

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday January 6, 2026 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in hybrid format, in person and virtually, at 9:00 a.m. with the following people in attendance:

Reuben B. Collins II, Esq., President, County Commissioner
Gilbert O. Bowling, III, 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

** Thomasina O. Coates, M.S., County Commissioner and Ralph Patterson, II, M.A., Vice President, County Commissioner were 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, Stewart, and Collins were present in person.

**Commissioners Coates and Patterson were absent.*

Charles County Proclamations for January 2026

2026-01 National Mentoring Month
2026-02 National Pan-Hellenic Council Recognition Month
2026-03 National School Choice Week
2026-04 Catholic Schools Week
2026-05 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and Beyond

The Commissioners were joined by members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council to receive proclamation 2026-02 National Pan-Hellenic Council Recognition Month; Students from St. Peter's Catholic School to receive proclamation 2026-04 Catholic Schools Week; Members of Stella Girls, Inc.; Beyond the Classroom, and Be a Hero, LLC. organizations to receive proclamation 2026-01 National Mentoring Month; and the President of the Charles County NAACP to receive proclamation 2026-05 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service and Beyond.

**Break 9:16 a.m. - 9:24 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

**Commissioners Coates and Patterson were absent.*

Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Collins offered condolences for the passing of Commissioner Stewart's father. Commissioner Stewart thanked everyone for their support.

Approval of the Minutes of December 9, 2025

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of December 9, 2025. **Commissioner Coates and Patterson were not present for the vote.*

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): January 13-14, 2026

Notice: Cancellation of the June 23, 2026 Meeting and Joint Town Hall Meeting for Election Primaries.

Closed Session

At 9:26 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, 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)(1)(3)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss appointments to Commissioner appointed Boards and Commissions; to discuss a personnel issue; and discuss a potential land acquisition. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, strategies, negotiations, and personnel information confidential. **Commissioner Coates and Patterson were not present for the vote.*

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 9:33 a.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(3)(7) Potential Property Acquisition

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Danielle Mitchell, Elizabeth Theobalds, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett, Jacob Dyer, and John Adelodun.

Staff provided an overview of a potential property acquisition, proposed uses, and the appraised value.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to accept the appraised value *presented*.
**Commissioner Coates and Patterson were not present for the vote.*

3-305(b)(1) Personnel- Vacancies on Commissioner Appointed Boards and Commissions

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Danielle Mitchell, and John Adelodun.

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

The Commissioners reached a consensus, and the official action took place later this day under Approval Items- Action on Boards and Commissions

3-305(b)(1) Personnel- Vacancies on Commissioner Appointed Boards and Commissions

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Danielle Mitchell, Alexis Blackwell, and Kevin Karpinski.

**At about 9:58 a.m. Commissioner Patterson joined closed session virtually.*

**At about 10:01 a.m. Commissioner Coates joined closed session virtually.*

**At about 10:35 a.m. Commissioner Coates recused herself for the remainder of closed session.*

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Mr. Kevin Karpinski, Outside Counsel, provided an overview of the complaint and procedural steps related to this matter. Each Commissioner agreed to have their representative from the Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT) Board of Trustees to accept service of the complaint.

At 11:00 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to end this close session. **Commissioner Coates was not present for the vote.*

The Commissioners returned to open session at 3:01 p.m.

Roll Call

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

Approval Items

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

(Ms. Samantha Chiriaco, Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative)

**TO BE RESCHEDULED* FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #118 Mandated Local Share for Eligible Children in Private Pre-Kindergarten*

FY2026 Budget Amendment Increase #339 Transfer Forest Conservation Fee-in-Lieu for Forestry

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve Budget Amendment Increase #339 for thirty thousand one hundred dollars (\$30,100.00).

Martin Luther King, Jr. Breakfast Sponsorship from Community Support Funds

(Ms. Crystal Hunt, Chief of Staff-Commissioners' Office)

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the Salome Howard level sponsorship of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.00), with a cost of three hundred dollars (\$300.00) per Commissioner.

Letter to Maryland Stadium Authority Regarding Blue Crab Stadium

(Ms. Deborah Hall, Acting County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services)

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

**TO BE RESCHEDULED* Letter of Request: To Charles County Public Schools Related to Swimming Pools in the Schools*

Action on Boards and Commission

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Michelle Gillam-Lyons as a member of the Nuisance Abatement Hearing Board.

Briefing and Request to Introduce and Schedule a Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2026-01 Compensation for County Commissioners

Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, explained that the Commissioners accepted the report from the Compensation Committee in December 2025 and that this Bill would codify the salaries in Charles County Code.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to introduce proposed Bill 2026-01 Compensation for County Commissioners.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 6:00pm in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the resolution established by the Compensation Commission.

