

February 3, 2026

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 3:00 p.m., with Ronald H. Fithian presiding, and John F. Price. Commissioner Fithian requested a moment of silence in recognition of the severe weather and expressed hopes that everyone stays safe and avoids injury on the icy conditions.

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

### **CLOSED SESSION**

G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, read a statement regarding the proposed closed session agenda items, including the topics and reasons for the session. At 3:02 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Fithian, and the Commissioners, by a majority vote, agreed to go into a closed session to discuss two 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.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, Kent County Sheriff's Office; Roland Sheppard, Director of Operations, Kent County Detention Center; Michael Sutton, Director, Human Resources (HR); and Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager, were also in attendance.

### **MATTER NO. 1 PERSONNEL**

Topic to be discussed: A request for additional staff for the Kent County Detention Center and a discussion of the qualifications of potential candidates.

Reason for closing: The discussion of the qualifications of specific individuals should be safeguarded.

Roland Sheppard, Director of Operations at the Kent County Detention Center (KCDC), requested feedback from the Commissioners regarding staffing needs. A discussion occurred concerning specific qualifications of candidates.

At 3:52 p.m., Sheriff Hickman, Director Sheppard, and Mr. Sutton departed the closed session.

Further discussed ensued.

### **MATTER NO. 2 PERSONNEL**

At 3:59 p.m., Mr. Sutton rejoined the closed session.

Topic to be discussed: A discussion of the qualifications of a potential nomination for Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department.

Reason for closing: The discussion of the qualifications of specific individuals should be safeguarded.

Mr. Sutton provided an update on the process to fill a vacancy at the Kent County Health Department (KCHD). Discussion occurred concerning the potential candidate.

At 4:01 p.m., a motion made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, agreed to adjourn the closed session and reconvene in an open session.

### **OPEN SESSION**

Upon returning to the open session, Commissioner Price summarized the two matters discussed in closed session.

Matter No. 1: Personnel –Advertisement to hire a contractual employee as well as advertising to replace a correctional officer position to replace a current vacancy at KCDC.

Matter No. 2: Personnel – Hiring nomination for an employee for the KCHD and an endorsement letter indicating support of the nomination.

Matter No. 2 was taken up for a vote first. On a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved to send a letter to the State in support of the recommended candidate.

Matter No. 1 was then taken up for a vote. On a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved to allow HR to advertise for contractual part-time position and a full-time correctional officer position.

### **CONSENT ITEMS**

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved nineteen consent items as presented.

1. Regular Session Minutes, January 13, 2026
2. Liquor Minutes, January 13, 2026
3. Public Hearing Minutes, January 13, 2026
4. Closed Session, Minutes, January 13, 2026
5. Carolyn Sorge, Chair of the Commission on Aging – Reappointment Letter for Denise Groppe term ending December 31, 2029
6. Rosemary Ramsey Granillo, Local Management Board – FY2026 ENOUGH Capacity Grant Award No. 2026-LMBC-0015 in the amount of \$41,618.00
7. Jill Coleman, Director, Parks and Recreation – Request for reallocation approval of \$415.00 Capital Funds for emergency phone capable of dialing 9-1-1
8. Ms. Coleman – Request for reallocation approval of \$400.00 Capital Funds for pool rule signs

9. Carla Gerber, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning – Request for Release of Chesapeake Bank and Trust Company Letter of Credit No. 175 Brickyard Land Holding, LLC in the amount of \$227,991.00 for Stormwater Management and Sediment and Erosion Control
10. Joanna McNamara, Grants Program Administrator – Request approval to accept the Department of Housing and Community Development Operating Assistance Grant Program Grant in the amount of \$30,000.00
11. Ms. McNamara – Request for approval and signature of the FY2026 Opioid Restitution Fund (ORF) Grant Agreements between Kent County and four grantees for a total of \$96,040.00
  - a. Not My Child, Inc., grant amount \$20,000.00
  - b. Open Doors Partners In Education grant amount \$9,500.00
  - c. Minary's Dream Alliance, Inc., grant amount \$32,040.00
  - d. Kent County Health Department grant amount \$34,500.00
12. Carrie Klein, Deputy Director, Public Works – Request for approval to proceed with Security Upgrades for Circuit Courthouse RFP#CC26-07 and award contract to BRS, Consulting, Inc., Proposals A (\$26,000.00) and B (\$52,200.00) totaling \$78,200.00
13. Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works – Request approval of the Galena Water and Wastewater Treatment Facilities, Operation and Maintenance Supervisory Agreement
14. Mr. Mattson Request for sewer allocation and Public Works Agreement – Elroy G. Boyer, Jr., Elm Street, Tolchester Estates Tax Map 035D, Parcel 0312 in the amount of \$11,800.00
15. Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, Kent County Sheriff's Office – Request to reallocate funds within the department budget in the amount of \$3,464.28 to purchase cameras.
16. Kent School, Raffle Only, February 20, 2026
17. Dogwood Festival of Galena, Inc., Combined Multiple Gaming Device, March 27, 2026
18. Chestertown Garden Club, Raffle Only, May 1, 2026
19. Dogwood Festival of Galena, Inc., Combined Multiple Gaming Device Permit, May 9, 2026

