

February 11, 2025

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 12:00 p.m., with the following present: Ronald H. Fithian, President, and John F. Price. The meeting was convened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to remain silent for everyone suffering around the world.

Pat Merritt, Chief Financial Officer for the Office of Finance, was present and stood in for the County Administrator.

Commissioner Fithian advised the audience that Commissioner Nickerson was in Annapolis to testify in support of House Bill 0736- School Construction – Local Cost Share – Alterations. Kent County Public School Superintendent Mary Boswell-McComas was also in Annapolis to testify in support of this bill.

CONSENT ITEMS

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved all five consent items as presented:

1. Regular Session Minutes, February 4, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, February 4, 2025
3. Public Hearing Minutes, February 4, 2025
4. Joanne McNamara, Grants Program Administrator, for K00B5600023 Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Contract 14-25-4232CZM254 Flood Nuisance Plan Grant Modification Number One to DNR Memorandum of Understanding Department of Natural Resources Chesapeake and Coastal Service. The modification is a no-cost extension to the contract's September 30, 2025, end date.
5. Betterton Still Pond Lions Club, Combined Gaming Devices, March 8, 2025

DEPARTMENT REQUESTS/UPDATES

Finance Department: Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Finance Department, gave an overview of the 2nd Quarter Financial Statements and General Fund as of December 30, 2024. An explanation of significant favorable and unfavorable variances was discussed.

Local Management Board: Rosemary Ramsey Granillo, Director, Kent County Local Management Board, requested approval of the FY2025 ENOUGH (Engaging Neighborhoods, Organizations, Unions, Government, and Households) Act Grant Acceptance and Assurances for the Local Management Board Capacity Building Award. The Governor's Office for Children awarded a total of \$5,000,000.00 to the twenty-five (25) LMBs for planning and capacity-building activities in relation to the ENOUGH Act; Kent County's award amount is \$104,000.00. The Board approved the LMB Capacity Building Proposal on October 29, 2024. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the LMB Capacity Building award grant.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Jim Miller, Director, and Vauné Johnson, Human Resources Specialist, of Human Resources, requested approval to fill a vacancy in the Environmental Operations Division. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved a conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate for the vacant MEO II position at the recommended salary.

Mr. Miller gave an overview of the information collected regarding the employee appreciation survey. Documents provided included responses from the survey, a summary survey memo, and CY2025/FY2026 recommendations. The survey responses were split into two groups: the employees who attended the dinner and those who did not. The summary survey memo listed some key points from the survey responses. The CY2025/FY2026 recommendations take a different approach to providing a family-oriented event to recognize the employees' efforts throughout the year and a gift that would replace the appreciation dinner near the end of the year. Additionally, in CY2026, there will be a different approach to recognizing employees for their years of service in the County. Commissioners Fithian and Price asked staff to investigate planning an employee appreciation event in the Summer of 2025 and further discuss venues and options for possibly moving the original appreciation celebration to January.

PUBLIC WORKS

Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works for the Environmental Operations and Public Landings Division, and Forrest Richards, Senior Captain of Schooner Sultana, requested review and consideration of Sultana's request for use to dock overnight and allow drop off and pick up of students for a summer program at the Quaker Neck public landing. The department sought the Board's review because the request is for consecutive days/weeks around a very busy boating holiday weekend - the 4th of July. Previously approved requests by Sultana to dock overnight and to allow pickup and drop off of students for summer programs had not been for two consecutive weeks. Nor have they been scheduled for a busy holiday weekend. Quaker Neck currently has twelve (12) rented boat slips, and using the boat ramp around the 4th of July weekend would assumingly be higher. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved Sultana's request for use of Quaker Neck public landing for overnight docking and drop off on requested dates - June 30 - July 3 & July 7 - July 12, 2025, to not include July 4th.

Commissioner Price requested an update on the new Office of Emergency Services (OES) building. Mr. Mattson provided the following information: weather permitting, construction of the OES building's shell is expected to begin and be completed by the end of next week. The demolition project at Bayside Landing is currently in progress, and the restoration of the Courthouse Lobby is nearing completion. The County Roads Department will report at 2:00 p.m. today and continue working through the evening to ensure the roads remain clear during the anticipated snowstorm.

