

December 2, 2025

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 5:00 p.m., with John F. Price presiding and Albert H. Nickerson.

Commissioner Price announced that a closed session scheduled for this evening has been canceled. A statement was read into the record, withdrawing his request for the session, explaining his reasoning, and expressing his general concerns about its cancellation. At 5:02 p.m., Commissioner Price announced the Board will recess with plans to reconvene at 6:00 p.m.

The Board reconvened at 6:00 p.m., with Ronald H. Fithian presiding, Albert H. Nickerson, and John F. Price. Special guest Hadley Dierker led the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to observe a moment of silence in memory of Samuel Richard “Dickie” Powell and Edwin “Pic” O. Pickering.

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 five consent items as presented.

1. Regular Session Minutes, November 18, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, November 18, 2025
3. Closed Session Minutes, November 18, 2025
4. Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works, FY2026 Vehicle Orders Enterprise Fleet Management Open-End (Equity) Lease Rate Quotes:
 - a. Vehicle 1 Ford F250 for the Water and Wastewater (W&WW) Division – No. 9225624 for \$1,048.35 monthly/ total cost of \$51,421.00
 - b. Vehicle 2 F150 for the W&WW Division - No. 9436336 for \$1,048.35 monthly/ total cost of \$44,084.00
 - c. Vehicle 3 F150 Roads Division - No. 9436347 for \$846.43 monthly/ total cost of \$43,991.00
5. Carrie Klein, Deputy Director of Public Works – Worton Park – Long Fence Company, Inc., Proposals for Worton Dog Park in the amount of \$25,478.00 and Baseball Field Covered Dugouts in the amount of \$41,705.00

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Jill Coleman, Director of Parks and Recreation, recognized the winning team, District 6 Intermediate All-Star Baseball Champions, comprising thirteen players and three coaches. Their dedication, teamwork, and sportsmanship have brought great pride to our community. Commissioner Nickerson read the certificate into the record. Certificates were awarded to coaches David Dierker, Brett Lovelace, and Eric Payne. The players who received certificates included Grady Dierker, Vincent Harris, Jaxon Hively, Cole McDonald, Grady Milburn, Liam Miller, Lincoln Payne, Tyler Phillips, Chase Porter, Shane Simon, Brennan Starkey, Deacon Turner, and Wyatt Wiltbank. All recipients present accepted their certificates.

APPOINTMENT

Dr. Dwayne Joseph, University of Maryland Extension Educator, provided an update on the Agriculture and Food Systems Program. The program serves Kent County through partnerships with Washington College, the Kent County Farm Bureau, the Kent County Economic Development Corporation, the Kent Soil and Water Conservation District, and through Community and Stakeholder Engagement with Corteva – Chesapeake Farms, National Corn Growers Association, Chestertown Christian Academy, Kent County High School, and Kent County Noxious Weed Control Advisory Board. The program had a total of 2,688 direct contacts statewide, comprising 38 individual consultations. There were three on-farm research projects in Kent County, covering a total of 8,122 acres, focused on nutrient management. The economic and environmental impact of nutrient management plans in Kent County was \$146,196.00, and reduced runoff tonnage. Programs and teaching initiatives included the Kent County Agronomy Breakfast, Transition to Organic Production Seminar, Private Pesticide Applicator Training, and Kent County Public Works Pesticide Training. The Agriculture and Food Systems future programs include strengthening weed management education, expanding on-farm research, improving outreach and farmer engagement, enhancing nutrient management support, and supporting County agencies and partners.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, and Ms. Coleman requested approval for a reclassification within the Parks and Recreation Department. This proposed change is part of an ongoing effort to better align staff titles with the duties and responsibilities currently being performed within the department. Aligning the job title with current job functions will provide greater clarity within the organizational structure, accurate internal and external communication, and ensure the position reflects department needs. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the proposed reclassification of the Deputy Director to Program Facilities Manager, effective immediately.

Mr. Sutton requested approval to fill the Utility Technician vacancy in the W&WW Division. 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.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Ms. Coleman provided an update on the department's accomplishments for the period from September to November 2025. The Community Center has secured grant funds for Turner's Creek Solar well and a new Mobi-Mat for Betterton Beach. New equipment has been purchased for the exercise room, and fall programming is now underway. The summer season was a success overall. The Commissioners invited Joanne McNamara, the Grants Program Administrator, to join Ms. Coleman in discussing current efforts to obtain grant funding to support County advances.

Funding Announcement: Ms. McNamara shared that Kent County was awarded Congressionally Directed Spending (Federal Earmark Appropriations) in the amount of \$6,200,000 to support the construction of a new, relocated Wastewater Treatment Plant serving the town of Millington. The County had worked with both Congressman Harris's Office and Senators Van

Hollen and Alsobrooks to request this appropriation, and the County was grateful to receive the support of both offices, which jointly sponsored the request for inclusion in the final bill. The relocation and construction of the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant is a critical infrastructure project for Kent County. Funding will support the replacement of the existing plant, which is considerably aged, at capacity, and in need of replacement, while relocating it to an area outside of the floodplain where it currently sits, which has resulted in significant flooding damage during prior storms. The FY2026 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which was passed, contained over 70 appropriations under its Rural Water and Waste Disposal Program, benefiting 24 states and territories. Within this program, Kent County's appropriation of \$6.2 million was the largest passed.

