

May 12, 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 family members of former County employees, Will Kelly, Deputy Sheriff and Warden of the Detention Center, and Mr. Jim Wright, who served as the County Engineer, both of whom recently passed away.

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 six consent items as presented:

1. Regular Session Minutes, May 5, 2026.
2. Liquor Minutes, May 5, 2026.
3. Public Hearing Minutes, May 5, 2026.
4. Closed Session Minutes, May 5, 2026.
5. Carrie Klein, Deputy Director, Public Works, Approval to transfer \$16,062.00 from Salaries to Operating for a required upgrade to the Metasys Server System at 400 High Street.
6. Carrie Klein, Deputy Director, Public Works, Approval to transfer \$5,433.00 from Salaries to Operating for the repair and replacement of a Backflow Preventer at the Kent County Detention Center.

APPOINTMENTS

Greenwill Consulting Group, Post-Session Wrap-up: Jonathan Carpenter, Vice President of Government Affairs, and Lesly Feliz, Vice President of Government Relations, provided the Commissioners with a legislative overview. Legislative priorities, major budget wins for Kent County Public Schools, next steps, and interim engagement were discussed. Ms. Feliz also submitted a list of relevant bills passed in 2026. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Carpenter and Ms. Feliz for their services and help in keeping the County up to date on all legislative matters.

Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board: Ellen LaFrankie, Acting Executive Director, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB), and Shelly Neal-Edwards, Director, Kent County Department of Social Services and Member of USWIB, provided information regarding the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Resource Sharing Agreement developed in alignment with the Maryland Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) Policy Issuance 2025-03. This policy outlines updated requirements for compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Ms. LaFrankie and Ms. Neal-Edwards reviewed the policy's purpose and statutory obligations, the County's roles and responsibilities within the local workforce system, and the infrastructure and shared-cost allocations required among partner agencies. Key benefits of the agreements were highlighted, including improved coordination of services, strengthened support for employers and job seekers, and enhanced collaboration among workforce partners. The timeline for execution and implementation was

discussed, with an emphasis on ensuring transparency, alignment, and continued partnership across the County's workforce development network. On motion by Commissioner Price, and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Memorandum of Understanding, as presented.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

National Public Works Week, May 17 – 23, 2026: Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, provided background information regarding National Public Works Week. National Public Works Week (NPWW) is a celebration of the tens of thousands of men and women in North America who provide and maintain the infrastructure and services collectively known as Public Works. National Public Works Week is observed each year during the third full week of May. Through NPWW and other efforts, the American Public Works Association (APWA) seeks to raise public awareness of Public Works issues and increase confidence in Public Works employees dedicated to improving the quality of life for present and future generations. This week is to energize and educate the public on the importance of public works to their daily lives: planning, building, managing, and operating the heart of our local communities, and improving the quality of life. Public Works helps keep communities strong by providing infrastructure for water and wastewater, streets and traffic, stormwater, utility repairs, public buildings and spaces, parks and grounds, public landings, and solid waste collection, as well as right-of-way management. They are what make our communities great places to live, work, and play. Public Works provides the harmony needed for collaboration among all stakeholders in capital projects, infrastructure solutions, and quality-of-life services. Mr. Mattson was accompanied by fellow Department of Public Works staff members: Carrie Klein, Deputy Director; Daniel Bitter, Division Chief of Roads; Dave Edwards of Roads; Bryan Jackson of Roads; Douglas Smith of Roads; Kevin Stumm of Building Maintenance; and Jason Sonaugle of Grounds Maintenance. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Mr. Mattson and the Public Works Department staff.

Mr. Mattson recognized the efforts, dedication, and services of Mr. Jim Wright while employed with the County. Mr. Wright recently passed away, and he was instrumental and a pillar of the Department of Public Works.

DAN MATTSON, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC WORKS

Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, presented a recommendation to reappoint a member to the Public Landings & Facilities Board. The Kent County Public Landings & Facilities Board consists of five members appointed by the Kent County Commissioners for a term of five years. On motion by Commissioner Price, and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the candidate for an additional five-year term on the Kent County Public Landings & Facilities Board. Mr. C. Clay Larrimore was reappointed to the Public Landings & Facilities Board.

