**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**
**Tuesday February 24, 2026 (Legislative Day)**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in hybrid format, in person and virtually, at 10:00 a.m. with the following people in attendance:

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

** Reuben B. Collins II, Esq., President, County Commissioner, was absent.*

## Call to Order/Pledge

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

## Roll Call

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

## Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Patterson requested a moment of silence to recognize the passing of DC Fire and EMS Battalion Chief Keith Long who died in the line of duty. He was a former Charles County employee at the Department of Emergency Services. He also spoke about the Bel Alton Alumni Association Black History program, and the Magaret Thornton Elementary School Black History program. He thanked the community who attended his Town Hall meeting on the operations of the County Landfill. He congratulated Ms. Emily Leedy for Teacher of the Year and all teachers. He spoke about the Charles County Chamber of Commerce Seventy (70$^{th}$) Anniversary Gala and Kathy Guzman and all the incoming Executive Board members. He acknowledged the success of the second (2$^{nd}$) Annual Historically Black Colleges and Universities event at Westlake High School.

Commissioner Stewart also spoke on the Black History Events at the schools and the Chamber of Commerce Gala and how the Westlake Band performed at the event. She spoke about the Grand Opening of the Weis Flagship store which had the Thomas Stone High School marching band perform.

Commissioner Coates acknowledged the Grand Opening event at the Weis Flagship store.

## Approval of the Minutes of February 3, 2026

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of February 3, 2026. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

## Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): March 3-4, 2026

## Approval Items

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

*FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #100 Increase Tourism Event revenue for the Mixtape Concert Series*
A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson present, voting in favor to approve FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #100 for seventy-one thousand eight hundred dollars ($71,800.00) **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

*FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #195 Support Concert Expenditures in Recreation Funds*
A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson present, voting in favor to approve FY2026 Budget Transfer Request #195 for two hundred and nineteen thousand dollars ($219,000.00) **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

*Change Order #9 Landfill Cell 4B Construction Contract*
(Ms. Frances Sherman, Chief of Environmental Services, Department of Public Works-Facilities)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson present, voting in favor to approve Change Order #9 Landfill Cell 4B Construction Contract which results in a decrease of two million two hundred and sixty-three thousand three hundred and fourteen dollars and twenty-two cents ($2,263,314.22). **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

*Letter of Support: US Bomb Technician Association (USBTA) for Congressional Directed Spending*
(Mr. Jim Chandler, Director, Department of Economic Development; Mr. Sean Dennis and Mr. Scott Fulkerson, Chief Executive Officers, US Bomb Technician Association)

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson, present, voting in favor to approve this letter of support. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

*Letter: Deer Cooperator Permit- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services*
*(Mr. Kevin Sullivan, State Director, USDA Wildlife Services; and Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney, Charles County)*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson, present, voting in favor to approve the letter for the Deer Cooperator Permit for United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Wildlife Services. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

*Request: Approve Court House Lights Blue for April Autism Awareness and Green for May Mental Health Awareness*
(Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; and Ms. Terri Kahouk, Deputy Director, Department of Public Works- Facilities)

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

*Request for Funds: Interfaith Commission Iftar Event for Observance of Ramadan*
(Mr. Rich Gilpin, Chair, Interfaith Commission)

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson, present, voting in favor to approve the Interfaith Commission's funding request for two hundred dollars ($200.00) from the Community Supprt Fund. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

*Discussion: Letter of Concern on Recent Sewage Spills into Potomac and Port Tobacco Rivers*
(Commissioner Bowling; Mr. Jim Chandler, Director, Department of Economic Development)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson, present, voting in favor send this letter of concern with the additional organizations included. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

Commissioner Coates asked to invite the organizations to come to the County and provide an overview of the impact.

**Briefing and Request for Approval: FY2027 VanGO Annual Transportation Plan and Authorizing Resolution 2026-(02)**
Mr. Robert Romero, Chief of Transit, and Ms. Donna Downing, Transit System Administrator, Department of Planning and Growth Management, reviewed the purpose of the Annual Transportation Plan (ATP) for grant funding for the community mobility needs, prioritized projects, and to establish a framework for utilizing federal and state funds to support, improve, or expand transportation infrastructure and services. This application includes a requested twelve million nine hundred and twenty thousand six hundred and thirty-four dollars ($12,920,634.00) for net operating and transit operation costs. The Federal and State share requested is five million five hundred and eighty-three thousand nine hundred and eight dollars ($5,583,908.00) with the County's share being seven million three hundred and thirty-six thousand seven hundred and twenty-five dollars ($7,336,725.00) per application. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) and Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) share of operating assistance is codified and cannot be reduced below FY2026 levels. An additional two million fifty-one thousand two hundred and ninety dollars ($2,051,290.00) was requested for capital assistance to replace twelve (12) buses, repower three (3) buses to extend their service, bus stop improvements, and capitalized preventive maintenance projects. The County's share of the capital assistance is one million one hundred and seventy-four thousand nine hundred and one dollars ($1,174,901.00). The final grant award notification is normally received in early July. An Authorizing Resolution needs to be included in the application.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson, present, voting to approve the FY2027 VanGo Annual Transportation Plan and approve Resolution 2026-02 authorizing submittal of this plan. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