OFFICE OF FINANCE

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Office of Finance, reviewed the proposed FY2025 Amended Budget. Budget adjustments are made throughout the year. Additionally, approvals are obtained throughout the fiscal year for adjustments to the use of fund balance and contingency. Adjustments moving funds within departmental budgets are approved by the department heads. The proposed FY2025 Amended Budget incorporates all changes in the final amended budget document, which was made available for review during the meeting. The FY2025 Adopted Budget was \$67,582,418.00, and the proposed FY2025 Amended Budget was \$66,055,687.00. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the FY2025 Amended Budget by Resolution 2025-20.

Ms. Merritt provided information regarding the FY2025 Financial Statements that included General Fund Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, Explanation of Major Variances, Financial Ratios, Water and Wastewater Services, and Capital Projects Fund. Favorable variances occurred in revenues and expenditures. The FY2025 Financial Statements were submitted for review.

Ms. Merritt provided an update on the estimated potential cost savings for the Kent County Detention Center (KCDC) facility under scenarios in which the County contracts with another detention center facility to house all of Kent County's incarcerated individuals. There are still some significant unknowns, such as the daily per diem rate that Kent County will pay to the facility housing the County's inmates. Once further information becomes available, cost estimates can be updated accordingly. Commissioner Price asked Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, and Roland Sheppard, Director of Operations, KCDC, to join the discussion. A lengthy discussion ensued. Each Commissioner raised questions, stated their viewpoint, and position on the matter. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved putting the Detention Center's operations back in service and bringing all piloted incarcerated individuals back to Kent County. Staff will schedule a closed session meeting to discuss personnel and revoke the resolution that assigned Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, to oversee the Detention Center.

PUBLIC WORKS

Ms. McNamara, on behalf of Mr. Mattson, requested approval to apply for a one-time, non-competitive, block grant offered by the Maryland Energy Administration (MEA). The MEA has a one-time appropriation of \$64,000,000.00 from the State to support local governments in pursuing clean energy and energy efficiency projects. Under this grant opportunity, MEA has allocated a

potential maximum amount of funding for each County, with Kent County eligible to receive up to \$1,425,289.00 with a 10% match (\$142,528.00) for a total of \$1,583,654.00 in total project costs that can be supported. Counties have three years (36 months) to utilize the funds, which can support planning activities (such as feasibility studies, energy audits, and strategy development) as well as implementation work (including the installation of solar panels, building energy efficiency upgrades, weatherization, and appliance upgrades). To claim these funds, Counties are required to provide an initial high-level overview of the types of projects they plan to pursue. However, after the award, each project must be separately submitted to the State, and projects do not have to be bound to the ones listed in the initial application. Department of Public Works seeks to claim the maximum allowable allotment from the State. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved submitting a grant application to the Maryland Energy Administration for L-GEM grant funding to implement energy efficiency projects in county-owned buildings.

COUNTY ATTORNEY

The Wicomico Hunt Club Fox Hunting Kennel offered to surrender its license, effective March 31, 2026, voluntarily. The hounds have been relocated to their winter enclosure, a secure interior building with four walls, which should alleviate the neighbors' concerns until they are removed from the property. Genevieve H.R. Macfarlane, Esquire, Law Offices of Stevens Palmer, LLC, Attorney Representative of WHC, and Ed Fry, Master of Foxhounds, were present to answer any questions. Discussion took place. Mr. Mowell explained that if the Board agrees with the request from WHC. The Board can forgo its right to hold a revocation hearing within the next three months and accept the terms of the surrender. Each Commissioner offered comments concerning the licensing process and wished WHC well in its future endeavors. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously accepted the voluntary surrender of the license on or before March 31, 2026.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, provided a public service announcement advising that the Inter-Agency Commission (IAC) meeting will be held at Kent County Middle School on December 16, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Members of the County Commissioners may be in attendance.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

The County applies for Maryland's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy State Aid for Police Protection (SAPP) Fund each year. The application Form 2, Estimated Expenditures for Police Protection, and Form 3, Sworn Officer County, required a signature. Due to the Commissioners' meeting schedule and the application submittal deadline, Commissioner Fithian signed the document on November 26, 2025, to ensure the timely submission of the application.

LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE

On October 31, 2025, Erin Counihan and Rachel Durso, the Co-Directors of the Kent County Public Library, received a communication from Melissa Walters announcing her resignation from the Board of Library Trustees. A thank-you letter was presented for signatures.

On November 18, 2025, the County Commissioners approved investing \$10,000,000.00 in Pinnacle Bank's Certificate of Deposit Account Registry Service (CDARS). The agreement to establish and fund the new account was presented for signatures on behalf of the Office of Finance.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

On October 7, 2025, the Kent County Commissioners entered into a Rental Agreement with UBEO Business Services to renew the County's copier contract. After the agreement was executed, Sharp released newer models than those originally selected by UBEO for the planned upgrades. As a result, UBEO updated Equipment Schedule A to reflect the latest device models. Ms. Heller signed the revised Equipment Schedule A on November 17, 2025.

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 18, 2025, is \$286,386.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$94,826.00.

At 8:10 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 16, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

December 2, 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, November 18, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSES

Main Street Chestertown submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer and wine for a Special Community Holiday Event/Festival on December 5th from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and December 6th from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the 200 and 300 blocks of High Street. The application was provided for review. 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 Main Street Chestertown.

The Tolchester Community Association, Inc. submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer and wine for a Christmas Open House for the Tolchester Residents on December 7, 2025, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Tolchester Community Association Center, Montgomery Avenue. The application was provided for review. 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 Tolchester Community Association, Inc.

At 8:10 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 16, 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