

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday December 10, 2024 (Legislative Day)**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in person at 9:05 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

*\*Gilbert O. Bowling, III, 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 Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins were present in person.

*\*Commissioner Bowling was absent.*

**Recognition: Employee Length of Service and Top Performer, Third Quarter (July-September 2024)**

The Commissioners recognized employees' years of service for July through September 2024. The Top Performer for the third quarter of 2024, Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, was recognized.

**Recognition: 2024 Charles County Truck Rodeo Awards**

Ms. Jakira Butler, Assistant to the Director, Ms. Tessa Meredith, Management Support Specialist, and Mr. Martin Harris, Director, Department of Public Works, assisted the Commissioners with presenting awards to participants and winners of the 2024 Charles County Government Truck Rodeo.

*\*Break 9:36 a.m. – 10:01 a.m.*

*The Commissioners continued the session in a hybrid format.*

**Roll Call**

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

*\*Commissioner Stewart was absent.*

**Commissioners' Comments**

Commissioner Patterson:

- Spoke about North Point High School State Championship game
- Resilience Authority and Community and County Staff that helped plant 451 trees in Waldorf

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- The Commissioner for Veterans Affairs Holiday Party and KIA/MIA dedication.

Commissioner Collins:

- Encouraged residents to shop local and support “With Love from Charles County” gift card program.

**Approval of the Minutes of December 3, 2024**

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of December 3, 2024. *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

**Announcement**

Next Scheduled Session(s): January 7-8, 2025.

**Approval Items**

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

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

**FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #75 Establish Feasibility Study Waldorf Urban Sports and Wellness Complex**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #75 for fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00). *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

**FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #74 Technology and Furniture Thornton Elementary School**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #74 for eight seven thousand four hundred and fifty dollars (\$87,450.00). *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

**FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #552 Board of Education to Cover Additional A&E Expenses William B. Wade School**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #552 for three hundred and seventy thousand dollars (\$370,000.00). *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

**FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #61 Emergency Services Feasibility Study at La Plata Armory**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment increase #61 for one hundred and twenty-four thousand four hundred and twenty dollars (\$124,420.00). *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

*\*At about 10:19 a.m. Commissioner Stewart joined session in person.*

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**Letter of Support: Charles County Public Schools La Plata High School Renovation with the Inclusion of a Natatorium**

(Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks, & Tourism; Mr. Steve Andritz, Director of Planning & Construction, Charles County Public Schools)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve this letter of support.

**Letter of Support: Legislation to Address Organized Retail Theft in Maryland**

(Commissioner Collins, Ms. Danielle Michell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; and Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve this letter of support.

**Adoption of the Charles County Hazard Mitigation Plan**

(Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, and Mr. Wade Haubert, Emergency Manager, Department of Emergency Services)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Resolution 2024-16 Adoption of the Charles County 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan.

**Resolution 2024-(17) Fall Water and Sewer Category Amendment Cycle**

(Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Ms. Melissa Hively, Planner, Ms. Heather Kelley, Planning Supervisor, and Mr. Jason Groth, Acting Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management)

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Resolution 2024-17 Fall 2024 Water and Sewer Category Amendment Cycle Amendments.

**Request for Amendments to Charles County Regulations 297-324 Regarding Window Signs**

(Commissioner Stewart, Mr. Jason Groth, Acting Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management)

The Commissioners reached a consensus for staff to bring back proposed changes.

Commissioner Stewart stressed the need to distinguish window signage and using transparent film with no markings.

Commissioner Coates acknowledged the need to look at lighting as a separate issue, but all should be reviewed holistically.

**\*\*CANCELED\*\* Letter of Support: Reallocate Funds from Rural Maryland Economic Development Fund (RMEDF) to Visitors' Center in Newburg**

**Briefing and Request for Approval: Partner with College of Southern Maryland (CSM) Velocity Center and Life Journey Writers Guild Traveling Smithsonian Institution Exhibition, Spark! Places of Innovation**

Mr. Robert Forloney, Program Officer, MD Humanities; Ms. Yvonne Medley, Founder/Executive Director, Life Journeys Writers Guild, Inc.; and Ms. Lesley Quattlebaum, Executive Director, CSM

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Velocity Center, briefed the Commissioners on a potential partnership with Spark! Places of Innovation. The program combines funding from the Smithsonian Institution and Maryland Humanities to create museum spaces in small towns. The Spark! Maryland Tour is scheduled to begin in Charles County May 17, 2025- June 29, 2025, as a partnership between the College of Southern Maryland Velocity Center and Life Journeys Writers Guild, Inc. Displays during the tour will take place at the Velocity Center and other locations in the County.

The Commissioners reached a consensus for this partnership.

