

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners

Tuesday June 10, 2025 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid, in person and virtually at 9:33 a.m. with the following people 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

Meet and Greet with the Delegation from Mozambique

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. All Commissioners were present in person.

Signing of Sister City Agreement with Mozambique and Recognition

Commissioner President Collins and Mr. Julio Jose Parruque, Mayor of Matola City Municipal Council Mozambique signed a Sister City Partnership Agreement. Symbolic Gifts were exchanged. Following the signing ceremony, Commissioner Collins and Mayor Parruque were joined by the full Board of County Commissioners, the Matola City Mozambique Delegation, Maryland Deputy Secretary of State Michael Lore, representatives from the Maryland Department of Commerce, representatives for Congressman Hoyer and Senator Van Hollen, Charles County Maryland State Delegation, and the Ambassador for Mozambique. Official Citations and recognition were presented to the Matola City Mozambique Delegation followed by official photographs.

**Break 9:59 a.m.-10:30 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

Charles County Proclamations for June 2025

2025-44 Pride Month

2025-45 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month

2025-46 Women's Veteran's Day

2025-47 Juneteenth

2025-48 Men's Health Week

The Commissioners were joined staff from the Charles County Health Department to receive proclamation 2025-48 Men's Health Week; staff from the Charles County Health Department and members of the PFLAG Southern Maryland Group to receive proclamation 2025-44 Pride Month; members of the Charles County Commission for Veterans Affairs to receive proclamation 2025-45 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month; members of the Commission for Veterans

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Affairs and the Warfighter Advance Non-Profit Group to receive proclamation 2025-46 Women's Veteran's Day; and members of the NAACP and the Charles County Juneteenth Foundation to receive proclamation 2025-47 Juneteenth.

Following the presentation of proclamations, the Commissioners presented Mrs. Mary Louise Webb a citation recognizing her one hundredth (100) birthday and years of service the Charles County Community.

**Break 10:56 a.m.-11:00 a.m.*

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Patterson spoke about the Third Annual PrEP for Pride event; Western Charles Farms Market, Master Child Church; Congratulated all the graduates from Charles County Public Schools; The Free Little Library at Pisgah Park to increase literacy and exercise; Ms. Lisa Amber, Beyond the Classroom for the Making Good Choices Workshop during "World No Tobacco Day" at the Waldorf Senior Center; Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) expressed lanes meetings; and the Maryland State Department of Transportation (MDOT) public meetings on the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) and the importance of community engagement.

Commissioner Bowling requested that a discussion be added to the agenda related to meetings that the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is having and the impact on Charles County.

Approval of the Minutes of May 20, 2025

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of May 20, 2025.

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): June 24-25, 2025

Approval Items

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

There were no FY2025 budget amendments or transfers discussed.

FY2026 Budget Transfer Request for Healthy Families Home Visiting Grant

(Ms. Dina Barclay, Director, Department of Community Services)

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2026 Budget Transfer Request for Healthy Families Home Visit Grant for forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00).

FY2025 Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program Application

(Captain Caroline Baker, and Ms. Erin Shoemaker, Deputy Director Budgeting, Charles County Sheriff's Office)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the FY2025 COPS Program application.

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Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)- Charles County Charitable Trust

(Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Wesley Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; and Ms. Christie Burnett, Executive Director, Charles County Charitable Trust)

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

Commissioner Bowling will submit an agenda request to discuss the standards/protocols used by the Charitable Trust be considered for other County agencies.

Resolution 2025-(12) Mill Hill Condemnation

(Ms. Elizabeth Theobalds, Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County; and Ms. Sara Guy, Chief of Property Acquisition, 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 Resolution 2025-12.

Letter of Support: Pomonkey High School Application for African American Heritage Preservation Grant

(Ms. Jacqueline Baker, President, Pomonkey High School Alumni Association, Inc.; and Mr. Cal Carpenter, Planner, Department of Planning and Growth Management)

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

Briefing and Request to Introduce and Schedule a Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-(06) Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 24-186 Master Sign Plan for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Properties

Mr. Kirby Blass, Planner III, and Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, reviewed proposed Bill 2025-06 Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 24-186. They explained that the applicant was seeking to add new text to the Charles County Zoning Ordinance to allow signage for a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zoned project to comply with a Master Sign Plan, which will govern the location, number, height, illumination, size and design of the signage. Affected portions include Article VII (7), Section 297-109, regarding Design guidelines and requirements of the TOD zone and Article XIX (19), Section 297-319, regarding General provisions of the Sign regulations. More specifically, Section 109 C. (4) and 319 C. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval of ZTA #24-182, as presented.

