

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday March 18, 2025 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid format, in person and virtually, at 12:02 p.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.

Roll Call

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

Recognition: Co-Founder Lifestyles, Inc.

Ms. Sandy Washington, Chief Executive Officer joined the Commissioners to receive a citation for her contributions to serving the underserved population in Charles County.

Presentation: Check from Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland (TCCSMD) for Funding Restoration of the Welcome Center in Charles County

Mr. John Hartline, Executive Director, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, presented the Commissioners with a check for funding the restoration of the Welcome Center in Charles County.

**Break 12:09 p.m.-12:14 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

**At about 12:15 p.m. Commissioner Stewart Joined session in person.*

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Patterson recognized the North point Women's Basketball team for being State Champions.

Commissioner Collins noted that the coach was a North Point graduate in 2019 and was an All-Metro football player at that time.

Approval of the Minutes of March 11, 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 March 11, 2025.

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Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): March 18-19, 2025

Notice: Public Hearing: To Revise Approved Use Maryland Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program to the Food Program (Meals on Wheel) is on Tuesday March 25, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

Approval Items

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

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

There were no Budget Amendments or Budget Transfers.

Resolution 2025-04 Property Land Donation Transfer to Melwood, Inc.

(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)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Resolution 2025-04 Property Land Donation Transfer to Melwood, Inc.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Rich Hill Farmhouse

(Ms. Cathy Thompson, Assistant Chief of Planning, Department of Planning and Growth Management; Mr. Mike Mazzeo, Friends of Rich Hill; Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, and Mr. Ben Yeckley, Planning Supervisor, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism)

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Rich Hill Farmhouse.

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 explained that the Maryland General Assembly has a ninety (90) day legislative session with goals and deadlines. The cross over day was March 17, 2025 which is a milestone for legislation that are most favorable moves to the other chamber. After this day legislation that has not crossed over has more challenges to be approved this session.

- HB835/SB731 *Charles County - Alcoholic Beverages - Baseball Stadium License – Alterations*
Crossed over and waiting for hearing date.
- HB841/SB730 *Gaming - Charles County Gaming Permit Review Board – Repeal*
Crossed over. Hearing on March 20, 2025.

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- HB1283/SB0912 *Charles County - Off-Highway Recreational Vehicles - Regulation and Enforcement*
House Bill crossed over; Senate Bill did not cross over.
- HB1284/SB0728 *Charles County - Governing Bodies of Common Ownership Communities - Member Training*
Did not cross over.
- HB1359/SB0727 *Charles County - Student Bus Transportation Providers - Provider Displacement*
Both Bills did not cross over. Still considering statewide impact.
- HB1036/SB931 *Public Utilities - Generating Stations - Generation and Siting (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)*
Did not cross over but the Governor is still working on modifications.
- HB0352/SB0321 *Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act of 2025*
Looking to eliminate funding for all land preservation programs from FY2026-FY2029. Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) is on record opposing this Bill.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to oppose the recommendations to eliminate funding for all land preservation programs from FY2026-FY2029.

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, provided an update on the discussions related State Teachers' Pension Plan costs shifting to the County. How the state shifts money and costs is a political issue versus a legal issue.

FY2026 Budget Work Session: Enterprise Funds, Operating and Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fees and Charges- Water and Sewer, Recreation, Cable and Cannabis

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Ms. Samantha Chiriaco, Chief of Budget, and Ms. TaTanya Bowman, Assistant Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, presented the first Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Work Session. The opening session covered Enterprise Funds, Operating and Capital Improvement Program Fees, and Charges. The FY2026 Water and Sewer Fund has a proposed budget is sixty million eight hundred and sixteen thousand one hundred dollars (\$60,816,100.00); the FY2026 Recreation Fund has a proposed budget of two million two hundred and ninety one thousand three hundred dollars (\$2,291,300.00); the FY2026 Cable Fund has a proposed budget of two million eight hundred and forty thousand nine hundred dollars (\$2,840,900.00) and the FY2026 Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund (CRRF) has a proposed budget of eight hundred and eleven thousand dollars (\$811,000.00).

