

October 7, 2025

SPECIAL WORK SESSION HELD ON OCTOBER 7, 2025

A budget work session was held on October 7, at 4:00 p.m., with the following present: Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian, Commissioner John F. Price, and Commissioner Albert H. Nickerson. Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, and Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, were also in attendance.

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, shared financial information. Then, the challenges of funding the proposed new Kent County Middle School project—the project's cost, debt service, Blueprint funding, the general fund budget FY2020 vs. FY2026, and funding opportunities—were discussed. Kent County Public Schools and its Board of Education were represented by Dr. Mary McComas, Superintendent; Kreigh Kirby, Interim Director of Finance; Dan Divilio, Public Relations and Communications Specialist; Trish McGee, President; Frank Rhodes, Member; Francois Sullivan; and Dr. David Lever, Consultant. The work session ended at 5:39 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 6:00 p.m., with Ronald H. Fithian presiding, Albert H. Nickerson, and John F. Price. The meeting was convened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to observe a moment of silence to remember Blanche Scott. Ms. Scott was a postmaster in Worton for 40 years.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, were also present.

APPOINTMENTS

Maryland Department of Transportation, Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) Tour: Commissioner Fithian welcomed Samantha Biddle, Acting Secretary, Will Pines, Administrator of Field Operations State Highway Administration (SHA); Melissa Williams, Director of Planning, and Program Development Maryland Department of Transportation Authority (MDTA); Lynn Winchell-Mendy, Deputy Director of the Office of Local Transit Support Maryland Transit Authority (MTA); Rhashad Johnson, Director of Field Operations Maryland Vehicle Administration (MVA); Sean N. Hammer, Deputy Director, Office of Regional Aviation Assistance Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA); for the annual CTP tour.

Ms. Biddle briefly stated the Federal Government Shutdown and its effect on Maryland families. Governor Wes Moore is taking action to support and protect all Marylanders affected by the lapse in federal funding by ensuring protection for as long as possible for federal workers and vital federal programs. Resources for Unemployment Insurance, Housing, Utilities, and loan programs can be found on the Governor's website.

Ms. Biddle gave a brief overview of the Draft FY2026-FY2031 Maryland CTP: 2026 State Report of Transportation, which details MDOT's six-year capital budget. The Secretary's Office (TSO); the MAA; the Maryland Port Administration (MPA); the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA); the SHA; the MTA; and authorities that are part of the MDOT, including the MDTA and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA); offered division updates. On

September 15, 2025, on behalf of Ken Fender District 2 Engineer, Darlene Koch submitted documentation highlighting SHA's FY2025 system preservation accomplishments and FY2026 priorities. The Commissioners thanked MDOT and SHA for their efforts with former and current projects throughout the County. Senator Steven Hershey, Jr., and District 36 Delegates, Jay A. Jacobs, and Steven Arentz, discussed the need for enhanced maintenance for Chester River Bridge, MD 290 north of Galena, and safety concerns with U. S. Route 301 toll diversion at MD 313.

The audience offered no comments. Discussion took place. The Commissioners also invited comments from the Mayors and Councils of Kent County's Municipalities. Positive comments were offered, especially to Mr. Fender and the SHA team. Mayor of Chestertown, David Foster, offered gratitude and acknowledged SHA's work. Tyler Carpenter, Mayor of Galena, requested a meeting with SHA to discuss pedestrian safety and additional traffic lights. Bob Resele, Town Manager for Rock Hall, expressed concerns about the lack of crosswalks in the town. Mr. Fender provided an update on the MD 301 and Route 405 construction projects aimed at reducing accidents in the area.

District 36 Delegation: Senator Hershey and Delegates Jacobs and Arentz spoke regarding the upcoming 2026 Maryland General Assembly legislative session and listened to the Commissioners' concerns and requests. The delegation also offered insight for each respective committee in which they are seated, including energy, permits, housing, solar, and areas of accountability, and a summary of last year's efforts to close the State's budget deficit and the effects on taxpayers.

Commissioners Fithian and Price stressed the effect of the wealth formula's unfavorable impact on the burden to Kent County's taxpayers and the financial constraints of funding the Blueprint. Last year's legislative bill tried to close the funding gap. The bill ultimately failed; however, some steps were taken to receive preauthorization in the state's capital budget. The Board requested support to continue legislative efforts to increase the State's cost share for constructing a new middle school.

