

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

October 19, 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 Purnell, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:31 a.m. in the Commissioners' Meeting Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(1), (3), 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 Joe Parker, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton, and Recreation and Parks Director Kelly Rados. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: rehiring Heather Sifford as a transfer station attendant within the Solid Waste Division of Public Works and certain personnel matters; considering the acquisition of real property for a public purpose; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing board appointments and approving step/salary adjustments for roads workers III's and IV's to correct pay disparities.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:52 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 Reverend Terry Fort of Whaleyville United Methodist 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 October 5, 2021 meeting as presented.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing October 25-29, 2021 as Economic Development Week to Greater Ocean City Chamber of Commerce Publications Manager Nancy Schwendeman, Ocean Pines Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Kerrie Bunting, Worcester County Economic Development Director Melanie Pursel and others. The commissioners highlighted the County's membership with the Maryland Economic Development Association (MEDA) and partnerships with the area chambers of commerce to bring jobs and capital and to promote economic development as an investment in the region and throughout all of Maryland.

The commissioners presented commendations recognizing the 2021 Volunteer Spirit of Worcester County awards recipients. James Meckley, Robin Tomaselli, and Sandra and Bill Venable were recognized in the Individual Spirit category. Shonn Williams was recognized in the Emerging Leader category, and members of the First State Detachment Marine Corps League were recognized in the Group/Team Spirit category.

The Commissioners met with Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and local State Highway Administration officials to discuss County projects included in the MDOT/SHA FY22-FY27 Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program. State officials in attendance included MDOT Deputy Secretary Sean Powell, SHA Administrator Tim Smith and District #1 Engineer Jay Meredith, Regional Aviation Director Ashish Solanki, MTA Planning and Program Development Director Melissa Williams, Maryland Transit Administration Support Director Travis Johnston, MVA Administrator Christine Nizer, and others. Mr. Powell presented an overview of statewide priority projects, which include \$130,000 for preservation work at the Pocomoke State Park in Worcester County.

SHA Administrator Tim Smith reviewed local projects, including the MD Rt. 376 resurfacing project completed in March 2021 and U.S. Rt. 113 Service Road near MD Rt. 610, safety and spot improvements on MD Rt. 376 from U.S. 113 to Flower Street that is currently under construction, and upcoming resurfacing and rehabilitation projects at various County locations. He further advised that \$500,000 has been allocated for a study to address safety and evacuation concerns on the MD Rt. 90 corridor from U.S. Rt. 50 to Ocean City. Other projects include funding for a study to identify potential improvements to the existing MD Rt. 589 corridor from U.S. Rt. 50 to U.S. Rt. 113 (4.7 miles), as well as potential federal funding for asset management and accessibility for vulnerable users, specifically cyclists, pedestrians, and those traveling on scooters, to make Maryland roadways safer for everyone and to improve traffic flow.

Ms. Williams reviewed Chesapeake Bay Bridge program improvements, including the automated lane closure system to remotely alter and monitor two-way traffic, which will be completed by fall 2022, electronic tolling, and an upcoming mobile app. Mr. Johnston advised that MTA is drafting a 50-year plan for transit in Maryland and is providing FY22 operating and capital grants of \$5 million for Shore Transit and \$3.8 million for the Ocean City transit system to support transit operations, as well as \$8 million in federal relief funds for Shore Transit and \$6.8 million for the Ocean City transit system. Ms. Nizer provided an update on MVA services, specifically the online component which provides increased accessibility to customers, and she advised that the deadline to comply with federal REAL ID requirements has been extended to 2023, though Maryland currently has 83% compliance. Mr. Solanki reviewed planned aviation projects, which includes \$112,000 for fence improvements for wildlife mitigation at the Ocean City Municipal Airport.

Commissioner Mitrecic thanked Governor Larry Hogan and MDOT officials for making safety improvements to MD Rt. 90 and MD Rt. 589 top priorities.

In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Bunting Mr. Smith advised that the concept study proposed for MD Rt. 90 will identify traffic, environmental, and structural problems; however, he confirmed that the existing bridge is currently in good shape.

Commissioner Bertino expressed concern that more development is coming on MD Rt.

589, yet no real funding has been allocated for improvements for this heavily congested road in the CIP. Mr. Smith advised that the study is a placeholder to keep this project on the radar for SHA. He advised that funding is not available to expand the corridor, and future funding will be based on land use decisions made by County and State partners.

Senator Mary Beth Carozza recognized the importance of the State and local partnerships and thanked the MDOT team for their timely responses to constituent safety concerns. She then asked MDOT officials to keep moving forward with the County's priority projects.

Delegate Wayne Hartman recognized Mr. Meredith for being responsive to constituent needs, for realigning State priority projects to match the County's priority projects.

Delegate Charles Otto thanked State officials for making MD Rt. 90 a priority project, but urged them to continue moving forward with U.S. Rt. 50 Bridge improvements. Following further discussion, the commissioners thanked MDOT officials and members of the Eastern Shore Delegation for meeting with them.

