

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday May 13, 2025 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid, in person and virtually at 9:02 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Reuben B. Collins II, Esq., 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 and Collins were present in person. Commissioner Coates was virtual. **Commissioners Stewart and Patterson were absent.*

**At about 9:04 a.m. Commissioner Stewart joined session in person.*

Commissioner Comments

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins Present, voting in favor to make today, May 13, 2025 a Legislative Day. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Approval of the Minutes of May 6 and May 7, 2025

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 May 6, 2025. **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 May 7, 2025. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): May 20-21, 2025

Approval Items

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

There were no budget amendments or transfers discussed.

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Approval of Pension Enhancements: Sheriff's Office Retirement Plan (SORP)

(Ms. Megan Donnicks, Deputy Director, and Ms. Kimberly Pelczar, Benefits Administrator, Department of Human Resources)

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 this amendment to the Sheriff's Office Retirement Plan (SORP). **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Approval: Charles County Pension Plan Non-Vested Termed Participants

(Ms. Megan Donnicks, Deputy Director, and Ms. Kimberly Pelczar, Benefits Administrator, Department of Human Resources)

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 this amendment to the Charles County Pension Plan. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

FY2026 Budget Work Session: Review of FY2026 General Fund and All Budgets; Commissioner's Proposed Changes to the Budget

and

FY2026 Budget Work Session: Review Governmental Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and Commissioner's Proposed Changes

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, reviewed the Commissioners requested add/delete items for the FY2026 General Budget.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on the following additions:

Commissioner Collins:

ADD: University of Maryland C.D. Mote Jr Incentive Awards Program: 4-year total of two hundred and thirty-seven thousand six hundred dollars (\$237,600.00) Source: Fund Balance of fifty-nine thousand four hundred dollars (\$59,400.00) for this year and will create a reserve account to cover the subsequent years.

Commissioner Bowling:

ADD: Charitable Trust additional funding Source: Fund Balance three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00)

ADD: Support for the Beginner Farmer/Rancher Program at the Charles County Soil Conservation District- to purchase additional equipment Source: Fund Balance of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00).

Commissioner Stewart:

ADD: Commissioner Scholarship Fund Source: Fund Balance of two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00).

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ADD: Support of the Mediation Center Source: Fund Balance of forty-eight thousand dollars (\$48,000.00) will use Commissioner Coates' requested amount instead (see below).

ADD: Library's Compensation Study Source: Fund Balance of thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000.00).

Commissioner Patterson:

ADD: Funding for the Military Alliance Council Source: Fund Balance of fifty thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) and another fifty thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) in reserve for next year.

Commissioner Coates:

ADD: Support of the Mediation Center Source: Fund Balance of ninety-eight thousand eight hundred dollars (\$98,800.00).

The proposed FY2026 Budget for approval will increase to five hundred and ninety-five million eighty-one thousand five hundred dollars (\$595,081,500.00).

Mr. Dyer then reviewed the Commissioners requested add/delete items for the FY2026-FY2030 Capital Budget.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on the following additions:

Commissioner Bowling:

Land Preservation Utilize Affordable Surplus of one point eight (\$1.8) million dollars and leverage amount of nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000.00) being built into the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) budget.

**Break 9:38 a.m. – 9:55 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

Briefing: Vulnerable Populations Plan

Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Department of Emergency Services; Ms. Dina Barclay, Director, Department of Community Services, reviewed the Vulnerable Population Plan which addresses the actions that the County Government and partner agencies plan to take to reduce the risk of severe cold and heat-related illness and injury. Plans include Warming and Cooling Centers at the Nanjemoy Community Center, Port Tobacco Community Center, Richard R. Clark Senior Center, all branches of the Charles County Public Library, and Lifestyles Center. The Maryland State Police Barracks is also available as an after-hours warming center with a four-hour limit. A dual-phase weather plan was also established to begin at the first freeze watch. Phase One includes an annual review of the weather plan, update of warming centers, coordination with local partners, and weather monitoring. Phase Two occurs when temperatures are thirty-two (32) degrees Fahrenheit or 40 degrees Fahrenheit with precipitation. Media Services and Emergency Management coordinate messaging, including referrals for shelter at warming centers and information for the Charles Regional Medical Center.

Closed Session

At 10:09 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, to move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(7)(8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to receive update on a potential litigation settlement; and receive legal advice. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, strategies, and negotiations confidential.

Discussion before final vote:

Commissioner Bowling questioned why the legal advice on social media was in closed. He felt that the County had its social media page and that all other social media the individual Commissioners use is private. He will not be told what he can or cannot say on his personal social media.

