

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners

Tuesday May 20, 2025 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid, in person and virtually at 9:01 a.m. with the following people 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 Collins was present in person. Commissioner Bowling, Coates, and Stewart were virtual. **Commissioner Patterson was absent.*

Commissioner Comments

There were no comments.

Approval of the Minutes of May 13, 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 13, 2025. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): June 10-11, 2025

Approval Items

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

There were no budget amendments or transfers discussed.

Board of Education FY2025 Inter-Category Budget Change Request

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, and Ms. Samantha Chiriacu, Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Ms. Sherri Fischer-Davis, Budget Manager, and Ms. Karen Acton, Chief Financial Officer)

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 approve the Board of Education's FY2025 Inter-Category Budget Amendment Increase for three million dollars (\$3,000,000.00) **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the Board of

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Education's FY2025 Inter-Category Budget Transfer Request for twelve million dollars (\$12,000,000.00) **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Request for Post-Event Funding: Charles County Commission for Women Legislative Breakfast

(Ms. Kenberly Stephens, Commissioner Specialist/ Staff Liaison, Commission for Women)

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve this funding from the Community Support Funds for five hundred dollars (\$500.00). Commissioner Bowling abstained from the vote.**Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-abstained; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-absent; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to zero (0) to one (1) with one (1) abstention and one (1) absent.

Commissioner Bowling will add an agenda request to have a discussion to update the policy for these requests to be made prior to the event.

Briefing and Request to Introduce and Schedule a Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-05)

Industrial Development Authority

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; and Ms. Michelle Frye, Deputy Director, Department of Economic Development joined the Commissioners to review proposed Bill 2025-05. Ms. Mitchell explained that per the advice of bond counsel with McGuireWoods, LLP, the legislation proposes establishing an Industrial Development Authority as permitted by the State's Economic Development Revenue Bond Act. The difference between a Revenue Authority and an Industrial Development Authority is that while both organizations may issue bonds, the key difference is that Revenue Authorities issue revenue bonds to finance public projects, while Industrial Development Authority issues Industrial Revenue Bonds to provide financing for facilities and machinery for private companies. Ms. Mitchell then reviewed in detail the proposed Bill.

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 introduce proposed Bill 2025-05 Industrial Development Authority. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

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 schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, July 8, 2025 at 6pm in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

FY2026 Budget Work Session: Recap of Proposed FY2026 General Fund and All Budgets and Review of Commissioner 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 FY2026 General Fund Operating Budget summary of the add/delete the Commissioners agreed to at the last work session:

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Commissioner Collins:

ADD: University of Maryland C.D. Mote Jr Incentive Awards Program: 4-year total of \$237,600
Source: Fund Balance fifty-nine thousand four hundred dollars (\$59,400.00).

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 fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00).

Commissioner Coates:

ADD: Support of the Mediation Center

Source: Fund Balance ninety-eight thousand eight hundred dollars (\$98,800.00).

Commissioner Stewart:

ADD: Commissioner Scholarship Fund

Source: Fund Balance two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00)

ADD: Support of the Mediation Center Source: Fund Balance forty-eight thousand dollars (\$48,000.00) included in Commissioner Coates request for ninety eight thousand eight hundred dollars (\$98,800.00).

ADD: Library's Compensation Study

Source: Fund Balance thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000.00)

Commissioner Patterson:

ADD: Funding for the Military Alliance Council

Source: Fund Balance fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00)

Remaining Unassigned Fund Balance after future years commitment is one million nine hundred and ninety-one thousand six dollars (\$1,991,006.00).

Mr. Dyer reviewed the FY2026-FY2030 Capital Budget summary of the add/delete the Commissioners agreed to at the last work session:

Commissioner Bowling:

Land Preservation Utilize Affordable Surplus of one point eight (\$1.8) million dollars.

Added nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000.00) by reducing the FY2026-FY2030 Debt Affordability.

Remaining FY2026-FY2030 Debt Affordability is nine hundred and thirty eight thousand dollars (\$938,000.00).

**Break 9:45 a.m. -9:51 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

**Commissioner Stewart joined session virtually at about 10:01 a.m.*

Briefing: College of Southern Maryland State of the College

Dr. Yolanda Wilson, President, and Mr. Diante Keita, Student, College of Southern Maryland, provided an overview of the State of the College to the Commissioners. A video review was also included in her presentation. The annual update highlighted student successes and provided an overview of the college's efforts to increase education in the five critical employment sectors of Information Technology, Cybersecurity, Trades, Healthcare, Education, and Sustainability.