**Break 3:13 p.m. - 3:21 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

Update: Goals and Objectives-Resiliency and Sustainability

Mr. Jason Groth, Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, and Ms. Frances Sherman, Chief of Environmental Resources, Department of Public Works-Facilities, provided an update on the Goal and Objective on Resiliency and Sustainability using the information directly from the Charles County Website found under Charles County Commissioners, Goals and Objectives. This website provides up-to-date data for residents to review on all the County's Goals and Objectives. The review included information on projects related to water resources, climate change, land preservation and the environment.

Discussion: Sworn Charles County Sheriff's Office Bonus for Fraternal Order of Police Bargaining Unit Members

Commissioner Bowling explained that he wanted this item scheduled for a vote since he felt that this should have been included in the one-time bonus approved in December 2025.

Commissioner Collins explained that he added it as discussion item only since he responded directly to the President of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) related to this request. Since the FOP did not request being included in bonuses from the County during their Collective Bargaining Agreement negotiations as other unions have done, they could not be included. Commissioner Collins would add this request for a vote to a future agenda.

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Commissioner Stewart explained her vote related to the one-time bonuses was not a slight to the FOP but with the limited amount of money wanted to address the needs especially of the County's parttime employees. The FOP generally receives annual increases that County employees do not.

Commissioner Coates requested a review of the motion related to this bonus. Ms. Carol DeSoto, Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners read the motion from the December 9, 2025 minutes under the Briefing and Request for Approval: FY2026 General Fund Review-First Quarter:

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve using the projected unassigned fund balance surplus to support a one thousand dollar (\$1,000.00) one-time take-home bonus for eligible full time and a two hundred and fifty dollar (\$250.00) one-time take-home bonus for eligible part time one employees on County Payroll and to increase the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund Balance reserve as presented by staff.

Commissioners' New Business

There was no new business discussed.

**Break 4:07 p.m. - 5:01 p.m.*

Roll Call

A roll call was taken. Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins were present in person. **Commissioner Coates was 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 four (4) people who provided comments in person and no one 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 about concerns on water negotiations with the Town of LaPlata and their increased development projects; he stressed his focus is on good governance.
- Speaker suggested changing the PRT (Parks, Recreation , and Tourism) legislation to reflect a new tax rather than a fee since a tax is income-producing revenue source.
- Speaker spoke on civic engagement and youth participation and building public trust; felt that having an Inspector General in the County would build trust in elected officials, and provide an independent channel for residents to report concerns.
- Speaker supports establishing an Office of the Inspector General (IG) and encouraged the County to pursue state legislation at same time to allow authority to investigate the school system; stressed that the Commissioners still retain budget authority even for request from the IG; and should consolidate audit functions under the IG office.

Commissioner's Responses

Commissioner Patterson: Expressed appreciation for comments; will have a robust conversation on the Office of Inspector General next week and draft proposal; he is interested in reviewing information shared about PRT (Parks, Recreation, and Tourism) legislation, *known in Charles County as Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (RPT)*.

Commissioner Collins: Echoed Commissioner Patterson's comments related to the IG and is also interested in reviewing the information on the PRT (Parks, Recreation , and Tourism) legislation and research- *known in Charles County as Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (RPT)*; he stressed that there will ample opportunity for public comment and input on the IG process; and encouraged speaker to upcoming public hearings.

Commissioner Bowling: Thanked everyone for coming and acknowledge young residents who return after college and would like to see more young people engaged in local government; expressed the challenge of determining how to achieve transparency and accountability within the County's fiscal constraints, especially during budget season when multiple entities seek funding (including the Board of Education and public safety) and supports any approach to improve accountability while also identifying cost savings; would like to explore ways to strengthen the independence and authority of the County's auditor so the auditor can perform many of the functions being reviewed with the IG process; he explained the Town of LaPlata is working to bring a plan to the County related to water and the County needs a plan to review before moving forward with public discussions

Commissioner Stewart: Thanked everyone for coming; She stated that staff researched IG structures and associated costs across the state and noted that it can be expensive but emphasized balancing accountability needs with fiscal responsibility and determine how the IG office would be funded; she noted that some past challenges could have been avoided through different leadership decisions, not solely through the creation of an IG office; interested in reviewing the information on the PRT (Parks, Recreation , and Tourism) legislation and research- *known in Charles County as Recreation, Parks, and Tourism (RPT)*; she suggested staff review documents and concerns related to the water and have the Commissioners hold an intentional discussion to address these concerns since public comment sessions does not allow enough time to fully explore complex issues.

At 5:27 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to adjourn. **Commissioner Coates was not present for the vote.*

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President