## Briefing: FY2026 General Fund Review-Second Quarter

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, and Ms. Samantha Chiriaco, Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided a review of the FY2026 General Fund for the second quarter ending on December 31, 2025. The FY2026 Adjusted Budget includes thirty point five ($30.5) million dollars of fund balance use. Due to favorable revenues, it is projected that ten point seven ($10.7) million dollars will be needed to offset the estimated net operating loss. They reported that the FY26 year-end revenue estimate increased by approximately three point six ($3.6) million dollars since the September projection, reflecting stronger-than-anticipated performance in key revenue categories.

## Briefing: Update on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, and Ms. Kelli Scherer, Budget Analyst II, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided an update on the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) for the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Charles County received thirty-one million seven hundred and ten thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars ($31,710,758.00). The funds are being used to support local businesses nd non-profits, public safety, infrastructure, housing, and public health. Funds from ARPA are one-time federal funds that had to be allocated by December 31, 2024, and spent by December 31, 2026. Any surface transportation projects must be completed by September 30, 2026.

**Break 11:04 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.*

## Roll Call

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

## Legislative Update: 2026 Maryland General Assembly Session

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Joseph Green and Ms. Michelle Goodwin, G.S. Proctor & Associates, Inc., provided an update of the 2026 Maryland General Assembly Session. Ms. Mitchell. They provided a review of local Bills submitted:

- HB0913/SB0573 *Charles County-Governing Bodies of Common Ownership Communities-Member Training*
  Was crossed filed, and House hearing on February 26, 2026.

- HB1493/SB0574 *Charles County-Student Bus Transportation Providers-Provider Displacement*
  This was refiled from last year.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to submit proposed amendments after the March 3, 2026 meeting at which the Board of Education and School Bus Contractors will be invited to discuss the redline version of these proposed changes:

*SB574 - Replacing lines 5-8 page 3 and revising line 14 on page 2:*
*not less than six (6) years, before taking any action that results in the displacement of an individual or entity providing student bus transportation services in Charles County, the Charles County Board of education shall:*
*(1) provide written notice of the proposed action; and*
*(2) if the action results in displacement, pay in full the remaining outstanding principal, interest, and any applicable fees or prepayment penalties on any school bus that:*

*(i) was purchased or financed prior to the date of the written notice required under item one (1) of this section; and*
*(ii) was acquired for the purpose of providing student transportation services under contract with the board.*

- SB0575 *Economic Development-Maryland Stadium Authority-Charles County Sports and Wellness Center*
  Hearing on February 25, 2026. Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, and Mr. Jim Chandler, Director of Economic Development, will provide testimony.

- SB0952 *Economic Development- Charles County Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor Authority-Established*
  Will be withdrawn.

- SB0953/HB1497 *Charles County-Rent Stabilization-Seniors*
  Hearings are on March 11 and March 12, 2026. Not written as enabling legislation.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to send a proposed amendment to make this an enabling legislation, change "shall" to "may" in the legislation.

- HB916 *Transportation - Regional Transportation Authorities*

It was requested that the Commissioners support this legislation which would establish the Baltimore region, capital region, and Southern Maryland region transportation authorities to develop and implement certain transportation plans; establishing the Baltimore region, capital region, and Southern Maryland region transportation funds as special, non-lapsing funds; imposing certain transportation authority sales tax surcharges, hotel surcharges, and transfer tax surcharges; etc.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, and Patterson present, voting in favor to send a letter of opposition as the legislation is written. Commissioner Coates was opposed. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling- yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-absent. The motion passed three (3) to one (1).

- SB0026 *Public Utilities – Off-Grid Electricity Providers – Exemption*

Commissioner Bowling expressed concerns about this legislation.

** At about 12:16 p.m. Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners, left session and John Adelodun, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners, continued in her stead.*

**Closed Session**

At 12:15 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Patterson 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) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss appointments to Commissioner appointed Boards and Commissions. The reason for moving into closed session is to

keep personnel information confidential. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

## Summary Closed Session Items

At about 12:31 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel: Appointments to Boards and Commissions**
Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, John Adelodun, Danielle Mitchell.

