

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday February 3, 2026 (Legislative Day)

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened hybrid format, in person and virtually, at 9:04 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
John Adelodun, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners

**Ralph Patterson, II, M.A., Vice President, County Commissioner, was absent and joined session later this day as noted.*

Call to Order/Pledge

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

Roll Call

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

**Commissioners Coates and Patterson were absent.*

Charles County Proclamations for February 2025

2026-06 Black History Month
2026-07 National Burn Awareness Week
2026-08 National Engineers Week
2026-09 National Wear Red Day

The Commissioners were joined by members of the Charles County Juneteenth Foundation and representative of the Stella Girls Foundation to receive proclamation 2026-06 Black History Month; members of the Southern Maryland Chapter of The Links to receive 2026-09 National Wear Red Day; and Students and faculty from College of Southern Maryland (CSM) to receive proclamation 2026-08 National Engineers Week.

Recognition: Employee Length of Service and Top Performer, Fourth Quarter (October-December 2025)

The Commissioners recognized years of service for October through December 2025. The Top Performers award for the fourth quarter of 2024 went to the Animal Care & Control Divisions: Summer Breuer, Amanda Brown, Mary Hayes, Immanuel Ingram, Donald Murphy, Hannah Neel, Myra Tayman, Katy Rosche, Jeffrey Thomas, Melody Hill, Michelle Bowles, Patricia Broughman, Krysta Butterfield, Amanda Elder, Renee Hamilton, Chloe Hartung, Sydney Messer, Candiace Rowe, Tawnee Safewright, Kaitlyn Sloan, Kimberly Stephens, Ross Wrabley, Special Operations Division: Nicholas Ellis, Kenneth Levy, Nathan Bruno, Ryan Scarlett, Walter Wright, Jason Hardesty, Robert Mott, Terrance Allen, Brett VanZant, Emergency Medical Services Division; Joseph Summers, Alex Smith, Patience Tinsley, Robert Lowmiller and Administration Division; Aldo Zambrana who went above and beyond the call of duty to rescue of one hundred and seventy (170) animals from horrific conditions while exhibiting the core values of teamwork, initiative, and innovation.

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**Break 9:39 a.m. to 9:50 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

Commissioner Comments

Commissioners Collins acknowledged Charles County residents Mr. Harold Simmons and Ms. Aura Simmons for their Grammy award win- Best Children Album (Harmony)

Commissioner Stewart thanked and acknowledged Charles County Government Staff for their response to snow removal.

**Break 9:55 a.m.-10:03 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

Approval of the Minutes of January 28, 2026

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 January 28, 2026. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Announcement

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

Approval Items

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

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

FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #270 Close White Plains Water Enhancements (\$662,370.00)

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 FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #270 for six hundred and sixty-two thousand, three hundred and seventy dollars (\$662,370.00). **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #719 Modifications and Technology Updates to the Government Building Auditorium (\$1,876,000.00)

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 FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #719 for one point eight hundred and seventy-six million dollars (\$1,876,000.00). **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Legislative Update: 2025 Maryland General Assembly Session

Ms. Danielle Michell, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr.

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Joseph Green, Ms. Michelle Goodwin and Ms. Jeanette Tejada de Gomez, G.S. Proctor & Associates, Inc. joined the Commissioners to provide an update on the 2026 Maryland General Assembly Session.

Ms. Mitchell reviewed the Charles County proposals:

- HB0239/SB0036 *Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)*
Hearings scheduled for February 12, 2026
- HB 1359 *Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider 3 Displacement*
Hearings held

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to send a letter of opposition and have Commissioner Collins review and sign the letter on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners.

- HB0239/SB0036 *Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)*

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to have Ms. Mitchell reach out to the Charles County Public School to get more information and bring it back at a later date.

- HB 1359 *Charles County – Student Bus Transportation Providers – Provider 3 Displacement*

Briefing: Charles County Resilience Authority Annual Report

Ms. Stacy Schaefer, Executive Director, Ms. Teresa Ball, Chairwoman, Mr. Jacob Dyer, Treasurer, Resilience Authority; and Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County reviewed the 2025 Charles County Resilience Authority Annual Report. The presentation provided an overview of projects and activities in 2025. The Resilience Authority secured five point seven six (\$5.76) million dollars in grants. Projects funded through grants secured by the Resilience Authority of Charles County included the continued construction of the elite Gymnastics Stormwater Pocket Park and the recently completed Waldorf Senior & Recreation Center Accessible Pocket Park.

**Break 11:23 a.m. – 11:33 a.m.*

Roll Call

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

Briefing: Quarterly Equity Update

Ms. Renesha Miles, Chief Equity and Access Officer, Ms. Elaine Pollard, Equity and Access Coordinator, Department of Human Resources presented an equity update outlining office rebrand, ongoing initiatives, progress, and strategies designed to support fairness, accessibility, and inclusion in County programs and services.

