

January 6, 2026

JANUARY 6, 2026, SPECIAL WORK SESSION HELD

A special work session was held on January 6, 2026, at 3:00 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, Maryland Department of the Environment Officials Adam Ortiz, Deputy Secretary; Heather Nelson, Director, Wetlands and Waterways Protection Program; Danielle Spendiff, Regulatory and Customer Service Division Chief; and Alex Butler, Government Relations, were also in attendance.

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Officials briefed the Commissioners on the Conowingo Water Quality Certification and Settlement Agreement. Potential collaborations were discussed. The special work session concluded at 4:16 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 5:00 p.m., with Ronald H. Fithian presiding, Albert H. Nickerson, and John F. Price. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to observe a moment of silence in memory of Robert “Bob” Payne of the Betterton/ Still Pond area and asked that everyone keep his family in their 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 items 2 through 4 as presented, as consent items. The Board chose to address Consent Item 1 in a separate discussion, which concerned an amendment to the minutes.

1. Regular Session Minutes, December 16, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, December 16, 2025
3. Closed Session Minutes, December 16, 2025
4. C. Henry Price II American Legion Post 246, Raffle Only, January 9, 2026 – December 11, 2026

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to revise the December 16, 2025, Regular Session Minutes by adding that the Board had a lengthy discussion, including whether Kent County was a paid or non-paying member of the Clean Chesapeake Coalition. Kent County has not paid an annual fee (dues) to the Coalition since FY2021.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Proclamation, National Mentoring Month – January 2026: National Mentoring Month honors the parents, families, teachers, coaches, and mentors who dedicate their time and love to uplifting America's children. Commissioner Price read the proclamation into the record, which was accepted by Kelsey Haft, Program Coordinator, from Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Eastern Shore.

Ms. Haft announced Big Brothers and Big Sisters is celebrating their tenth year of impact across the Maryland Eastern Shore in nine counties, providing community and site-based mentorship. In 2025, in Kent County alone, 368 children were served, and 462 children received assistance through outsourced resources.

Proclamation, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – January 19, 2026: Martin Luther King, Jr., was born on January 15, 1929, and in 1983, President Ronald Reagan signed a bill making Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a federal holiday. As a result, Americans commemorate Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday on the third Monday in January of each year. This year's celebration will be held at Minary's Dream Alliance on January 19th, at 10:00 a.m., and a complimentary breakfast will be served. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record, which was accepted by Doncella Wilson.

Certificates of Recognition - Rebuilding Together Eastern Shore: Genevieve Croker, the Executive Director, along with Clara Rankin, a Board Member, Larisa Thomas, the President, and Diane McComb, the Secretary of Rebuilding Together Eastern Shore, were present for a special recognition ceremony. They joined board members Max Ruehrmund III, the Treasurer, and B. Victor Pfeiffer for their recognition that honored their commitment to repairing homes, revitalizing communities, and transforming lives. Commissioner Fithian read the certificates into the record, which were accepted by Mr. Ruehrmund and Mr. Pfeiffer.

APPOINTMENT

Kent County Public Library – Board of Library Trustees: Natalie Hagan, Executive Director for the Kent County Public Library (KCPL) Board of Trustees, introduced herself, and John Murphy was also present as a KCPL Board Representative. The Board of Trustees worked to fill the vacancy for the Executive Director position, and Ms. Hagan's official start date as Executive Director was December 26, 2025. The Commissioners welcomed Ms. Hagan and congratulated her on her new position.

The KCPL Board of Trustees interviewed applicants to replace Melissa Walters, who resigned this fall, leaving an unexpired term vacant, and Erin Counihan, whose five-year term ends at the end of this month. It was recommended that candidate William Miles Campbell fill the unexpired vacancy ending on December 31, 2027, and that candidate Andrea Boothby Rice be appointed to a five-year term ending on December 31, 2030. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the appointment of the recommended candidates for the proposed terms as submitted.

KENT FAMILY CENTER

Lisa Mazingo, Director of Kent Family Center, gave a departmental update and requested approval to accept the Maryland Family Network (MFN) contract addendum. The Kent Family Center is primarily funded by a grant from MFN. This year, MFN has increased the annual award by \$46,700.00, from \$330,000.00 to \$376,700.00. The additional funds will be used to replace funds that were cut from this year's budget, increase hours for two part-time employees, and improve programs offered to families. The MFN grant requires KFC to use \$11,700.00 for basic needs. KFC staff created a mobile pantry program to provide basic needs for families with children

under the age of five. Once a month, staff will provide basic supplies, a meal with recipe cards and instructions to help grow the nutrition education program as well. On January 17th, at 10:00 a.m., KFC will host its ten-year anniversary birthday party. The amendment to the grant was provided for review and signatures. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Addendum to the Services Contract Agreement with Maryland Family Network for the Patty Center-Family Support Program and approved the proposed budget for increased funds.

