

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

March 17, 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 Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, 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: hiring Graceson Evans as a grounds worker II within the Maintenance Division, Brandon Gilbow as a certified correctional officer within the County Jail, and Addison O'Connell as a part-time, temporary marketing intern within Recreation and Parks; rehiring part-time seasonal employees James Blades and Jeff Bradley as roads worker IIIs, David Waters as a roads worker II, and Randy Hammer as a roads worker within the Roads Division; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments.

Following a motion by Commissioner Abbott, seconded by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 10:00 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 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 3, 2026 meeting as presented.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing March as Women's History Month to Worcester County Commission for Women Chair Susan Ostrowski and member Kelsey Moran.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing March for Meals Month to Worcester Commission on Aging (WorCOA) representatives Stephen Douglas, Hollie McCall, Terrell Crosby, Director Brandy Trader, and Howard Travers. Ms. Trader advised that through

home-delivered Meals on Wheels and congregate dining, WorCOA provides more than just nutritious meals. They provide connection, care, and support. In 2025 alone, staff and volunteers served over 26,800 Meals on Wheels to homebound residents, along with thousands of meals at local 50plus Centers and the River Oaks Day Center.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments.

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

Upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-7 as follows: applying for an SFY2027 Maryland Office of Overdose Response Grant of \$30,000 and a CY2026-2028 Patrick Leahy Bulletproof Vest Program Grant of \$25,000; State of Maryland's Proposed Mosquito Control Budget for the 2026 season of \$65,992.65, with estimated County funding of \$151,040; the Mid-Atlantic Amateur Sports Alliance (MAASA) Event Sponsorship Memorandum of Understanding MAASA Event Sponsorship; out-of-state travel for one staff member within County Administration to attend the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA) mid-year seminar in Washington, D.C. April 10-13, 2026; and acknowledging that the Board of Education's proposed FY27 Operating Budget does not include any non-recurring requests.

Pursuant to the request of Development Review & Permitting Director Jennifer Keener and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously adopted the Findings of Fact and Resolution No. 26-03 establishing the Racetrack Village Residential Planned Community Floating Zone, as conceptually approved after the February 17 hearing.

Pursuant to a request from Public Works Director Dallas Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved an over-expenditure within the FY26 Ocean Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant budget of \$18,500 to fund a performance evaluation and to award the study to George, Miles & Buhr. Mr. Baker said the request follows operational challenges experienced in 2025 and February 2026 caused by prolonged, low wastewater temperatures, which impacted the plant's biological nutrient removal process and its ability to meet performance levels required for exemption from the Bay Restoration Fee. The study will evaluate operational strategies and potential improvements to enhance cold-weather performance. The over-expenditure will be offset by savings in other Ocean Pines budget categories, including System Maintenance, Building Site Expenses, and Capital Equipment.

During the discussion, Mr. Baker confirmed the plant is currently meeting permit limits but noted colder temperatures are impacting treatment efficiency. Potential solutions may include operational adjustments and infrastructure improvements to maintain optimal temperatures for biological processes. He also confirmed the cost will be funded through the Ocean Pines service area budget.

Pursuant to the request of outgoing Deputy Finance Officer Steven Douth and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously approved FY25 Enterprise Fund Budget encumbrances totaling \$4,514,092, consisting of Water and Wastewater budget encumbrances of \$2,431,296 and Solid Waste budget encumbrances of \$2,082,696.

Enterprise Fund Controller Quinn Dittrich presented the requested FY27 Solid Waste and Water and Wastewater Enterprise Funds Operating Budgets, with the first budget work sessions on April 14, the public hearings May 5, and additional work sessions on May 12, 19, and May 26. Adoption of the FY2027 Enterprise Funds Operating Budgets is scheduled for June 2, 2026.

Mr. Dittrich advised that Water and Wastewater revenues at the requested rates are projected at \$21,231,239, based on assumptions including 250 gallons per day per commercial equivalent dwelling unit (EDU) and usage tiers multiplied by the number of EDUs per customer. Requested expenditures total \$22,348,147, with \$1,116,908 in General Fund support required to balance the budget.

Commissioner Bertino requested County staff notify ratepayers of the new rates in advance of the public hearing, specifically requesting clear, service-area specific information on how proposed rates will impact quarterly bills. Mr. Dittrich advised that the April billing will include updated information, along with a link to detailed rate information and public hearing materials. Furthermore, information will also be posted on the County website and included in a press release and social media posts.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the FY27 Enterprise Funds Operating Budget work session and public hearing schedules as presented.

Pursuant to the request of Budget Officer Kim Reynolds and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the FY26 General Fund Budget Amendment. Ms. Reynolds advised that the Amendment is to adjust the accounting of local income tax revenues and corresponding payments to municipalities, as recommended by auditors. The amendment reflects that the comptroller pays municipalities directly and results in no net financial impact, while revising both revenue and expense line items accordingly.

The commissioners met with Budget Officer Kim Reynolds to review the FY27 Requested Operating Budget, which includes estimated revenues of \$299,118,027 and requested expenditures of \$302,074,373. Ms. Reynolds explained that this leaves a shortfall of \$2,956,346, which must be reconciled either with reductions in expenditures, additional revenues, or a combination of the two.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule a public hearing on the FY27 Requested Operating Budget on May 5, 2026 at 6 p.m. at the Worcester County Government Center, with budget work sessions to take place on May 12, 19, and 26 if needed.

Pursuant to the request of Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to reallocate funding within the Treasurer's Office from the personnel budget (not to exceed \$80,000) to contract with an outside consultant to assist with financial reporting and audit preparation, financial analysis, and general accounting.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to reappoint J.T. Novack to the Electrical Examiners Board.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved items 18-20 as follows: sending a letter to Governor Wes Moore opposing funding cuts to the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration, as reductions would adversely impact rural counties where specialized care is already limited; sending a letter of support for a grant to restore the Girdletree Museum; and Resolution No. 26-05 acknowledging redesignation of the Snow Hill Arts and Entertainment District.

In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Mitrecic, County staff agreed to follow up on the commissioners' letter to the Board of Elections identifying concerns that the use of the Princess Royale as a polling place would cause confusion and instead urging them to use the Ocean City Senior Center as the polling location during the Primary Election and the Convention Center during the General Election.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet in closed session.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bertino, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 10:43 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: _; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments

Following a motion by Commissioner Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 11:55 a.m.

The commissioners will meet next on April 7, 2026.