Discussion: Proposed Amendments to the Charles County Zoning Code-Retail Sales Over 100,000 Square Feet

Commissioner Stewart, Mr. Jim Chandler, Director, Department of Economic Development; Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Mr. Jason Groth, Director, Department of Planning and Growth

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Management, discussed proposed amendments to the Charles County Zoning Code.

The Commissioners present reached consensus for staff to draw up legislation based on the proposed amendment as well as a briefing on the potential economic impact and return with more information in March.

Discussion: Consideration of Charles County Project Labor Agreement (PLA) Policy

Commissioner Stewart, Mr. Martin Harris, Director, and Ms. Britta Hertling, Chief of Capital Services, Department of Public Works; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director and Ms. Shanna Reese, Chief of Purchasing, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism; Mr. Jim Chandler, Director, Department of Economic Development, discussed the potential implementation of a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) policy. This policy would establish standardized terms and conditions between project owners and labor organizations for large-scale construction projects. As initially proposed, the policy would apply to commercial and public works projects estimated to exceed twenty (\$20) million dollars.

The Commissioners directed staff to research a preliminary framework, distinguish the policy from existing prevailing wage laws, and conduct stakeholder engagement sessions before returning for a final review in March.

Closed Session

At 1:02 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting in favor to move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(1)(3)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to receive legal advice on two (2) matters; and discuss 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. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

**At about 1:12 p.m., Commissioner Patterson joined closed session virtually.*

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 1:15 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

3-305(b)(7) Legal Advice

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

Ms. Danielle, Acting Deputy County Administrator, reviewed proposed changes to building signage.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to approve the proposed changes. Official action took place later this day, under Additional Approval Items- Facade Alteration to Blue Crabs Stadium

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

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

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

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

**At about 1:20 p.m., Commissioner Coates recused herself from the next discussion*

3-305(b)(7) Legal Advice

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, John Adelodun Carol DeSoto, Danielle Mitchell, Sarah Guy, Victoria Rickett, Elizabeth Theobalds, Terrah Dews, and Marc Potter

Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, reviewed the County's policy and the proposed changes.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus on the proposed changes. Official action took place later this day, under Additional Approval Items- County Land Use Map Amendment

At 1:29 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins present, voting in favor to end this closed session. **Commissioner Coates was not present for the vote.*

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

Roll Call

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

**At about 3:01 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session virtually.*

Additional Approval Items

Action on Boards and Commission

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to reappoint William Johnson, and James Sherman as Members to the Animal Matters Hearing Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to reappoint Michelle Jones as Member to the Board of License Commissioners (Liquor Board).

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Trey Brown as Employee of Charles County Sheriff's Office to the Charles County Sheriff's Office Retirement Plan Committee.

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Façade Alteration to the Blue Crabs Stadium

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the Façade Alteration to the Blue Crabs Stadium.

County Land Use Map Amendment

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins voting in favor to approve the County Land Use Map Amendment. *Commissioner Coates recused herself from the vote.

Charles County Departmental Highlights

Ms. Terri Kahouk, Deputy Director, Ms. Britta Hertling, Chief of Capital Services, Mr. Charles Strawberry, Mr. Samuel Walter, and Mr. Olin Strauss Program Managers, Department of Public Works joined the Commissioners to provide a presentation outlining some of their department highlights and activities. The Roads program currently manages nine (9) active projects with a total budget of forty-nine point seven (\$49.7) million dollars. Staff highlighted the ongoing construction of Western Parkway Phase 3A-3 and the final Phase 3B, which will connect to US 301. The Bridge program is overseeing eight (8) active projects valued at twelve point two (\$12.2) million dollars, including the recently completed Hancock Run and Celestial Lane bridges, as well as the replacement of the County's last wooden bridge on Poplar Hill Road. Sidewalk initiatives remain a high priority with a nine point one (\$9.1) million-dollar budget covering eight (8) projects that improve pedestrian safety and connectivity in areas like Bryan's Road, Mill Hill Road and Hamilton Road.

Staff noted that the County is on track to meet its twenty-twenty seven (2027) stormwater permit requirements through projects like the White Oak Pond retrofit and various stream restorations.

Major building projects include the eighteen-point six (\$18.6) million dollars Animal Control Center, which is currently fifty percent (50%) complete, and the eleven point seven (\$11.7) million-dollar Pinefield EMS Station, the first county-owned facility of its kind.

The Mattawoman Wastewater Treatment Plant is undergoing a two hundred and seven (\$207) million-dollar campus-wide upgrade, including a newly operational eleven (11) million-gallon flow equalization basin that has significantly improved plant performance. Finally, the water and sewer program is managing sixty-six point seven (\$66.7) million dollars in expansion efforts, featuring the construction of the Gleneagle's two (2) million-gallon water tower and the Bryans Road Well No. 7 to meet the demands of the growing population

Work Session: Preliminary Proposed Bill 2026-() Establishing an Inspector General Office

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County provided an overview of the proposed bill on establishing an Inspector General Office including its purpose, potential scope of authority, reporting structure considerations, operational independence, and associated budgetary implications.

