

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday April 28, 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:

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
Danielle Mitchell, Acting Deputy County Administrator
Wes Adams, County Attorney
Carol A. DeSoto, 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 Coates, Stewart and Collins were present in person. Commissioner Bowling was virtual. **Commissioner Patterson was absent.*

Commissioner Comments

There were no comments.

Approval of the Minutes of April 14, 2026; April 21, 2026; April 22, 2026

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting to approve the minutes of April 14, 2026. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting to approve the minutes of April 21, 2026. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Collins and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting to approve the minutes of April 22, 2026. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Announcement

Next Scheduled Session(s): April 29, 2026 and May 5-6, 2026

Change of Public Hearing Dates:

Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2026-(03) Establishing an Inspector General Office (previously scheduled on May 5, 2026) Now on May 19, 2026.

Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2026-04 Collective Bargaining Legislation (previously scheduled on May 12,

Approval Items

There were no approval items.

Briefing and Request to Introduce and Schedule a Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2026-(06) Zoning Text Amendment 25-189 Flexibility for Accessory Dwelling Units

Mr. Joel Binkley, Planning Supervisor, and Mr. Devin Parker, Planner I, , Department of Planning and Growth Management reviewed the proposed Zoning Text Amendment 25-189 for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). This includes: No storage space requirement for detached ADUs; Size limitation of one thousand (1000) square feet or seventy five percent (75%) of gross floor area (no square footage limit over three (3) acres); Adequate public Facilities (APF) considerations unchanged; No off-street parking required; Sewer/septic requirements unchanged; HOA guidelines apply; Internal ADUs within townhouses; ADUs (attached or detached) may be permitted in any zone where single family detached housing is permitted; Only one(1) ADU allowed per lot; Minimum sizes determined by Health Department regulations that determine minimum lot size; Building code will determine minimum building size; Maximum of two (2) bedrooms; Maximum height of twenty four (24) feet; An ADU cannot be a mobile home; Setbacks equal existing rules for accessory buildings.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting to introduce proposed Bill 2026-06 Zoning Text Amendment 25-189 Flexibility for Accessory Dwelling Units. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart and Collins present, voting to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, July 7, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually. **Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Briefing: FY2026 General Fund Review-Third Quarter

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Ms. Samantha Chiriaco, Chief of Budget, reviewed the FY2026 General Fund Report for the third quarter ending March 31, 2026. The FY2026 Adjusted Budget includes a thirty point seven (\$30.7) million dollars of fund balance use and due to favorable revenues, it is projected that the budgeted fund balance use will not be needed for FY2026. They reviewed revenues, expenditures, comparisons of revenues and expenditures to the December 2025 second quarter report, property tax estimates.

Briefing and Request for Approval: Update on American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, and Ms. Kelli Scherer, Budget Analyst II, Department of Fiscal & Administrative Services, provided an update on the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021. The County received thirty-one million seven hundred and ten thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight dollars (\$31,710,758.00). These funds were allocated to support local businesses and nonprofits, public safety, infrastructure, housing, and public health. Staff requested to reallocate one million five hundred dollars (\$1,500,00.00) which are available through savings generated from the closure of several stormwater projects.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present voting in favor to reallocate one million

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday April 28, 2026 (Legislative day)

five hundred thousand dollars (\$1,500,000.00) of ARPA funding to the following existing ARPA projects: Five hundred and eight thousand dollars (\$508,000.00) to the Charitable Trust for their non-profit grant program; Two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00) to the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland's Community Refrigerator and Food Pantry program; Five hundred and twelve thousand dollars (\$512,000.00) for the Surface Transportation Road Overlay program; One hundred thirty thousand dollars (\$130,000.00) for the Health Department's Community Health Outreach Workers program; One hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000.00) to continue supporting the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Expansion Program These funds are available through savings generated from the closure of several stormwater projects. *Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.

FY2027 Budget Work Session: Recap of General Fund, Enterprise Funds; Review Special Revenue Fund and Fees and Charges and Recap of the CIP Budget

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Director, Ms. Samantha Chiriaco, Chief of Budget, and Ms. TaTanya Bowman, Assistant Chief of Budget, Ms. Kelli Scherer, Budget Analyst, Ms. Megan Moorman, Budget Analyst, Mr. Estid Reedy, Budget Analyst, and Mr. Dylan Moyer, Budget Analyst, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, reviewed the proposed fiscal year 2027 budgets. The proposed General Fund budget is six hundred and forty-one million eight hundred and twenty-six thousand five hundred dollars (\$641,826,500.00); the proposed FY2027-FY2031 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget is nine hundred and forty million nine hundred thousand dollars (\$940,900,000.00); the proposed FY2027 Enterprise budget is one hundred and nineteen million two hundred and fifty seven thousand seven hundred dollars (\$119,257,700.00), the proposed FY2027 Special revenue Funds budget of sixty two million five hundred and ninety six thousand nine hundred and eighty seven dollars (\$62,596,987.00) They also reviewed the proposed new fees for FY2027; information on the Community Reinvestment and Repair Fund (CRRF); and reviewed the proposed new positions for all funds and proposed vehicle and equipment listing.

Closed Session

At 11:12 a.m., 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 move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305 (b)(3)(7)(8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss a lease agreement; receive an update an agency building location; receive an update on a potential litigation settlement and discuss a potential land transfer. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, strategies, and negotiations confidential. *Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.