### **ROBERT G. MOWELL, COUNTY ATTORNEY**

Mr. Mowell presented a request for an easement agreement for a small cemetery on an 8.11-acre residential property surrounded by a larger 220-acre farm owned by Henry Dierker. Linda Dierker passed away on October 20, 2025, and her dying wish was to be buried in her rosary garden behind the house. The rosary garden is completely screened from Maryland Line Road. Mr. Dierker would like to create two 3.5' x 10' burial plots within the rosary garden for himself and his wife, Linda. The burial plots will be 819' from the road and 62' from the nearest property line. As a result of the special exception, the applicant has prepared a deed containing an easement for access and creating a restrictive covenant for perpetual maintenance. The proposed deed includes the County as a party, granting it the right to enter to ensure compliance with maintenance, and, among other things, authorizing the County to enforce the covenant and recover attorney's fees. Without an agreement, the County could repair or maintain the burial site only with the owner's permission (Md. Code Ann., Real Prop. § 14-122(b)). However, the enforcement of a perpetual maintenance agreement is typically handled by a cemetery preservation board, which could create additional obligations for the County that it has not traditionally undertaken. The question before the Commissioners was whether the County should be a party to the deed/agreement. Mr. Mowell

provided legal advice regarding the request. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the request for the County to be a part of the deed and for it to be filed appropriately.

### **LEGISLATIVE PROTOCOL**

Mr. Mowell summarized actions the Commissioners could consider during the legislative session. The legislative bill was scheduled for a third reading and presented it for passage, rejection, amendment, or deferral for a later date. No proposed amendments were received. A written comment was received during the comment period from Joanne Rich, Chair, Economic and Tourism Development Commission, which relayed its support for the bill and was available for review. On a motion made by Commissioner Price, and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, agreed to go into a legislative session. The legislative session started at 4:13 p.m.

### **LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> Read and Vote - Code Home Rule Bill No. 9-2025 Cannabis Processor in the Commercial District (C)**

AN ACT to amend Chapter 222, Zoning, of the Code of Public Local Laws of Kent County, Maryland, also known as the Kent County Unified Development Ordinance, in order to permit a land use in the C District by amending Article III, Uses, Section 2, Land Uses and Accessory Uses and Structures, #95 by adding “with the exception of cannabis processor as defined by the State of Maryland located on properties served by public water and sewer.” Mr. Mowell recognized that Ms. Gerber, Lance Young, MacLeod Law Group, LLC, Attorney Representative of Pneuma Solventless, LLC, and the applicants were available for questions. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, adopted Code Home Rule Bill No. 9-2025 Cannabis Processor in the Commercial District. The legislative bill passed without amendments.

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved to go out of legislative session at 4:18 p.m.

### **SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS**

Proclamation, Human Trafficking Awareness Month - January 2026: Sidney Davenport-Trond, Director of Development and Bill Flook, Board Member, of For All Seasons, gave an overview of the services provided by For All Seasons to the public. Ms. Davenport-Trond also provided further information regarding human trafficking. Commissioner Price read the proclamation into the record which was received by Ms. Davenport-Trond and Mr. Flook.

### **KENT COUNTY CIRCUIT COURT - COURTHOUSE**

The Honorable Harris P. Murphy, County Administrative Judge, presented a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Security Goods and Services for approval. The Kent County Circuit Court has been awarded \$56,888.23 in security funding. These funds have been awarded to cover

the cost of the following: x-ray machine, magnetometer (handheld & walk-thru), and a bullet-resistant security desk. A copy of the MOU was provided for the Commissioners review. The Security Goods and Services are valued up to \$100,000.00. This agreement is between the Administrative Office of the Courts, representing the Circuit Court for Kent County, and the Kent County Commissioners (E26-0034-25K). On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the Memorandum of Understanding for Security Goods and Services, as submitted by Judge Murphy.

### **KENT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

Natalie Hagan, Executive Director of the Kent County Public Library (KCPL) gave an organizational update. Ms. Hagan was accompanied by Chief Operations Officer Chris Walmsley. A presentation was given providing recent information and programs/events offered through the KCPL.

