

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

May 18, 2021

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting 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 Harold L. Higgins, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton, and Recreation, Parks, Tourism, and Economic Development Director Tom Perlozzo. Topics discussed and actions taken included: hiring Matthew LeCates as a Carpenter/Maintenance Worker III in Public Works, and certain personnel matters; discussing acquisition of real property for a public purpose; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments and considering a grants writer position.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 10:18 a.m.

After the closed session, the Commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Mitrecic called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Father John Solomon of the Holy Roman Catholic Church in Ocean City 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 May 4, 2021 meeting as presented.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously approved as a consent agenda the item numbers 2-3 as follows: a Department of Housing and Community Development grant agreement for pass-through grant funds of \$172,937 to nonprofit organizations located in Worcester County; and advertise a summary of use-of-funding changes for a Community Development Block Grant awarded to the County and sub-awarded to Diakonia, Inc. in the amount of \$336,000 for emergency rental service, authorizing funds of \$145,000 for personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, and two full-time emergency rental assistance case managers.

Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli and Enterprise Fleet Management (EFM) Consultant Bailey Elliot presented a lease proposal to the Commissioners to replace vehicles within the Sheriff's Office beginning in FY22. Ms. Elliot reviewed a PowerPoint, including but not limited to the following: current fleet age and negative impacts on the overall budget and fleet operations; identifying an effective vehicle life cycle that maximizes potential equity at the time of resale to create a conservative savings of over \$2.2 million in 10 years, with a first year vehicle purchase cost of approximately \$315,000; increase employee safety with newer vehicles; and results, which include reducing fuel costs by 20% through increased fuel efficiency and reduce maintenance costs by \$205,000 annually once fully implemented; leverage EFM's buying power; implement a tighter controlled resale program to lower total ownership costs and operational spending; and leverage an open-ended lease to maximize cash flow and recognize equity from vehicles sold, creating an internal replacement fund, averaging 109% above Black Book value. Ms. Elliot advised that this would be an open-ended lease, with no mileage or early termination penalties.

In response to questions from the Commissioners, Ms. Elliot advised that the optional replacement time for vehicles is every five years or every 100,000 miles. She confirmed that the Sheriff's Office has only asked for 20 replacement vehicles, while EFM has identified 26 vehicles that meet the criteria for replacement, as they are either at least 20 years old or have over 150,000 miles. She confirmed that the Commissioners could choose the service options they do or do not need. For example, the County has a Fleet Maintenance Division, so they could eliminate that contract option. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Ms. Elliot advised that the price quotes include the cost of police packages, noting that EFM will work with aftermarket technicians to install police packages in the vehicles. Furthermore if that same equipment remains compatible with newer technology it could later be installed in replacement vehicles. She confirmed that it would take EFM approximately 12 months to secure the proposed vehicles due to current vehicle shortages.

Following some discussion, the Commissioners thanked Ms. Elliot for her presentation.

The Commissioners met in legislative session.

The Commissioners met with Emergency Services Director Billy Birch to introduce legislation for the purpose of implementing and enforcing Md. Code, Public Safety 1-314 (known as "Kari's Law") to require that multiple-line telephone systems allow for direct dialing via 9-1-1.

Following some discussion, Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Church, Elder, Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell introduced the aforementioned legislation as Bill 21-6 (Kari's Law) and agreed to schedule a public hearing on the bill.

Commissioner Mitrecic closed the legislative session.

Pursuant to the request of Sheriff Crisafulli and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously authorized the Sheriff's Office to apply for an FY22 Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Grant of \$26,062 through the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention to purchase a new server, computer, and various digital media. Sheriff Crisafulli advised that no cash match or in-kind match is required for this grant submission.

