

October 28, 2025

OCTOBER 28, 2025, SPECIAL WORK SESSION HELD:

A special work session was held on October 28, 2025, at 11:00 a.m., at the Comptroller's Office in Annapolis, Maryland, with staff members Ben Seigel, Dani Depietro, Stephen Harrington, and Michael Bayrd. Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian; Commissioner John F. Price; Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; Pat Merritt, Chief Officer of Finance; Dr. Mary McComas, Superintendent, and Kreigh Kirby, Interim Director of Finance, Kent County Public Schools; and Kent County's lobbyist, Jonathan Carpenter, with Greenwill Consulting Group, LLC., were also in attendance. The public was offered a phone number allowing them to listen to the meeting.

This meeting was scheduled in response to a letter of invitation sent to Brooke Leirman, Esq., Comptroller of Maryland, regarding the State Spending Series: School Construction Report Dated September 2025.

Topics that were discussed include, but are not limited to:

1. Share local data and perspectives about Kent County's facilities and fiscal constraints;
2. Explore possible adjustments or refinements to the cost share formula;
3. Identify possible models or best practices from other jurisdictions that could help Kent County with more equitable access to state investment; and
4. Discuss how the Comptroller's office might assist in elevating awareness and legislative interest in addressing these funding inequities.

The special work session concluded at 12:30 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 for the people who are suffering across this great land and to keep them in our prayers.

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

CONSENT ITEMS

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

1. Regular Session Minutes, October 21, 2025
2. Public Hearing Minutes, October 21, 2025
3. Liquor Minutes, October 21, 2025
4. Closed Session Minutes, October 21, 2025

5. Jamie Williams, Director of Economic and Tourism Development – Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland Tourism Development Board FY2026 Destination Marketing Organization Grant Agreement for \$37,246.00
6. Rosemary Ramsey Granillo, Director of Kent County Local Management Board – FY2026 Contact with Minary's Dream Alliance in the amount of \$100,500.00
7. Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, and Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works – Weed Control Adjustment, retroactive implementation of the FY2026 Salary
8. Mr. Mattson, Building Maintenance FY2026 Budget Reallocation for \$5,588.00
9. Mr. Mattson, Water and Wastewater Division – Worton Well #5 Repair - Fund Transfer of \$44,500.00

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Proclamation - Operation Green Light: Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist, of Economic and Tourism Development, gave an overview of the Operation Green Light project. Staff hosted two meetings to discuss future events in Kent County. America's counties have a long and proud history of serving veterans. This legacy continues to this day, as work with federal, state, and local partners ensures that former service members have access to the resources they need to thrive. This Veteran's Day will celebrate the fifth anniversary of Operation Green Light. The National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) have invited the nation's 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs to join in showing support for veterans by lighting up buildings in green from November 4-11, 2025. By shining a green light, county governments and our residents will let veterans know that they are seen, appreciated, and supported. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Ms. Osborn. Also in attendance: Timothy J. Lloyd, Jr., with the Frank M. Jarman American Legion Post 36, and Eleanor Ringgold from Sumner Hall.

APPOINTMENTS

Kent County Health Department: At the Commissioners' request, Carla Thorpe, Acting Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department, was invited to a meet-and-greet. Ms. Thorpe introduced herself to the Board and provided an overview of the challenges she is facing in her role as Acting Health Officer. The Commissioners shared information regarding recent feedback from their constituents. Ms. Thorpe gave updates on vaccination clinics and the heat system at the A.F. Whitsitt Center. Ms. Thorpe can be reached at 410-778-2409.

Kent County Public Schools: Dr. Mary McComas, Superintendent, and Kreigh Kirby, Interim Director of Finance, submitted a budget amendment for the Commissioners' consideration. Laura McKenzie, member of the Board of Education, was invited to join the presenter's table. Budget Amendment #4 for Fiscal Year 2025 of Unrestricted Funds is required, as budget categories are noted for adjustments to account for budget deficits in specific lines. Instructional salaries must be increased by \$62,537.00, special education by \$2,990.00, and student transportation by \$5,648.00. Administration needs to be reduced by \$71,175.00. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioners Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the unrestricted Funds Budget Amendment #4 for FY2025, as presented.

