

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday November 19, 2024 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in person and virtually at 9:00 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Reuben B. Collins II, Esq., President, County Commissioner
Ralph Patterson, II, M.A., Vice President, County Commissioner
Gilbert O. Bowling, III, County Commissioner
Thomasina O. Coates, M.S., County Commissioner
Amanda M. Stewart, Ed.D., County Commissioner
Deborah Hall, Acting County Administrator
Wes Adams, County Attorney
Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

**Ralph Patterson, II, M.A., Vice President, County Commissioner was absent and joined session later this day as noted.*

Call to Order/Pledge

Commissioner Collins called the meeting to order and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

A roll call was taken. Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins were present in person.

**Commissioner Patterson was absent.*

Commissioners' Comments

There were no comments.

Approval of the Minutes of October 29 and October 30, 2024

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of October 29, 2024. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of October 30, 2024. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): December 3-4, 2024.

Approval Items

Letter of Support: Board of Education FY2026 Capital Improvement Projects to Interagency Committee on School Construction (IAC)

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director and Mr. Steven Andritz, Director of Planning and Construction Charles County Public Schools)

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the letter of support with the clarifying language. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

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Budget Amendments and Budget Transfers

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative)

FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #866 Charles County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Purchase Less than Lethal Launchers for Patrol Squad and Emergency Response Team

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #866 for seventy-three thousand five hundred dollars (\$73,500.00).

**Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast Sponsorship from Community Support Funds

(Ms. Crystal Hunt, Chief of Staff-Commissioners' Office)

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve using the Community Support Funds for one thousand two hundred and fifty dollars (\$1250.00) split equally between the five (5) Commissioners at two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250.00) each. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Request Approval: Establishing Charles County Government Employee Deferred Compensation Program Committee

(Ms. Megan Donnick, Deputy Director and Ms. Nancy Bowling, Benefits Compliance Administrator, Department of Human Resources; and Mr. Mike Beczkowski, Senior Consultant, Bolton)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to Resolution 2024-13 Establishing a Deferred Compensation Committee and Bylaws. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Briefing: Equity Assessment/Employee Experience Survey

Ms. Renesha Miles, Chief Equity Officer and Ms. Elaine Pollard, DEI/HR Coordinator, Office of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Department of Human Resources briefed the Commissioners on the upcoming Equity Assessment/Employee Experience Survey. The survey will be used to assess workforce culture, strengthen equity focus, update equity strategic plan, build trust, and identify challenges and opportunities for internal alignment. The process will begin with a Kick-off meeting with staff in December 2024, then the launch of the Employee Experience Survey. There will be focus group discussions and data assessment and analysis to update the Equity Strategic Plan, which will then be presented to the Commissioners.

Briefing and Request to Introduce and Schedule a Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2024-17 Cobb Island Golf Cart

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, briefed the Commissioners on the proposed Bill 2024-17 Cobb Island Golf Carts. The Bill will allow golf carts to operate on Cobb Island if the operator possesses a valid driver's license and operates only between dawn and dusk, among other restrictions. The law would only apply to County

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roads. Ms. Mitchell explained that the Commissioners received authority for this County Bill through the passage of House Bill 43 into law by the Maryland General Assembly in May 2024.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to introduce Bill 2024-17 Operation of Golf Carts on Cobb Island. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, Maryland to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

****TO BE RESCHEDULED** Briefing and Request to Approve: Department of Emergency Services Station Feasibility Study**

Briefing: Health Department Update on Proposed Blue Zone Initiative

Dr. Dianna Abney, Health Officer, Ms. Amber Starn, Director Community Health, and Ms. Valerie Dent, DEI Coordinator, Community Health, Charles County Health Department; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Ms. Julie Kosteas Brown, Healthcare Consultant; Ms. Margaret Brown, VP Business Development and Mr. Danny Buettner, EVP and Chief Development Officer, Blue Zones, joined the Commissioners for an update on the proposed Blue Zone Initiative. There will be no County Funds needed since the Health Department will reprogram current funds in their existing budget and funds from Community partners such as the Charles Regional Hospital Center, will be used during the assessment phase. Dr. Abney indicated that she was working on getting additional funding through grants and other community partners.

Closed Session

At 10:23 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners with Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(1)(3)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss potential land acquisition; legal updates on land donation requests; discuss Commissioners' Committee Assignments for 2025; and receive legal advice on agreements. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, negotiations, strategies, and personnel information confidential.

**Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 11:00 a.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(3)(7) Potential Land Acquisition

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett, and Martin Harris.