Commissioner Price asked if the County could assist the Town of Chestertown with snow removal. Mr. Mattson said it was possible; however, a coordination exercise would need to be reviewed to adjust the routes. Staff were asked to investigate the number of streets and

the additional mileage required and report to the Board with the information compiled.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Finance Department, made a funding request on behalf of Robert S. Resele, Town Manager of the Town of Rock Hall, for the emergency replacement of the water plant filtration system. The issue was first discussed on November 6, 2024, and again on November 19, 2024. During these discussions, the Commissioners expressed the County's willingness to provide support and interim funding as a last resort. The request was revisited at the February 4, 2025, meeting but was tabled to allow for further discussion when the full Board could be present. The Town of Rock Hall must meet a deadline and cannot wait until the February 25, 2024 meeting. Commissioner Price conveyed that Commissioner Nickerson had discussed this matter with Shelley Heller, County Administrator, before the meeting, and he remained in favor of November's decision. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the allocation of \$394,595.00 for the emergency replacement of the water plant filtration system that was discussed previously to the Town of Rock Hall utilizing the General Fund balance. Understanding that the Town of Rock Hall will replace some funds back to the County if they receive money from the State.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Ms. Merritt shared that Local House Bill (HB) 0736 - School Construction - Local Cost-Share Alterations is being heard today (February 11, 2025), and Senate Bill (SB) 0843 will be heard on March 4, 2025. This bill adds an adjustment for the local cost-share for school construction projects for certain counties under certain circumstances, which will help increase State funding for a new middle school. Due to a scheduling conflict between the House hearing and the Kent County Commissioners' regular meeting and work session, Ms. Heller requested approval to send a letter of support on behalf of the Commissioners. During the February 4th meeting, Commissioners approved staff to draft a letter of support for House Bill 0736/Senate Bill 0843 for Ms. Heller to sign on their behalf. Ms. Heller signed the letter on February 5, 2025; the support letter was uploaded to the General Assembly portal and included as written testimony for the bill.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in effect. David Sobers, Chris Jennings, and Michael McDowell offered comments regarding the Tax Differential and Tax Rebate proposal being requested by David Foster, Mayor of the Town of Chestertown.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS

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

CONTINGENCY FUND

The FY2025 Contingency balance as of February 4, 2025, is \$123,264.00. The FY2025 use of Fund Balance is \$105,307.00.

At 1:32 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian; the Commissioners, by a majority vote, agreed to adjourn the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

FEBRUARY 11, 2025, SPECIAL WORK SESSION HELD

A special work session was held on February 11, 2025, at 1:40 p.m., with Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian and Commissioner John F. Price.

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, was also present.

Today's session started with a discussion of the State of the County. Reports were submitted by Scott Boone, Director of Information Technology; Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance; Carla Gerber, Deputy Director of Planning, Housing, and Zoning; Jim Miller, Director of Human Resources; Bonnie Pearsall, Inspector, Kent Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement (KATE); Roland Sheppard, Director of Operations, Kent County Detention Center; Rosemary Ramsey Granillo, Director of Kent County Local Management Board; Lisa Mazingo, Director of Kent Family Center; Pete Landon, Director of Emergency Services; Jill Coleman, Director of Parks and Recreation; Daniel Mattson, Director of Public Works; Sondra Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager; and Jamie Williams, Director of Economic and Tourism Development for the Commissioners review and input. A discussion took place. Recess was called at 2:12 p.m.

The Commissioners resumed the session at 3:04 p.m. Letters dated January 9, 2025, were sent inviting the legislative body of each municipality to join today's work session to discuss any matters of concern with the Commissioners. Don Sutton, the Mayor of Betterton; John Carroll, the Mayor of Galena; and Kevin Hemstock, the Mayor of Millington, discussed the current projects and challenges facing their respective municipalities. David Foster, Mayor of the Town of Chestertown, presented and asked the Commissioners to consider reducing Kent County property tax to provide a 15% tax differential for Chestertown residents and businesses.

Ms. Merritt shared a breakdown of services provided to the municipalities. The list included emergency medical services, the Sheriff's Office, fire companies, 9-1-1 services, economic and tourism development, beach and pool operations and maintenance, high-speed internet access, pump station maintenance, public landings maintenance, and recycling. The cost of the associated services was \$4,824,692.00. Potential collaborations were discussed. The special work session concluded at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

February 11, 2025

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

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, was also in attendance.

CONSENT ITEM

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved Consent Item #2 - Liquor Minutes, February 4, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C

The Betterton Still Pond Lions Club has submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license for approval. They would like authorization to sell beer and wine during a fundraising event for local charities. The event is scheduled to take place from 5:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at the Betterton Fire Hall. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the Special Class (Per Diem) liquor license application for the Betterton Still Pond Lions Club.

At 1:32 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian; the Commissioners, by a majority vote, agreed to adjourn the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 10:00 a.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