### **JAMIE WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR, ECONOMIC AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. Williams, accompanied by Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist discussed Resolution 2026-02. This year (2026) marks a milestone year for America to celebrate the 250th anniversary of independence from Great Britain. Kent MD 250 will kick off local commemorative events beginning this weekend. A local resolution was prepared to honor this historic occasion. Later in the meeting, the Commissioners revisited this discussion and voted on the resolution. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by majority vote, approved the Resolution for the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that the Commissioners signatures are on. Resolution 2026-02 was adopted to commemorate the 250th Anniversary of American Independence and honor the history of Kent County, celebrating 250 years of independence today, and throughout 2026.

Ms. Williams presented a candidate recommendation to fill the vacancy on the Economic and Tourism Development Commission. A recommendation from the nominating committee was referenced. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the recommended candidate, to fill the board position. Benjamin Tilghman will fill an unexpired term ending May 31, 2028.

Ms. Williams provided a comprehensive update, highlighting local projects and events currently underway within the department, as well as sharing updates on regional initiatives.

### **CARLA GERBER, DIRECTOR, PLANNING, HOUSING, AND ZONING**

Ms. Gerber presented a preliminary report for the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) for a solar project. Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., on behalf of OneEnergy 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 4.0 MW utility-scale solar energy system that will occupy – including panels, fencing, and landscaping – 23.3 acres. The submitted materials included 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 is located off Broad Neck Road, near Cedar Point Road. The 40-acre property is zoned Agricultural Zoning District (AZD) and Resource Conservation District (RCD), which is in the State's Critical Area. 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 prior to submission of the application with the Public Service Commission. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the letter as presented.

### **DAN MATTSON, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS**

Mr. Mattson provided an update on the weather event that just occurred, and the measures taken to work through it.

Environmental Operations Division - Mr. Mattson requested funding for a facility project. The groundwater treatment facility at the Nicholson Landfill utilizes two granular carbon filters to remove volatile organic chemicals from migrating offsite. The filters operate in an alternating series. Staff obtained a proposal from Evoqua Water Technologies for \$16,085.27 to replace the filter vessel and carbon, and to dispose of the used carbon, including that from the filter removed from last year. Evoqua Water Technologies is recommended to perform the work, as they have previously completed carbon and vessel replacements and have demonstrated in the past to be the lowest-cost, closest, and most responsive vendor for this work. The two vessels will be hauled by staff to a recycler for salvage funds. The department recommends approval of the proposal so the replacement work can be done in a timely manner. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved allocating \$10,000.00 in contingency funds for the project and approving the reallocation of departmental funds as presented.

Mr. Mattson requested approval to apply for grant funding from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). The MDE is soliciting applications for capital funding for various types of financial assistance for water quality infrastructure projects, including wastewater. The department seeks to submit two applications: one for funding to support the construction of the new Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant, and a second application for funding to support demolition of the existing Wastewater Treatment Plant and conveyance costs to transport wastewater to the new plant. For each of these funding applications, they are submitted to be considered for the best possible MDE funding package. While funding applications for federal appropriations and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) grants have been successful, additional funding is still needed to support the total costs of the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) funding is expected to support costs related to improved Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) standards, allowing the new site to improve the surrounding environment. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved submitting grant applications to MDE for the construction of the new Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant and the demolition of the existing plant.

Mr. Mattson gave a general status update on the Rock Hall Dredging project. This project is a joint effort between Kent County and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACoE). No approvals are currently required. ACoE has secured funding to dredge the Rock Hall Channel and Harbor, with bidding scheduled for Summer of 2026 and work expected to begin in October 2026.

Approximately 100,000 cubic yards (CY) of material will be dredged and deposited in the Orem Pit, which currently holds 38,900 CY, leaving a deficit of about 61,000 CY. Bramble, the site owner, can excavate additional areas to create capacity and has requested tipping fees throughout FY2027, as well as a down payment in FY2026 to cover excavation costs. ACoE will fund dredging only; tipping fees and deposits must be covered by the County and/or the Town of Rock Hall. The County anticipates a \$250,000.00 deposit to Bramble. This update is provided to inform Commissioners of the project status and potential FY2026–FY2027 budget impacts.

### **SHELLEY L. HELLER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

Ms. Heller requested guidance regarding the 2025 Official Ballot for Farm Service Agency (FSA) County Committee Elections. The election date is February 2, 2026, and James O. Miller is the only candidate. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved the submittal of the 2025 Official Ballot for FSA County Committee Elections as indicated on the provided paperwork.