**Briefing and Request for Approval: FY2025 First Quarter General Fund Review**

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, and Ms. TaTanya Bowman, Assistant Chief of Budget Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided a review of the FY2025 General Fund Report for the first quarter ending September 30, 2024. The FY2025 Adjusted Budget includes a twenty-eight point three (\$28.3) million dollars of fund balance use. Due to favorable revenues, it is projected that nine point seven (\$9.7) million dollars will be needed to offset the estimated net operating loss. They provided a detail review of revenues and comparison to adopted budget; Commercial versus Residential Property tax; expenditures and comparison to adopted budget; requested budget changes for approval.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the five million five hundred thousand dollars (\$5,500,000.00) fund balance reserve to replace radios for first responders/Charles County Government personnel.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the proposed January 2025 Salary Increases that will result in a three point five percent (3.5%) salary increase for eligible full-time employees including County employees, the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) union members, Charles County Sheriff's Office civilians and Correctional Officers union members, and other eligible full-time employees on the County payroll and a two point five percent (2.5%) hourly rate increase for part time employees including County Employees, Charles County Sheriff's Office, and other eligible part time employees. This increase will be supported by increasing the Income Tax Revenue budget eight hundred and seventy five thousand dollars (\$875,000.00).

**Briefing and Request for Approval: Update on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; and Ms. Kelli Scherer, Budget Analyst II, Department of Fiscal & Administrative Services, briefed the Commissioners on the use of the American Rescue Act Plan funds. They requested a transfer of six hundred and fifty-eight thousand ninety-seven dollars (\$658,097.00) from unobligated broadband programs to Surface Transportation Road Overlay. The transfer would satisfy a requirement that all funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and approved, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor an amend the request to allocate five hundred and fifty-eight thousand ninety-seven dollars (\$558,097.00) to Surface Transportation Road Overlay and one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00) to Food Insecurity.

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**Briefing: Overview of the Internal Audit Office**

Mr. Johnnie Coleman, Senior Internal Auditor, Mr. Michael Pheulpin, Junior Internal Auditor, and Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator, provided an overview of the Internal Audit Office mission, authority, reporting structure, County-Wide risk assessment and matrix and scores, the FY2023/FY2024 Audit Plan Update, and audits included in the FY2025 Annual Plan based on estimated available audit staff hours. The audit plan is based on two thousand four hundred and forty direct audit hours to be provided by two (2) audit professionals in FY2025.

Commissioner Stewart will submit future agenda requests related to conducting audits with businesses that do business with the County.

**Briefing: Internal Audit Annual Review of Commissioner Expenses**

Mr. Johnnie Coleman, Senior Internal Auditor and Mr. Michael Pheulpin, Junior Internal Auditor, Office of the County Administrator, provided an overview of the Internal Audit Report for Commissioners' Expenses for FY2024. They reviewed County Commissioner Expense Policy (SOP #: CP.CC.01.002) and Section 1.5.3 of the Commissioner Expense Policy states the requirement that an Internal Audit be conducted at the end of each fiscal year on the Commissioners' expenses. They reviewed the audit objectives, and Issues, Recommendations, and Management Response.

Commissioner Stewart will submit future agenda requests related to a separate overview of money spent by each Commissioner in all their individual funding accounts.

**Closed Session**

At 1:18 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling, which Commissioner Bowling withdrew and then was seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson, 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 a potential land acquisition and discuss Board of County Commissioners' Committee Assignments for 2025. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, negotiations, strategies, and personnel information confidential. *\*Commissioners Bowling and Stewart were opposed.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-no; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to two (2).

Discussion of the Vote: Commissioner Stewart's concern that the appointments to the Commissioners' Committee Assignments being discussed in closed and not in open session. It was an administrative function of the Board. Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, clarified that the first item in closed session fits the legal advice category and the second discussion is no policy discussion and will have a follow up in open session.

**Summary Closed Session Items**

At about 1:45 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

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

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Sam Drury, Kelli Beavers, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett.

Staff reviewed additional details of a potential property for the Open Space Program and the requirements of this program.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to have staff negotiate *up to the specified amount*.

**3-305(b)(1) Commissioner Committee Assignments for 2025**

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

The Commissioners discussed Commissioner Committee Assignments for 2025. Official action will take place later this day under Additional Approval Items- Action on Boards and Commissions.

At 2:01 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this closed session.

At about 3:38 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

**Roll Call**

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

**Additional Approval Items**

**Change Order #4: Contract 19-03 Radio Communications System**  
**FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #130 Cover Cost of Change Order #4 CIP 3220 Radio**  
**Communication System Upgrade**

(Mr. Jeffrey Clements, s, Chief of Communications, and Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Department of Emergency Services)

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #130 for four million dollars (\$4,000,000.00).

