

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

August 2, 2022

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 Elder, 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 Weston Young, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Joe Parker, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton, State's Attorney Kris Heiser, and Brett Davis of Davis Strategic Development. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: promoting Taylor Kitching to emergency communications supervisor and certain personnel matters with Human Resources, a matter directly related to a negotiating strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including receiving the FY22 monthly financial update and board appointments.

Following a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, seconded by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:43 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 Cynthia Bonneville 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 July 5, 2022 meeting as presented.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing August as National Child Support Awareness Month to Child Support Assistant Director Renee Reid of Department of Social Services (DSS) and other DSS staff members.

The commissioners presented a years-of-service commendation to retired Natural Resources Inspector Tom Bair of Environmental Programs (26 years) and retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant and Shore Transit Director Brad Bellacicco (10 years).

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-16 as follows: a Community Development Block Grant waiver and bid award to Poseidon Plumbing and Home Services for \$24,174.40 for a general rehabilitation project contingent upon approval of the waiver by DHCD; FFY 23-25 Child Services Cooperative Reimbursement Agreement; the Local Behavioral Health Authority Adolescent Clubhouse proposal from Minary's Dream Alliance for \$233,594; Local Management Board Bounce Back Request for Proposals; two Out-of-State Travel requests for a total of four Recreation and Parks staff to attend the National Recreation and Parks Annual Conference in Phoenix, Arizona from September 20-22, 2022; Selsey Road Resiliency bid specifications; Public Works dump truck bid specifications; a Small Project Agreement to extend water service to Buas Mini Storage in Berlin; a Small Project Agreement to extend water and sewer service to the Refuge at Windmill Creek; a Small Project Agreement to provide public water service for fire protection only to the Ocean City Municipal Airport via the Mystic Harbour Service Area; a Small Project Agreement to extend water and sewer service, along with eight equivalent dwelling units, to Royal Farms in Ocean Pines; declaring a property located at 10130 Silver Point Lane to be a nuisance that must be abated; a proposal to purchase hardware and software for all required 9-1-1, telephone, and radio recording from Exacom, at a cost of \$149,539.95 and to seek funding from the State of Maryland 9-1-1 Board for this purchase; and renewing a Memorandum of Understanding between the Sheriff's Office and the Board of Education for the School Resource Deputy program.

Pursuant to the request of Parks Superintendent Jacob Stephens and upon a motion by Commissioner Church, the commissioners unanimously awarded the bid for construction services for the West Ocean City commercial harbor to Brittingham Construction and Landscaping, Inc. for \$1,163,259.91.

The commissioners resumed their July 5, 2022 discussion regarding the distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously agreed to allocate ARPA funds to the three entities in the County working to extend broadband to the unserved and underserved areas of the County as follows: \$1 million to Bay Country Communications, with a 15% match, to cover approximately 31.8 miles; \$2.5 million to Choptank Fiber, with a 50% match, to cover approximately 81 miles; and \$3.5 million to Talkie Communications, with a 42% match, to cover approximately 83 miles.

Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young provided an update on the results of the phase I environmental site assessment of a 95.521-acre parcel located west of Stephen Decatur High School (SDHS) under contract by the County as the site for a potential sports complex. Mr. Young stated that the site does not have any Recognized Environmental Conditions (REC). However, there are vague reports of potential RECs on other parcels that neighbor this site. Therefore, it is recommended that soil borings be completed on areas of the property that abut these areas. He concluded that the FY23-27 Capital Improvement Plan does not identify an adequate funding source for the acquisition of this parcel, so one must be determined if the commissioners choose to finalize the contract to purchase this property.

Mr. Young met with the commissioners to review the proposal of \$28,523.62 from Wallace Montgomery for engineering services for the U.S. Rt. 50 access evaluation of the 95.521-acre parcel located west of SDHS that is under contract by the County as the site for a potential sports complex. Commissioner Bunting questioned how ingress and egress from U.S. Rt. 50 could be determined before a site plan has been developed that identifies the layout of the proposed sports complex. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Mr. Young stated that Wallace Montgomery will develop a concept plan that the County can share with the Town of Berlin and can take to the State Highway Administration (SHA) office in Baltimore to request access to the property from U.S. Rt. 50.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners voted 4-3, with Commissioners Church, Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell voting in favor and Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, and Elder voting in opposition, to accept the proposal from Wallace Montgomery for engineering services.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Bunting, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint John O'Brien to the Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

The commissioners conducted a public hearing to consider petitions to sell agricultural easements to the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) in FY23 on eleven properties in Worcester County at no cost to the County. Also present at the meeting were Environmental Programs Director Bob Mitchell and Katherine Munson, Environmental Programs Planner V. Mr. Mitchell stated that the applications have been reviewed by both the Worcester County Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board, which recommended submitting the top eight ranked applications to MALPF for appraisal.

Commissioner Mitrecic opened the floor to receive public comment.

There being no public comment, Commissioner Mitrecic closed the public hearing.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the Commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Elder voting in opposition, to submit the top eight ranked applications to MALPF for appraisal and further consideration for purchase of agricultural easements.

The commissioners met with Tourism and Economic Development Director Melanie Pursel met with the commissioners to resume discussions from their July 5, 2022 meeting concerning projects within the County totaling up to \$3 million to include in an application to be submitted by the Tri-County Council (TCC) for the Lower Eastern Shore on behalf of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties for Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund grant monies totaling up to \$10 million.

Following some lively discussions and upon a motion by Commissioner Nordstrom, the commissioners unanimously agreed to submit the following projects for inclusion in the grant application: 1 – West Ocean City Commercial Harbor Dredging (\$275,000); 2 – Worcester Main Street Connectivity Plan (\$800,000); 3 – Riddle Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant Membrane Replacement (\$1,003,868), 4 – Riddle Farm Water Tower Rehabilitation (\$650,000), 5 – Riddle Farm Rt. 50 Sewer (\$30,000), 6 – Ocean Pines-Greater Ocean Pines Regional Water and Sewer Engineering (\$75,000), 7 – Riddle-Mystic Harbour Regional Water (\$50,000); 11 – Pocomoke

City-Pathways for Economic Development Feasibility Study (\$100,000), 13 – Snow Hill-Bikeways Project (\$100,000), and 15 – Lower Shore Trails Infrastructure Planning (\$100,000).

The commissioners met in legislative session.

Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Joe Parker advised that advertising of the passage of Bond Bills 22-11 to 22-16 did not take place within the required 30 days and bond council advised that these should be reintroduced on September 6, 2022. Mr. Young advised that two of the bond bills have been removed. These include the sports complex, due to the referendum effort, and the Cedar Chapel Roof Project. In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Finance Officer Phil Thompson advised that the County is closely following the interest rates, noting that current uncertainties in the market make bonds very attractive.

Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Church, Elder, Mitrecic, Nordstrom, and Purnell reintroduced the aforementioned bond bills as follows and agreed to schedule public hearings on these bills for September 6: Bond Bill 22-11 for County Jail Phase 2; Bond Bill 22-12 for Public Safety Logistical Storage Facility; Bond Bill 22-13 for Stephen Decatur Middle School; Bond Bill 22-14 for Refunding 2013 Taxable Bonds; Bond Bill 22-15 for Refunding of 2014 Bonds; and Bond Bill 22-16 for Refunding of 2015 A Bonds.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on March 1, 2021.

Commissioner Nordstrom invited all in attendance to take part in National Night Out celebrations in a number of towns tonight, noting that it is a great way to bring each community together.