OFFICE OF FINANCE

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Office of Finance, presented the first quarter Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2026 dated September 2025. Ms. Merritt reported that revenues increased by \$102,986.00; expenditures were favorable by \$497,653.00, resulting in an excess of \$ 600,639.00. Additionally, the Cumulative Local Income Tax Distributions through Reconciling Distributions for Kent County were 12.4% in tax year 2024 and 10.3% in tax year 2023.

Chris Lehman, Engagement Partner, SB and Company, LLC (SBC), discussed the FY2025 auditor's report via a presentation that summarized the results. Kent County produces accurate and proper financial statements. SBC issued an unmodified opinion of the financial statements, noting that no audit adjustments were required. Ms. Merritt thanked the Finance staff for all their hard work.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, advised that the Disciplinary Action policy has not been revised since being published in 2017. Human Resources (HR) recommends that the policy be retitled "Progressive Corrective Action." The revised policy modernizes Kent County's approach by shifting from a disciplinary model to a corrective, improvement-focused framework. It introduces clearer criteria, formal HR involvement, improved documentation practices, and a more consistent timeframe for evaluating repeat issues while preserving the County's discretion to act decisively in serious situations. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously adopted the amended Progressive Corrective Action policy by Resolution 2026-1.

Mr. Sutton requested approval to offer a conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate to fill the Systems of Care Coordinator vacancy in the Local Management Board. 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.

G. ROBERT MOWELL, COUNTY ATTORNEY

G. Robert Mowell, Attorney, advised that Section 11-206(b)(1) of the Local Government Article of the Maryland Code permits a county attorney to prosecute civil infractions under certain conditions: (1) The State's Attorney must authorize the authority in writing; and (2) the County Commissioners must approve the authorization. State's Attorney Bryan DiGregory has authorized

in writing the County Attorney for Kent County to prosecute civil infractions. Mr. Mowell is now seeking approval from the Commissioners. Mr. Mowell has more familiarity with the Code of Public Laws for Kent County and the witnesses involved with local code violations. Vesting authority with the county attorney would relieve some of the caseload from the Office of the State's Attorney. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the authorization of the county attorney to prosecute civil infractions.

LETTERS OR DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE

At the December 16, 2025, meeting of the Commissioners, Joanne McNamara, Grants Manager, was directed to prepare letters of appreciation to the Congressional delegation, Senators Angela Alsobrooks and Chris Van Hollen and Representative Andy Harris, in recognition of their respective roles in securing the federal appropriation for the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP), as well as to the President of the United States for signing the appropriation into law. Staff recommends approval and execution of the letters as submitted. The letters were presented and signed.

During the meeting on December 16, 2025, the Commissioners agreed to send letters to the members/participants of the Compensation Review Commission. The letters, addressed to Roy Crow, Jim Culp, Steve Leonard, Carter Stanton, Carol Sutera, and Mike Waal, express gratitude for their engagement and input. These letters were presented and signed.

PUBLIC NOTICE

CHR Bill No 9-2025 Cannabis Processor in the Commercial District (C) - Public Hearing Notice - A public hearing is scheduled for January 13, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.; the public notice has been duly advertised.

Shelley Heller, County Administrator, announced for the record that on August 3, 2021, Kent County officially withdrew from the Clean Chesapeake Coalition.

Commissioner Price announced that the special work session held earlier today with MDE was beneficial and a positive step in bringing people to the table, ensuring transparency. Commissioner Price requested that future issues and actions requiring attention be brought to the Board and that the Board continue to present them to the public. Two members of the public contacted him after the December 16, 2025, meeting, referring to the August 3, 2021, meeting and the meeting minutes.

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 December 16, 2025, is \$276,386.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$94,826.00.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

At 5:57 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, January 13, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

January 6, 2026

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, December 16, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSES

The applications noted below were reviewed and met the requirements to be approved for a multiple-event license. Part of those requirements includes providing a list of events scheduled to take place throughout the year. This practice helps track the number of permitted events allowed throughout the year. Both applicants provided a list of events planned for the year so far and will provide an updated list as additional events and dates are confirmed. Bonnie S. Pearsall, Inspector, Kent Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement (KATE), will schedule visits to educate each fire department about their responsibilities and the requirements for obtaining a Multiple Event License. Staff recommended approval.

Galena Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. (GVFC) has applied for a Beer, Wine, and Liquor Special Class C Multiple Event License to cover twelve (12) events for the 2026 calendar year. There were no objections. On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Multiple Event Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application for the Galena Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company (RHVFC) has applied for a Beer, Wine, and Liquor Special Class C Multiple Event License to cover twelve (12) events for the 2026 calendar year. There were no objections. On a motion by Commissioner Nickerson and seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Multiple Event Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application for the Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company.

At 5:57 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, January 13, 2026, 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