Summary Closed Session Items

At about 11:29 a.m., the Commissioners went into closed session

3-305(b)(3)(7) Discuss Potential Land Transfer

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Danielle Mitchell, Sarah Guy, and Terrah Dews.

Staff reviewed the potential land transfer.

This item will be rescheduled.

3-305(b)(1)(7)(8) Discuss: Potential Litigation Settlement

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Danielle Mitchell, Elizabeth Theobalds, Don Litten, Reed Faasen, Cathy Thompson

**At about 11:59 a.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session virtually.*

Staff reviewed the proposed settlement.

The Commissioners provided additional feedback and specific requirements related to this issue.

3-305(b)(7) Discuss a Potential Lease Agreement

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

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of County Administrator, provided a review of the proposed lease, building, and signage.

The Commissioners present reached a consensus to proceed with the lease agreement and required legal notification and bring back in about three (3) weeks for open session approval.

3-305(b)(7) Update on an Agency Building Location

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

Staff reviewed a potential location for this district office location.

The Commissioners provided directions to staff to review and bring back this discussion with additional information.

At 1:18 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this closed session.

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

Roll Call

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

Briefing: Update on Keep Charles County Beautiful Program

(Ms. Margaret Romero, Assistant Chief of Environmental Resources, and Ms. Michelle Smith, Litter Control Manager, Department of Public Works-Environmental Resources, reviewed and shared pictures of projects in this program, such as the Pomonkey clean up of tires and debris; the coordination of roads cleaned with intersecting with state roads during March and April 2026; the Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup; the upcoming sixth (6th) Annual Community Cleanup Day; and the Adopt-a-Road and Adopt-a-Spot program.

Briefing: Equity and Access Quarterly Update

Ms. Renesha Miles, Chief Equity and Access Officer, Ms. Elaine Pollard, Equity and Access Coordinator, Department of Human Resources, reviewed the Office of Equity and Access workforce related equity initiatives and actions, equity focused training, budget equity and tools and focus areas, and community equity and engaging with external community. They reviewed the Community Reinvestment & Repair Fund (CRRF), CRRF work group members and next steps. They shared the engagement, learning, and development programs they participated in.

Charles County Boards and Commissions Annual Update

Briefing: Annual Update from Animal Matters Hearing Board

Briefing: Annual Update from Agricultural Land Preservation Board

Briefing: Agricultural Reconciliation Board

Staff and members of the Animal Matters Hearing Board, the Agricultural Land Preservation Board, and the Agricultural Reconciliation Board provided an overview of their 2025 Annual Reports.

**At about 4:12 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session in person.*

Commissioners' New Business

Commissioner Stewart informed the Commissioners that she would be submitting an agenda request related to the sewage overflow in La Plata and will be requesting legal review of the matter related to clean up, enforcement and signage.

**Break 4:28 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.*

Roll Call

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

**Commissioner Bowling was absent.*

Commissioners' Public Comment Session

The 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 five (5) 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 the importance of public art as a tool for community healing and connection. She highlighted rising mental health challenges, stress, and social disconnection within the community, particularly among youth, and emphasized that investment in public art can foster engagement, creativity, and unity across diverse populations.

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners
Tuesday April 28, 2026 (Legislative day)

- Speaker raised concerns regarding public hearing procedures noting limitations on Commissioner engagement during hearings as well as First Amendment protections. He also questioned County Administrator coming back to work; strategies for economic growth without property tax increases; questioned feasibility study on Capital Clubhouse which is under a twenty-five (25) year lease.
- Speaker expressed concerns about water supply and infrastructure capacity, emphasizing that while water may not run out, projected demand could exceed supply in the near future. He also raised issues related to: aquifer sustainability and land subsidence, assumptions around future water sourcing, and limited opportunities for public engagement and transparency regarding closed-session discussions.
- Speaker urged the Commissioners to reject or strengthen the proposed zoning ordinance for data centers, citing environmental and public health concerns. She highlighted: insufficient setback and buffering requirements, noise pollution and health impacts, air quality risks from emissions, concerns about wastewater disposal and groundwater contamination, and the need for independent expert review and stronger regulatory protections.
- Speaker expressed appreciation for the Commissioners' continued support of Charles County Public Schools and advocated for sustained investment in education. She emphasized the importance of funding staff, programs, and student resources; the need to remain competitive in attracting and retaining educators; ongoing implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future; expansion of career and technical education and student opportunities.

Commissioner's Responses

Commissioner Patterson: Expressed appreciation and support for education for children and the arts; agrees that there is a lack of Town hall meetings; and acknowledge concerns related to the data centers and the need for strong regulations.

Commissioner Coates: Expressed appreciation and support of Charles County Public Schools; mentioned the Capital Clubhouse study; acknowledged concern related to water.

Commissioner Stewart: Agreed there are a lot of questions that need answers related to data centers; Feels that La Plata's water issues is related to their growth and not understanding capacity and not planned appropriately and funds should come from developers to fix infrastructure. Supports arts in the County and a strong partnership with the schools.

Commissioner Collins: Expressed appreciation and spoke on the Cultural Arts Master Plan for an Arts District discussed in 2019; Spoke on creating an Industrial Authority and the focus on projects.

At 5:36 p.m., 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 adjourn. **Commissioner Bowling was not present for the vote.*

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President