

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

May 3, 2016

Madison J. Bunting, Jr., President  
Merrill W. Lockfaw, Jr., Vice President  
Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.  
James C. Church  
Theodore J. Elder  
Joseph M. Mitrecic  
Diana Purnell

Following a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, 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 Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform administrative functions. Also present at the closed session were Harold L. Higgins, Chief Administrative Officer; Kelly Shannahan, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Maureen Howarth, County Attorney; Kim Moses, Public Information Officer; and Stacey Norton, Human Resources Director. Topics discussed and actions taken included: hiring Cierra Lyons as a Correctional Officer Trainee for the County Jail; advertising to fill vacancies for one Office Assistant VI for the County Jail, one Accounting Clerk II for the Treasurer's Office, one Recycling Worker I and one Recycling Worker II for the Solid Waste Division of Public Works; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions.

After the closed session, the Commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Bunting called the meeting to order and announced the topics discussed during the morning closed session.

The Commissioners reviewed and approved the open session minutes of their April 12, 2016 budget work session and the open and closed session minutes of their April 19, 2016 meeting as presented.

The Commissioners presented a proclamation to Jami Truitt of the Worcester County Department of Social Services and other staff members along with foster parents Tracy and Katrina Mason recognizing May 2016 as National Foster Care Month.

The Commissioners presented a commendation to Tracy and Katrina Mason recognizing them as the 2016 Foster Parents of the Year and extended their thanks for the Masons' willingness to serve foster children living in crisis in the community. Commissioner Purnell thanked the Masons for the impact they are having on foster children in need of safe, loving homes while their lives are going through turmoil.

The Commissioners received objections and other public comment on their intent to

convey one 2006 Ford Expedition with 202,666 miles and one 2007 Ford Crown Victoria with over 209,500 miles, respectively, to the Showell Volunteer Fire Department to use as a command vehicle and the Criminal Justice Academy at Wor-Wic Community College (WWCC) to teach pursuit driving to police recruits.

There were no public objections or comments at the meeting.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to convey the surplus police vehicles to Showell Volunteer Fire Department and WWCC for other public purposes.

Pursuant to the request of Housing Program Administrator Jo Ellen Bynum and upon a motion by Commissioner Lockfaw, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the low bid for the general rehabilitation of a single family home in the Berlin area to Shoreman Construction Company of Delmar, Maryland at a cost of \$11,950.

Pursuant to the request of Housing Program Administrator Jo Ellen Bynum, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule a public hearing on June 7, 2016 to receive comments on the progress of a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the rehabilitation of 18 owner-occupied homes. Ms. Bynum stated that to date seven projects have been completed, five are under construction and two are pending final work write-ups. She advised that this will be the second of the two public hearings the County is required to conduct to receive comments during the grant period, which began June 2014 and will end on July 31, 2016. Ms. Bynum plans to apply for an amendment to the existing grant to request a one-year extension to the deadline.

The Commissioners met with Human Resources Director Stacey Norton to review the draft Training Reimbursement Agreement for Correctional Officers in accordance with Worcester County Government Personnel Rules and Regulations, Section 4.01 - Training Policy, which outlines the County's policy regarding offering reimbursement for training that directly increases an employee's skills, knowledge and abilities directly related to County employment, to obtain or maintain required licenses and certifications, and to develop staff resources; requiring an employee to sign a training agreement obligating the employee to reimburse the County for all training expenses if their employment is terminated within one year of the completed training; and outlining the proper protocol for an employee to apply for reimbursement of funds for additional training. Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Training Reimbursement Agreement for Correctional Officers as submitted.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Director John Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Lockfaw, the Commissioners unanimously approved Change Order No. 2 for upgrades to Pump Station B in the Ocean Pines Service Area that will result in a net additional cost of \$22,296.28 to fund the following small project additions: additional piping connections to allow the use of an existing 6-inch force main at a cost of \$7,655.12, installation of electrical conduit and disconnect switch for completing the new Choptank Electric Service at a cost of \$9,602.41, wet well modification to accommodate owner supplied pumps at a cost of \$5,105.14, and piping changes to plug valves and ventilation blower changes at a credit of \$66.39. In