Charles County Departmental Highlights Departmental Highlights: Department of Emergency Services Department of Public Works Department of Media Services

Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Department of Emergency Services; Mr. Martin Harris, Director, Department of Public Works; and Ms. Jennifer Harris, Chief of Media Services, Office of the County Administrator-Media Services Division, joined the Commissioners to provide a presentation outlining some of their department highlights and activities. The Department of Emergency Services is upgrading the county safety radio system. The new system includes new power plants and electrical work to prepare for the new system, and construction of new towers

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in Marshall Hall and Port Tobacco. The Department of Public Works is securing permits and procurement for the new Pinefield EMS Station. Permits for the new site were submitted at the start of the year, with an anticipated construction procurement of summer 2025. Work continues on a new chiller for the County courthouse. The new chiller units have been installed on the roof, and new chilled water pipes have been installed within the courthouse. The installation is scheduled to be completed in May 2025. Media Services “Stay Connected” campaign seeks to provide residents with information on staying current on County Government news through video, podcast, and digital newsletter products. They have also partnered with the Charles County Advocacy Council for Children, Youth and Families (CCACCYF) to implement the Children and Family Resource Academy. This pilot program was offered from January through March to county residents who identify as parents, caregivers, and youth supporters to provide information about the variety of community-based programs and support available for school aged children.

Closed Session

At 2:39 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson, 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)(4)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss potential new business in the County and to receive legal advice related to a state compliance matter and an update on a potential land donation process. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, negotiations, and strategies confidential.

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 3:01 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(4)(7) Discuss Business Locating in the County

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Sue Greer, Gracelyn McDermott, Isreal Rocha, Lorena Gonzalez

The Commissioners were provided an update on the business’s revised plans for moving to the County.

3-305(b)(4)(7) Legal Advice: Discuss a State Compliance Matter

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Elizabeth Theobalds, Jason Groth, Catherine Reisinger, Kelly Palmer.

Staff reviewed the noncompliance issue and the necessary steps that need to be taken.

The Commissioners directed staff to provide a follow up on April 29, 2025.

305(b)(7) Land Donation Update on Appraisal

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

Staff reviewed the revised appraisal for the property.

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A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to accept the appraisal as discussed.

At 4:22 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this closed session.

At about 5:01 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

Roll Call

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

Briefing: Encroachments on County Owned Property

Ms. Sarah Guy, Property Acquisition Officer, and Ms. Victoria Rickett, Assistant Property Acquisition Officer, Department of Planning and Growth Management; Ms. Elizabeth Theobalds, Deputy County Attorney, and Mr. E. Wesley Adams, County Attorney, and Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, briefed the Commissioners on encroachments on county-owned property. Encroachments are unauthorized use of land by someone other than the owner that often result in dumping, burning, littering, and loss of tax revenue for the County. The presentation defined encroachments, where encroachments were located, and photographic examples. Encroachments are considered trespassing on County property, and the County has a right to require the trespass to be abated at the expense of the trespasser.

Mr. Adams explained that the County will notify everyone about compliance and will work with them to remedy the situation. It is not about revenue.

Commissioners' New Business

There was no new business discussed.

**Break 5:23 p.m. - 5:59 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-(01) Charles County Government Bond Authority

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on Proposed Bill 2025-(01) Charles County Government Bond Authority. Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Ms. Anna Horevay, Partner, McGuire Woods, LLP, explained that proposed Bill 2025-01 is used to support Board of Education, College of Southern Maryland, and County Government infrastructure projects. The 2024 bond sale which was finalized in December used the remaining available bond authority from 2017. To continue to fund the approved capital improvement program with general obligation bonds, new authority must be enacted via local legislation. The new bond authority is so that the County can issue new bonds over the next few years. Staff is seeking to obtain new bond authority of three hundred and seventy-five million dollars (\$375,000,000.00). This amount is based on our existing projects and our planned projects for FY2026 and FY2027.

There were no public comments provided.

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A motion was made 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 Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to close this public hearing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2025-01 Charles County Government Bond Authority.

At 6:02 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