

February 10, 2026

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 10:00 a.m., with Ronald H. Fithian presiding, Albert H. Nickerson, and John F. Price. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to observe a moment of silence for the passing of Helen Elizabeth “Sis” Williams and asked to keep her and her family in our 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 nine consent items as presented.

1. Regular Session Minutes, February 3, 2026
2. Liquor Minutes, February 3, 2026
3. Closed Session, Minutes, February 3, 2026
4. Betterton Still Pond Lions Club, Combined Gaming Devices, March 14, 2026
5. Pete Landon, Director of Office of Emergency Services – Appointment letter for John Darling, term ending January 31, 2027, and a thank you for your service letter for Phil Russum
6. Carrie Klein, Deputy Director, Public Works – Request for approval of Natural Lands Project Landowner Agreement – Turner’s Creek and Toal Park
7. Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works – Request approval of the Cooperative Agreement between Maryland Department of Agriculture and Kent County for Noxious Weed Control
8. Mr. Mattson – Approve purchase of two replacement wastewater pumps from DEMCO, Inc. for \$28,608.84 for John Hanson pump station
9. Mr. Mattson – Request approval for Kent County Public Schools (KCPS) Enterprise Fleet Management – FY2026 Vehicle Orders
 - a. Open-End (Equity) Lease Rate Quote No. 9538266 - 2026 Ford Explorer – Monthly rental cost of \$887.71
 - b. Open-End (Equity) Lease Rate Quote No. 9314952 – 2026 GMC Sierra 2500 HD – Monthly rental cost of \$1,223.52

JILL COLEMAN, DIRECTOR, PARKS AND RECREATION

Ms. Coleman presented a summary of the 2025 Annual Report, highlighting nine park facilities, various programs and events with participant numbers, and a partner spotlight on the Kent County Health Department’s support for special events. Also noted were capital improvements at Worton Parks and field upgrades, as well as community investments such as the Story Walk, Sensory Path, and the Beach Tennis Tournament.

OFFICE OF FINANCE

Pat Merritt, Chief Financial Officer, Office of Finance, reviewed the FY2025 Financial Statements as of December 31, 2025, that included the General Fund Statement of Revenues,

Expenditures, and Explanation of Major Variances. Areas of favorable variances in revenue and expenditures were discussed.

Ms. Merritt and Ashley Albia, Treasury Accountant, gave an overview of House Bill (HB) 0059 Tax Sale Criteria. In April of 2025, HB0059 was approved by the Governor, and its changes were incorporated into the Tax - Property Article, section 14-811. This bill mandated changes to tax sale criteria and allowed the County discretion to establish additional criteria. Additionally, this bill requires the County to establish a registry for interested parties or to designate the Tax Sale Ombudsman to withhold property from tax sale. Staff provided a schedule comparing the previous criteria for withholding properties from tax sale with the criteria established in HB0059. Ms. Albia requested the Board to approve staff recommendations for withholding limits as follows:

1. Residential (owner-occupied) less than \$1,000.00
2. Residential (occupied heir of deceased owner) less than \$1,000.00
3. Residential (non-owner-occupied) less than \$250.00
4. Non-Residential less than \$250.00

These limits would allow for more timely collection of delinquent County and municipal water and sewer accounts. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the recommended criteria for withholding properties from tax sale indicated on the schedule provided.

SHELLEY L. HELLER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Ms. Heller presented a request for a letter of support from Elizabeth Jo Manning, Town Administrator for the Town of Millington. The Town intends to submit a non-capital grant application to the Maryland Historical Trust Preservation Grant program for the Freedom Serenity Trail Park. A copy of the request outlining the project details, along with a draft support letter, was provided to the Board for its review and consideration. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved and signed the support letter as submitted.

On behalf of the County Commissioners of Kent County, on January 30, 2026, Ms. Heller submitted letters to The Honorable Cory V. McCray, The Honorable Guy Guzzone, Chair, and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee expressing strong support for Senate Bill (SB) 0288. The bill, with sponsor amendments, prevents a significant reduction in Highway User Revenue in FY2028. Kent County emphasized that these funds are critical to maintaining local roads and bridges, ensuring traffic safety, and supporting storm response. As a rural jurisdiction without independent authority to raise transportation revenue, Kent County relies on predictable funding for multi-year projects and to avoid costly emergency repairs. The letters urged a favorable report on SB0288 to preserve funding stability and advocate for long-term restoration of Highway User Revenues. On February 6, 2026, a similar letter was sent to the Honorable Mark Eldelson and to the Members of the Appropriations Committee and the Environment and Transportation Committee regarding HB0559.