response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Tustin stated that change orders of this nature occur routinely in large projects such as this \$800,000 project. In response to a question by Commissioner Bunting, Mr. Tustin advised that the additional piping will permit the service area to provide additional redundancy. He further noted that the requirement to install electrical conduit was made by Choptank Electric after the contract was awarded. He advised that project construction should be completed and online by Memorial Day.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications for electrical work at Ocean Pines Pump Station E. Mr. Tustin advised that funding for this estimated \$70,000 project is included in the 2014 bond issue.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners voted 6-1 with Commissioner Elder voting in opposition, to waive the standard bid process and accept the proposal from Ames, Inc. of Columbia, Maryland to purchase six sewage grinder pumps at a total cost of \$29,222 for use by the Water and Wastewater Division of Public Works within the Snug Harbor Area. Mr. Tustin explained this would allow the division to maintain an adequate supply of readily available inventory on hand to use as needed when new customers connect to the system. In response to a question by Commissioner Elder, Mr. Tustin stated that staff has been purchasing sewage grinders from the local vendor for many years in order to provide consistency in the parts that are used. However, he agreed to verify the price with other suppliers outside the area to ensure that prices are competitive.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously approved bid specifications for the cap and closure of the Berlin Rubble Fill. Mr. Tustin advised that funding for this estimated \$3 million project will be derived from a combination of the Assigned Fund Balance and the recent bond issuance. Mr. Tustin advised that the project should be completed within 270 days of the bid being awarded, thus assuring the County is able to comply with the State's requirement that the project be completed within two years of plan approval by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) which occurred in December 2015.

Mr. Tustin updated the Commissioners on the success of Agricultural Scrap Tire Drop Off on February 20, 2016 at the Central Landfill in Newark. Mr. Tustin advised that 1,900 tires or 67.31 tons of scrap tires were collected from 53 vehicles during the event, which was hosted by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), Maryland Farm Bureau, and Maryland Environmental Services (MES). He advised that MES reimbursed the County for the up front cost of \$17,164.05 for disposing of the tires.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Tustin in response to a request by Dan Collins of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, and upon a motion by Commissioner Lockfaw, the Commissioners unanimously authorized the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary to use the West Ocean City Boat Ramp area on Saturday, May 21, 2016, between 10:00 a.m. and noon to conduct

ceremonies and safety exhibitions to mark National Safe Boating Week. Mr. Tustin stated that this annual event is being expanded this year to provide additional educational opportunities.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Tustin and upon a motion by Commissioner Lockfaw, the Commissioners voted 5-2, with Commissioners Bunting and Mitrecic voting in opposition, to approve bid specifications for construction of the proposed Taylor Landing fishing and crabbing pier. Mr. Tustin advised that all needed project permits have been approved with the exception of one permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE); however, the County will not award the construction contract until this final permit is in hand. In response to a question by Commissioner Bunting, Mr. Tustin expressed some concern that this project could set a precedent for future pier upgrade projects at County boat landings. Commissioner Bunting concurred.

Pursuant to the request of Enterprise Fund Controller Jessica Ramsay, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to schedule the public hearings on requested FY17 enterprise fund budgets for Water and Wastewater Enterprise Funds (Sanitary Service Area Budgets), Solid Waste Enterprise Fund (Central Landfill, with Homeowner Convenience Centers and Recycling to be subsidized by the General Fund in FY17), and Liquor Control Enterprise Fund (Wholesale and Retail Liquor Sales) on Tuesday, June 7, 2016 at 10:40 AM.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Shannahan and upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously adopted Resolution No. 16-7 authorizing the Chief Administrative Officer or in his absence the Assistant Chief Administrative Officer to execute documents on behalf of the County Commissioners. Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Kelly Shannahan stated that Resolution No. 16-7 will enable all such documents to be processed immediately upon receipt and significantly reduce or eliminate the volume of documents that are routinely saved over the two-week period between Commissioners' meetings for signature by the President. In response to a question by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Shannahan advised that the execution of documents is limited to those that have already been conceptually approved by the Commissioners at a regular meeting and further reviewed and approved by the County Attorney, and includes all documents other than deeds, bonds, resolutions, bills and laws.

Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell formally introduced the Commissioners to Frank Piorko, the new Executive Director of the Maryland Coastal Bays Program (MCBP). Mr. Mitchell stated that Worcester County and the MCBP have maintained a collaborative partnership for the protection, restoration, and preservation of the Atlantic Coastal Bays watershed. He pointed out that, with the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) implementation plan currently being written and the implementation of the strategies in the recently adopted Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) for the Coastal Bays, there are many opportunities in the time ahead to continue to work together on solutions for protecting area waters. Mr. Piorko thanked the Commissioners for meeting with him. He advised that prior to joining the MCBP he worked with the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) for 26 years where he managed the state's shoreline and

waterways programs, stormwater and floodplain management, drainage and dam safety, and conservation district and watershed planning sections. Mr. Piorko stated that he is looking forward to a long and mutually beneficial relationship with the County as they work together to protect area waters. The Commissioners welcomed Mr. Piorko.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Mitchell and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the Commissioners unanimously approved an in-kind match of approximately \$600,000 for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) National Estuary Program (NEP) grant for the period of October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017. Mr. Mitchell explained that the County will use non-federal Rural Legacy Program funds, expended during FY17 for this match, and noted that there will also be a match from the Bay Restoration Fund (BRF) grants for the same time period, with no cash outlay from the county.

The Commissioners recessed until 11:00 a.m.

The Commissioners conducted a public hearing on Rezoning Case No. 397, for an application submitted by Attorney Hugh Cropper, IV on behalf of GCR Development, LLC, for an amendment to the Official Zoning Maps to rezone approximately 3.45 acres of land located on the westerly side of Golf Course Road to the north of Sunset Avenue, and more specifically identified on Tax Map 27 as Parcel 702 - Lot 2, Block G in the Tenth Tax District of Worcester County, Maryland from R-3 Multi-Family Residential District to C-2 General Commercial District. Staff members present at the hearing were Development Review and Permitting Director Ed Tudor and Deputy Director Phyllis Wimbrow. County Attorney Maureen Howarth informed the public of the procedures in this rezoning case. She then swore in those individuals who planned to give testimony during the hearing. Mr. Tudor reviewed the application. Ms. Wimbrow entered the Planning Commission's Findings of Fact into the record and stated that, according to the application for rezoning, the applicants' claim as the basis for their rezoning request was that there is a mistake in the existing zoning classification of the petitioned area as a result of the last comprehensive rezoning on November 3, 2009 when the property was rezoned from B-2 General Business District to R-3 to match the zoning of the properties to the north and to which at that time the petitioned area was technically joined; however, a well-established wetlands area actually separates the uplands portion of the petitioned area from the residential uses to the north, while the commercial uses to the south are directly abutting the petitioned area. She pointed out that the properties to the south and west of the petitioned area are zoned C-2 while those to the north are zoned R-3, and the properties abutting the West Ocean City harbor are zoned CM Commercial Marine District. She stated that the Planning Commission concluded that the petitioned area should have retained its commercial zoning classification in the 2009 Comprehensive Rezoning because the petitioned area is more closely linked to the harbor area and the commercial properties to the south and east than it is to the residential properties and uses to the north, from which it is physically separated by wetlands. Ms. Wimbrow concluded that the application received a favorable recommendation from the Planning Commission, which had concluded that a change in zoning would be more desirable in terms of the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Bunting opened the floor to receive public comment.

Mr. Cropper, attorney for the applicant, concurred with staff's assessment and advised that the basis for the proposed change in zoning from R-3 to C-2 is that there was a mistake in the 2009 Comprehensive Rezoning. He concurred with the Planning Commission's report and Findings of Fact and entered them into the record. He stated that the mistake in zoning was made in good faith because the petitioned area was originally owned as part of the property immediately to the north under one deed, and he had included it in the 54 lots that were consolidated into one parcel in 2001. He asserted that it was a mistake for him to consolidate all of the lots within the two parcels in 2001, and that as a result the County had granted the release of the Declaration of Consolidation on April 21, 2015. Thus he requested the Commissioners restore the commercial zoning that had been in place prior to the 2009 Comprehensive Rezoning.