Staff reviewed details of a potential property.

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The Commissioners present reached a consensus to have staff move forward with pursuing this purchase following appropriate steps as outlined.

3-305(b)(7) Legal: Update on Potential Land Donation Request

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett.

Staff provided an update on the process related to this land donation request. They reviewed the survey, appraised value and reviewed the next steps if the Commissioners accepted the appraised value. Once appraisal is accepted the next step would be to provide an open session briefing and request to schedule a public hearing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting in favor to accept the appraised value *for the disclosed amount given in closed session.* *Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.

3-305(b)(7) Legal: Update on Potential Land Donation Request

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett.

Staff provided an update on the process related to this land donation request which includes a Budget Amendment. They will bring back the survey, appraised value and inspections during another closed session to seek Commissioner approval of the appraisal.

3-305(b)(1) Personnel: Commissioners' Committee Assignment for 2025

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin.

The Commissioners did not reach a consensus and will schedule this when all Commissioners are present.

3-305(b)(7) Legal Advice: Agreements

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, and Jason Groth.

Staff reviewed the policy related to fees charged. The County Attorney will do further research and a future agenda request will be submitted.

At 11:55 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Coates, and Collins present, voting in favor to end this closed session. *Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.

At about 5:00 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

Roll Call

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present in person.

Briefing: Update Current Costs of the Lawsuits Related to the Board of County Commissioners

Ms. Elizabeth Theobalds, Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, briefed the Commissioners on the legal fees that have been incurred with the lawsuit filed in December 2022. The legal fee expenses total of one point five (\$1.5) million dollars through November 15, 2024. Ms. Theobalds also informed the Commissioners of the potential liability for unapproved legal fees incurred by attorneys pursuing appeals on Commissioner Coates' behalf, which total approximately one hundred and thirty-nine thousand dollars (\$139,000.00).

The Commissioners requested further breakdown of costs for clarification of the legal fees incurred related to appeals. This will be scheduled on the December 3, 2024 agenda.

Additional Approval Items

Budget Amendment(s) and Budget Transfer(s):

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative)

FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase # 830 Create Budget for Cost Associated Potential Land Donation

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #830 for thirty-six thousand five dollars (\$36,000.00).

Action on Boards and Commissions

There was no action taken.

Commissioners' New Business

There was no new business discussed.

**** NO Commissioners' Public Comment Session- There will be a JOINT TOWN HALL MEETING TODAY AT 7:00 P.M****

*Break 5:13 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present in person.

Public Hearing: FY2025 Municipal Storm Water (MS4) Financial Assurance Plan (FAP)

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the FY2025 Municipal Storm Water (MS4) Financial Assurance Plan (FAP). Charles Rice, Planning Director and Ms. Karen Wiggen, Planner III, Department of Planning and Growth Management; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; and Ms. Britta Hertling, Chief of Capital Services, Department of Public Works, reviewed the requirements of the FAP:

- Actions required to meet impervious surface restoration requirements
- Projected costs to meet impervious surface restoration
- Projected revenues or other funds that will be used to meet impervious surface restoration

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- Sources of funds that will be utilized to implement the MS4 permit
- Specific actions and expenditures from previous fiscal years to meet impervious surface rest

Staff indicated that the County is on track to achieve the required one thousand eighty-three (1083) acres by 2027.

There were no comments provided by the public.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to close the public record.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this public hearing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Resolution 2024-14 Approval of the Watershed Protection and Restoration Program Financial Assurance Plan.

Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2024-(14) Revisions to the Homeowners Tax Credit

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on proposed Bill 2024-14 Revisions to the Homeowners Tax Credit. Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, and Mr. Eric Jackson, Chief of Treasury, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; and Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, explained that this Bill would amend the County Code so that the combined household income always matches the State program and would allow for more senior homeowners to be eligible for this tax credit.

There were no comments provided by the public.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart to keep the record open for thirty (30) days. It was then amended by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to close the public record.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this public hearing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2024-14 Revisions to the Homeowners Tax Credit.

**Break 6:22 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.*

Roll Call

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present in person.

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Charles County Commissioners Joint Town Hall Meeting

The Commissioners held an in-person town hall meeting in the government building. They were joined by staff from each department.

There were five (5) questions submitted in writing and there were fifteen (15) people who asked questions or provided comments in-person.

Each Commissioner was given the opportunity to respond or asked staff to provide more information on the comments/questions given from the public.

At about 9:42 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adjourn.

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President