Commissioners' Requests: Commissioner Price made a motion to amend the agenda to permit a motion to build a new school. Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously approved. Commissioner Price motioned to sign a letter of intent to build a new Kent County Middle School on the current site in Chestertown, enabling the Kent County Board of Education to continue progress with preconstruction bids without delay. The letter of intent will have a contingency clause requiring final approval from the Commissioners before any site work. This final approval will be contingent, pending fair and equitable State funding cost share that the Commissioners deem appropriate and consistent with other counties with similar total wealth. Commissioner Nickerson seconded the motion, and the vote was unanimously approved.

MAYORS AND COUNCILS OF KENT COUNTY'S MUNICIPALITIES

Legislative Discussion: The Mayor of Betterton, Bob Sutton, requested assistance with an undesirable proposed solar field construction project in Betterton. Mayor Carpenter requested assistance with legislation regarding solar energy. Senator Hershey and Delegate Arentz offered feedback.

TOWN OF ROCK HALL

Mr. Resele, Chief Bill Dempsey, Police Sergeant First Class Martin Heinefield of the Rock Hall Police Department, and Bryan DiGregory, State's Attorney, expressed concerns about juvenile offenses and the effects of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act's shortcomings. Senator Hershey and the Delegates offered feedback.

CONSENT ITEMS

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved all nine consent items as listed.

1. Regular Session Minutes, September 30, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, September 30, 2025
3. Public Hearing Minutes, September 30, 2025
4. Closed Session Minutes, September 30, 2025
5. Information Technology – Request to Approve Manage Rental Agreement with UBEO, LLC and Amended Lease with USBank for \$61,164.00 for year 1 with 5% increase each year
6. Planning, Housing, and Zoning (PHZ) – Renewal of Maryland Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Citizen Participation Plan, new period 2025-2030
7. PHZ – Renewal of Maryland CDBG Program Residential Anti-Displacement and Relocation Assistance Plan, new period 2025-2030
8. Public Works – Water and Wastewater Division – Contract Award to Premier Service Group, LLC in the amount \$174,315.00 for Worton Wastewater and Treatment Plant Dewatering Press Replacement Installation
9. Betterton Still Pond Lions Club, Multiple Gaming Device, November 8, 2025

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Kent County 4-H Club – National 4-H Week is October 5-11, 2025: Elizabeth M.S. Hill, 4-H Educator and Principal Agent Associate, University of Maryland Extension, gave an overview of the 4-H program. 4-H is America's largest youth development organization, empowering nearly six million young people with the skills to lead for a lifetime. National 4-H Week will be celebrated October 5-11, 2025. The Boumiea family, Michael (dad), Aimee (mom), and sons Benjamin and Emmett, accompanied Ms. Hill. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Ms. Hill and the 4-H members. Ms. Hill gave each Commissioner a commemorative pin.

COUNTY ATTORNEY

G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, reviewed the protocol for a legislative session.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Mr. Mowell summarized actions the Commissioners could consider during the legislative session. The legislative bill scheduled for a third reading was presented for passage, rejection, amendment, or deferral to a later date. No proposed amendments to the bill were received, and no written comments were received during the comment period.

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to go into a legislative session, which started at 7:50 p.m.

3rd Read and Vote – Code Home Rule Bill No. 8-2025, Administration of Government

AN ACT to repeal and reenact with amendments Chapter 3 Administration of Government, of the Code of Public Local Laws of Kent County, Maryland. The purpose of this amendment to this chapter is to establish a Compensation Review Commission to undertake a comprehensive study of the rate of the current compensation for the County Commissioners and make recommendations regarding the amount of compensation in accordance with State and local laws.

Ms. Heller provided a brief overview of the bill's intent. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved Code Home Rule 8-2025, Administration of Government.

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to adjourn the legislative session, which ended at 7:52 p.m.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, requested approval of a recommended candidate for the Office of Emergency Services – 9-11 Specialist vacancy. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners approved a conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate.

Mr. Sutton asked for feedback regarding the proposed County Employee Dinner to be held at the Chester River Yacht and Country Club (CRYCC). It was originally scheduled for January, but CRYCC will be renovated in January. Options included December 13th and December 20th or hosting a party in April. The Commissioners agreed to have staff research the availability of other venues to host an employee appreciation dinner in January.

PUBLIC WORKS

Carrie Klein, Deputy Director of Public Works, requested contingency funds for \$16,800.00 to remove property debris at 8669 Georgetown Road. The property is a public health hazard due to trash and debris. The Department of Health raised the issue after resident complaints, which led to a Court Order on October 4, 2024, giving the property owner 30 days to clean it up. The site remains in poor condition. Despite outreach from County staff, the owner has not cleaned the property. In August 2025, quotes for the cleanup came in, with the lowest from Danny McHenry Backhoe & Paving Inc. at \$16,800.00. This includes five 30-cubic-yard dumpsters at \$2,000.00 each, plus costs for removing four boats and four RVs, and \$1,200.00 for site restoration.