Ms. Heller on behalf of Adam Ortiz, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) shared efforts to convene an Advisory Group related to implementation of the Conowingo Settlement and broader water quality initiatives, and to request confirmation of Kent County's designated representative for participation. The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is in the process of scheduling the first Advisory Group meeting to discuss implementation of the Conowingo Settlement, water quality priorities, and related matters. In recent weeks, MDE has engaged in constructive discussions with county partners to establish the framework and coordination for this effort. Deputy Secretary Adam Ortiz has requested that each county confirm its designated representative so that MDE may coordinate scheduling and communications directly. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved to appoint Commissioner Fithian to represent the County. Commissioner Fithian will be the primary point of contact and participant in the Conowingo Settlement/Water Quality Advisory Group for Kent County.

### **SHELLEY L. HELLER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Clay B. Stamp, County Manager, Talbot County, submitted information on the Annual Transportation Plan for FY2027 Transportation Services. Delmarva Community Transit is a public transit system that provides transportation services for the residents of Caroline, Kent, and Talbot counties, including elderly persons and persons with disabilities, as well as the general public. Delmarva Community Transit is applying for grant funds to continue to operate these public and specialized transportation services. Public hearings on this Plan will be conducted by Delmarva Community Services, Inc., via a virtual meeting, on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, on behalf of Kent County from 2:15 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. All interested persons may contact Brittany Baker at 410-221-1910 or email [brittany@dcsdct.org](mailto:brittany@dcsdct.org) for information on joining the virtual meetings. Written comments may also be submitted prior to the public hearings to Brittany Baker, Delmarva Community Transit, 10502 Greensboro Road, Denton, Maryland 21629. Alternate formats of this

Plans are available by contacting the Delmarva Community Transit Caroline County Dispatcher at 410-479-3867, the Kent County Dispatcher at 410-778-5187, the Talbot County Dispatcher at 410-822-4155, or the Maryland Relay Service for the hearing and speech impaired at 7-1-1, no later than Friday, January 30, 2026. A letter was received from Clay B. Stamp, County Manager, Talbot County, which includes further information. The letter was available for review.

Allan Schaubert, Chief of Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad, requested a Commissioners Citation for Mary H. Grussing. Ms. Grussing was employed and volunteered with the Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad for 43 years. The Commissioners presented the citation to Ms. Grussing at the Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad Annual Appreciation Dinner on January 24, 2026.

### **LETTERS OR DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE**

At the January 13, 2026, meeting, the Commissioners approved the appointments of members to various Boards and Commissions under the administration of Planning, Housing and Zoning administration. Letters were submitted for the following:

#### **Appointments/Reappointments:**

Construction Trades Board - Zeb Blyman - Term ending December 31, 2028

Board of Appeals - Benjamin Legow - Term ending December 31, 2028

Agriculture Advisory Commission - John Cahall, Jeff Pettit, and John H. Myers, Jr. - Term ending December 31, 2028

Agriculture Preservation Advisory Board - Dylan Hill, Bradley Morris, Tyler Gale - Term ending December 31, 2030

Historic Preservation Commission - Jeremy Rothwell - Term ending December 31, 2028

#### **Thank you for your service:**

Agriculture Advisory Commission - Herman E. Hill, Jr.

Historic Preservation Commission - Jennifer Moore

Agriculture Preservation Advisory Board - David Hill

Social Services Advisory Board - Reverend Caitlan Gartland, Chair of the Social Services Advisory Board, submitted a letter to the Commissioners advising that a member confirmed her intention to resign. Reverend Gartland requests that the vacancy be formally recognized, so the Board can begin recruiting a replacement. A thank-you-for-your-service letter to Hope Braveheart was signed as submitted.

Inclement weather disrupted the proper administration of the January 27, 2026, meeting, requiring all materials to be combined with the February 3, 2026, meeting. To maintain efficiency and in anticipation of further weather concerns, certain documents originally prepared for the January 27 meeting retained their original date but were submitted for signature during the February 3 meeting.

### **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

A letter dated January 9, 2026, notifies the Kent County Commissioners that a well permit application has been submitted for Tax Map 11, Parcel 44, aka 24188 Still Pond Neck Road, Worton, MD 21678, which is Still Pond Station Park. Correspondence and a copy of the permit application were available for review.

**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 January 13, 2026, is \$269,186.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$94,826.00.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

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

At 5:50 p.m., on a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved adjourning the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston  
Clerk

Approved:

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

February 3, 2026

The Board of License Commissioners met today with the following present: Ronald H. Fithian, presiding, 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 Fithian, the Commissioners, by a majority vote, approved Consent Item #2 - Liquor Minutes, January 13, 2026.

At 5:50 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, 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 10, 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