Final Recap and Adoption: FY2026 General Fund Operating Budgets and Fiscal Year 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Projects

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Ms. Samantha Chiriaco, and Ms. TaTanya Bowman, Assistant Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, explained that the Commissioners that balance budget for FY2026 was five hundred and ninety five million eighty-one thousand five hundred dollars (\$595,081,500.00) and was requesting approval.

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 set the fiscal year 2026 real property tax rate at the current rate of one point one four one dollars (\$1.41) per one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of assessed value; and to set the Personal Property tax rate for all railroad personal and public utility property, corporate personal and business personal property subject to taxation at the current rate of two point eight five two five dollars (\$2.852) per one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of assessed value. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

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 set the Fire and Rescue real property tax rate at the current rate of six point four cents (\$0.064) per one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of assessed value; and to set the Fire and Rescue business personal property tax rate at the current rate of sixteen cents (\$0.16) per one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of assessed value.

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

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 set the fiscal year 2026 La Plata Town Tax Differential Rate at twelve point six cents (\$0.126) per one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of assessable base and; the Indian Head Town Tax Differential Rate at two point four cents (\$0.024) per one hundred dollars (\$100.00) of assessed value. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

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 set the semi-annual real property tax payment option rate which has been calculated to be one point two two seven percent (1.227%). **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

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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 set the 2026 Income Tax rate at the current rate of three point zero three percent (3.03%) **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt Resolution 2025-08 for the Fiscal Year 2026 General Fund Operating Budget in the amount of five hundred ninety-five million eighty-one thousand five hundred dollars (\$595,081,500.00) and to approve the fiscal year 2026 new position list for General Fund operations which includes adding to the authorized strength of the Sheriff's Office, one (1) Digital Evidence Custodian and converting seven (7) part time positions and one (1) full time reduced hour position to full time. Also includes additional positions throughout County Government operations to include ten (10) new EMTs for the Department of Emergency Services. **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 adopt Resolution 2025-09 for the Fiscal Year 2026 Capital Budget in the amount of one hundred forty-two million nine hundred one thousand one hundred dollars (\$142,901,100.00), and the Fiscal Year 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Program in the amount of one billion twenty-four million eighty-one thousand one hundred dollars (\$1,024,081,100.00), and the associated water and sewer connection fee rates as proposed to support related projects and, the associated school excise tax rates as proposed to support new school construction projects. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt the Fiscal Year 2026 Inspection and Review Enterprise Fund Operating Budget in the amount of twelve million eight hundred twenty-nine thousand dollars (\$12,829,000.00). **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt the Fiscal 2026 Recreation Enterprise Fund Operating Budget in the amount of two million two hundred ninety-one thousand three hundred dollars (\$2,291,300.00). **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 adopt the Fiscal Year 2026 Landfill Enterprise Fund Operating Budget in the amount of fourteen million one hundred twenty-eight thousand two hundred dollars (\$14,128,200.00), and as proposed to increase the tipping fee to one hundred and eight dollars (\$108.00) per ton with a minimum charge of fifteen dollars (\$15.00). **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt Resolution 2025-11 for the Fiscal Year 2026 Water and Sewer Operating Budget in the amount of sixty million eight hundred sixteen thousand one hundred dollars (\$60,816,100.00), and to increase the associated

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water and sewer user fee rates as proposed by approximately four point one percent (4.1%) on the average water and sewer bill to fund the budget. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt Resolution 2025-10 for the Fiscal Year 2026 Environmental Service Fee Enterprise Fund Operating Budget in the amount of eleven million seven hundred twenty-seven thousand eight hundred dollars (\$11,727,800.00), and to increase the Environmental Service Fee to one hundred and ninety three dollars (\$193.00) per improved property tax account for properties outside the municipal limits of La Plata and Indian Head and, Proposes to increase the fee for properties located within La Plata and Indian Head to thirty one dollars (\$31.00) per improved property tax account. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

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 adopt the Fiscal Year 2026 Watershed Protection and Restoration Enterprise Fund Operating Budget in the amount of eight million eight hundred twelve thousand seven hundred dollars (\$8,812,700.00), and as proposed to increase the Stormwater Remediation Fee to one hundred and sixty two dollars (\$162.00) per improved property tax account for properties outside the municipal limits of La Plata and Indian Head.

**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 adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Fees and Charges for County Government services. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Charles County Boards and Commissions Annual Update

Briefing: Annual Update from the Sheriff's Office Retirement Plan (SORP) Committee

Briefing: Annual Update from the Charles County Pension Plan (CCPP) Committee

Briefing: Annual Update from the Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) Committee

Briefing: Annual Update from the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) Committee

Briefing: Annual Update from the Historic Preservation Commission

Staff and members of the SORP Committee, the CCPP Committee, the OPEB Committee, the LOSAP Committee and the Historic Preservation Commission provided an overview of their 2024 Annual Reports.

