

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

April 16, 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 Bunting, seconded by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference 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 Candace Savage, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls, and Public Works Director Dallas Baker. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: a personnel update; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing Riddle Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant operations.

Following a motion by Commissioner Bunting, seconded by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:31 a.m.

After the closed session, the commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Bertino called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Rabbi Art Rutberg of Temple Bat Yam and pledge of allegiance, announced the topics discussed during the morning closed session.

The commissioners reviewed and approved the April 2, 2024 open session meeting minutes as presented and closed session meeting minutes as amended.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to Tourism and Economic Development Director Melanie Pursel and County tourism partners recognizing Saturday, April 27, 2024 as Celebrate Trails Day, when the new Summerfield Trails in Snow Hill are to be inaugurated.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to Housing Program Coordinator Davida Washington recognizing April as Fair Housing Month and reflecting on the impact that the County's Housing Rehabilitation Program has made since it began in 1987.

The commissioners presented a proclamation to representatives from the CRICKET Center, Life Crisis, and Department of Social Services recognizing April as National Child

Abuse Prevention Month.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-3 and 5-7 as follows: scheduling a public hearing on the FY25 Solid Waste Enterprise Fund budget for June 4, 2024; bid specifications for the Medical Assistance Transportation program through the Health Department; awarding the lowest responsive bid to purchase and install a new incinerator at Animal Control to ECO Concepts for \$37,781; and recommended FY25 tax rates, certifications, and recommended managers for all 18 tax ditches in the County.

Pursuant to the request of Procurement Officer Nick Rice and upon a motion by Commissioner Elder, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Mitrecic voting in opposition, to approve bid specifications for the Berlin Homeowner Convenience Center bulkhead repair project.

Mr. Rice presented a progress report on the Pocomoke Branch Library bid and permit phase, with construction to begin in October 2024 and to be completed in late 2025 or early 2026. He then advised that the State has allocated \$3.99 million in matching construction funds for this project. Library Director Jennifer Ranck advised that the State will provide \$2.2 million for FY24 and \$1.79 million for FY25. In response to questions by Commissioners Abbott and Bertino, Ms. Ranck advised that the Library Board of Trustees is working on plans to relocate Pocomoke Branch Library operations during demolition and construction.

Pursuant to the recommendation of Mr. Rice and upon a motion by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously awarded the lowest responsive bid for the roof coating project at the Health Department in Berlin to D-Project, Inc. for \$86,000.

Pursuant to the request of Recreation and Parks Director Kelly Rados and upon a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, the commissioners unanimously adopted the proposed Park Naming Policy.

Pursuant to the request of County Attorney Roscoe Leslie and upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously agreed to accept at no cost a conservation easement in the Winding Creek subdivision that is currently owned by the Lower Shore Land Trust (LSLT). Mr. Leslie advised that the County already owns the wetlands surrounding the buffer in Winding Creek and similar conservation easements elsewhere, so staff has experience monitoring them.

Commissioner Fiori advised that some of the leadership of the Board of Education (BOE) have requested that the BOE and County finance teams meet and initiate an open dialogue and collaborate to come up with a few recommendations for budgetary procedures, i.e. formatting.

Following some discussion, a motion by Commissioner Fiori failed 2-5, with Commissioners Abbott and Fiori voting in favor and Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, Elder, Mitrecic, and Purnell voting in opposition, to have County and BOE finance teams meet to provide recommendations to solve funding issues and assure that all teachers and bus drivers

receive the raises they deserve.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned their open session meeting to conduct a budget work session. Following the budget work session, the commissioners adjourned to meet again on May 7, 2024.