

November 18, 2025

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 in honor of our first responders. And to keep everyone in our prayers over the holidays for a safe holiday season.

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 all nine consent items as presented.

1. Regular Session Minutes, November 4, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, November 4, 2025
3. Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources – Compensatory Time Buy-Back Program
4. Mr. Sutton and Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, Water and Wastewater Division – Compensation Adjustments effective 7/1/2025 and 1/1/2026
5. Roland Sheppard, Director of Operations, Kent County Detention Center, Mid Shore Behavioral Health, Inc., FY2026 Addendum to Contract Agreement
6. Mr. Mattson, Request for \$6,000.00 of Additional Contingency Funds, 8669 Georgetown Road Property Clean Up
7. Mr. Mattson, Roads Division – FY2026 Enterprise Fleet Quote No. 9440973
Total cost \$93,520.04; monthly lease rate of \$1,768.70
8. Mr. Mattson, Roads Division – FY2027 Vehicle Order and Approval of FY2026 Contract with Beltway International Trucks, LLC for \$193,313.56
9. Mr. Mattson, Water and Wastewater Division, Award Contract #26WWCHEM1130 for Water Treatment Chemical Supply and Delivery Services to Hawkins, Inc.

APPOINTMENT

University of Maryland Shore Regional Health (UM SRH): Ken Kozel, President, provided an update on UM SRH and discussed the new magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) services offered at the hospital. Aaron “Zack” Royston, Vice President of Rural Health Care Transformation and Executive Director of UM Shore Medical Center, and Lara Wilson, Director of External Affairs, were also in attendance. Topics also discussed included the current state of rural health care in America, federal and state changes to the Maryland payment model, the University of Maryland Medical System and the University of Maryland School of Medicine, as well as an update on Shore Regional Medical Center and its impact on the community.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Scott Boone, Director of Information Technology, discussed the FY2024 Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Office of Statewide Broadband, Home Stretch –

Difficult to Serve Properties Grant Program, which provides funding to local county jurisdictions to assist with the capital construction costs related to the installation of broadband service to premises that have difficulty obtaining service due to their remoteness, distance from broadband infrastructure, or other geographic issues that may discourage an Internet Service Provider (ISP) from delivering broadband service. The financial impact of this request is grant funding of \$614,092.00. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the First Amendment to Memorandum of Understanding, Broadband Contract with Talkie Communications, and Broadband Contract with Choptank Fiber, LLC., as presented.

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Pete Landon, Director of Office of Emergency Services (OES), Brad Russum, Chief of Communications and Kent County Chief Association Liaison, and John “Otis” Darling, representing the Kent County Chief Association, requested funding for the Volunteer Fire Companies’ Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP). Mr. Landon also noted that Danny Quinn and Steve Bisbee, LOSAP coordinators for the Kent County Fire Chiefs, were in the audience in case a question arose that they could assist with. In 2005, the County adopted the LOSAP on behalf of the Fire Chiefs Association and all Volunteer Fire and EMS companies in Kent County. Over the years, the program's cost has increased significantly, nearly doubling, due to both growth in the number of eligible volunteers and the effects of inflation. Despite these rising costs, LOSAP remains a vital tool for recruitment and retention. In FY2025, the LOSAP program cost \$164,986.00, and in FY2026, the price increased to \$172,931.00. Historically, the program’s cost has been as low as \$82,000.00 per year; however, it has steadily increased over time. To support the accuracy and integrity of the program, the Kent County Fire Chiefs have designated a group of volunteers to maintain accurate rosters throughout the County. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved \$50,469.00 out of the FY2025 fund balance to pay for the Volunteer Fire Company’s LOSAP plan for FY2025. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved \$2,873.00 out of the FY2026 fund balance to pay for the Volunteer Fire Company’s LOSAP plan for FY2026.