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney, explained how the opinion of a Commissioner on a private page can be difficult to differentiate so that a citizen knows it is a private opinion on not that of the Board of County Commissioners. He stressed this topic was about perception from the public and wanted a mechanism to make it clear to the public that it was an opinion as a citizen and not as a Commissioner. He furthered that private versus public pages can be a legal challenge the more your private and public page blends. He furthered, that the Board of Commissioners has no authority to control what an individual Commissioner says on a private page. However, the Commissioners could agree on a statement/procedure, to add to their personal social media pages, but it is not necessarily binding.

Commissioner Collins expressed that even if it is a private social media page the public may view it differently and wanted to see if the Commissioners could come up with a disclosure statement indicating that this was a Commissioner's individual opinion. There was no agreement on this issue.

Commissioner Stewart suggested that any further discussion can be held in open session if needed.

The amended motion to move into closed session, without legal advice, component:

At 10:09 a.m., 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 move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(7)(8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to receive update on a potential litigation settlement. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, strategies, and negotiations confidential. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 1:00 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(7)(8) Settlement Letter

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Olin Strauss, Samuel Walter, Martin Harris, and Terrah Dews.

Staff reviewed the letter related to settlement payment request.

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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 sign this letter.

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

At 10:37 a.m., 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 end this closed session. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Tour: Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Facilities at Centennial Street

At about 3:59 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

Roll Call

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

**Commissioners Coates and Patterson were absent.*

**At about 4:00 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session virtually.*

Additional Approval Items

Change Order #33 Mattawoman Flow Equalization Basin ITB 20-35

(Mr. Olin Straus, Senior Project Manager-Utilities, Mr. James Sizemore, Acting Deputy Director-Utilities, and Mr. Martin Harris, Director, Department of Public Works)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve Change Order #33 for one hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars (\$185,000.00). **Commissioner Coates was not present for the vote.*

FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #584 Mattawoman Wastewater treatment plant Flow Equalization Project

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins present, voting in favor to approve Budget Transfer Request #584 for one hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars (\$185,000.00).

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

Charles County Departmental Highlights Departmental Highlights: Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism; Department of Human Resources; and Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services

Ms. Kelli Beavers, Director, Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Ms. Ashley Chenault, Chief of Tourism, Mr. Tim Drummond, Chief of Parks, and Ms. Toni Adams, Park Services Specialist Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism; Ms. Alexis Blackwell, Director, Department of Human Resources; and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, and Mr. Bill Kidwell, Chief Information Officer, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services joined the Commissioners to provide a presentation outlining some

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of their department highlights and activities. The Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services is rolling out an update to move all County laptops from Windows 10 to Windows 11 ahead of Windows 10's end-of-support date on Oct. 25, 2025. Other software updates include new procurement, key performance indicator models, and a Budget Book Module for OpenGov. The County's official websites will be refreshed including the main government website, Recreation, Parks, and Tourism website, and the Department of Economic Development website, to help maintain consistency across all County sites. The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism is installing weather stations at ten (10) County parks. These stations have lightning detection and warning sirens to alert park visitors of severe weather within a radius of the park. Bensville Park just opened the third synthetic multi-purpose field with LED lighting. The Department of Human Resources reviewed the wellness programs for staff, staff training courses, such as the Leadership Academy and professional development classes, the County's recruiting efforts by engaging in community-based recruiting events, and the summer internship program which received a record number of applications this year.

**At about 4:27 p.m., Commissioner Patterson joined session in person.*

Briefing: Communications Plan for Recognition of Heritage Months

Ms. Jennifer Harris, Chief of Media Services, Ms. Doria Fleisher, Assistant Division Chief of Media Services and Community Engagement Manager, and Ms. Kayla Hunt, Communications and Engagement Specialist, Office of the County Administrator; Ms. Renesha Miles, Chief Equity Officer, Department of Human Resources, briefed the Commissioners on the recognition plan for Heritage Months in Charles County. The updated communication strategy includes face-to-face recognition, website and social media posts, featured photos and videos, and participation in community events.

Commissioners' New Business

There was no new business discussed.

**Break 5:10 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

***TO BE RESCHEDULED* Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-(03) The Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services Tax Rate (Corrections to Charles County Code, Chapter 54)**

Public Hearing: 2025 Local Legislative Proposals

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the 2025 Local Legislative proposals. Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County reviewed the proposals submitted for 2025. Each submitter was given time to explain their proposal:

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- TOPIC: *Ballot Initiative*
Submitted by Carlos Child
- TOPIC: *Special Elections*
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- TOPIC: *Term Limits*
Submitted by Durrell Gray
- TOPIC: *Nuisance Abatement*
Submitted by Terrah Dews on behalf of the Nuisance Abatement Hearing Board
- TOPIC: *Volunteer Emergency Responders Tax Credit*
Submitted by Submitted by Bill Smith on behalf of Charles County Volunteer Firemen's Association

There were no in person comments. There were three (3) people who provided virtual comments.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to keep the public record open until June 20, 2025.

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

At 6:39 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, 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