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 12:34 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson present, voting in favor to end this closed session. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

At about 3:01 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

## Roll Call

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

## Additional Approval Items

*Action on Boards and Commission*
A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Patterson present, voting in favor to appoint James Slattery as a Member to the Board of Electrical Examiners. **Commissioner Collins 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 Patterson present, voting in favor to reappoint Ruby Thomas and Appoint London Teele, Anjela Barnes, and Kenya Spencer as Members to the Historic Preservation Commission. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote*

## Briefing: Business Enterprise Program

Mr. Jim Chandler, Director, and Ms. Chastity Durham-Miller, Acting Business Enterprise Programs Compliance Manager, Department of Economic Development, provided a briefing on the Business Enterprise Program with a significant milestone being the launch of a new digital contract compliance portal designed to rectify the equity gaps identified in the 2021 disparity study. This innovative centralized hub streamlines the procurement process for the County's nine hundred (900) certified vendors by providing on demand with digital access to certifications, a searchable database for prime contractors to locate diverse suppliers, and a comprehensive calendar for training events and procurement opportunities. The program remains focused on supporting local economic retention by

requiring Small Local Business Enterprises (SLBE) to be headquartered in Charles County or maintain a significant local workforce, while also ensuring that Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE) are accurately represented in the government marketplace at no cost to the participants.

## Update: Goals and Objectives-Institutional Governance

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Ms. Doria Fleisher, Assistant Division Chief, Media Services/Community Engagement, and Ms. Julie Losh, Citizen Response and Communications Coordinator, Office of the County Administrator; Ms. Kristin Baucom, HR Program Manager, Ms. Shandy Destin-Williams, Recruitment Manager, and Ms. Elaine Pollard, HR/DEI Coordinator, Department of Human Resources; Ms. Tessa Meredith, Administrative and Financial Manager, Department of Public Works; Mr. Rich Ball, Assistant Chief of Training and Professional Development and Ms. Antonella Volpe, Public Safety Communications Supervisor, Department of Emergency Services; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, provided a review of the County's Goals and Objective-Institutional Governance. They provided an overview on the County's recruitment efforts, retention initiatives, the County's Wellness Program, county-wide training and internal growth opportunities. Staff noted that the County has maintained its triple A (AAA) bond rating for nine (9) years and is actively modernizing its operations through a new property tax and utility billing system, reinforcing cybersecurity at critical sites, and strengthening accountability and operations through Countywide audits. Efforts to promote transparency and community engagement remain a priority. The County has implemented SeeClickReport as its new Customer Relationship Management system to improve cross-department response to resident service requests.

## Commissioners' New Business

There was no new business discussed.

**Break 4:03 p.m. – 4:59 p.m.*

## Roll Call

A roll call was taken. Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson were present in person.
**Commissioner Collins 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 seven (7) people who provided comments in person and one (1) person who provided virtual comments. Any written comments received were added to the website for the public to view.

Summary of Public Comments

In Person:

- The speaker expressed gratitude for the proposed project labor agreement policy but raised serious concerns regarding hostile collective bargaining negotiations and a lack of transparency within the library's leadership and board.

- The speaker formally called for the extension of collective bargaining rights to all county workers through The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Maryland Council to ensure respect, stability, and fair input in workplace policies.
- The speaker advocated for a fair labor code and collective bargaining, noting that hardworking staff often leave for other opportunities due to ineffective internal policies and uncompetitive pay.
- The speaker questioned the lack of a feasibility study for the proposed Sports and Wellness complex and criticized the push for a community task force on data centers, arguing that such work is the responsibility of the established Planning Commission.
- The speaker stood in solidarity with organized labor efforts and urged the County to pause data center approvals until more research is conducted and proper infrastructure is in place.
- The speaker voiced strong community support for County workers' collective bargaining rights and warned that the County must address the looming water supply deficit in Waldorf before moving forward with massive data center projects.
- The speaker praised the board for the speed and success of the Mill Hill area road widening project but requested a traffic safety study to explore alternative exits for the Avalon West and North Point communities.

Virtual:

- The Speaker requested full transparency regarding the County's interactions with data center companies and asked for a public list of the ten plus (10+) companies that have reportedly met with the government over the last eighteen (18) months

Commissioner's Responses

Commissioner Bowling: Stated that he has always supported unions, believes employees have the right to organize, appreciates their participation, and emphasized transparency and proper process regarding data centers.

Commissioner Stewart: Stated that she has long supported employees' union efforts, encouraged restarting the formal process, committed to following up on traffic safety concerns, and thanked participants for a productive meeting.

Commissioner Coates: Expressed support for collective bargaining, highlighted ongoing work on traffic safety, supported the Sports and Wellness Center study, and thanked residents for engaging in complex County issues.

Commissioner Patterson: Voiced support for employees seeking collective bargaining, stressed thoughtful planning for community facilities, supported improving public engagement opportunities, and called for due diligence regarding TeraWulf.

**Break 5:40 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.*

## Roll Call

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

**Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2026-(01) Compensation for Commissioners**

The Commissioners conducted an in person and virtual public hearing on proposed Bill 2026-01 Compensation for Commissioners. Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, reviewed the proposed bill which would enact the 2025 recommendations of the Charles County Compensation Commission regarding commissioner compensation.

There was one (1) person who provided an in-person comment. There were no virtual comments.

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

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Patterson present, voting in favor to adopt Bill 2026-01 Compensation for Commissioners. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

At 6:07 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Patterson present, voting in favor to adjourn. **Commissioner Collins was not present for the vote.*

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners
John Adelodun, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners

Ralph Patterson, II, M.A., Vice President