

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

Budget Work Session
March 28, 2023

Anthony W. Bertino, Jr., president
Madison J. Bunting, Jr., vice president (Absent)
Caryn G. Abbott
Theodore J. Elder
Eric J. Fiori
Joseph M. Mitrecic (Absent)
Diana Purnell

The commissioners, with Commissioners Bunting and Mitrecic absent, met at 9:00 a.m. with Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, Budget Officer Kim Reynolds, and Finance Officer Phil Thompson to conduct a work session to review the Worcester County Departmental Operating Budget Requests for FY24, as presented to the commissioners during their March 21, 2023 meeting. The requested FY24 Operating Budget currently reflects estimated revenues of \$218,040,884, and requested general fund operating expenditures of \$241,756,064, which leaves a shortfall of \$11,586,353 that must be reconciled by either reductions in expenditures, additional revenues, or a combination of the two. Mr. Young announced that department heads have been informed of the need to reduce their budgets.

Commissioner Bertino called the meeting to order and announced the topics discussed during the March 21, 2023 afternoon closed session.

Pursuant to the request of Budget Officer Kim Reynolds and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously approved the FY24 Budget Property Tax Constant Yield advertisement to run in area newspapers during the weeks of April 20 and 27, prior to the public hearing on the FY24 County Operating Budget on May 2. This advertisement has already been approved by the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation.

The commissioners met with Library Director Jennifer Ranck to review and discuss the proposed FY24 Library Budget of \$2,944,918, representing an increase of \$18,201 or 0.6%.

The commissioners met with Circuit Court Judge Brian D. Shockley to review and discuss the proposed FY24 Circuit Court Budget of \$1,669,222, representing an increase of \$173,613 or 11.6%.

The commissioners met with Development Review and Permitting (DRP) Director Jennifer Keener to review and discuss the proposed FY24 DRP Budget of \$2,137,026, representing an increase of \$25,235 or 1.2%.

The commissioners met with State's Attorney Kris Heiser to review and discuss the proposed FY24 State's Attorney's Office Budget of \$3,181,582, representing an increase of \$448,461 or 16.4%.

The commissioners met with Tourism and Economic Development Director Melanie Pursel to review and discuss the proposed FY24 Tourism Budget of \$1,373,990, representing an increase of \$26,503 or 2%; and Economic Development Budget of \$451,715, representing an increase of \$8,908 or 2%.

The commissioners met with Sheriff Matt Crisafulli, Chief Deputy Nate Passwaters, and Colonel Doug Dods to review and discuss the proposed FY24 Sheriff's Office Budget of \$11,467,155, representing an increase of \$1,201,529 or 11.7%. Commissioner Bertino requested Sheriff Crisafulli provide the commissioners with an accounting of all unfunded mandates resulting from State legislation.

The commissioners recessed for 10 minutes.

The commissioners met with Incoming Fire Marshal Matt Owens to review and discuss the proposed FY24 Fire Marshal's Office Budget of \$684,806, representing an increase of \$30,892 or 4.7%; and the Fire Training Center budget request of \$87,548, representing a decrease of (\$26,600) or -23.3%.

The commissioners met with Emergency Services Director Billy Birch to review and discuss the proposed FY24 Emergency Services Operating Budget of \$3,251,479, representing an increase of \$13,944 or 0.4%.

Public Works Director Dallas Baker updated the commissioners on the status of the Bay Restoration Fee (BRF) waiver. He noted that, while the County provided a letter and accompanying data to the State on January 28 confirming the Ocean Pines Sanitary Service Area (SSA) should be exempt from paying the BRF for 2023, to date no reply has been received except to confirm receipt of the request. He advised that bills are scheduled to be released on March 31 and sought direction from the commissioners regarding three billing options.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously agreed to include the \$15 per user per quarter BRF charge to the water and wastewater bills to be mailed March 31. They further agreed that, if the State exempts the Ocean Pines SSA from paying the BRF, the County will issue a refund to these customers.

The commissioners met with Karen Reddersen, director of the Lower Shore Area Extension to review and discuss the FY24 University of Maryland Extension Agency Budget of and \$255,625, representing an increase of \$12,947 or 5.3%.

Public Works Director Dallas Baker and Enterprise Fund Controller Barbara Hitch reviewed the proposed FY24 Solid Waste Budget of \$4,644,738, representing a decrease of (\$110,523) or -2.3%; Homeowner Convenience Centers Budget of \$742,936 for the, representing a decrease of (\$1,747) or -0.2%; \$906,070 for Recycling, representing a decrease of (\$13,968) or -1.5%; Water and Wastewater Budget of \$15,281,944, representing an increase of \$1,145,556 or 8.1%; Public Works Administration/Fleet Maintenance Budget of \$775,342, representing an increase of \$45,631 or 6.3%; Roads Division Budget of \$4,445,656, representing an increase of \$146,786 or 3.4%; Maintenance Division Budget of \$1,585,447, representing an increase of

\$27,792 or 1.8%; and Mosquito Control budget of \$197,586, representing an increase of \$35,750 or 22.1%.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on April 11, 2023.