**Break 11:28 a.m. – 3:29 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

Additional Approval Items

Letter of Support for National Association of Counties (NACo) Letter Regarding Federal Cuts to the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Programming

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(M. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney)

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 send a letter of support. **Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

Joint Meeting with Charles County Public Schools on the 2025 School Allocation Cycle

Ms. Melissa Hively, Planner II, and Ms. Heather Kelley, Planning Supervisor, Department of Planning and Growth Management; Dr. Maria Navarro, Superintendent, and Mr. Michael Heim, Chief of Operations and Supporting Services, Charles County Public Schools, joined the Commissioners to review the capacity at County schools and the proposed school seat allocations. Ms. Hively provided a recap of the 2024 allocations, the 2025 Student Yield Factors, available capacity at elementary, middle, and high schools, and the school allocation waiting list.

**At about 3:54 p.m. Commissioner Stewart joined session in person.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adopt the School Allocation for the Annual 2025 Cycle per the policy adopted in the Adequate Public Facilities Manual.

Commissioners' New Business

Commissioner Stewart requested that Mr. Jason Groth, Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, follow up with the State for an update on the traffic light in Waldorf on Route 228, Market Place and Festival Way since there was another serious accident there.

**Break 4:14 p.m. - 4:29 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

Public Hearing: Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application to Purchase

Materials for Transitional Homes

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application to purchase materials for transitional homes. Ms. Barbara Farmer, Community Development Supervisor, Department of Community Services, explained that this public hearing is being held for comments only to remain in full compliance with the program requirements. A proposed revision to the approved use of a previously awarded COVID-19 grant under the Maryland CDBG Program now allows Charles County the opportunity to apply for additional funds to purchase materials for the rehabilitation of two (2) County-owned transitional homes, operated by local nonprofit partners. The County is seeking seventy five thousand dollars (\$75,000.00) to support the purchase of materials needed to repair the two transitional homes.

There were no public comments.

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to submit application to purchase materials for transitional housing through the Maryland Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program.

**Break 4:33 p.m. – 4:38 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

**Commissioner Patterson were absent.*

The Commissioners agreed to move the Closed Session discussion scheduled later on this day at 7:00 p.m. to this time.

Closed Session

At 4:39 p.m., 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 move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to receive legal advice. 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 4:40 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

**At 4:41 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined closed session virtually.*

3-305(b)(7) Legal Advice

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

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, reviewed the legal requirement to seek the Attorney General's opinion on a matter the Commissioners are reviewing.

**At about 5:19 p.m. Commissioner Patterson left session.*

The Commissioners provided input and potential options.

At 5:23 p.m., 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 end this closed session. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

At about 5:31 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

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Roll Call

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

*Commissioners Coates and Patterson were absent.

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 seven (7) people who provided comments in person and three (3) people 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 spoke on past attempts to hold leadership accountable such as asking Commissioner Coates to provide evidence of hate group targeting; Commissioner Patterson to release report on County employee mistreatment; and Commissioner Collins to address report of time theft involving special needs students of Commissioner Patterson; Condemns the Board's silence when pro-charter supporter disparaged volunteer first responders; social media posts by a retroactive term limits supporter inciting violence needs urgent attention for public safety.
- Speaker criticized proposed increase to the FY2026 Budget which was added without public input which was driven by two (2) Commissioners; Charles County only County not proposing budget cuts and how it will pay for its priorities without new revenue sources; speaker challenged the inconsistency of wanting amenities like land conservation and parks without accepting population growth or new development, while still benefiting from Waldorf's tax base and supports recreation or consumption tax; the second Sargeant report should be pursued through the courts; and speaker rejected claims of bitterness over the failed charter, but frustrated in persistent disrespect and double standards.
- Speaker expressed that same concerns remain unanswered specifically on the ongoing and confidential negotiations regarding water allocation to the Town of La Plata and lack of transparency and why behind closed doors; He warned against decisions being made now that could be dismissed later as the responsibility of past officials; speaker also criticized Vice President Commissioner Patterson's attendance record, stating he has only fully attended one of the last seven Board meetings, citing missed votes and absent participation in staff presentations, the speaker questioned whether Patterson should continue serving as Vice President if he cannot commit to the schedule, especially given similar attendance issues the previous fall.
- Speaker had several policy requests into the record, emphasizing that they did not expect an immediate response, only a well-considered one. First, that the Board of County Commissioners publish and promote a clear public engagement schedule for the upcoming 2026 Comprehensive Plan update. Noting that the 2016 plan involved significant public participation, the speaker asked for the same robust level of engagement and discouraged