In response to questions by Mr. Cropper, Land Planner and Landscape Architect Bob Hand stated that the majority of the northern portion of the petitioned area is primarily wetlands, which make a nice transition area between the residential uses to the north and the commercial uses to the south. He asserted that the petitioned area is surrounded by commercial and quasi-industrial uses, including boat storage facilities at Sunset Marina, as well as recently installed high power electric transmission poles and lines, all of which make the petitioned area better suited for commercial infill, as called for by the Comprehensive Plan's Land Use Map since it is located in an Existing Developed Area.

In response to questions by Mr. Cropper, Wetlands Scientist Edward Launay stated that he performed a wetlands delineation on the petitioned area in 1999 and received a jurisdictional determination of his delineation from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). He stated that he evaluated the site again at the request of the current owners relative to the feasibility of using the site for commercial use and found that there has been no significant changes since his original opinion. He stated that approximately two acres of the site are comprised of a ditch and wetlands, some of which are considered tidal waters of the State while others are either nontidal or tidally influenced nontidal wetlands. He stated that the remaining 1.5 acre of upland is sufficient for a commercial project, and the wetlands would act as a natural buffer between the commercial project and the residential properties to the north.

In response to questions by Mr. Cropper, The Traffic Group Project Manager Betty Tustin stated that traffic arising during peak hours from either residential or commercial use on this site would be comparable based upon the maximum size of retail use feasible. She stated that a retail center on this small site may result in a pass-by trip rather than a destination trip, so there would be less conflict from commercial use than from residential use during peak hours. Mr. Cropper pointed out that the petitioned area is within walking distance of the West Ocean City Harbor, so people visiting a retail center on the petitioned area are likely to opt to walk to other commercial sites in the harbor area rather than driving to them, which could eliminate one trip per visitor altogether.

Mr. Cropper concluded that no traffic study was performed relative to the application, nor was one warranted given the limited amount of commercial use feasible on the site. He reiterated that the request for rezoning was based on a mistake in the existing zoning. He asserted that the petitioned area is part of the harbor area, and as such a commercial zoning category is much more appropriate for this site.

There being no further public comment, Commissioner Bunting closed the public hearing.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the Commissioners unanimously adopted the Planning Commission's Findings of Fact and approved the rezoning based on a mistake in the existing zoning of this property, and agreed to rezone the property from R-3 to C-2.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to reconvene at 7:00 p.m. for the FY17 Requested County Operating Budget Public Hearing at the Snow Hill High School Auditorium.

The Commissioners conducted a public hearing at 7:00 PM at the Snow Hill High School Auditorium on the FY17 Requested County Operating Budgets. Commission President Bunting called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the FY17 Requested Operating Budget. The presentation included the following graphs and information: FY17 Budget Issues; General Fund Estimated Revenues and Expenditures for FY17; Worcester County Assessable Tax Base from FY09-FY17, which has declined by \$5 Billion from \$20.2 Billion to \$15.2 Billion since FY09; General Fund Major Revenues - Property Tax, Income Tax and Recordation and Transfer Taxes from FY10-FY17; General Fund Budget Revenue History from FY10-FY17; General Fund Revenue and Expenditure Comparisons FY14-FY17; FY16 Real Property Tax Rates of counties on the Eastern Shore of Maryland of which Worcester County is 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest at \$0.835 per \$100 of assessed value; CY16 Income Tax Rates of Eastern Shore counties of which Worcester County is the lowest at 1.75%; the Worcester County Constant Yield Tax Rate of \$0.8245 per \$100 of assessed value to yield the current rate of revenue; and the Schedule of Upcoming Budget Work Sessions on May 10, 18 and 24, 2016 (if all are necessary); and the Budget & Tax Rate Adoption on June 7, 2016.

