

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday February 25, 2025 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid format, in person and virtually, at 9:01 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

Call to Order/Pledge

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

Invocation

Pastor DeColby Hill, R.E.A.L Life Church, shared an opening prayer.

Roll Call

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

Commissioner Comments

Commissioners Collins, Patterson, Coates, and Bowling introduced the high school students who were shadowing them today (Leila Harrison, North Point High School, Kristabelle Salazar, St. Charles High School, Rajan Venkatesh, Henry Lackey High School, and Juliet Moore, La Plata High School).

Commissioner Patterson the High School State Champions in 2A Indoor track Adano Murray, Westlake High School; Lackey High School Boys- Shot Put; Destine Jackson, St. Charles High School; and Olivia St. Vil, McDonough High School. He also congratulated, Alison Cheney, Charles County Public School Teacher of the Year. He noted that the Bel Alton High School being listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Approval of the Minutes of February 4, 2025

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of February 4, 2025.

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): March 4-5, 2025.

Change of Date: Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-01 Charles County Bond Authority Originally Scheduled for February 25, 2025 is now scheduled on March 18, 2025.

Approval Items

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

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

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FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #343 Adequate Public Safety Ordinance Consultant Study

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #343 for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00).

FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #367 Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) Construction Costs Clinton Zone Phase IV Transmission Main

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #367 for two million dollars (\$2,000,000.00).

Letter of Support: Grant for Historic Rich Hill Restoration

(Mr. Michael Mazzeo, Chair, Rich Hill Steering Committee and Mr. Cal Carpenter, Planner I, Department of Planning and Growth Management)

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

Letter of Support: Maryland Veterans Museum FY2026 Federal Earmark for Enhancements

(Mr. Lawrence Abell, President, Maryland Veterans Museum).

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

Briefing and Request for Approval: FY2026 VanGO Annual Transportation Plan and Authorizing Resolution 2025-(01)

(Mr. Jeffry Barnett, Chief of Transit, Mr. Jason Groth, Acting Director, and Mr. Robert Romero, Transit System Administrator, Department of Planning and Growth Management)

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the FY2026 VanGo Annual Transportation Plan and approve Resolution 2025-01 authorizing submittal of this plan.

Discussion and Request for Approval: Additional Paid Time Off (PTO)

(Commissioner Collins; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; and Ms. Alexis Blackwell, Director, Department of Human Resources)

No action was taken at this time.

Discussion: Impact of Federal Executive Orders on Charles County

Departments of Economic Development, Human Resources and Planning and Growth Management Transit Division; Transportation and Regional Workforce Development, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland; Charles County Chamber of Commerce; Veteran Representative, Maryland Department of Labor; Representative, Congressman Hoyer's Office; and Representative, Maryland Governor's Office, joined the Commissioners to discuss the impact of federal executive orders on Charles County. They discussed and shared local and state responses and resources and other changes occurring on the federal level. The Charles County Department of Economic Development has launched a website with resources for local individuals and businesses impacted by the federal

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government transition. The site includes job search assistance, unemployment resources, benefits programs, and other resources.

Commissioner Collins will request a follow-up to discuss legal impacts and consequences of the Federal Executive Orders.

**Break 11:14 a.m.-11:24 a.m.*

Legislative Update: 2025 Maryland General Assembly Session

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Joseph Green, Ms. Sherri Simms, and Ms. Jeanette Tejeda de Gomez, G.S. Proctor & Associates, Inc. joined the Commissioners to provide an update on the 2025 Maryland General Assembly Session.

Ms. Mitchell reviewed the Charles County proposals:

- HB0835/SB0731 *Charles County - Alcoholic Beverages - Baseball Stadium License – Alterations*
Hearings held both in the House and the Senate
- HB0841/SB0730 *Gaming - Charles County Gaming Permit Review Board – Repeal*
Hearings held
- HB1283/SB0912 *Charles County - Off-Highway Recreational Vehicles - Regulation and Enforcement*
Hearings scheduled for March 5 and March 7, 2025

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to send a letter of support.

- HB1284/SB0728 *Charles County - Governing Bodies of Common Ownership Communities - Member Training*
Was not in this years Charles County Proposal Package but the Delegation resubmitted this Bill

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to send a letter of support.

- HB1359/SB0727 *Charles County - Student Bus Transportation Providers - Provider Displacement*
Hearing scheduled on March 6 and March 7, 2025

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to send a letter of support

- SB0729 *Special Police Officers - County Government - Protection of Employees and Public Officials*
Delegation will be removing this Bill since there is not enough statewide support
- HB772 *Education-Career Counseling*
Removes sunset provision; supported by Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) with amendments

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to have Ms. Mitchell reach out to the Delegation to get more information and bring back next week.