OFFICE OF FINANCE

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Finance Department, discussed investing the County’s surplus funds. Periodically, the County solicits bids to invest surplus County funds. In October, the department issued a request for proposals for investment instruments to manage the surplus funds. Three responses were received, and the investment opportunities included three options: 1) Variable interest rate instrument tied to the federal funds rate, where the funds are immediately available, 2) Fixed interest rate for a term of six months, and 3) Fixed interest rate for a term of twelve months. As always, the goal is to maximize the County’s return while balancing the need for liquidity. While variable interest rates tied to the federal funds rate are currently higher than fixed rates, it is anticipated that the Federal Reserve will lower interest rates by at least 0.25% at its December meeting and that additional rate cuts are likely to occur during 2026. Discussion took place. The department recommended investing \$10,000,000.00 for a period of six months at a fixed interest rate of 3.79% in the Pinnacle Banks Certificate of Deposit Account Registry Service

(CDARS) and investing the balance of the County's surplus funds in the Maryland Local Government Investment Pool at a variable interest rate tied to the federal funds rate (currently 4.01%). Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the recommendation as presented.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Mr. Sutton offered a personnel recommendation for the OES dispatcher. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the conditional offer of employment to the former great employee as a part-time 9-1-1 Specialist.

Mr. Sutton requested approval to fill a personnel vacancy in the Public Works department. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate for the Wastewater Division Utilities Technician position.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Shelley Heller, County Administrator, presented the 2026 Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Legislative Committee Nominations – Member and Alternate for discussion. The 2026 General Assembly Session is just around the corner, and it is again time to nominate county elected officials to serve on MACo's Legislative Committee. Each jurisdiction has a member and an alternate who serves on the committee. Counties with a county executive and council may have a member and an alternate for each branch (those members will split their county's vote, with a half-vote each, so that MACo maintains the "one county, one vote" rule). There is no requirement to change the member and alternate each year. In 2025, Commissioner Nickerson served as a member, and Commissioner Price served as an alternate. The Board can choose to keep the same individuals as representatives or make a change. On a motion made by Commissioner Nickerson and seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commissioners unanimously approved to keep Commissioner Nickerson as a member and Commissioner Price as an alternate.

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 November 4, 2025, is \$292,386.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$91,953.00.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:05 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, and carried unanimously into a closed session to discuss personnel matters. The meeting was closed under the Annotated Code of Maryland, General Provisions Article § 3-305 (b)(1) To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; or any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals. There were two personnel issues discussed.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney; Michael Sutton, Director, Human Resources; and Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1 PERSONNEL

Topic to be discussed: Qualifications and job performance of candidates for the Director of Planning, Housing, and Zoning.

Reason for closing: The qualifications of certain individuals to fill personnel vacancies are confidential and should be protected.

Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, presented a personnel recommendation. Discussion took place. Mr. Sutton left the closed session at 7:11 p.m., while all other attendees remained.

MATTER NO. 2: PERSONNEL

Topic to be discussed: Qualifications and job performance of candidates for the Compensation Review Commission.

Reason for closing: The qualifications of certain individuals to fill personnel vacancies are confidential and should be protected.

Code Home Rule 8-2025, relating to the Administration of Government, will take effect on November 21, 2025. This legislative bill includes a summary discussing the establishment of the Compensation Review Commission (CRC). The CRC will consist of five (5) citizens appointed by the County Commissioners, including one Chair. All members of the Commission must have been residents of Kent County for at least three (3) years prior to their appointment. They should possess an outstanding reputation for civic pride, integrity, responsibility, and professional or business ability. Additionally, no member should have any direct or indirect financial interest in the compensation and allowances of a County Commissioner.

A discussion occurred regarding each Commissioner's prospective candidates for the Kent County CRC. Ms. Heller and G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, discussed any potential conflicts of interest or any that would disqualify a candidate for the Board's consideration.

At 7:39 p.m., a motion made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the closed session and reconvened in an open session.

OPEN SESSION

Upon returning to the regular session, Commissioner Price reported out on the discussion of two closed personnel issues.

Matter No. 1: Personnel – Commissioner Price made a motion to be considered. Approve the recommended candidate for the Director of Planning, Housing, and Zoning for Kent County. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson and made unanimous by Commissioner Fithian.

Matter No. 2: Personnel – Commissioner Price made a motion to be considered. To direct staff to form a Compensation Review Commission and proceed as discussed. The motion received a second from Commissioner Nickerson and was made unanimous by Commissioner Fithian.