Mr. Higgins explained that the requested expenditures of \$193,946,906 exceed the County's estimated revenues of \$187,404,247 by \$6,542,659. He stated that this difference must be reconciled by the Commissioners either through reductions in expenditures, additional revenues or a combination of both. Mr. Higgins further explained that the Constant Yield Tax Rate (CYTR) represents the property tax rate that would generate the same amount of revenues the County received in the current fiscal year. He noted that in February the State informed Worcester County that, to fully offset the effect of increasing assessments, the real property tax rate would need to be decreased from the current tax rate of \$0.835 per \$100 of assessed value to the CYTR of \$0.8245 to remain constant with the current year, FY16. He stated that the CYTR would create no additional revenue above the current year's total, but explained that the County Commissioners are considering not reducing its real property tax rate enough to fully offset increasing assessments and instead will consider adopting a real property tax rate of \$0.87 per \$100 of assessed value to fully fund budget requests. This tax rate is 5.5% higher than the CYTR and would generate an additional \$6,618,196 in real property tax revenues.

Commissioner Bunting opened the floor to receive public comment on the department budget requests, proposed property tax increase, and the Board of Education budget request, in that order.

Harold Scrimgeour of Stockton thanked the Commissioners for supporting the Snow Hill High School (SHHS) addition and renovation project, which resulted in a beautiful building. He urged the County to institute the use of smart phone applications in Development Review and

Permitting and Environmental Programs to create a faster, more user-friendly permitting process to expedite what he considers to be an antiquated permitting process. He stated that, rather than increasing taxes, the County should focus on streamlining the permitting process in DRP and Environmental Programs, as doing so would spur economic development and grow the tax base.

Barbara Witherow of Ocean Pines urged the Commissioners to fully fund the requested operating budget for the Sheriff's Office, including the request for additional Deputies and patrol vehicles, to keep the public schools and the entire County safe.

Jack Ferry, Executive Director of the Worcester County Developmental Center (WCDC) in Newark, thanked the Commissioners for supporting the WCDC's programs and services, which help to enrich the lives of people living with physical and mental disabilities. He stated that the WCDC hosts diverse programs and services designed to empower individuals with intellectual disabilities, and he asked the Commissioners to continue their support in the future.

Steve Taylor, Executive Director of Worcester Youth & Family Counseling (WYFC) Services, Inc. of Berlin, thanked the Commissioners for their continued support of the WYFC, which provides services to 669 youth and families in crisis each year which help them thrive and become productive citizens. He requested the Commissioners maintain level funding to the WYFC for FY17.

Claudia Nagle, Executive Director of Diakonia in West Ocean City, thanked the Commissioners for their previous years of support, which helps Diakonia provide emergency shelter and many other needed services, including programs that assist military veterans, to help residents become stable and self sufficient. She stated for example that Diakonia's food pantry provided 24,941 bags of groceries last year to help residents in need. She requested flat funding from the County in the coming year and stated that County dollars help the shelter staff leverage other grant funds to provide vital services to adults and children living in crisis in the community.

Stacey Weisner, Executive Director of the Delmarva Discovery Center (DDC) in Pocomoke, stated that the living history museum serves as a source of learning through the preservation and interpretation of Pocomoke's rich cultural and natural heritage and draws thousands of school-age children and tourists to Pocomoke each year. She advised that the DDC is in the process of completing a live otter exhibit that will further enhance the visitor experience. Ms. Weisner noted that the DDC is working to become self-sufficient by leveraging funds from private donors, and as such they have reduced their FY17 County grant request. She concluded that any grant funds the County allocates to the DDC in FY17 will be used to make the facility handicap accessible and to provide a larger sign on the front of the building.

Furnace Town Executive Director Patrick Rofe thanked the Commissioners for their years of support to Furnace Town Living Heritage Village, which helps them to preserve the historic Nassawango Iron Furnace and the hands-on history museum. He stated that this historic town and furnace is a source of economic development, as it attracts 7,000 visitors from across the country annually, and these visitors spend their money in area hotels and dine at area eateries. He stated that it is a center of learning that welcomes an additional 3,000 public and private school students each year, as well as University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES) and Salisbury University students who come to gain experience in their fields of learning. He pointed out that currently the college students are helping to uncover and catalogue archeological digs at the site. He asked the Commissioners to continue to support the village and invited them to tour

the site.