limiting public input to brief three-minute comments following presentations. Second, the speaker renewed a prior request for the formation of a citizen task force to review the Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance (APFO). They stressed that the APFO is vital for ensuring growth aligns with infrastructure capacity, promoting responsible development, and preserving livability and fiscal efficiency. Third, the speaker requested a joint public meeting between the Charles County Commissioners and the towns of Indian Head and La Plata to address water-related challenges tied to public facilities. They asked for a transparent, collaborative process where multiple options are developed, publicly reviewed, and voted on and not simply presented as predetermined solutions. Finally, the speaker called on the Commissioners to respond to potential impacts of the Virginia Department of Transportation's proposed HOT (high-occupancy toll) lanes on the Woodrow Wilson Bridge.

- Speaker addressed the conduct of Commissioner Coates during the May 6, 2025 meeting and expressed disappointment over her dismissive and hostile response to public concerns. Although Commissioner Coates was not present at the current meeting, the speaker felt compelled to call out her behavior, describing it as disgraceful and unprofessional and felt she demeaned residents which reflects the consistent pattern of behavior documented in the Sargeant report; speaker criticized the continued use of taxpayer funds to cover legal fees associated with Commissioner Coates' conduct and called on the Board to stop funding her legal defense and argued that any further legal action should be paid by Commissioner Coates personally; Speaker noted Commissioner Patterson's absences, citing public records that show he has attended only one of the last seven (7) Commissioner meetings and missed votes and closed sessions, stressing that consistent absenteeism undermines effective governance and urged the Board to reevaluate who holds the title of Commissioner Vice President, emphasizing that the role should be filled by someone who is present and engaged.
- Speaker addressed the Board to advocate for a trap-neuter-return (TNR) program for community cats prompted by recent concerns at the Capitol Clubhouse in Waldorf, where a managed colony of approximately fifteen (15) spayed and neutered cats lives, and highlighted the dedication of caretakers who maintain the area daily and keep it cleaner than most public spaces and emphasized that despite plans for a new animal shelter, without a formal TNR program, high euthanasia rates will persist.
- Speaker addressed the Board to advocate for a formalized, humane trap-neuter-return (TNR) policy. The Helper Pets organization currently performs TNR services by trapping community cats, spaying or neutering and vaccinating them, then returning them to their original locations without taxpayer expense. Despite the program's success, the speaker shared that Animal Control continues to oppose these efforts, often re-trapping already sterilized cats and taking them to the County shelter which is counterproductive and costly to taxpayers; speaker reiterated willingness to collaborate with County Leadership for policy updates.

Virtual:

- Speaker voiced strong concerns over orchestrated effort to reintroduce individual elements of the failed Charter proposal, which voters had already rejected at the ballot and expressed alarm

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that proposals such as an Inspector General and retroactive term limits were being revived with the intent of blocking specific individuals from advancing politically and narrowing the candidate pool to preferred allies; Speaker accused Commissioners Collins, Coates, and Patterson of pursuing a self-serving agenda that does not reflect the will of their constituents as well as political operatives like Greg Waring and Derek Terry for allegedly manipulating public opinion and associating with individuals who have publicly advocated violence against political opponents which is dangerous and unacceptable; Speaker addressed unresolved issues and ongoing costs related to misconduct by Commissioner Coates, including the payout for the former County Administrator, the alleged double-dipping by at least one (1) Commissioner, misuse of County credit cards, and continued hiring of outside counsel and ignores Wes Adams legal advice thereby exposing taxpayers to litigation risk; speaker denounced proposed tax increases, since public should not be forced to pay for poor leadership and mismanagement and why there remains no mechanism to remove a Commissioner for cause and demanded answers about the unreleased Sergeant report.

- Speaker expressed frustration with inconsistent Commissioner attendance during public comment sessions, noting that only one (1) Commissioner was physically present during recent budget hearings, and acknowledged that some Commissioners may have attended virtually, but emphasized that full engagement matters, especially when public participation is being criticized; Speaker referenced comments made by Commissioner Bowling in past discussions about the Charter, accusing him of now avoiding accountability after previously advocating for transparency and governance reforms and suggested that Commissioner Bowling had been active on social media the night prior, discussing County matters, implying a lack of focus or professionalism; Speaker referenced an earlier moment when Commissioners Stewart, Murphy, and Robinson were seen in a photo displaying three (3) fingers, a symbolic gesture that was not met with the same scrutiny now being applied to the current majority and reflects political double standards now that control of the Board has shifted.
- Speaker acknowledged past statements made by elected officials suggesting the Charter could be selectively adopted, keeping the beneficial parts and discarding the rest and recalled publicly expressing similar views at community events, stating that while they opposed the Charter as a whole, they supported specific components such as term limits, an ethics board, and an Inspector General; Speaker acknowledged complexity of implementing term limits, particularly whether they should be applied retroactively or begin with future elections, and suggested this is a conversation worth having and rejected personal attacks and urged community members to stay focused on collective goals.

