mitrecic Abstaining from the vote due to a conflict of interest, to declare the property to be a nuisance and ordered the abatement of such nuisance within 90 days pursuant to Section PH 1-102 of the Public Health Article of the County Code.

Pursuant to the request of Information Technology Director Brian Jones and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved an over-expenditure of \$19,254.78 to cover increased maintenance costs for Skyline Technology to cover additional locations added by the BOE, Ocean City Emergency Services, and the Core at Ocean Pines.

The commissioners met with Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young to review a text amendment application drafted by staff to reduce the Homestead Property Tax Credit cap from 103% to 100%, effectively lowering the allowable increase in taxable assessment for eligible properties from 3% to 0%.

Following some discussion, Commissioners Abbott, Bertino, Bunting, Elder, Fiori, Mitrecic, and Purnell introduced the aforementioned text amendment as Bill 25, a legislative bill for the purpose of amending the Homestead Property Tax Credit from 103% to 100%.

In response to a question from Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Young stated that resident property owners already receiving the Homestead Tax Credit do not need to reapply for this benefit. Only those who are not currently enrolled will need to apply and can do so by visiting the Maryland State Department of Assessment and Taxation online at <https://dat.maryland.gov/Pages/Tax-Credit-Programs.aspx>.

The commissioners met with Sara Gorfinkel, administrative assistant to Berlin Mayor Zack Tyndall, to discuss a request from the Town of Berlin to reallocate a portion of County grant funding to serve as a local match for a Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) grant. Ms. Gorfinkel said that the town was awarded a \$1.2 million Federal Highway Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Grant in 2024 for the “Bridging 113” project. However, most of that funding was recently rescinded. MDOT has proposed using its Repurposing Provision for Federal Earmarks to restore \$643,000 for Berlin, contingent upon a 20% local match of \$128,000. She concluded that the town would like to apply \$113,000 in County grant funds for Rails and Trails, along with \$104,000 from the town’s budget for the match. Funding would be used for the design and feasibility of the Berlin Bikeway, which was part of the original grant proposal and intended to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Commissioner Fiori made a motion, which he later amended, to table further discussion on this request to give the commissioners time to better understand the details of the request and to confirm that due process had been followed by town officials prior to making this presentation to the County.

In response to a question by Commissioner Fiori, Ms. Gorfinkel stated that MDOT has requested the town confirm their commitment to provide matching funds within 48 hours, but that they would have two years to complete the match. Ms. Gorfinkel stated that the Berlin Council did a poll vote last week to approve the match, though that information was not included

in the memo to the commissioners. She concluded that the town stands to lose the MDOT grant if they are not able to confirm their intention to provide matching funds.

The commissioners raised questions regarding whether the project focused on a bridge or bikeways, the role of the feasibility study in identifying the safest crossings, and the relationship of the project to the proposed community center. Concerns were expressed about the rushed timing of Berlin's request, the lack of supporting documentation, and the need for clarity on future costs if an overpass were ultimately pursued. Ms. Gorfinkel stated that the study would identify the best location for a crossing and where bike safety could be improved. In response to questions from Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Young stated that these are County grant funds that have already been allocated to Berlin for pedestrian-based infrastructure. Ms. Gorfinkel stated that the town is only asking to reallocate County grant funds of \$24,000 toward the match, but that they would like to utilize the entire County grant toward the project in the future.

Following some discussion and upon an amended motion by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition, to approve reallocating \$24,000 in County grant funding for the local match to support Berlin's application.

In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Young stated that County staff are scheduling a meeting with the BOE and Health Department to discuss community schooling and what that means as far as health costs in the schools and how that may overlap with costs already being paid within the Health Department.

In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Commissioner Mitrecic confirmed that it is imperative to keep the Electrical Board in place to oversee the special licensing for longtime electricians within Worcester County who do not fit within the State's mandate.

In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Mitrecic, Mr. Young stated that County staff will present a proposal at the commissioners' September 16 meeting that will include different scenarios and costs to address sewer disposal in the West Ocean City (WOC) area. Commissioner President Ted Elder and Vice President Eric Fiori agreed to attend a future meeting of the Ocean City Mayor and Council to discuss whichever option would benefit the County and City.

In response to a question from Commissioner Abbott regarding water and wastewater escrow funds, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Candace Savage said that County staff are still gathering information and do not have a recommendation at this point.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on September 16, 2025.