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- *HB1379/SB824 Alcoholic Beverages and Cannabis Article- Sale of Alcoholic Beverages in Retail Establishments*
Charles County Liquor Board is opposed to this Bill based on the public comments received at a public hearing they held on this topic.

Commissioner Stewart was opposed to sending a letter of opposition. She also requested since the majority of the Board was in favor of sending this letter of opposition, she requested that the letter include signatures of each Commissioner to reflect accurately the vote of each Commissioner.

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 send the letter of opposition. Commissioner Stewart was opposed. A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-no; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed four (4) to one (1).

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to expand location types listed in this letter as requested by Ms. Mitchell.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to add the five (5) Commissioners' signature block to this letter to reflect the vote.

- *SB774/HB0969 Property Tax - Valuation of Operating Property of Rural Broadband Service Providers*
Amendment was added to this Bill.
- *HB1036/SB0931 Public Utilities - Generating Stations - Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)*
Hearing scheduled on February 28, 2025. Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) is opposed to this Bill.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to have Commissioner Collins present oral testimony at the hearing opposing this Bill; Commissioner Patterson would be the alternate to present opposition testimony.

Commissioner Bowling requested a letter of support for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) Bill related to additional funding to SMADC only if funding request comes out of the cigarette restitution funds.

The Commissioners directed Ms. Mitchell to reach out to the Health Department first and bring this request for a letter of support back next week.

Closed Session

At 12:16 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, and passed, with all Commissioners 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)(9) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss collective bargaining negotiations; receive updates and legal advice on three (3) property acquisitions; to receive legal advice related to the use of a current property in the County; and to review vacancies and appointments to Commissioner appointed Boards and Commissions. A portion of this session will also concern the administrative

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function of the County Commissioners in their executive role. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, negotiations, strategies, and personnel information confidential.

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 12:32 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(7)(9) Legal: Discuss Collective Bargaining Negotiations

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Jacob Dyer, Alexis Blackwell, Megan Donnicks, Eric Paltell, John Adelodun.

Mr. Eric Paltell, Outside Counsel, reviewed the three (3) scenarios related to this negotiation topic.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to proceed with scenario one (1) in the negotiations.

3-305(b)(3)(7) Update on a Potential Property Acquisitions

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

Staff provided an update on the negotiations related on these properties. The first property needs additional negotiation authority and the second has a letter of intent agreed upon.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to have staff continue negotiations for the first property for the *specified amount discussed*.

3-305(b)(3)(7) Update on a Potential Property Acquisitions Related to Right of Ways (ROW)

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett, Elizabeth Theobalds, Terrah Dews, Jason Groth, Alicia Afroilan and John Adelodun.

Staff reviewed the negotiations on the two (2) properties.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus on the first property to accept the counter offer.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus on the second property to send a Best and Final Offer with the same percentage as the first property; if the owners do not accept this offer, then the County will move to the next steps in the process.

3-305(b)(3)(7) Legal Advice: Use of Current County Property

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett, Elizabeth Theobalds, Terrah Dews, Marc Potter, and John Adelodun.

Staff reviewed encroachments on County owned property and potential legal actions.

The Commissioners agreed to have this presentation added to an open session meeting.

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Administrative: Provide Additional Documents to the Commissioners

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

Staff provided the Commissioners with additional legal documents related to a potential County transaction.

3-305(b)(1)(7) Personnel: Review Vacancies on Commissioner Appointed Boards and Commissions

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

Mr. John Adelodun, Assistant Clerk to the Board of Commissioners, reviewed vacancies on Boards and Commissions

The Commissioners present reached a consensus on these appointments. Official action will take place on the March 4, 2025 agenda, under Approval Items- Action on Boards and Commissions.

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

At about 3:02 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

Roll Call

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

Additional Approval Items

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

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

FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #472 Potential Property Acquisition

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #472 for three hundred and ninety-seven thousand dollars (\$397,000.00).

FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #576 Repairs for Stagg Hall

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #576 for one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000.00).

****TO BE RESCHEDULED** Briefing: Charles County Mediation Center**

Briefing: Delinquent Commercial Taxes

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, and Mr. Eric Jackson, Chief of Treasury, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided an overview of the delinquent commercial property taxes in Charles County. The discussion included the number of ordinary and personal businesses that were delinquent, the percentage of delinquent taxes collected, and the percentage of collections performed through 2021-2024 and enforcement options used to collect.