Jennifer LaMade, director of planning, quality, and core services for the Health Department, and other Health Department professionals presented the commissioners with an overview of the 2021 Community Health Assessment for Worcester County. Ms. LaMade advised that the data used in the 2021 assessment is pre-pandemic, as State data lags by two years. The 2021 assessment reflects racial and gender disparities and focuses on addressing the following three priorities for the next three years: mental health, teen substance abuse, and physical inactivity.

Commissioner Bertino expressed concern that food insecurity has increased by 14% from the last survey and wondered what factors contributed to this change. In response to questions and concerns raised by Commissioner Bertino, Ms. LaMade advised that health officials conducted outreach campaigns at branch libraries, the WalMart stores, and other locations to reach populations that generally do not respond to computer surveys. At the request of Ms. LaMade, the commissioners agreed to support the Local Management Board's efforts to develop a workgroup in October, which will bring together community members interested in focusing on addressing health equity. Following some discussion, Commissioner Mitrecic thanked health officials for meeting with them.

Pursuant to the request of Snow Hill officials and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously agreed to send a letter of support for the town's application for two Community Legacy grants through the Division of Neighborhood Revitalization to renovate properties in the historic downtown area and to install an ADA-compliant elevator in the former Peninsula Bank building on the Pocomoke River.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to continuation of Carolyn Dryzga's appointment as a member of the Commission on Aging Board through September 30, 2023. Ms. Dryzga previously resigned from the board and later asked to recant her resignation.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to nominate Commissioner Elder as 1st vice chair and Commissioner Nordstrom as secretary and Commissioners Church, Purnell, and Mitrecic as voting members of the Board of Directors of

the Tri-County Council (TCC) for the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland.

Pursuant to the request of Fire Marshal Jeff McMahon and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved an over-expenditure of \$1,981 within the FY21 budget to cover unforeseen vehicle maintenance costs for work performed for COVID-related activities in the Fire Marshal's Office.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Director Dallas Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously accepted the low bid from Lane Enterprise, Inc. to include the deletion of all of the 18"-14' metal pipe (\$5,114.20), the 15"-12' metal pipe (\$3,418.56), 15"-10' metal pipe (\$1,899.20), and six pieces of 18"-20' plastic pipe (\$1,986) for a total bid price of \$36,460.92 to reflect available funding in the FY22 budget for the purchase of corrugated metal and plastic pipe to be utilized within the Roads Division of Public Works. In response to concerns raised by Commissioners Bertino and Nordstrom, Mr. Baker stated that the revised bid should be adequate to meet the immediate needs of the department, and he will work to identify additional funds within his budget to purchase the remaining pipe in the future.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously accepted the local bid from Chesapeake Paving & Sealing, Inc. of Salisbury, Maryland for County-wide blacktop surfacing of approximately 13.20 miles (69,706 feet) of County roadway at a fixed price of \$73.50 per ton of bituminous concrete – minus the deletion of John Walter Smith Park Road for 476 tons and Sirman Drive for 188 tons – for a total estimated cost of \$998,644.50, with funds of \$1 million designated in the FY21 budget for this purpose.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Baker and the Ocean Pines Advisory Board, the commissioners unanimously agreed to amend Resolution No. 21-15, a resolution on board member expense compensation, to add the five water and wastewater advisory boards to the list of boards whose members are to be compensated at a rate of \$100 per meeting if they attend. In response to questions by Commissioner Elder, Mr. Baker advised that the boards typically meet quarterly and are struggling to attract members.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously accepted the proposal from George, Miles and Buhr (GMB) at a cost of \$40,200 to analyze the three-year flow data from all County water and wastewater systems in conjunction with the number of equivalent dwelling units (EDUs) and to evaluate system capacities to determine factors limiting full use of water and wastewater systems, such as effluent disposal limitations and excessive water consumption or storage capacity. Ultimately, GMB will establish recommendations to potentially lower and standardize the gallons per day (gpd) per EDU rates between the Sanitary Service Areas (SSAs) wherever possible.

Commissioner Purnell requested Mr. Baker investigate options to divert seasonal traffic away from Sinepuxent and Holly Grove Roads to improve safety conditions on these roads.

The Commissioners met with Environmental Programs Director and Sewer Committee representative Bob Mitchell to review a request from Mark Cropper, representing Mitch Parker (owner), for the allocation of nine EDUs of sanitary sewer service from the Mystic Harbour SSA to serve a proposed residential planned community (RPC) of nine housing units on a 4.84-acre parcel located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Stephen Decatur Highway and Snug Harbor and more specifically identified on Tax Map 33 as Parcel 298. The property is currently zoned R-2 Suburban Residential District and is designated S-1 (designated for sewer services within two years) in the County Water and Sewerage Plan, though this does not guarantee any service or obligate the provision of services in that time frame. If this request is approved, Mr. Mitchell stated that the property owner will also be required to connect to public water from the Mystic Harbour SSA.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously approved Option 1, allocating nine EDUs to the property by utilizing nine EDUs from the infill and intensification category from Area 1 (north of the airport).

In response to concerns raised by Commissioner Elder regarding the extensive damage caused by vandals to Furnace Town, the commissioners conceptually agreed to help fund repair costs that are not covered by insurance.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on November 2, 2021.