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to reappoint Donna Dillon to the Housing Review Board for a three-year term expiring December 31, 2023.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Reverent James Jones to the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council for a four-year term expiring December 31, 2025.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Public Works Deputy Director John Ross and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Mitrecic abstaining from the vote due to a potential conflict of interests, to award the low bid for the provision of galvanized steel corrugated metal pipe and HDPE double-wall plastic pipe for use within the Roads Division of Public Works to Tri Supply of Salisbury, Maryland of \$44,123.47, minus \$4,048.80 for six pieces of 24" x 20' metal pipe and minus \$337.40 for one piece of 24' x 10' metal pipe for a total revised cost of \$39,737.27, to remain in line with budgeted funds of \$40,000 for this purchase.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Ross and upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously awarded the low bid for the grading and paving of the Department of Public Works parking lot at Timmons Road in Snow Hill to Terra Firma of Delmarva, Inc. at a total cost of \$45,500. Mr. Ross stated that the low bid exceeds budgeted funds of \$35,075 for this project due to escalating asphalt prices; however, the project shortfall could be covered by postponing several smaller projects totaling \$10,425.

Pursuant to the request of Finance Officer Phil Thompson and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the Commissioners unanimously approved the recommended FY22 tax ditch rates, certifications, and recommended managers for all 18 Tax Ditches in the County. The tax ditch rates were identical to the prior year.

Pursuant to the request of Development Review and Permitting Deputy Director Jennifer Keener and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to extend the County's temporary outdoor seating permit applications for a period of 60 days beyond the dissolution of the County's existing State of Emergency.

The Commissioners answered questions from the press.

In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Mitrecic and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter to the Department of Labor supporting the request of Trimper's Rides Board of Directors President Antoinette Bruno for additional summer workers on the J-1 visa program. Commissioner Mitrecic noted that Ms. Bruno applied for 150 J-1 students, but was allotted only nine J-1 workers for the 2021 summer season.

In response to a request from Senator Ben Cardin, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to issue a letter by May 21, 2021 seeking his support for the County's priority projects.

In response to comments by Commissioner Mitrecic and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the Commissioners voted unanimously to sponsor a \$100 Worcester County Award for the Worcester County Arts Council festival in September 2021.

The Commissioners recessed until their budget work session at 11:30 a.m.

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Budget Work Session

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The Commissioners met with Chief Administrative Officer Harold Higgins, Budget Officer Kathy Whited, incoming Budget Officer Candace Savage, and Finance Officer Phil Thompson to discuss issues pertaining to the FY22 Requested Operating Budget. The Commissioners deliberated on the projected revenues and requested expenditures in the Committee Reviewed FY22 Operating Budget, which currently reflects estimated revenues of \$213,294,726 and requested general fund operating expenditures of \$216,338,353, which leaves a shortfall of \$3,043,627.

The Commissioners resumed their review of requested expenditures by department.

Berlin Mayor Zack Tyndall met with the Commissioners to request that they restore \$115,000 to the unrestricted grant to the Town of Berlin, which was cut from the town's budget on May 11, 2021 in response to flat and in some instances decreased funding from the Town of Berlin to the Berlin Fire Company (BFC). He stated that the town relies on the unrestricted grant to fund public safety, including fire, emergency medical services, and police. Mayor Tyndall reviewed the history of town grants to the BFC, advised that annual town grants are based on available funding and are not contingent upon the amount of the annual County grant to the BFC. He then advised that the FY22 town grant includes flat funding of \$400,000, which is what the town can afford. Following some discussion the Commissioners agreed to consider Mayor Tyndall's request and thanked him for meeting with them.

Mr. Higgins reviewed changes that were made to revenues, expenses, and fund balance based on actions taken by the Commissioners at their May 11 budget work session. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to restore the \$115,000 grant to Berlin for total unrestricted grant funding of \$465,000 and total grant funding to the town of \$2,301,868 for FY22.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners unanimously approved a transfer in of \$3,158,627 in FY21 surplus funds to the FY22 budget, resulting in a balanced FY22 County Operating Budget.

Having balanced the budget, the Commissioners agreed to cancel their May 25, 2021 budget work session. The Commissioners adjourned to meet again on June 1, 2021.