Copies of the letters were sent to:
The Honorable Stephen S. Hershey, Jr.

The Honorable Jay A. Jacobs

The Honorable Steven J. Arentz

The Honorable Jefferson L. Ghrist

LETTERS OR DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE

At the February 3, 2026, meeting, the Commissioners approved an easement agreement for the Dierker Cemetery that would authorize the County to take actions to maintain and preserve the cemetery if necessary. A copy of the agreement executed by the other parties was provided for signature. After the agreement is executed fully, G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney will file it in the Land Records for Kent County to comply with Mr. Dierker's February 14, 2026, target burial date.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

CleanCapital is developing the American Kestrel Solar Project, a 5-megawatt solar energy installation located on Chestertown Road in Chestertown, MD. Two public meetings to review the project are scheduled for Tuesday, February 3, 2026, and Tuesday, March 3, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company, 21500 Rock Hall Avenue, Rock Hall, MD 21661.

On December 29, 2025, the Water and Science Administration issued Water Appropriation and Use Permit No. KE2025G003(01) to Zeiset Farms, LLC, for property located at 24704 Chestertown Road, Chestertown, MD, to appropriate and use an annual average of 165,000 gallons of water per day (gpd) and an average of 1,000,000 (gpd) during the month of maximum use for crop irrigation at Massey Farm. The letter and supporting documents 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 February 3, 2026, is \$259,186.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$94,826.00.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in place. Mike Waal, Compensation Review Commission member and Kent County resident, expressed concerns regarding security breaches and the information the County maintains with signatures.

CLOSED SESSION

G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, read a statement regarding the proposed agenda items of a closed session, including the topics and reasons for the session. At 10:55 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, and carried unanimously to

go into a closed session. 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; and (12) To conduct or discuss an investigative proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct, respectively. Two matters were taken up for discussion.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney; Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager; and Lacey Townsend, Deputy Clerk II, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1: PERSONNEL

At 10:56 a.m., Michael Sutton, Director, Human Resources joined the closed session.

Topic to be discussed: A request to reclassify an existing position and to discuss a salary adjustment.

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

Mr. Sutton discussed a personnel matter to reclassify an existing position. Discussion took place concerning the request and the candidate's qualifications.

At 11:11 a.m., Mr. Sutton departed the closed session. All other persons remained.

MATTER NO. 2: INVESTIGATING PROCEEDING ON ACTUAL OR POSSIBLE CRIMINAL CONDUCT

At 11:12 a.m., Bonnie Pearsall, Inspector, Kent Alcohol and Tobacco Enforcement (KATE) joined the closed session.

Topic to be discussed: A discussion of a potential criminal investigation and how the County should proceed.

Reason for closing: The discussion of details of a criminal investigation should be shielded from the public to maintain evidence integrity and avoid jeopardizing the ongoing investigation.

County Attorney Bobby Mowell presented a confidential memorandum for the Commissioners' review, accompanied by supporting documentation. Inspector Pearsall provided additional details to supplement the memorandum, and the Commissioners engaged in discussion regarding the information presented.

At 11:24 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson; the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the closed session and reconvened in open session.

OPEN SESSION

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

Matter No. 1: Personnel – As a result of the discussion held in closed session regarding the reclassification of the employee, Commissioner Price moved to approve the reclassification as discussed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, and the Commissioners unanimously agreed.

Matter No. 2: Investigating proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct - The Commissioners discussed the matter, and no action was taken.

At 11:25 a.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, February 24, 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 10, 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, 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, February 3, 2026.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSE

Kent Cultural Alliance submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer and wine for a concert, For the Love of Artists: Sue Matthews in Concert, on February 14, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at 211 High Street, Chestertown. 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 Kent Cultural Alliance.

The Betterton-Still Pond Lions Club submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer and wine for a Fundraiser on March 14, 2026, from 5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. at Betterton Fire Hall. 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 Betterton -Still Pond Lions Club.

The Dogwood Festival of Galena submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer only for a Festival on May 9, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. at 105 Sycamore Lane, Galena. 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 Dogwood Festival of Galena.

Each application was provided for review. No comments were received either in support of or in opposition to any of the applications presented for approval.

At 11:26 a.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, February 24, 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