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Change Order #4 for thirteen million four hundred and fifty-four thousand one hundred and eighty dollars and thirteen cents (\$14,454,180.13).

**Action on Boards and Commissions**

Commissioner Stewart commented to clarify her earlier objection to moving into closed. She stated that this discussion was originally scheduled on the November 19, 2024 agenda and moved to today's schedule and felt the discussion should be held in open not closed. She will provide her comments during this time.

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A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to Commissioner Coates serving on the Area Council on Aging.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Board of Fire and Rescue.

A motion was made Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Charles County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Department of Economic Development as staff designee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Charles County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) Executive Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Stewart serving on the Board of Social Services.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Coates serving on the Charles County Homeless and emergency Shelter Committee with Rita Wood as the staff designee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Christina Ledman and Michelina Coates serving on the Charles County Scholarship Fund, Inc. as the staff designees.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Critical Area Commission.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Coates serving on the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) Advisory Council.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Stewart serving on the Comcast/Verizon Negotiation Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Coates serving on the Commuter Ferry Stakeholders Group with Jeffry Barnett as the staff designee.

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A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council with Deborah Hall as the staff designee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Stewart serving on the Fire/EMS Scholarship Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Stewart serving on the Library Board of Trustees.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC).

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Eric Jackson serving as the staff designee on the Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT) Board of Trustees.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and failed, with Commissioners Bowling and Stewart present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) 2025 Legislative Committee with Commissioner Stewart as the alternate. *\*Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins were opposed.*

A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-no; Commissioner Collins-no. The motion failed two (2) to three (3).

Discussion of the Vote: Commissioner Stewart expressed her concerns with Commissioner Patterson serving on this board since this was his second meeting he attended during the day and this committee meets during the day and Charles County needs to be represented.

Commissioner Patterson countered that he felt he would be an asset on this board and speaks with MACo weekly and is doing a presentation at their conference. He is committed to serving the County.

A motion was made Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) 2025 Legislative Committee with Commissioner Patterson as the first alternate. *\*Commissioners Bowling and Stewart were opposed* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-no; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to two (2).

Discussion of the Vote: Commissioner Bowling asked Commissioner Collins if he would consider having Commissioner Stewart serve on this board with Commissioner Patterson to give both Commissioners an opportunity to serve.

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Commissioner Collins responded that he limits the boards he is on and will not relinquish this board.

A motion was made Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Planning Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Bowling serving on the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Rural Counties Coalition with Commissioner Stewart as first alternate.

A motion was made Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Maryland Department of Health Maryland Walkability Academy.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Stewart serving on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Air Quality Committee (MWAQC) with Jason Groth as first alternate.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Board of Directors with Commissioner Coates as first alternate and Commissioner Stewart as second alternate.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Kyle Redden serving as staff designee on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Chesapeake Bay and water Resources Policy Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Beth Groth and Noelani Brockett serving as staff designees on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Climate, Energy, Environment Policy Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Bowling serving on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Food and Agriculture Regional Member (FARM) Committee with Commissioner Collins as the first alternate.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Michelle Lilly and Tony Rose serving as staff designees on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Human Services Policy Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Legislative Committee.

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Discussion: Commissioner Bowling asked Commissioner Collins if he would consider having Commissioner Stewart serve on this board in his stead since he serves on the MACo Legislative Board.

Commissioner Collins said he wanted to give Commissioner Stewart the opportunity to serve on the Transportation Planning Board instead, again since he limits the boards he serves on.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Jason Groth and Charles Rice serving as staff designees on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Region Forward Coalition.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Stewart serving on the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) Transportation Planning Board (TPB) with Jason Groth as the staff designee.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Naval Support Activity South Potomac Civilian Military Community Relations Council (COMREL) Executive Committee.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Coates serving on the Naval Support Activity South Potomac Civilian Military Community Relations Council (COMREL) General Meetings with the Department of Economic Development as the staff designee.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Bowling serving on Patuxent River Commission with Paula Proctor as the staff designee.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Collins serving on the Southern Maryland Tri-County Community Action Council (SMTCCAC) Board of Directors.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Bowling serving on the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (TCCSMD) Executive Board.

A motion was made Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor of Commissioner Patterson serving on the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland (TCCSMD) Veterans Regional Advisory Committee.

**Briefing: Annual Update from Business Loan Development Fund for Women, Minorities, and Veterans**

Staff and members of the Business Loan Development Fund for Women, Minorities, and Veterans provided an overview of their 2024 Annual Report.