Commissioner Stewart requested a redline of changes to this zoning.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to introduce proposed Bill 2025-06 Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 24-186 Master Sign Plan for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Properties.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, July 22, 2025 at

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6pm in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

Briefing: PPR Strategies Detailed Report the Charter Education Campaign

Ms. Deborah Hall, Acting County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; and Ms. Sandy Dubay, PPR Strategies, joined the Commissioners to review the Charter Education Campaign. Ms. Dubay reviewed that PPR Strategies was tasked with creating and implementing a campaign strategy to neutrally inform Charles County voters of the upcoming election decision regarding the Charles County form of government. They were hired not to take a side on the issue. The campaign increasingly faced content restrictions as Election Day approached, necessitating frequent strategic pivots. They were able to adjust as necessary and achieve an ad spend total of forty-five thousand and two dollars and fifty-eight cents (\$45,002.58) of the total budget of seventy-five thousand and two dollars and fifty-eight cents (\$75,002.58), thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000.00) used for creative strategy, design and vetting. Ms. Dubay reviewed the timeline of the project, and the different aspects used to reach a broad scope of people. These included, website development, social media posts and ads, Google Ads, E-newsletter, Southern Maryland Radio Ads, Newspaper Ads, Streaming Radio Ads, Praise DC Radio Ads, The Scoop Newsletter, rack cards, flyers, posters, Facebook and Nextdoor posts, and two (2) Billboards. She reviewed each for the data related to impressions, views, frequency, sends, opens, clicks. She shared samples of these ads and posts. Voter turnout was a plus hundred- and four-point two one percent (+104.21%) compared to the 2014 proposed Charter measure. Ms. Hall explained the procurement process of retaining PPR Strategies. When queried by the Commissioners, Ms. Dubay, rated the project as an “A” for educating the public.

Closed Session

At 12:23 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling, 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)(7)(8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to review settlement offer letter and to review appointments to Commissioner appointed Boards and Commissions. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, strategies, negotiations, and personnel information confidential.

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 12:48 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(7)(8) Potential Litigation: Review Settlement Offer Letter

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, John Adelodun, Olin Straus, Ed Gorham, Terrah Dews.

Staff reviewed offer letter.

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

3-305(b)(1) Personnel: Boards and Commissions Appointments

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

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Mr. John Adelodun, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners, reviewed vacancies on Commissioner Appointed Boards.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus on appointments. The official action took place later this day under Additional Approval Items, Action on Boards and Commissions.

At 1:08 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this closed session.

At about 3:00 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

Roll Call

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

Additional Approval Items

Action on Boards and Commissions

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Aaron Reid as an Electrical Examiners General License member to the Board of Electrical Examiners.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Triverr Gray and reappoint Denise Joseph as a citizen member to the Board of Social Services.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to reappoint Melissa Gilpin as a Veteran Business member, Ayana Moore as a Business Associate member, Troy Smith as a Finance/Banking member, Natonya Thomas as a Business services member, and appoint Jessica Montgomery as a Marketing member to the Business Development Loan Fund for Women, Minorities and Veterans.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to reappoint Joseph Barnette, Rhonda Bello, Ramona Jones, Lawrence Moses, James Wade and Joan Sabree as Citizen members to the Commission for Veteran Affairs.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Anbrea McCoy as an Alternate member to the Ethics Commission

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to reappoint Patricia Vaira as a Citizen Member to the Library Board of Trustees.

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A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Jacob Dyer as a County ELT member to the Resilience Authority of Charles County

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Timothy Wells as a representative of Charles County and Appoint Christina Davis as a representative of Charles County Department of Public Works (DPW) to the Southern Maryland Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Board.

Charles County Boards and Commissions Annual Update

Briefing: Annual Update from the Board of Electrical Examiners

Briefing: Annual Update from the Charles County Library Board of Trustees

Briefing: Annual Update from the Interfaith Commission

Staff and members of the Board of Electrical Examiners, Charles County Library Board of Trustees, and the Interfaith Commission provided an overview of their 2024 Annual Reports.

Update: Fire Suppression Task Force

Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Department of Emergency Services; Ms. Deborah Hall, Acting County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; and Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, joined the Commissioners for an update on establishing a Fire Suppression Task Force. Mr. Adams advised the Commissioners that the task force believes that the goals set forth by the Commissioners can be met through the Board of Fire and Rescue. A meeting with the volunteer fire department leadership is scheduled for June 16, 2025 followed by a meeting with the individual station leadership at a later date. These meetings will be to garner input and recommendations. Mr. Adams further advised that the task force will provide an update in September 2025.

The Commissioners directed staff to find a facilitator, an independent identified expert in the field, to work with the Task Force on best practices, to prepare a strong draft recommendation.

Update: Goals and Objectives-Emergency Preparedness, Response and Safety

Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Mr. Tony Rose, Deputy Director, Ms. Lori Cherry, Chief of EMS and Special Operations, Mr. Jeffrey Clements, Chief of Communications, Mr. Jeffrey Thomas, Chief of Animal Control, Mr. Wade Haubert, Emergency Manager, Ms. Kathy Lewis, Database Specialist GIS, Department of Emergency Services; and Mr. Mark Kaufmann, Fire Chief, presented an overview update of the goals and objectives for Emergency Preparedness, Response and Safety. The Charles County Department of Emergency Services hosts a number of opportunities to increase collaboration and coordination, including bi-weekly public safety leadership meetings, quarterly Public Safety Leadership meetings, and other trainings and exercises with local response partners. They have partnered with public schools and volunteers to enhance the high school career and technical education program. New trainings were also created, including Community Paramedicine and Tactical Emergency Casualty Care. Construction of the new Pinefield Emergency Medical Services Station is almost ready for procurement to request construction bids. A feasibility study is also underway on the use of the La Plata Armory building by the department of emergency services. The former Sears Auto

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Center was purchased last month with the intent to renovate it for an EMS station. The Department of Emergency Services has a new Emergency Preparedness-related podcast. “Ready, Set, Prepare: Emergency Preparedness in Charles County” is a podcast series designed to inform residents on what to do in the event of an emergency. Their Emergency Services Dashboard is live on the County webpage. The Dashboard contains data from Emergency Services and Volunteer Fire and EMS.

