

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**

**Tuesday July 22, 2025 (Legislative Day)**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid, in person and virtually at 9:04 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

**Call to Order/Pledge**

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

**\*TO BE RESCHEDULED\* Invocation** (Pastor James Cogman, Metropolitan United Methodist Church)

**Roll Call**

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

**Commissioner Comments**

Commissioner Collins spoke of the loss of Terrance Taylor from Congressman Steny Hoyer's Office and requested a moment of silence.

Commissioner Patterson provided comments on the Newburg and Benedict Volunteer Fire Departments officer installation; National Coalition of one hundred (100) Black Women Health and Wellness Fair; Charles County Youth Orchestra at Christ Church in La Plata; passing of Valenia McCoy-Scott who spent forty five (45) years as a teacher at Lackey High School; the Riverboat Grant Award ceremony which distributed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00) to local non-profit organizations; the fifty eighth (58<sup>th</sup>) Annual Chamber Golf Tournament success; and the meeting at Colonial Charles Waldorf Community.

Commissioner Stewart spoke on the meeting at Colonial Charles Waldorf Community and her participation at the National Coalition of one hundred (100) Black Women Health and Wellness Fair.

**Approval of the Minutes of July 8, 2025**

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of July 8, 2025.

**Announcement**

Next Scheduled Session(s): September 9-10, 2025.

Announcement: Public Hearing Date Proposed Bill 2025-(03) The Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Medical Services Tax Rate (Corrections to Charles County Code, Chapter 54) which was originally scheduled on May 13, 2025, is now on September 30, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. to be held in the Charles

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County Government Building both in person and virtually

**Approval Items**

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

**FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #555 Southerland Septic Connection**

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #555 for nine hundred and fifty-eight thousand five hundred and forty dollars (\$958,540.00).

**FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #329 Department of Emergency Services (DES) Purchase Three (3) LifePak's**

A motion was made Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #329 for one hundred and eighty-five thousand one hundred and eighty dollars (\$185,180.00).

**FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #44 Sports and Wellness Center A&E Design Services Phase I**

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 #44 for two million six hundred and sixteen thousand dollars (\$2,616,000.00).

**FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #412 Landfill Leachate System Pump Station and Force Main**

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #412 for one hundred and seventy-four thousand six hundred and eighty dollars (\$174,680.00).

**Change Order #05 Landfill Leachate System Pump Station and Force Main**

(Mr. Charles Strawberry, Capital Services Program Manager, Department of Public Works-Utilities)

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Change Order #05 for three hundred and seventeen thousand eight hundred and seventy-three dollars and thirty-four cents. (\$317,873.34).

**ThinkBig Networks (TBN) Proposed Payment in Lieu of Taxes ( PILOT) Agreement**

(Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator and Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County)

A motion was made Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the ThinkBig Networks PILOT agreement.

**Options Contract with the Maryland Department of Transportation Project No.: PG067B32 Project: MD 382 (Croom RD)**

(Ms. Sarah Guy, Chief of Property Acquisition, Department of Planning and Growth Management and Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Administrator)

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

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**Approval of the Board of County Commissioners Calendar Year 2026 Session Calendar**  
(Ms. Carol DeSoto, Clerk to the Charles County Board of County Commissioners)

A motion was made Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the Board of County Commissioners Calendar Year 2026 Session Calendar. Commissioners Coates and Patterson were opposed. A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-no; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to two (2).

**Legislative Work Session: Prepare for 2026 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 and Ms. Jeanette Tejeda de Gomez, G.S. Proctor & Associates, Inc., joined the Commissioners to discuss priorities for the upcoming 2026 Maryland General Assembly Session. Mr. Green informed the Commissioners that there will not be a Maryland General Assembly special session scheduled to deal with the budget issues. He mentioned that his office is working with the Governor's Office related to economic development in Indian Head as well.

The Commissioners provided priorities and projects that they would like the lobbyist to focus on in a purposeful and intentional way with the State Delegation. These include: Funding Resources for the Sports and Wellness Center; transportation needs to include funding for the northern end by Pinefield interchange and Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT); any County Staff bills that are being proposed; energy resources bills that affect Charles County use and taxes; Maryland Teacher State Pension back to state for payments; Maryland Blueprint for Education policies that are clear and measurable; affordable housing funding sources; address senior housing and tax credits; authorize a Regional Transportation Authority for Southern Maryland to include Charles County, Prince George's County, Calvert County, and St. Mary's County. The Commissioners also directed the lobbyist to have intentional conversations with County organizational partners such as the Charles county Sheriff's Office. Mr. Green also mentioned that the impact of the Federal Bills will be known in September. Ms. Mitchell concluded by informing the Commissioners that state legislative proposals for 2026 are being accepted now through August 18, 2025 and the public hearing, with the state delegation, on these proposals will be held on September 9, 2025.

