

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

February 3, 2026

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

Following a motion by Commissioner Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, 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, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: hiring Ava Fries as a communications specialist trainee within Emergency Services and David Kinnikin as a landfill operator within the Solid Waste Division; transferring Youth Services Specialist Lisa Voss to a part-time library services assistant II; approving a leave of absence request; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions, including discussing potential board appointments.

Following a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, seconded by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:24 a.m.

After the closed session, the commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Elder called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Davida Washington 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 January 20, 2026 meeting as presented.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments.
There being no further public comments, Commissioner Elder closed the floor.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing February as Black History Month in Worcester County to representatives from the Germantown School Community Heritage Center.

The commissioners presented a proclamation recognizing February as Children's Dental Health Month to representatives of the Health Department.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-7 as follows: out-of-state travel for one deputy to attend Less Lethal Instructor Training April 6-9, 2026; out-of-state travel for one deputy fire marshal to attend the Fire Department Instructors International Conference in Indianapolis, IN from April 22-26, 2026; a letter to the US Army Corps of Engineers to participate in the update to the 1988 Water Resources Study; a Small Project Agreement for the Snow Daze 9529 Stephen Decatur Highway project to extend water and sewer service; scheduling a public hearing to accept Beach Tree Road into the Inventory of Public Roads; and an over-expenditure of \$5,500 within the Recycling Division Overtime Pay account.

Sheriff Matthew Crisafulli presented a request to the commissioners to award the purchase of a breaching tool to Chesapeake Fire & Rescue for \$38,230. Sheriff Crisafulli said that the tool, which received funding approval as part of the amended FY26 budget on December 2, 2025, is a tactical device designed to provide rapid, controlled forced entry into locked or barricaded doors and other entry points. He advised that this tool would enhance operational safety and efficiency during high-risk law enforcement activities. Commissioners Bunting and Purnell noted that the Sheriff's Office already has a manual system that opens doors just as quickly, so this expensive tool does not appear to be necessary. Commissioner Mitrecic said that these funds could be used elsewhere more efficiently; however, he would support the request since the commissioners already approved this tool as part of the amended FY26 budget.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the request as presented.

Pursuant to the request of Sheriff Crisafulli and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved an over-expenditure of \$76,632.42 in the FY26 budget to place an ammunition order from the Gun Shop of New Jersey, the State vendor, for operational and training use in FY27. In response to a question by Commissioner Mitrecic, Colonel Doug Dods advised that the Sheriff's Office is piggybacking off of the State bid.

The commissioners met with Public Works Director Dallas Baker to review the results of a speed study on Cathell Road, which was conducted from January 7-12, 2026 at the request of an area resident to address safety concerns and speeding vehicles. Based upon the recommendation of Mr. Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to reduce the speed limit from 40 mph to 35 mph and to post the new speed limit.

Parks Deputy Director Jacob Stephens presented two quotes to replace the pavilion at the Bishopville Park with either steel or wood. Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners voted 6-1, with Commissioner Bunting voting in opposition, to approve Option A, awarding the purchase and installation of a new 16' by 30' steel frame pavilion to All Recreation of Virginia Inc. for \$46,000. Citing costs concerns, Commissioner Bunting supported Option B to purchase and install a wood frame pavilion at \$18,779, which unlike Option A includes the cost of the concrete slab.

The commissioners met with Environmental Programs Planning Manager Katherine Munson to review two FY27 Rural Legacy Area (RLA) grant applications for the Dividing Creek RLA and the Bishopville-Showell RLA. Ms. Munson explained that, because the County is submitting two applications, the program requires the County to indicate which area is preferred for the funding applications. She said that staff recommends a preference for the Dividing Creek RLA because there is a backlog of interested landowners in this RLA, and all grant funds for this area have been expended. In response to questions from Commissioner Bertino regarding the push to increase the amount of affordable housing in rural communities, Ms. Munson stated that it has been well established that these are areas that the County wants to protect because of the agricultural resources, and she does not see that changing. Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young said that these sites consist of very swampy soils where septic systems may not be permitted.

Following some discussion and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertin, the commissioners unanimously authorized Commission President Elder to sign both the Dividing Creek RLA and the Bishopville-Showell RLA grant applications, which include a combined total of \$5.17 million in grant requests, and stating a preference for the Dividing Creek RLA.

The commissioners reviewed and discussed various board appointments.

Upon a nomination by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously agreed to appoint Jennifer PFlaumer to the Library Board of Trustees.

Legislative Analyst Charlene Sharpe met with the commissioners to request approval to provide testimony on several bills that have hearings within the next two weeks. Support was sought for SB 300, which would establish a Rural Readiness Program to provide assistance to small towns and nonprofits that lack the capacity to compete for funding; and HB 460, which would reduce from 5% to 2% the amount of priority preservation area acreage that can be used for solar. Opposition was sought for HB 99, which would remove the commissioners' existing right to review and approve zoning classifications that would result in higher density within five years after annexation as long as the annexation is consistent with the town's comprehensive plan; HB 203, which would prohibit the training repayment agreements that allow the county to recoup training costs if an employee leaves; HB 239, which would prohibit the County from enforcing single-family lot size minimums beyond 5,000 square feet on public water and sewer, mandates standard setbacks on all existing and new lots, prohibits the County from setting dwelling square footage minimums, and would force the County to allow townhouses in any area where single-family residential uses are allowed; and HB 257, which would require subdivisions to conduct flood-related watershed studies that would have to be submitted to MDE for review and approval.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously agreed to provide testimony on each of the bills as recommended by County staff.

Commissioner Abbott thanked all staff who worked to keep County roads clear and the public informed during the recent snow and ice storms.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on February 17, 2026.