There is no budget for this cleanup, so contingency funds were requested. The number of dumpsters needed will be determined during the process of cleaning up the property. Public Works is coordinating with various County Departments to ensure safety and minimizing risks, as at least one person may be living in one of the RVs.

The property owner received a final notice via certified letter and will get visits from the Sheriff's Department and mental health resources during October 6-10, 2025. After the cleanup, Public Works will provide a waste application/sticker to prevent future issues. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the recommended use of contingency funds to allow the project to proceed and to be cleaned up in the amount of \$16,800.00.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

On September 23, 2025, the Commissioners nominated Carla Thorpe, MSA, LBSW, CPRP, to serve as the Acting Health Officer for Kent County. Secretary Seshamani, Maryland Health Department, concurred with the nomination of Ms. Thorpe. This interim appointment will be effective October 1, 2025, and will continue until the recruitment process had been finalized. During this time, Ms. Thorpe will work closely with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and local partners to ensure the health and well-being of residents in Kent County. As Acting Health Officer, Ms. Thorpe will have the powers and duties of a Health Officer assigned by law and delegated by the Secretary of Health. The letter of appointment was provided. Commissioner Price asked staff to coordinate with Ms. Thorpe regarding her attendance at a future meeting.

LETTERS OR DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE

William S. Baldwin, Jr., resigned from the Construction Trades Board effective September 20, 2025. A thank-you letter acknowledging Mr. Baldwin's service to the community was submitted for the Commissioners' signatures.

At the September 30, 2025, meeting, the Commissioners approved sending a letter to Brooke E. Lierman, Comptroller of Maryland, commending her on a job well done and requesting a meeting with her. The letter was submitted for the Commissioners' signatures.

On September 30, 2025, the Commissioners agreed that Kent County is no longer considering a regional jail with Queen Anne's County. A letter formally advising James Dunkerson, Deputy Director of Resource Management, Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services Division of Capital Construction and Facilities Maintenance, of the Board's decision was submitted for signatures.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application for Kent County: The County is applying to DHCD CDBG to support the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant Project. CDBG requires the applicant to hold a public hearing during a regularly scheduled Commissioners meeting. During the public hearing, the

County will discuss the proposed application. The public hearing notice is now available; the public hearing is scheduled for October 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Licensing Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennel: In accordance with Chapter 64: Animals, Article II of the Local Public Laws of Kent County, Maryland, a Public Hearing will be held on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the County Commissioners' Hearing Room, located at the R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, Maryland. The purpose of the hearing is a probationary-period review of Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennel License No. 1.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in place. Patsy Reihl, a Kent County resident, expressed concerns regarding the need for patrol car presence to deter mischief, opinion to save the old schools, and the need to preserve the buildings as historical landmarks.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS

The Commissioners received a copy of the final ARPA Spend Plan report.

CONTINGENCY FUND

The FY2026 Contingency Fund balance as of September 30, 2025, is \$314,910.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$13,953.00.

At 8:09 p.m., on a motion made by Commissioner Nickerson and seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commissioners unanimously approved adjourning the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

Ronald H. Fithian, President,
The County Commissioners
of Kent County, Maryland

October 7, 2025

The Board of License Commissioners met today with the following present: Ronald H. Fithian, presiding, Albert H. Nickerson, and John F. Price.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, were also present.

CONSENT ITEM

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved Consent Item #2 - Liquor Minutes, September 30, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSE

The Betterton Still Pond Lions Club submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer and wine for a fundraising event on November 8, 2025, from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. at 2 Howell Point Road, Betterton. The application was provided for review. On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application for the Betterton Still Pond Lions Club.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice: An application has been made by Members: Stephanie Blusk and Angela Tsionas-Matuals, representing Tsionas Waterman's, LLC, for a Class B, Beer, Wine, and Liquor License with Delivery (DEL) on the premises known as Waterman's Crab House, 21055 West Sharp Street, Rock Hall, MD 21661, which shall authorize the holder thereof to sell Beer, Wine, and Liquor at retail, at the place therein described, for on-premises consumption, or elsewhere. A hearing on the application will be held in the County Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr. Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, MD, on October 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., at which time any exceptions to the application will be heard.

At 8:09 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Price, and the Commissioners unanimously approved adjourning the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

THE BOARD OF LICENSE COMMISSIONERS
OF KENT COUNTY, MARYLAND

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk/KATE Manager

Approved:

Ronald H. Fithian, President
The County Commissioners
of Kent County, Maryland