

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

February 6, 2024

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Elder, seconded by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal personnel and contract matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(1)(7) and (14) 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 Candace Savage, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Administrative Assistant Karen Hammer and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: requests to hire Sara Tobin, Environmental Programs Intern, Ernie Bonneville, PT Landfill Operator, Leagha Pepper, Emergency Services Communications Specialist, requests to promote to Kelly Buchanan, Recreation Program Manager IV, to promote Devon Purnell, Sr. Corporal to a Sergeant and Jayne Drummond, Sergeant to Lieutenant, and certain other personnel matters, discussion of negotiating strategy for a contract; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bunting, seconded by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 10:07am.

After the closed session, the commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Bertino called the meeting to order and following a morning prayer by Rev. Mary Boyd of First Corinthians Holiness Church, and the 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 Jan. 16, 2024, meeting as presented.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to celebrate Black History month, received by Patrick Henry. In addition, a proclamation was presented for Children's Dental Health Month received by Ms. Deborah Stevens.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2- 7 as follows: approving Power Boat Special event on June 7, 2024; a Small Project Agreement for the Salt Life project; out of state travel request for one staff

to attend the 2024 FEMA Region 3 Hurricane Tabletop Exercise, in Philadelphia on April 15, 2024; ARPA funding request of \$6,844 from Ocean City Volunteer Fire Company; Request to Bid Berlin Health Department Roof Coating and a request to contract Pocomoke Middle School Basketball Court Fencing for \$31,994 by Long Fence Company, Inc..

Pursuant to the request of Health Department Director, Becky Jones and upon motion by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously approved to send a letter of support to the State requesting a review of the current Core Funding match and an appropriate formula for the County Health Department to use to determine the match.

Pursuant to the request of Election Director, Patricia Jackson and upon motion by Commissioner Elder, all Commissioners excluding Commissioner Abbott approve the overnight lodging request for two Election Office personal in Ocean City for the week of (early voting), May 2, 2024 – May 9, 2024, and (General Election Voting), October 24th – October 31, 2024, at the Convention Center. Commissioner Abbott expresses concern on the location for early voting, in the northern district, the Ocean City Convention Center, this presents a problem for the Southern half of the County to travel that distance. Commissioner Mitrecic comments, in the past it was determined to cost close to \$100,000 to add an additional early voting space in the Pocomoke area.

Commissioner Abbott addresses concerns brought to her attention by constituents. The community, many elderly patrons, were unable to obtain seating at a recent Elections Board meeting. Director Jackson conveys constituents are asked to sign up ahead of time before a meeting if they wish to speak, only two people had signed up. The Elections Office meeting space is very small and unable to accommodate many people. Ms. Jackson is looking for a larger space to hold the April meeting, which will also help the Elections Office to follow guidelines for any COVID-related issues.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Department Director, Dallas Baker and upon motion by Commissioner Elder, all Commissioners unanimously approved a three-month trial to revise Fleet Maintenance Division and the Public Works Administration Division to a four-day, ten-hour work week.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Department Director, Dallas Baker and upon motion by Commissioner Elder, all Commissioners unanimously approved the purchase of a 4x2 pickup truck for the West Ocean City Service Area for \$30,000.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Department Director, Dallas Baker and upon motion by Commissioner Fiori, all Commissioners unanimously approved an over expenditure of the FY 24 Mosquito Control Budget in the amount of \$21,258, due to outbreaks of Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus, multiple aerial treatments were required which caused the increase in the annual State invoice.

Pursuant to the request of Environmental Programs Director, Robert Mitchell and presented by Planner V, Natural Resources Division, Katherine Munson, and upon motion by

Commissioner Bunting, all Commissioners unanimously approved a new Rural Legacy area for Bishopville-Showell. This will be Worcester County's third Rural Legacy Area, conserving and protecting County farmland and coastal bays watersheds.

Pursuant to the request of Environmental Programs Director, Robert Mitchell and upon motion by Commissioner Fiori, all Commissioners unanimously approved an application for an FY 25 Grant application to the State, indicating the Bishopville-Showell RLA as the higher priority for funding.

Pursuant to the request of DRP Director, Jennifer Keener and upon motion and amendment by Commissioner Mitrecic, all Commissioners unanimously approved to write a letter opposing Senate Bill 537 - Cannabis – license locations restrictions, which contradicts the Worcester County Commissioners Bill 23-07 imposing a 2,000-foot separation distance from listed facilities; example - parks, playgrounds, libraries, and schools. Ms. Keener suggests adding places of worship to the current facilities jurisdiction list. It was unanimously voted to approve Senate Bill 158 – Cannabis – zoning requirements, which repeals pre-approved applicants on the Stage One approval list from being exempt from local authority or being required to submit for approval an actual location to the local zoning board.

Pursuant to the request of CAO, Weston Young and upon motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, Commissioner Purnell and Commissioner Elder to approve a public comment section during the bi-monthly Commissioners meeting, as has been adopted by several other local governments, the request was denied by vote from Commissioners Bertino, Fiori, Bunting, and Abbott.

Pursuant to the request of Vice President of Operations for Wor-Wic Community College, Jennifer Sandt and upon motion by Commissioner Fiori, all Commissioners unanimously approved a request for a letter of support and reconsideration to Gov. Moore concerning the recalculation of the Cade funding formula which will impact Wor-Wic Community College's budget by approximately \$1.5mil operating deficit.

Pursuant to the request of Environmental Programs Director, Robert Mitchell and upon motion by Commissioner Bunting, all Commissioners unanimously approved the nomination for appointment to the Governor's Office for David Bradford as a government official to the Chesapeake Bays Critical Area Commission.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Ms. Beth Gismondi to the Worcester County Board of Zoning Appeals and Mr. Stuart Cooper to the Worcester County Agricultural Preservation Board.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Ms. Joan Scott to the Worcester County Commission for Women.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Purnell, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Ms. Sharnell Tull to the Worcester County Commission for Women.

Pursuant to the request of CAO, Weston Young and upon motion by Commissioner Elder, all Commissioners unanimously approved the submittal for a letter of support, composed by the County's Fire Marshall to provide testimony to the General Assembly regarding the necessity for a Committee to promote Lithium-Ion Battery safety, in association with HB468 and SB532.

Pursuant to the request and motion by Commissioner Fiori and upon 2nd motion by Commissioner Abbott, all Commissioners unanimously approve proposal for a work session with the Commissioners, DRP and Environmental Programs, a round table to discuss and to review added pressures, zoning and new projects coming to the area, for example solar energy and other issues, before moving forward with the Comp Plan.

Commissioner Mitrecic mentions the effluent situation in West Ocean City. Commissioner Mitrecic would like to "hold CAO, Weston Young and Ocean City Manager, Terry McGean out of harms way" regarding any decisions concerning the West Ocean City sewerage. Weston Young has a future meeting with Terry McGean in hopes of interpreting better ideas on this situation.

Weston Young recaps the most recent B.O.E. meeting. Positive aspects; "B.O.E did a great job showing the actual spending in the last 3 years. They budgeted line items this year in all areas accurately. There was limited information on how the FTE's positions were broken down and budgeted within each subcategory. The draft budget did not present any information on restricted grants, revenue sources and things like fleet." The focus was on format not the actual budget request at this time, touching base on the Blueprint (State), meant to improve and replace and change the way things are done. Often employees are added to the staff after budgeting is completed, the Superintendent holds the power to modify the positions at any point during the fiscal year. Overall, after the last meeting with the B.O.E. there is a feeling of a positive step towards moving forward.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on Feb. 20, 2024.