Dr. McComas and Mr. Kirby discussed the KCPS FY2027 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This submittal outlines a request for funding for the construction services of the Kent County Middle School Project in FY2027. The CIP also outlines other upcoming capital projects (Kent County High School, targeted renovations) in the project pipeline. The 2027 CIP was provided for review and approval. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners approved the Kent County Public Schools FY2027 Capital Improvement Program submission, as presented.

Dr. McComas and Mr. Kirby discussed a letter of support for the FY2027 Capital Improvement Program (CIP). A draft letter addressed to Alex Donahue, Executive Director of the Interagency Commission on School Construction, was provided for the Commissioners' consideration. Commissioner Nickerson read the contingency clause into record. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved and signed the letter with the contingency clause as presented.

Commissioner Price gave an overview of the work session held this morning at the State's Comptroller's Office, which went well. The Board believes they understand our situation and hope that they will advocate for us.

PUBLIC WORKS

Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, and Sam Leaverton, Conservation Planner at Kent Soil and Water Conservation District (KSWCD), presented a request. The request is that Kent County make a used 3/4-ton pickup truck from its fleet, which is scheduled for replacement, available to KSWCD. KSWCD proposes that the terms of this arrangement be mutually agreeable. KSWCD is willing to assume all responsibility for the vehicle, including costs for title transfer, inspection, insurance, maintenance, and fueling. There are currently two (2) 2016 Ford F250s available for resale, through enterprise, donation, or sale to KSWCD. Both are from the Roads division and have a combined mileage of slightly over 105,000 miles. Enterprise has estimated the value of each vehicle to be approximately \$12,500.00. KSWCD has inspected the vehicles and confirmed that they meet the request. The replacement vehicles 'freeing up' the two subject trucks were received in early October, so immediate sale/donation to KSWCD is available. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the donation of a 2016 Ford F250 from County Roads to Kent Soil and Water Conservation District.

Mr. Mattson and Mayor Taylor Carpenter of the Town of Galena presented a request for a donation. Sarah Merrell, Councilmember for the Town of Galena, also approached the presenter's table. The County currently possesses a monopole tower that was donated in 2019. After consultation with the IT department, Public Works has determined that this tower is considered "legacy technology" and is no longer needed for any County projects. The tower was initially obtained for a potential project aimed at expanding internet service in Quaker Neck. However, before that project commenced, a provider installed fiber internet in the area, eliminating the necessity for the County to install the tower. As a result, the Town of Galena has requested to receive this tower as a donation for potential future use. On a motion made by Commissioner Price

and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the donation of Kent County's unused monopole tower, in As-Is condition, to the Town of Galena.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Building: Mr. Mattson requested funds for two items related to the new building: \$2,823.50 for required landscaping and \$2,900.00 for building lettering. This totals \$5,723.50. The Town of Chestertown required a landscape buffer between the EMS building and Flatland Road. The design/build contractor created a landscape plan at no cost, which the Town approved. The contractor originally quoted \$9,388.00 for this work, but the County Commissioners chose not to accept that quote. Instead, it was directed that the department buy the plants directly and have staff install them. This work has been completed at a total cost of \$2,823.50. The department has also planned for building lettering to be placed on the front of the building to identify it as the "Kent County Emergency Services Headquarters" and to acknowledge the building's dedication. The contractor provided different options and a quote, which was confirmed that it meets the Town's zoning rules. Public Works is also evaluating design and costs for potential flagpole installation at the site, this will be brought to the Commissioners, once finalized, at a future meeting. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved \$5,723.50 from the contingency fund for landscaping and building letters.

Mr. Mattson advised that Public Works has received two new vehicles and is now able to donate the two pickup trucks to the Humane Society, as previously approved.

PLANNING, HOUSING, AND ZONING

Carla Gerber, Acting Director of Planning, Housing, and Zoning, presented the first of two letters and preliminary reports for the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for solar projects. Application of American Kestrel Solar Project for the installation of a 5 MW utility-scale solar energy system on Chestertown Road. On August 8, 2025, ARM Group, LLC, on behalf of Clean Capital Holdings, LLC, in accordance with COMAR 20.79 pre-application consultation requirement, submitted to the Department of Planning, Housing, and Zoning, materials for a proposed 5 MW utility-scale solar energy system that will occupy – including panels, fencing, and landscaping – 39.43 acres. The submitted materials include a concept site plan depicting the proposed solar array, perimeter fencing, and outlines of the landscape buffer; and a draft Environmental Review Document that summarizes consistencies with the Kent County Comprehensive Plan and the county-wide standards for utility-scale solar energy systems, and information on the cultural and natural features of the site and the surrounding area. The site is on Chestertown Road near Fairlee. The 104.94-acre property is zoned Agricultural Zoning District (AZD). In accordance with COMAR 20.79.01.05, the applicant has requested a preliminary report from Kent County containing (a) a statement or finding whether the proposed project is consistent with the current comprehensive plan of the county or municipal corporation; (b) a statement or finding whether the proposed project is consistent with the current zoning ordinance of the county or municipal corporation; and (C) suggestions for improving or modifying the application before submission of the application with the Public Service Commission. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the letter as presented.