**Briefing and Request to Schedule a Public Hearing: Amend the Solid Waste Management Plan**

Ms. Frances Sherman, Chief of Environmental Resources, and Ms. Margaret Romero, Assistant Chief of Environmental Services, Department of Public Works; and Ms. Amy Blessinger, Planner III, Department of Planning and Growth Management, provided a presentation outlining a summary of the proposed amendment which includes an addition of Appendix C – Glossary; Updates to private facilities in Chapters 3 and 5; Inclusion of the Amendment Application Process for private entities in Chapters 1, 4, and 5; and Addition of Appendix D – Amendment Application Process which provides a clear outline of the steps required for submitting an Amendment Application by a private entity.

A motion was made Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, September 30, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

**Briefing and Request to Introduce and Schedule a Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-07**  
**Commissioners Term Limits**

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, reviewed the proposed bill which would limit the number of terms permitted to be served by any member of the Board of County Commissioners for Charles County starting with the term beginning December 6, 2022. No person may serve more than two (2) terms, whether consecutive or non-consecutive and it applies to both District Commissioner and Commissioner President and any combination of office.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to introduce proposed Bill 2025-07 Commissioners Term Limits.

A motion was made Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, September 23, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

**Briefing: Announcement and Overview of the Goals and Objectives Official Portal Launch**

Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Bill Kidwell, Chief Information Officer, Ms. Gina Markovich, IT Project Manager, Ms. Lauren Ryan, Systems Analyst I, and Mr. Miles Norton, Systems Analyst II, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided a review of the webpage for Commissioners' goals and objectives for Charles County Government for 2023-2026: Economic Development, Quality of Life, Emergency Preparedness, Response and Safety, Resiliency and Sustainability, and Institutional Governance. The site will provide updates, data, and updates that residents can track. Staff shared a video outlining the features of this site.

**Closed Session**

At 10:29 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, and passed with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(1)(3)(4)(7)(8)(10) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss appointments on Boards and Commissions, meet a new director; review and receive updates on two (2) potential land acquisitions; to discuss a potential new business in the County; to receive update on potential litigation settlement; and to discuss public security procedures. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, strategies, negotiations, and personnel matters confidential.

**Summary Closed Session Items**

At about 11:00 a.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel: Brief Meet and Greet New Director of Economic Development**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Alexis Blackwell and Jim Chandler.

*\*At about 11:26 a.m. Commissioner Bowling left closed session.*

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**3-305(b)(7)(8) Potential Litigation Options**

Present: Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Terrah Dews, and Sharon Robertson.

Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County reviewed potential litigation that will be investigated. She also recommended proposed outside counsel that specializes in this type of litigation.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to pursue this litigation and sign retainer for outside counsel and give the County Attorney the administrative authority related to this retainer.

*\*Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

**3-305(b)(7)(8) Potential Litigation Settlement**

Present: Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Terrah Dews, and John Raggio.

Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County and Mr. John Raggio, Outside Counsel reviewed the proposed settlement related to this litigation case.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to opt in on this litigation settlement and to delegate authority to County Attorney for future matters related to this litigation.

*\*Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

**3-305(b)(3)(7) Potential Land Acquisition**

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

Staff provided a review on a potential property.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to explore potential property and to give staff negotiating authority up to the specified amount.

**3-305(b)(3)(7) Update on a Potential Land Acquisition**

Present: Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett, Martin Harris, Collin Mohler, John Earle, and Teri Kahouk.

Staff provided an update on a potential property.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to give staff negotiating authority up to the specified amount.

**3-305(b)(4)(7) Potential Business in the County-Update**

Present: Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Michelle Frye, Mark Thompson, Jason Groth, Charles Rice, Martin Harris and Jennifer Harris.

Staff provided an update on the potential new business and the necessary next steps.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to have staff move forward with the zoning process and the media outreach campaign.

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A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to have Media begin an informational communication campaign consistent with presentation. \**Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

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

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

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

The Commissioners present reach a consensus on these appointments. Official Action took place later this day under Additional Approval Items-Actions and Boards and Commissions.

**3-305(b)(10) Public Safety or Security: Tabletop Exercise-Department of Emergency Services**

Present: Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Michelle Lilly, Wade Haubert, Jennifer Harris, and Doria Fleisher.

\*At about 1:57 p.m. Commissioner Stewart left closed session.

Staff provided information and review of public safety and security protocols for potential safety matters.

At 2:19 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to end this closed session. \**Commissioners Bowling and Stewart were not present for the vote.*

At about 3:03 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

**Roll Call**

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

**Additional Approval Items**

**Action on Boards and Commissions**

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Atola Idika as the Health Department Psychiatrist to the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board. \**Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Sharon Garcia as an At-Large member to the Commission on Individuals with Disabilities. \**Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

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A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Bamidele Bello as a representative of District one (1), Veto ya Smith as a representative of District three (3), and Michelle Gillam-Lyons as an At-Large member to the Compensation Commission. \**Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Kimberly Graham as a Clergy member and Dana Wallace as a Faith-Based Community member to the Interfaith Commission. \**Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

**Charles County Boards and Commissions Annual Update**

*Briefing: Annual Update from the Disability Review Boards (Sheriff's Office and Charles County)*

*Briefing: Annual Update from the Police Accountability Board and the Administrative Charging Committee*

Staff and members of the Disability Review Boards and the Police Accountability Board and the Administrative Charging Committee provided an overview of their 2024 Annual Reports.