Harold Scrimgeour of Stockton urged the Commissioners to fully fund the Department of Economic Development's requested budget and suggested that the Commissioners consider the Accomack, Virginia model of placing the Departments of Development Review and Permitting and Environmental Programs under the umbrella of Economic Development to assure that the emphasis of these programs is on increasing the tax base.

Vince Gisriel of Ocean City stated that he feels blessed to live in Worcester County, which has some of the lowest income and property tax rates in the State, and he has had no reason to attend a County budget hearing to express concern until now. He stated that he understands that the County had to raise taxes last year to maintain infrastructure and vital services in the face of declining revenues, but if they fully fund the requested FY17 budget, his tax bill will have increased by 59% since FY09, while his Ocean City tax bill increased by 50% over the same period. He explained that this would be the first year that the cumulative increase in his County tax bill was higher than the cumulative increase in his Ocean City tax bill since FY09. He pointed out that many area residents live on fixed incomes, and he asked the Commissioners to adopt the Constant Yield Tax Rate of \$0.8245 for FY17.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Jerry Wilson thanked the Commissioners for supporting the Board of Education (BOE), and in honor of National Teacher Appreciation Day, he thanked all of the educators in attendance at the hearing. He stated that the BOE's top priorities are to maintain an exceptional school system to educate the 6,610 students, and to attract and retain highly qualified staff. He stated that the BOE work force has been reduced by 4% through attrition due to a stagnant budget that did not allow for salary increases. However, he cautioned that this outstanding school system, which attracts new residents and generates over \$230 million in annual economic activity in the County, cannot continue to operate effectively on a flat budget. He stated that the BOE presented the Commissioners with a reasonable FY17 budget request on March 22, 2016, which includes an increase of 3.4% over the current year adopted budget to include the following: a salary step for 633 employees currently on the salary scale; a 1% increase for the 515 employees who have years of experience beyond the step scale; a modest adjustment to starting teacher salaries; \$200,000 to maintain the iReady and Performance Matters learning programs that were previously funded with Race to the Top grant funds; and a 1% increase in the hourly and mileage rates for bus drivers. He urged the Commissioners to keep Worcester County public schools great by fully funding the BOE's requested budget. He further supported the proposed Sheriff's Office budget, which includes a request for additional School Resource Officers and vehicles, and Health Department funding to increase mental health services, all of which greatly benefit Worcester County youth and keep our schools safe.

Barbara Witherow of Ocean Pines thanked the Commissioners for their past support of the school system. She stated that, even though she is now retired and lives on a fixed income, she supports a pay increase for teachers and County employees too.

Doug Andrews of Berlin stated that he has two children who attend Snow Hill Middle School (SHMS) and SHHS and another who graduated from SHHS and is now a sophomore at Salisbury University. He thanked the Commissioners for their commitment to the school system and ultimately the children of Worcester County. He stated that the County has some of the best schools in the State, and he asked the Commissioners to continue to build on that success by fully funding the requested FY17 BOE budget.

Lexi Harrison, a SHHS senior and Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) biomedical program student, stated that her training at WTHS made it possible for her to obtain an internship at Snow Hill Dental Associates. She stated that she feels lucky to have the opportunity to pursue her career path by taking courses as a dual enrollment student, and she asked the Commissioners to fully fund the FY16 BOE budget so that all area youth continue to have access to these great learning opportunities.

Theresa Knight of Pocomoke stated that she is the proud mother of two daughters attending Pocomoke Middle School. She stated that Worcester County public schools offer the best teachers and access to the technology her children need to keep up with the rest of the world. She asked the Commissioners to adopt a budget that maintains current educational programs and technology and provides a pay increase for teachers.

