

May 5, 2026

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION HELD ON MAY 5, 2026

A budget work session was held on May 5, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., with the following present: Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian, Commissioner Albert H. Nickerson, and Commissioner John F. Price. Also in attendance were Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney; Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, and Bob Gast, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance.

Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, and Andrew Jones, Sales Manager, The Garland Company/ Garland DBS, discussed a proposed roofing project for the Chestertown branch of the Kent County Public Library. Ms. Merritt also shared documentation and discussion items for the budget process, including the general fund overview, funding for the proposed middle school project, allocations, other capital projects, and new positions. Further discussion occurred, and the budget work session concluded at 4:54 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

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. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to observe a moment of silence for the hopes of peace in the Middle East.

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, by unanimous vote, approved seven consent items as presented:

1. Regular Session Minutes, April 28, 2026
2. Liquor Minutes, April 28, 2026
3. Closed Session Minutes, April 28, 2026
4. Joanne McNamara, Director, Grants and Contracts - Maryland Energy Administration (MEA) Local Government Energy Modernization (L-Gem), Awarded Grant Funds of \$1,076,242.00 with a 10% cost share of \$119,582.00, MEA Grant No. 2026-21-466S, 2026-31-584-AP
5. Shelly Neal-Edwards, Director of Social Services, Social Services Advisory Board Recommendation, Appointment of LaToya Johnson for a three-year term ending May 5, 2029
6. Recognition of the 2026 Maryland Green Center Inductees, Sultana Education Foundation
7. Democratic Club of Kent County, Raffle Only, May 7 - June 4, 2026

SPECIAL REGOGNITIONS

Correctional Officer Week, May 3-9, 2026: Hilary Siakor-Sirleaf, Warden, and Roland Sheppard, Director of Operations, Kent County Detention Center, requested a proclamation to recognize May 3-9, 2026, as Correctional Officer Week. This week is in recognition of the hard work and dedication of the Correctional Officers of the Kent County Detention Center. Warden Siakor-Sirleaf read a statement into the record recognizing the efforts and dedication of the staff and officers of the Kent County Detention Center. In addition to recognizing Correctional Officer Week, Warden Siakor-Sirleaf and Director of Operations Sheppard asked the Commissioners to recognize Captain Steve Wallace as Officer of the Year. Commissioner Nickerson read a proclamation into the record proclaiming May 3-9, 2026, as Correctional Officer Week. Commissioner Fithian read a certificate of recognition into the record recognizing Captain Wallace as Officer of the Year. The proclamation and certificate of recognition were presented to Warden Siakor-Sirleaf, Director of Operations Sheppard, and Captain Wallace. Also present to accept the proclamation and to support Captain Wallace in his recognition as Officer of the Year were Sergeant Chuck Dobson and Correctional Officer/Administrative Assistant Monaca Stickland.

National Travel and Tourism Week, May 3-9, 2026: Jamie Williams, Director, Economic and Tourism Development, requested a proclamation to recognize May 3-9, 2026, as National Travel and Tourism Week. Tourism plays a vital role in Kent County's economy, attracting visitors with scenic landscapes, historic waterfront towns, and vibrant year-round festivals. Arts, culture, and outdoor recreation create memorable experiences while supporting local jobs and small businesses. The visitor economy brings fresh energy and new dollars into the community, strengthening Kent County's unique sense of place. Ms. Williams provided statistics on the impact of economic and tourism development, as well as additional background information on National Travel and Tourism Week. Ms. Williams also thanked Bernadette Bowman, the previous Economic and Tourism Director, for laying the foundation of the Economic and Tourism Department and her contributions to the department. Commissioner Price read the proclamation into the record, and the Commissioners presented it to Ms. Williams.

PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDMENT TO THE KENT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE WATER AND SEWER PLAN, SERVICE FOR THE EVERTON WAREHOUSE PROJECT

A public hearing was conducted. Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, provided an overview of the proposed amendment. Information about the above-proposed amendment and the minutes are available on the County's website at <https://www.kentcounty.com/government>.