Briefing: 2024 Annual Update Charitable Trust

Ms. Christie Burnett, Executive Director, Ms. Jessica Minopoli, Director of Development, and Ms. Virginia McGraw, Board Member, Charles County Charitable Trust, presented an annual update on the Charitable Trust and their activities. In 2024, the Charles County Charitable Trust awarded approximately one point seven (\$1.7) million dollars to over sixty (60) nonprofit organizations through four (4) rounds of grant funding through the Charitable Trust's Fiscal Year 2024 nonprofit Grant Program and three (3) additional rounds funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

Briefing: Charles County Resilience Authority Annual Report

Ms. Stacy Schaefer, Executive Director, and Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Treasurer, Resilience Authority of Charles County; and Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, reviewed the 2024 Charles County Resilience Authority Annual Report. The presentation provided an overview of projects and activities in 2024. The Resilience Authority secured four point seven (\$4.7) million dollars in grants. Projects funded through grants secured by the Resilience Authority of Charles County included the creation of a Stormwater Pocket Park at the Elite Gymnastics Recreation Center, funding for the Residential Stormwater Drainage Improvement Program, and restoration work along the shoreline in the Town of Indian Head.

Commissioners' New Business

Commissioner Collins informed the Commissioners of his intent to submit an agenda item for March 25, 2025 to discuss the initiative to draft a County Code for an Inspector General for the County.

**Break 3:58 p.m. – 5:01 p.m.*

Commissioners' Public Comment Session

Commissioners held an open session to receive public comments on any issue. This agenda item was added for the Commissioners to listen to feedback only, twice each month during their regular meetings.

There were two (2) people who provided comments in person and one (1) person who provided virtual comments. Any written comments received were added to the website for the public to view.

Summary of Public Comments

In Person:

- Speaker discussed his concerns and questions related to the water sources and cost of infrastructure and future plans for water services in the County; also questioned if Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) is the sole option and requested regular reports to the residents.
- Speaker wanted to take to acknowledge and compliment Charles County staff in the Environmental Services division and the interactive GIS maps on the website.

Virtual:

- Speaker agrees with an Inspector General position for accountability and also spoke about the need for term limits in Charles County.

Each Commissioner was provided an opportunity to respond to the public comments.

Additional Legislative Update: Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, 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, reviewed an important notice related to a hearing being held this week to shift State costs to the counties.

- HB352 *Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2025*
Hearing on February 27, 2025.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to oppose this Bill and send a letter of opposition.

The Commissioners also agreed that it was important to have a conversation with the Charles County Delegation related to this Bill.

**Break 5:38 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.*

Public Hearing: Bryans Road Fire Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Truck 11 Tax Exempt Loan

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the Bryans Road Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad (BRVFDR) issuance of Bonds for financing the purchase of a replacement Ladder Fire truck. Mr. Rudolf Carrico, Attorney, Law Office of Rudolf A. Carrico, Jr., reviewed the process required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and had Mr. Paul McCormick, Treasurer, BRVFDR, provide testimony and answer questions related to this purchase and the approval process.

There were no comments provided by the public.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates 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 close this public hearing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Resolution 2025-02 Approve the Issuance of Bonds by the Bryans Road Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad, Inc. for Financing to Purchase Replacement Ladder Fire Truck.

Public Hearing: Hospice Land Donation

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the Hospice Land donation. Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; Ms. Sarah Guy, Property Acquisition Officer, and Ms. Victoria Rickett, Assistant Property Acquisition Officer, Department of Planning and Growth Management, reviewed the property details and location; background on the property and use; the donation request and process the County follows for land donation requests. It was clarified that if the donation request is approved, that after the transfer is complete, there will be a deed restriction that states the property will revert to the County if it ceases to be owned by the non-profit organization, or if the non-profit ceases to exist.

There were two (2) in-person 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 Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to close this public hearing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Resolution 2025-03 Property transfer to Hospice of the Chesapeake, Inc. as part of the provision of educational, recreational or cultural services.

Public Hearings: NIKE Land Donations (Melwood)

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the Melwood Land donation. Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; Ms. Sarah Guy, Property Acquisition Officer, and Ms. Victoria Rickett, Assistant Property Acquisition Officer, Department of Planning and Growth Management, reviewed the property details and location; background on the property and use; the donation request and process the County follows for land donation requests. It was clarified that if the donation request is approved, that after the transfer is complete, there will be a deed restriction that states the property will revert to the County if it ceases to be owned by the non-profit organization, or if the non-profit ceases to exist.

There was one (1) in-person comment provided by the public

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

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

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The resolution to codify this land donation will be prepared by staff and official action will take place on a future agenda, under Approval Items.

At 6:27 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adjourn.

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President