At 7:40 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, December 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

November 18, 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, G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, and Bonnie S. Pearsall, Inspector, Kent Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement, 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, November 4, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSE

The Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company (RHVFC) submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer, wine, and liquor for a private birthday party on December 7, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in the Chesapeake Room of the RHVFC, 21500 Rock Hall Avenue, Rock Hall. The application was provided for review. This application is in addition to the Multiple Event License No. 2025 ME-6 currently held. No comments were received either in support of or in opposition to 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 the Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company.

PUBLIC HEARING PROTOCOL

G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, affirmed Commissioner Fithian's suggestion in waiving the reading of the public hearing protocols. The rules for a public hearing were in effect.

TRACKSIDE BAR & GRILL, LLC, CLASS D, BEER, WINE, AND LIQUOR LICENSE

The hearing commenced at 6:03 p.m. Mr. Mowell read the public notice into the record. Notice, an application has been made by Member Javier Colon Algarin, representing Trackside Bar & Grill, LLC, for a Class D, Beer, Wine, and Liquor License on the premises known as Trackside Bar & Grill, which shall authorize the holder thereof to keep for sale and to sell Beer, Wine, and Liquor at the place therein described, for on-premises consumption, or elsewhere. The hearing was duly advertised.

Mr. Mowell administered the Oath to Bonnie S. Pearsall, Inspector, Kent Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement (KATE), Mr. Algarin, and anyone else wishing to testify.

A legal review of the application for a Class D, Beer, Wine, and Liquor License was completed. Inspector Pearsall informed the Commissioners that the applicant had met all the requirements for the application to be heard, and a pre-hearing inspection had been completed. Staff recommended approval of the application with contingencies noted. No comments were offered in favor of or in opposition to the application. There being no objections, on a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Class D, Beer, Wine, and Liquor License for Trackside Bar & Grill, LLC, with

contingencies upon the receipt of a Fire Marshal's inspection report and a corrected Sales and Use Tax License. The public hearing concluded at 6:08 p.m.

KENT ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT (KATE)

Modification Application: Inspector Pearsall provided an update on Rock Hall Brewing Company's alcohol beverage license. Rock Hall Brewing Company submitted a License Modification Application requesting to remove Member Valerie Ashmore and add Matthew Walling, Anita Leonard, and Christopher Leonard as New Members to liquor license No. 4914. The application was reviewed by legal counsel and met all the requirements for approval of the license modification. Staff recommended approval. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the license modification application for Rock Hall Brewing Company, as presented.

FY2026 First Quarter Report: Inspector Pearsall conducted routine inspections of sixty-five (65) out of sixty-six (66) alcohol establishments. In addition to the inspections, Main Wine and Rock Hall Brewing Company were revisited to deliver informational/educational materials, which included the required parking lot signage prohibiting consumption in that area. Great Oak Landing was found to be in violation for failing to verify photo IDs. A verbal warning was issued by Inspector Pearsall, placing the establishment on notice of the violation and the ramifications if it were to happen again. The KATE team continues to seek responsible 18 to 20½ year-olds for compliance checks for tobacco retailers, as well as responsible 21 to 27 year-olds to serve as "Mystery Shoppers" who will use caution or thank-you cards to check alcohol establishments for compliance, ensuring they ask for proper identification from their patrons.

License Updates: Inspector Pearsall offered two (2) updates. The first update, being Alcoholic Beverage License No. 4920, has been issued to Tsionas Waterman's, LLC, operating as Waterman's Crab House. This license was granted on October 29, 2025. The previous management/owners of the establishment surrendered their alcoholic beverage license (License No. 4881) and received a pro-rated refund. On October 31, 2025, Inspector Pearsall conducted an inspection to facilitate the issuance of Bulk Transfer Permit No. BO-0157 to the new licensees. The second update, being Honk Honk, LLC, operating as Betty's Bar, has met the hearing's contingency. Alcoholic Beverage License No. 4921 was issued on November 7, 2025.

At 7:40 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Price; the Commissioners unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, December 2, 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