The Commissioners discussed potential governance structure, safeguards to ensure independence and objectivity, jurisdictional authority, and fiscal considerations.

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The Commissioners directed staff to return with additional information and recommendations in March.

Commissioners' New Business

Commissioner Bowling informed the Commissioners of his intent to submit an agenda item to withdraw proposed Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 25-187 Data Centers.

**At about 4:38 p.m., Commissioner Patterson joined in person*

**Break 4:40 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 to feedback only, twice each month during their regular meetings.

There were four (4) 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 addressed the Board on behalf of the Cobb Island Citizens Association to request inclusion of critical public safety items in the County's FY2027 budget, stating that the issues directly affect emergency response capability and life safety for residents and visitors in Cobb Island and the Cobb Neck area.
- Speaker expressed frustration that the County may be facing more than eighteen (\$18) million dollars in costs related to long-standing development decisions, which he characterized as unexpected and overly favorable to developers. He questioned the financial and legal consequences of these decisions and suggested the County should reconsider its approach, even if legal challenges result.
- Speaker thanked the Board for inviting the Baltimore City Inspector General (IG) at the previous meeting to speak and said he valued her experience. The speaker noted her suggestion to separate the internal auditor function from the Inspector General (IG) role but stated he believes the County could instead structure a consolidated office with clearly defined roles. He referenced Montgomery County's Inspector General (IG) model, which includes risk-based assessments, auditing, internal controls, contracts, and other processes.
- Speaker of the Bannister Circle neighborhood raised concerns about a lack of snow removal in his community. The speaker stated he has twenty-eight (28) years of experience as an engineer,

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including service with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and said he previously attempted to contact the Department of Public Works to offer input but did not receive a response.

Virtual:

- Speaker argued that data centers are being unfairly singled out as major polluters. The speaker stated that larger sources of pollution in Charles County include military installations, County facilities, landfills, agriculture, residential runoff, and vehicles, and said these collectively contribute more to pollution than data centers. The speaker characterized environmental opposition to data centers as overstated, suggesting that concerns about energy and water use should also consider alternative power sources, efficiency improvements, and evolving cooling technologies.
- Speaker referenced a February 2, 2026 press release from TeraWulf Incorporated announcing a proposed one point five (1.5) gigawatt expansion in the Newburg area and expressed concern that investors were informed while local residents were not. The speaker stated that corporate filing does not replace a public process and said the community lacks information about potential impacts on energy supply, water resources, and overall quality of life.
- Speaker commented on the proposed Inspector General (IG) legislation, stating it is a significant improvement over prior efforts during the proposed transition to charter government and praising features such as budgetary controls and a blind selection process for a citizens' advisory board. The speaker commended the drafter for the initial version and described the proposal as an example of more thoughtful governance.

Commissioner's Responses

Commissioner Bowling: Stated that he will request budget funding to repair the Cobb Island hydrant and continues to advocate for restoring Advanced Life Support (ALS) coverage in both Cobb Island and Newburg. He stated that no decision has been made on the La Plata water issue and emphasized the need for clear public information and lessons learned from past development agreements. He expressed support for creating an Inspector General office, including a budget contingency, and said he favors allowing retroactive investigations and full transparency. He thanked the Bannister Circle resident for his input and said he wants to meet with him to hear his recommendations. He also stated that he has not signed any nondisclosure agreements with data center companies and only recently met with TeraWulf representatives.

Commissioner Stewart: Thanked the Bannister Circle resident and said she is open to improving the County's snow-removal operations. She acknowledged long-standing Emergency Medical Service (EMS) issues in Cobb Island and noted that some operational matters cannot be discussed publicly. She said she first learned of the TeraWulf project the previous week, has signed no nondisclosure agreements, and emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing residents' concerns. She stated that the Inspector General's (IG) primary focus should not be retroactive investigations, though she agreed the Sergeant report could be reviewed for transparency. She requested a staff update on the La Plata water matter and suggested scheduling it for a later meeting.

Commissioner Collins: Welcomed the Bannister Circle resident and suggested adding a future agenda item to explain the County's snow-removal process. He said the County is working to improve emergency services in the Cobb Island area as part of broader efforts with volunteer departments. He

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stated that the Board has made no commitments or agreements regarding data centers and emphasized the need for public education and engagement. He noted that data centers will be a major topic at the state level and said he will monitor those discussions closely.

Commissioner Patterson: Emphasized the importance of maintaining strong fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) services for Cobb Island and expressed support for including hydrant and Advanced Life Support (ALS) funding in the budget. He thanked the Bannister Circle resident for assisting neighbors and said she is interested in reviewing snow-removal plans and visiting the area. He supported establishing an Inspector General with broad investigative authority across all County operations. He encouraged a balanced discussion about data centers, stated he has no ties or nondisclosure agreements with TeraWulf, and emphasized the need for transparency.

At 5:41 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins present, voting in favor to adjourn. **Commissioner Coates was not present for the vote.*

John Adelodun, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President