Ms. Gerber presented a second letter and report for the CPCN application of Elk Development LLC for the installation of a 4 MW utility-scale solar energy system on Lynch Road. On July 29, 2025, H&B Solutions, LLC, on behalf of Elk Development, LLC, in accordance with COMAR 20.79 pre-application consultation requirement, submitted to the Department of Planning, Housing, and Zoning, materials for a proposed 4 MW utility-scale solar energy system that will occupy – including panels, fencing, and landscaping – 31.36 acres. The submitted materials include a concept site plan depicting the proposed solar array, perimeter fencing, and outlines of the landscape buffer; and a draft Environmental Review Document that summarizes consistencies with the Kent County Comprehensive Plan and the county-wide standards for utility-scale solar energy systems, as well as information on the cultural and natural features of the site and surrounding area. The site location is off Lynch Road near Lynch. The 210.44-acre property is zoned Agricultural Zoning District (AZD). The process is the same as the first applicant. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the letter as presented.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, discussed an amendment to update the Kent County Employee Handbook. The previous Anti-Harassment policy has not been revised since being published in 2017. The Human Resources (HR) department is hosting the Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT) to provide all County employees with “refresher” training on harassment. As a means of providing training, LGIT reviews the current County Anti-Harassment policy to recommend any necessary changes, such as regulatory or compliance updates. HR, in conjunction with Matt Peter, LGIT Executive Director and Attorney, has amended this policy to include revised protected classes and language changes. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners approved the amended Anti-Harassment policy and adopted Resolution 2025-19.

Mr. Sutton requested approval to extend a conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate to fill the Public Works, Roads Division Motor Equipment Operator vacancy. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved a conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

State Spending Series: School Construction Report: The matter was discussed earlier in the meeting, and a summary of the work session was provided.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Jason R. Peters, Maryland South Section Chief Regulatory Branch Project NAB-2025-61270-M53 Worton Creek Marina LLC Dredging Notice. Plans have been posted for review, and the applicant requested Department of the Army Corp of Engineering authorization for new tidal dredging in Worton Creek, Chestertown, Kent County MD. The proposed work is considered to be

minor, non-controversial nature and authorization by a Department of the Army Letter of Permission is contemplated. A full copy of the notice was made available.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in place. No comments were offered.

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 October 21, 2025, is \$298,110.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$91,953.00.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:06 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, and carried unanimously to go into a closed session. The meeting was closed under the Annotated Code of Maryland, General Provisions Article §3-305 (b) (3) To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto; and (7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney; Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works; Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager; and Lacey T. Cox, Deputy Clerk II, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1: CONSIDER THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY AND LEGAL ADVICE

Topic to be discussed: The acquisition of real property and obtaining legal advice from the County Attorney concerning the acquisition of said property.

Reason for closing: Legal advice from the County Attorney is private to the public and is meant to shield specific details concerning the acquisition of real property.

Dan Mattson, the Director of Public Works, discussed the proposed land acquisition and requested that the Commissioners consider the possibility of Kent County purchasing the property. A discussion took place, and it was determined that no legal advice was needed at this time. Mr. Mattson sought direction from the Commissioners.

At 7:20 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson; the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the closed session and reconvened in open session.

OPEN SESSION

Upon returning to the open session, Commissioner Price summarized the discussion from the closed session regarding land acquisition. The matter discussed required no action.

At 7:21 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, November 4, 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 28, 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, October 21, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSE

Minary's Dream Alliance (MDA) has submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer, wine, and liquor for a Bingo event on October 31, 2025, from 6:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. at MDA, 9155 American Legion Road, Chestertown. The application was reviewed. Discussion took place. No comments were received either in support of or against the application. 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 Minary's Dream Alliance.

At 7:21 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, November 4, 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