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**Discussion: Clarification on the Watershed Conservation District (WCD) Density Requirement**

Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, provided a presentation which explained the Zoning Text Amendment #22-170, Bill 2023-10 Watershed Conservation District (WCD) Zone:

- Prior regulations had a residential density of one (1) unit per twenty (20) acres with a twenty (20) acre minimum lot size.
- New regulations have a residential density of one (1) unit per twenty (20) acres with a three (3) acre minimum lot size.
- NO CHANGES made to density requirement which remains one (1) unit per twenty (20) acres
- These changes are consistent with the other rural zoned lands (AC & RC).
- Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan by maintaining the one (1) unit per twenty (20) acre density.

**Briefing: Blighted Property Enforcement**

Mr. Don Litten, Building Code Official, Mr. Ray Shumaker, Chief of Codes, Permits, and Inspections (CPIS), Mr. Jarington Bazemore, Inspector, Department of Planning and Growth Management; and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided a presentation on Blighted Property Enforcement. They provided an update on a recent campaign to enforce signage regulations in the County. During the sign enforcement initiative, two hundred and two (202) inspections were performed, with one hundred and fourteen (114) cases logged. Ninety-six (96) of those cases came into compliance, while fourteen (14) are still outstanding. They also discussed what constituted a blighted property and the associated enforceable codes. Since January 2021 to present, fifty (50) cases related to blighted buildings have been logged, with thirty-seven (37) resolved and thirteen (13) working toward a resolution. Staff will come back to the Commissioners after investigating the number of properties that would be impacted by a Blighted Property Campaign along with fiscal impacts to the County for properties that do not come into compliance.

Commissioner Collins directed staff to look into the feasibility of local legislation to designate blighted properties with punitive consequences if they do not comply, such as progressive fines, and to define blighted properties.

**Discussion: Process for Charles County Board of County Commissioners Public Comment Sessions and Joint Town Hall Meetings**

Ms. Doria Fleisher, Community Engagement Coordinator, and Ms. Jennifer Harris, Chief of Media Services, Office of the County Administrator, provided the Commissioners with recommendations for Joint Quarterly town Hall Meetings and various engagement tools, and best practices.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to:

- Hold four (4) quarterly Joint Town Hall one (1) for each district
- No public comment sessions during the month a Joint Town Hall Meeting is being held
- There will be two (2) public comment sessions each month that there is no Joint Town Hall meeting scheduled

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- The Commissioners can respond at the end, six (6) minutes each for a total of thirty (30) minutes.

With the added amendment by Commissioner Coates to add Decorum/Civility requirement to each meeting.

**Work Session: Proposed Bill 2024-(06) Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 22-174 Mixed Use (MX) Zone**

Ms. Tetchiana Anderson, Planner III, and Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, joined the Commissioners for a work session on proposed Bill 2024-06 Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 22-174 Mixed Use (MX) Zone. This Bill would incorporate “housing for specific populations” and allow for commercial development to be substituted with residential development within the Mixed-Use Zone. Staff recommended denial of this ZTA because of the impacts it could have on MX Zone by eliminating the requirement to have a commercial component, and the likelihood of losing the “mixed” component. Their concerns are supported by the County Attorney’s Office and the Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services Fiscal Analysis of ZTA 22-174. The County Attorney’s Office is of the opinion that ZTA 22-174 runs afoul of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and indicated that the 2016 Comprehensive Plan would need to be amended to incorporate the vision of the ZTA 22-174. The County Attorney’s Office further indicated that a zoning text amendment is not the proper mechanism to amend the 2016 Comprehensive Plan. The process to do this is outlined in the Land Use Article of the Maryland Annotated Code. Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services concerns is based on the language in the Text Amendment, this change would allow for the potential maximum mixed use of a development to go from seventy percent (70%) residential / twenty seven percent (27%) commercial /three percent (3%) civic to ninety seven percent (97%) residential / three percent (3%) civic which would not allow the commercial tax base to grow. The more commercial development that occurs within mixed use zones would reduce the burden on general fund expenditures and help alleviate the need to raise property tax rates to cover the cost of County services. An imbalance of residential and commercial development, where residential becomes dominant, increases the likelihood the County would need to raise the property tax rate to cover expenses.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and failed, with Commissioners Stewart and Bowling present, voting in favor to amend Bill 2024-06 changing the maximum of ninety seven percent (97%) residential to eighty two percent (82%) maximum residential, keeping the commercial/civic ratios the same. *Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins were opposed.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-no; Commissioner Collins-no. The motion failed two (2) to three (3).

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2024-06 Zoning Text Amendment 22-174 Mixed Use Zone. *Commissioners Bowling and Stewart were opposed.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-no; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to two (2).

**Commissioners' New Business**

Commissioner Stewart thanked the public for attending her town hall meeting.

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At about 5:55 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adjourn.

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Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

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Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President