RESOLUTION 2026-09 AMENDMENT TO THE KENT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE WATER AND SEWER PLAN, SERVICE FOR THE EVERTON WAREHOUSE PROJECT

Upon the conclusion of the public hearing for the Amendment To The Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan, 2018 Update to Include Water and Sewer Service For The Everton Warehouse Project, the amendment process requires the adoption of a Kent County resolution. Mr. Mowell presented Resolution 2026-09 Amendment To The Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan, Service For The Everton Warehouse Project. On a motion

by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved adopting Resolution 2026-09, Amendment to the Kent County Water Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan, Service for the Everton Warehouse Project as presented.

Before Mr. Mattson departed the meeting, Commissioner Fithian asked about running electricity to the docks at Worton Creek Public Landing. Discussion took place.

On a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to amend the agenda to discuss the potential electricity source for a hoist for a way to lift the blue cats (catfish) out of the watermen's boats onto the piers. Further discussion ensued.

On a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to utilize up to \$15,000.00 of contingency funds to accomplish what needs to be accomplished. The Commissioners approved the use of up to \$15,000.00 in contingency funds to install electricity at the Worton Creek Public Landing for use by the Watermen.

CARLA GERBER, DIRECTOR, PLANNING, HOUSING, AND ZONING

Ms. Gerber explained that questions have been asked about the timing and process for site plan review for utility-scale solar facilities, especially those large enough to require a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN). The Unified Development Ordinance permits applications that are “substantially complete” to be scheduled for review by the Technical Advisory Committee and Planning Commission. Substantially complete is not defined. The Planning Commission has tried to be fair and flexible, allowing concurrent review by scheduling these applications for concept or preliminary review while they are working through the CPCN process. We have required the final order for the CPCN before scheduling the final site plan review.

The following questions were posed to the Commissioners by Ms. Gerber:

- Is it inefficient and wasteful for the County to review projects before getting a CPCN on the chance that the Public Service Commission (PSC) requires changes to the site plan?
- Does it make it easier for the PSC to approve the CPCN if they think that the County has already approved the site plan?
- Does it provide the County an opportunity to influence the PSC decision if the Planning Commission requests changes to the site plan?

Mr. Mowell offered further insight into the information Ms. Gerber provided. Discussion took place. Janet Christensen-Lewis, County Resident, provided comments regarding the solar panel projects throughout the County and the approval process required.

LETTERS OR DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE

Ms. McNamara - Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Request for Release of Funds: As part of Kent County's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) award, the County has been required to complete certain environmental screening processes prior to requesting approval for release of grant funds. The Department of Grants & Contracts has worked with the Department of Public Works and with its contracted engineers to complete these preliminary screening assessment requirements as mandated by CDBG regulations, and Kent County is now in a position to seek a request for release of grant funds and authority to use the funds awarded through the CDBG project to support the Millington Wastewater Treatment plant project.

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 April 21, 2026, is \$135,798.00. The use of Fund Balance was \$94,826.00.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment procedures were in place, but no comments were made.

CLOSED SESSION

G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, read a statement regarding the proposed closed session agenda item, including the topics and reasons for the session. At 6:55 p.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)(3) To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto; (7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice; and (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. Two separate matters were discussed.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, and Lacey Townsend, Acting County Clerk, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1: LEGAL ADVICE AND POTENTIAL LITIGATION

Topic to be discussed: Property transactions related to the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Reason for closing: Legal advice from the County Attorney is private to the public and is meant to shield specific details concerning the acquisition of real property and negotiations related thereto, and information provided by staff regarding the matter should be shielded because it relates to the acquisition of real property.

To date, the County has closed on two property transactions associated with the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant. A lengthy discussion occurred regarding the options available to the county in negotiating the purchase of another property related to the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Mr. Mattson departed the closed session at 7:14 p.m. All other persons remained.