**Briefing: Update on Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (RPT) Fees and Charges**

Ms. Kelli Beavers, Director, Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Planning, explained the reasons for fee increases to address inflation and rising operational costs and higher expenses for turf supplies, lighting, and staff wages. The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (RPT) shift to a cost recovery model and centralized scheduling and billing system to promote equity and fairness. The implementation plan is to do gradual increases aligned with neighboring areas and regular adjustments to be competitive.

**Work Session: Proposed Bill 2025-05 Industrial Development Authority**

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County and Ms. Michelle Frye, Acting Director, Department of Economic Development, reviewed the proposed Bill 2025-05, presented at the public hearing on July 8, 2025 and some of the recommended requirements presented by the public during the public hearing. The recommended requirements can be established when there is a Board of Directors and included in their rules of procedures.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2025-05 Industrial Development Authority. \**Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

**Commissioners' New Business**

Commissioner Stewart requested that the public hearing scheduled earlier for Bill 2025-07 Commissioners Term Limits on September 23, 2025 be rescheduled due to the Jewish Holiday.

The Commissioners present reached an agreement to schedule the public hearing for Bill 2025-07 Commissioners Term Limits on Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

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\*Break 3:39 p.m. - 3:59 p.m.

**Roll Call**

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

\*Commissioners Bowling and Coates 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 and provide feedback, twice each month during their regular meetings.

There were three (3) people who provided comments in person and no 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 talked about Accountability, Equity, and Transparency in Charles County Government Decision-Making
- Speaker spoke about Water Supply, Growth Management, and Public Engagement in Charles County
- Speaker spoke on Affordable Housing, Balanced Development, and Infrastructure Concerns in Charles County

**Commissioner's Responses**

**Commissioner Patterson:**

Agreed that the County was significantly behind in providing affordable housing options and noted the Board's recognition of this and plans to take a balance approach to expanding multi-level and varied housing types; He stated that he voted against the 2026 Board Calendar since August had no public comment session and two (2) other months only had one (1) and that he attempted to propose adding an additional session in August; he agreed there is a need to ensure that development in the County supports infrastructure and water needs to support residents across all income levels. Since Mr. Belton's status is a personnel matter, he declined to comment on it publicly.

**Commissioner Stewart:**

Spoke on her long standing advocacy for moderate home prices in the County and that she regularly speaks with residential developers and builders to encourage more affordable housing options; she expressed optimism about upcoming discussions during the Comprehensive Plan update and wants to explore policy level requirements for moderate housing for enforceable policies that align with the Board's housing goals; she clarified that concerns raised about the 2026 Board Calendar should have been discussed openly during the voting session to voice any proposed changes or concerns, rather than simply voting against it without dialogue. It was approved as the official meeting schedule with a three (3) to two (2) vote; She encouraged residents to continue to participate in Town Hall Meetings

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and direct contact with Commissioners and her openness to follow up personally with residents who reach out.

**Commissioner Collins:**

Thanked speakers here for attending the meeting and their consistent engagement and encouraged their continued involvement, especially during the Comprehensive Plan process. The Comprehensive Plan is important for the County's future planning and the goal to ensure broader participation and public outreach; he confirmed that water capacity and environmental impacts will be key topics and the importance of responsible growth and planning; affordable housing is not unique to the County but is a regional and national issue and will remain ongoing points of discussion for both County and State.

*\*Break 5:21 p.m.- 5:59 p.m.*

**Roll Call**

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

**Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2025-(06) Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 24-186 Master Sign Plan for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Properties**

The Commissioners conducted an in person then virtual public hearing on 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, joined the Commissioners to review the proposed Bill. Mr. Blass provided an overview of the ZTA which seeks to add new text to the zoning ordinance to allow signage for TOD zoned project to comply with a Master Sign Plan, which will govern the location, number, height, illumination, size and design of the signage. Adoption of this amendment does not permit an applicant to bypass adherence to codified signage regulations within Article XIX (19) of the Zoning Ordinance, only provide a mechanism to proffer attractive and cohesive alternatives for approval consideration.

Mr. Eric DeVito, applicant, presented a review of the comprehensive signage design package that Greenberg Gibbons is proposing.

There were no public comments provided.

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

*\*Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to close this public hearing. *\*Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2025- 06

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Zoning Text Amendment 24-186 Master Sign Plan for Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Properties. *\*Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

At 6:12 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to adjourn. *\*Commissioners Bowling was not present for the vote.*

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Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

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Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President