Diane Hurney of Snow Hill stated that her family relocated here from Virginia Beach because of the outstanding schools. She stated that her three boys have learned to be disciplined, to work hard and to be successful in school from outstanding educators. She stated that it is the people in the schools who make the difference and she asked the Commissioners to fund the requests for salary increases and technology to keep their school system great.

Sarah Noble of Berlin stated that her family moved from Fairfax, Virginia to Worcester County, and a staff of amazing teachers at Cedar Chapel Special School (CCSS) helped her son, who has autism, make great progress through the use of technology in the classrooms. She stated that the County needs to provide these teachers with incentives to stay here, and the way to do that is to support the requested salary package.

Donna Hughes of Pocomoke thanked the Commissioners for their support of the teachers and asked them to fully fund the FY17 BOE budget. She stated that she has two daughters, one graduated from Pocomoke High School (PHS), earned a college degree and is now employed with the Health Department, and the other is a college ready PHS senior who has been accepted to all four of the colleges in Florida where she applied thanks to her Worcester County education.

Dr. George-Anne Garg of Ocean Pines stated that she came to Worcester County 15 years ago on a work assignment and stayed to raise a family because of the great teachers, resources and technology available for her children in Worcester County public schools. She noted that these schools provide an exceptional educational experience that outpaces the private school, Worcester Preparatory School. She stated that the public schools are raising the next generation of doctors, business leaders and government officials, and she asked the Commissioners to fully fund the requested FY17 BOE budget to assure that these generations to come are prepared to meet the challenges that will face them when they take their place in the global market.

Beth Shockley-Lynch, mother of three and President of the Worcester County Teachers Association (WCTA) and Snow Hill Elementary School Teacher, requested the Commissioners fully fund the FY17 BOE Budget, which provides proper compensation for teachers, as well as adequate funds to purchase materials of instruction and other classroom essentials to help Worcester County public schools remain the best in the State. She stated that this month her oldest son will graduate with honors from the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus and has already accepted a job in Worcester County, thanks in part to the science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs offered by the County. Speaking on behalf of the 668 members of the WCTA, she stated that the County is the school system's primary funding source and thanked the Commissioners for sharing in the progress the schools are making to educate a

global workforce. She thanked the Commissioners for continuing to provide an excellent health plan with a reasonable premium and asked them to fund the Board of Education budget request which is modest and affordable.

Kandy Davis of Berlin thanked the Commissioners and BOE staff for making their schools the best in the State. She advised that she has two children who attend Ocean City Elementary School (OCES) and one child who attends Stephen Decatur Middle School (SDMS), and the teachers they've had during their education thus far have helped them to become problem solvers who love to learn. She stated that proper materials of instruction and attractive salary and benefit packages are needed to continue to attract the best educators to the County. Therefore, she asked the Commissioners to support the requested FY17 BOE budget.

Helen Trivits of Berlin stated that she has a child going into middle school where outstanding teachers are helping to train her to succeed in life. She stated that parents, teachers and families only have one shot at educating each child, and that they should all feel a sense of urgency to do all they can to prepare them for college and for life, since there are no do-overs. She stated that teachers and technology play a huge role in educating children, and she asked the Commissioners to fund a budget that allows the BOE to attract and retain the most highly qualified educators and purchase and maintain the latest technology.

Tom Terry of Ocean Pines commended the BOE and Commissioners for their partnership approach to funding education and building schools, and he encouraged them to continue that relationship. He suggested that the County Commissioners and the Board of Education should approach the State Legislators to fix the funding formula which provides Worcester County Schools with the lowest level of funding per pupil in the state.

There being no further public comment, Commissioner Bunting closed the public hearing at 9:00 p.m.

Commissioner Bunting thanked everyone for attending the public hearing on the FY17 Requested Budget. He stated that the Commissioners would consider all the suggestions presented this evening. He also invited the public to attend the budget work sessions scheduled for May 10, 18, and 24, 2016 (if all are necessary). Commissioner Bunting advised that the Commissioners will adopt the balanced FY17 County Operating Budget on June 7, 2016.

The Commissioners adjourned to meet again on May 17, 2016.