

## Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

January 20, 2026

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Abbott, with Commissioner Bunting momentarily 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, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: a personnel update; promoting Recreation Program Manager II Trudy Gebhardt to recreation program manager III within Recreation and Parks; promoting Assistant Chief Plant Operator Ray Riggan to chief plant operator and hiring Ben Trejo-Munoz as a plant operator trainee within the Water and Wastewater Division; hiring Melvin Grayson, Dante Byrd, and Cole Gibbs as correctional officer trainees within the County Jail; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:46 a.m.

After the closed session, the commissioners attended the Board of Education swearing in ceremony. They reconvened in open session at 10:30 a.m. Commissioner Elder called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Signe Dennis 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 January 6, 2026 meeting as presented.

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

Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young informed the commissioners that draft Bill 25-7 will be readvertised and brought back at a future date, and item 8 (request to purchase sheriff's breach tool) has been pulled from today's meeting agenda.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 1-4 and 6 as follows: approving a Memorandum of Understanding for a Circuit Court security grant of \$16,804.81; declining an offer to acquire State Highway Administration surplus property identified on Tax Map 48 as Parcel 7 in Newark; awarding the bid to replace the digital sign at the Ocean City branch library to Rogers Sign Co. for \$27,196.67; approving a request to bid housing rehabilitation professional services; and approving the purchase and installation of parking lot lights for the Northern Worcester Athletic Complex from Musco Sports Lighting, LLC for \$75,000.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Young and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter to the federal delegation asking for their assistance in engaging the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to re-evaluate their current response to the World War II era unexploded ordnances that continue to wash up on the beach.

Pursuant to the request of Shylia Tingle, director of the Local Management Board, and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the distribution of the Worcester County Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund Plan, which was the subject of a public hearing on January 6, 2026. In response to questions from Commissioner Bertino, Ms. Tingle said that she has no concerns with changes that State officials made to the plan.

The commissioners discussed two legislative proposals.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners voted 4-3, with Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, and Elder voting in opposition, to request a legislative change to increase the number of members on the Worcester County Board of License Commissioners from three to five. The commissioners agreed not to request that legislation include authorizing the County to appoint the members. Commissioner Elder disagreed with removing the request to authorize the County to approve the members, as he felt that severely restricted local oversight.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously voted to pursue legislation to create a temporary to-go event permit in Worcester County. This would allow the Board of License Commissioners to issue this permit to liquor license holders under certain circumstances, allowing attendees to move in and out of licensed establishments located within the event footprint with their drinks. Tourism and Economic Development Director Melanie Pursel and Berlin Economic Development Director Ivy Wells discussed the need for the event permit. Ms. Wells said that the 15 bars and restaurants in Berlin currently lose out on increased revenues during events, while event goers wait in lines halfway down Main Street to purchase alcohol from a nonprofit with a temporary event alcohol permit.

The commissioners met with Development Review and Permitting (DRP) Director Jennifer Keener to review a text amendment application submitted by Christy Agnes, a property owner within the Landings subdivision. The amendment modifies the effective date at which a third parking space shall be provided for a short-term rental property, from January 1, 2020 (effective date of the rental regulations) to January 1, 2026. Ms. Keener said the Planning Commission gave a unanimous unfavorable recommendation to the amendment as written and

requested that staff and the county attorney attempt to draft language that would accommodate the licensed properties that had short-term rental licenses revoked because of staff error in the enforcement of the code. However, after conferring, staff determined that such an exemption is unfeasible.

Commissioner Fiori stated that an employee in DRP responsible for issuing these short-term rental licenses assured individuals looking to purchase investment properties that they could use them as short term rentals, without being required to have a third parking space, even after that requirement was put into place. He stated that, even if the draft legislation is adopted, individual homeowners associations would still have the autonomy to govern short-term rentals in their communities. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Ms. Keener explained the cause of the past employee's inconsistent enforcement of the code. She confirmed that individual no longer works for DRP, and additional controls and departmental oversights are now in place to ensure no further occurrences. Ms. Keener said that staff do not yet know the full number of affected licenses and confirmed that this legislation would apply to all unincorporated areas in the County, including Ocean Pines. Commissioner Bertino requested staff provide the commissioners with the number of applications that were impacted.

Following some discussion, Commissioners Abbott, Fiori, Mitrecic, and Purnell introduced the draft legislation and agreed to schedule a hearing to receive public comment on the proposed bill.

The commissioners met with County Attorney Roscoe Leslie to discuss introducing a bond bill to secure \$618,000 in USDA funding for the Lewis Road sewer extension project. Following some discussion, Commissioners Abbott, Bertino, Bunting, Elder, Fiori, Mitrecic, and Purnell introduced the bond bill and agreed to schedule a hearing to receive public comment on the proposed bill.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Teresa Purnell Milbourne to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Young formally introduced Procurement Officer Ed Welch, Grants and Contract Accountant Shelby Mitch, and Deputy Finance Officer Steven Doult, all of whom recently joined the Worcester County Government team.

Commissioner Abbott expressed her appreciation for the outstanding customer service that Transfer Station Attendant Patrick Murray provided to a constituent recently at the Homeowner Convenience Center in Pocomoke.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on February 3, 2026.