Briefing: Update on the Charles County 2026 Comprehensive Plan Process

Ms. Amy Blessinger, Planner III, Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, and Ms. Cathy Thompson, Assistant Chief of Planning, Department of Planning and Growth Management; and Ms. Evelyn Kasongo, Project Consultant, Michael Baker International, provided an update on the Charles County 2026 Comprehensive Plan process. The project is titled, Shaping Tomorrow Together: Vision 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update. The Comprehensive Plan is a planning document that sets policies and action items to guide land use over the next twenty (20) to twenty-five (25) years. It is a shared vision for how the community will grow and prosper moving forward. The state requires each jurisdiction review, and if necessary, update its comprehensive plan every ten (10) years and Charles County adopted the last Comprehensive Plan in 2016. Staff outlined the community engagement process and the proposed timeline for the Comprehensive Plan Process. The Project Kickoff is March–June 2025; Planning Process and Public Engagement is June 2025–June 2026; Draft Plan Preparation is Summer 2026; Final Plan and Adoption Process Fall 2026–Spring 2027.

Work Session Bill 2025-04 Revisions to Recordation Tax

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, explained that this tax does not impact County wide property or income taxes and that the County collects this targeted tax when someone sells a property or records a title. It accounts for less than four percent (4%) of the overall general fund revenue budget. Mr. Dyer also reviewed some of the exemptions to this tax. The Bill increases the recordation tax by two dollars (\$2.00) per five hundred dollars (\$500.00), making the new rate seven dollars (\$7.00) per five hundred dollars (\$500.00), for home sales or recorded titles. The increase was approved to raise additional funds to support the County’s Fiscal Year 2026 funding towards Charles County Public Schools and provides a funding source for affordable housing initiatives without impacting renters or non-transacting homeowners.

Commissioner Collins believes this is sound fiscal policy and commended staff since Charles County has had a AAA rating based on sound policy.

Commissioner Bowling proposed the having the Board of Education use some of the sixty-seven-million-dollar (\$67,000,000.00) Fund Balance which would not affect the Bond Rating.

Commissioner Stewart requested looking into an exemption for first time home buyer.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins present voting in favor to adopt Bill 2025-04 Revisions to Recordation Tax. Commissioner Bowling was opposed. A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed four (4) to one (1).

Update and Work Session: Establishing Term Limits for Charles County Commissioners

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to reschedule this work session to July 8, 2025.

Commissioners' New Business

Commissioner Collins wanted to clarify that the Juneteenth Flag was going to be displayed as a tradition. Commissioner Stewart indicated that this was agreed upon at a previous session.

**Break 5:42 p.m.- 6:00 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2024-(16) Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 24-182 Driveways and Parking for Agritourism Projects

The Commissioners held a hybrid, virtual/in-person, public hearing on proposed Bill 2024-16. Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Mr. Kirby Blass, Planner III and Ms. Kelly Palmer, Planner III, Department of Planning and Growth Management, reviewed a presentation and explained that during the Commissioners work session on January 28, 2025, the Commissioners' asked County staff to work with members of the farming community to revise the draft bill. The work session was continued until March 11, 2025. During this time, County staff met with members of the Charles County Farm Bureau and revised the draft bill, as summarized in the March 6, 2025, dated memorandum to the Board of Commissioners. Due to the substantive nature of the proposed changes, County staff asked the Board of Commissioners to send the revised draft bill back to the Planning Commission for a public hearing and recommendation. The Planning Commission held a public hearing and subsequently conducted their work session and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the revised draft bill and County staff requested the Commissioners accept the Planning Commission's recommendation. The proposed changes:

- Include both Agritourism and Ecotourism as land uses that are subject to the provisions of the Bill.
- Refer directly to the terms Agritourism and Ecotourism, as defined, and delete the word "projects".
- Exempt Agritourism and Ecotourism, that provide 50 or fewer parking spaces, from both the Parking Standard Table and the driveway width standards (Article XX, §297-337 A. and B.).
- Clarify that a sketch plan is required for Agritourism and Ecotourism, regardless of the number of parking spaces provided.
- Remove the proposed standard criteria in Article XX, §297-339 regarding parking area surfaces for smooth surfaces free of holes and dips, brush, long grass.

There were no public comments.

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 Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this public hearing.

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A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2024-16 Zoning Text Amendment 24-182 Driveways and Parking for Agritourism Projects as presented.

At 6:08 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