MATTER NO. 2 PERSONNEL

Topic to be discussed: An issue related to personnel.

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

Mr. Mowell and Ms. Heller provided information regarding a complaint received by a county employee. Legal advice was given by outside sources, which resulted in no action being taken at this time. Discussion took place.

OPEN SESSION

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

MATTER NO. 1 LEGAL ADVICE AND POTENTIAL LITIGATION: The first item addressed was a discussion regarding a land acquisition. On a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to have the staff proceed as directed and discussed.

MATTER NO. 2 PERSONNEL: The second topic concerned personnel, and no action was taken.

At 7:19 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, May 12, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lacey M. Townsend
Acting County Clerk

Approved:

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

May 5, 2026

PUBLIC HEARING

County Commissioners Ronald H. Fithian, Albert Nickerson, and John F. Price were in attendance, as were Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney; and Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works.

On a motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved going into a public hearing.

G. Robert Mowell, County Attorney, asked to have the protocols for a public hearing waived because no one signed the testimony log to speak regarding the amendment, and the Commissioners agreed. The rules for a public hearing were in effect. The public notice was duly advertised and included as part of the record.

AMENDMENT TO THE KENT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE WATER AND SEWER PLAN, SERVICE FOR THE EVERTON WAREHOUSE PROJECT

The public hearing commenced at 6:19 p.m. in the County Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, MD. Mr. Mowell proceeded to read the public notice into the record. The public hearing is required by Title 9, Subtitle 5 of the Environmental Article of the Maryland Annotated Code to amend the comprehensive water and sewer plan. The purpose of the public hearing was to review and receive comments on a proposed amendment to the 2018 Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan for Kent County.

Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, provided an overview of the amendment. Mr. Mowell stated that the amendment proposes extending the County Water and Sewer Service Area to include the Everton Warehouse Project (Map 31, Parcel 6), and that it has been determined that the amendment is consistent with the Kent County Unified Development Ordinance and Comprehensive Plan. The project is located within a designated County Priority Funding Area (PFA). In addition to available water capacity, the County Commissioners and the Town of Millington executed an agreement on February 24, 2026, allocating 34 Equivalent Dwelling Units (EDUs) of existing sewer capacity to support the project.

The proposed update to the Kent County Comprehensive Water and Sewerage Plan may be examined at the Department of Public Works, Water and Wastewater, 709 Morgnec Road, Chestertown, Maryland, from 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

PUBLIC COMMENTS / WRITTEN COMMENTS

During the public hearing, citizens were invited to sign the testimony log and offer comments on the proposed legislation. No comments were offered. No written comments were received at the time of the public hearing.

Public Hearing Minutes – Amendment to the Kent County Water Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan, Service for the Everton Warehouse Project
May 5, 2026
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On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to adjourn the public hearing at 6:24 p.m. and return to regular session. Resolution 2026-09 will be voted on upon resuming the regular session.

Respectfully submitted,

Lacey M. Townsend
Acting County Clerk

Approved:

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

May 5, 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, April 28, 2026.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSE

The Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company (RHSVFC) applied for a Multiple Event Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license for twelve events per year. The application was approved by the Commissioner during their January 6, 2026, meeting. Multiple Event License number 2026 ME-6 was issued on January 9, 2026. Since the approval and issuance of their license, the RHSVFC has had an influx of events scheduled and would like to revise their license to a Twenty-four event per year Multiple Event Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license. There was no need to make them complete a whole new application; they were asked to complete the first page again to revise the request from twelve to twenty-four events per year and to provide an updated list of events. The RHSVFC complied with the request and submitted the required documents, which were provided to the Commissioners for review along with their original application. They will have to pay an additional fee of \$200.00 for the Twenty-four event per year, Multiple Event Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license. On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the revision to the Multiple Event Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application for the Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company.

At 7:19 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, May 12, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

THE BOARD OF LICENSE COMMISSIONERS
OF KENT COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lacey M. Townsend
Acting County Clerk

Approved:

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