Commissioner's Responses

Commissioner Collins:

- Apologized for the late start for public comments; Hearing testimony on the colony of cats helped broaden his understanding of the growing community cat population and the shift in terminology from “feral cats” to “community cats,” noting a preference for the more respectful framing and expressing appreciation to the speakers for elevating the issue; he acknowledged the growing presence of these cat colonies and recognized the early morning behavior patterns that make them easy to overlook and that he is committed to engage with staff to look further into the matter, with a willingness to explore potential policy and programmatic responses.

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Commissioner Bowling:

- He explained that La Plata and water allocation was discussed earlier in the context of adequate public facilities (APFO) and that the County had previously asked the Town of La Plata to implement an APFO similar to the County's and that staff had been tasked with providing updates and supports holding a joint public meeting between the County Commissioners and the Town Councils of La Plata, Indian Head, and Port Tobacco to discuss mutual concerns, including infrastructure and water; 2026 Comprehensive Plan discussion at the May 5, 2025 Planning Commission meeting staff presented updates and suggested requesting a staff briefing outside of public comment to avoid using meeting time; he agreed that a fee summary for the Second Sergeant report could be easily requested and shared with the public; Regarding community cats, he welcomed continued discussion and stressed the need for a flexible policy that considers both urban and rural contexts; He noted that he attended the morning's budget meeting virtually and actively participated and that he has rarely attended virtually in his six (6) years on the board and emphasized that remote participation, when necessary, does not diminish engagement.

Commissioner Stewart:

- She addressed Commissioner attendance, noting that while virtual participation is sometimes necessary, it does not reflect a lack of engagement and emphasized that she, along with Commissioners Collins and Bowling, were present for the vast majority of meetings and actively participates whether in person or remotely; she does not support retroactive legislation, stating that this Board legislates forward, not backward and term limits applied retroactively would be inconsistent with standard legislative practice and fairness; she clarified that while the FY26 budget process was challenging, the County's responsible planning and fiscal policy allowed them to maintain services without making dramatic cuts and that not all departments received full funding, but the budget was balanced thoughtfully, and she commended the work of Fiscal and Administrative Services; she affirmed that the La Plata water negotiations, discussions are ongoing and involve legal contracts and negotiations, which cannot be public at this stage and emphasized that while much of the work is done behind the scenes, a public discussion will occur at the appropriate time; She agrees that a public hearing is not sufficient for the Comprehensive Plan, and is committed to ensuring that the revision process is genuinely public and participatory and will follow up with staff to verify that this expectation is clear; she acknowledged the presence of multiple cat colonies in the community and admitted she was unaware of the specific challenges until now and expressed interest in learning more about trap-neuter-return (TNR) practices, especially concerns about spayed/neutered cats being collected by Animal Control after return; she acknowledges the County has spent over \$2.5 (2.5) million dollars related to the Sergeant Reports; . She publicly thanked Attorney Wes Adams for saving the County from potentially millions more in legal liabilities through his counsel on unrelated matters.\

*Break 6:16 p.m. – 6:24 p.m.

Roll Call

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

*Commissioners Coates and Patterson were absent.

Public Hearing Proposed Bill 2025-04 Revisions to Recordation Tax

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on the proposed Bill 2025-04 Revisions to the Recordation Tax. Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, explained that this Bill seeks to raise the recordation tax by two dollars (\$2.00) per five hundred dollars (\$500.00) for home sales or recorded titles. The tax does not impact County-wide property or income taxes. The increase was proposed to raise additional funds to support Charles County Public Schools and Affordable Housing initiatives in the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget without impacting renters or non-transacting homeowners.

**At about 6:30 p.m. Commissioner Coates joined session virtually.*

There were thirteen (13) people who provided in person comments and one (1) person who provided virtual comments.

**At about 7:11 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session virtually.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to keep the public record open for ten (10) days. A roll call of the vote was taken to confirm virtual votes: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-yes; and Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed unanimously.

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

At 7:13 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this closed session and adjourn.

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President