OFFICE OF FINANCE

Bob Gast, Chief Financial Officer, Office of Finance, and Pat Merritt, Chief Financial Officer, Office of Finance, presented a request for contingency funds. The invoice for the State Department of Assessments and Taxation was underbilled for the previous year(s), which subsequently increased this year's invoice and any future invoices. On motion by Commissioner Price, and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved \$56,120.00 in Contingency Funds and \$21,637.00 of Fund Balance for the State Department of Assessments and Taxation invoice.

Commissioner Fithian previously reached out to Ms. Merritt regarding an issue the Rock Hall American Legion is having with payments to the Comptroller's Office for sales tax. Ms. Merritt stated that she has contacted the Comptroller's Office and is waiting for a response. Upon the conclusion of the meeting, she will reach out again and see if she can be of further assistance.

Mr. Gast and Ms. Merritt presented a request to move the Worton Elementary School roof project of \$1,894,458.00 from the proposed FY2027 Budget to the FY2026 Budget. Discussion took place. On motion by Commissioner Price, and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to authorize the amount of \$1,894,458.00 to be allocated from the FY2026 General Fund Balance for the Worton School Roof Project.

MICHAEL SUTTON, DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES

Colonial Life - Voluntary Benefits: Mr. Sutton relayed that the County currently partners with American Fidelity to provide voluntary benefits to our employees, including Life Insurance (Whole and Term), Accident, Cancer, Hospital Indemnity, Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D), Critical Illness, and Flexible Spending Accounts. However, our relationship with this vendor has significantly declined. The Human Resources (HR) team has experienced ongoing challenges in obtaining necessary information and support. Timely and reliable communication is essential to effectively meet employee needs. In response, the HR department engaged with Benecon contacts to explore alternative vendors. Based on our requirements, we were introduced to Colonial Life. Colonial Life is able to offer all the same coverages currently provided, including Flexible Spending Accounts. In addition, they are committed to delivering comprehensive employee support through both in-person and virtual options. Colonial Life also offered additional incentives associated with transitioning to their services. On motion by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commissioners unanimously approved Colonial Life as one of the County's voluntary benefits provider.

Clerk Vacancy: Mr. Sutton discussed a hiring recommendation of an internal candidate to fill the Clerk's vacancy for the Commissioners' Office. On motion by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved an offer of employment to the recommended candidate at the proposed rate for the identified vacant position.

G. ROBERT MOWELL, COUNTY ATTORNEY REPORT

Mr. Mowell reported that on April 20, 2026, President Fithian signed closing documents for the purchase of property for the Millington Wastewater Treatment Plant, which was authorized by Resolution 2026-06 on April 14, 2026. The execution/signing of the closing documents

occurred outside a weekly Commissioners Meeting and was reported out, allowing the public to be informed of the process.

SHELLEY L. HELLER, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Ms. Heller reported that Anna Harrison, Chestertown Christian Academy, submitted a raffle permit for approval. The Christian Academy wanted to start selling raffle tickets as soon as possible, but did not submit their application in time to be included as a consent item during the 5/5/26 Commissioners Meeting. The Commissioners unanimously approved the permit application outside of a regular scheduled meeting. Permit 19-2026 was issued to the Chestertown Christian Academy on 5/8/26 and is attached for the record.

LETTERS OR DOCUMENTS FOR SIGNATURE

Department of Planning, Housing, and Zoning: On June 10, 2025, the Commissioners approved the Morgnec Road Solar Decommissioning Bond Rider to assign the Public Service Commission as an additional obligee. Per current County practice, bonds are not submitted for approval, as there is no obligation on the County. In this case, a rider allowing the Public Service Commission (PSC) to be an obligee of the bond required County signature approval, as the bond's rights are shared with the State. In May 2025, the Department of Planning, Housing, and Zoning (DPHZ) received four performance and completion bonds from Pennsylvania Insurance Company for the Morgnec Road Solar, LLC project located at 616 Morgnec Road, Chestertown, Maryland. Copies of the four original bonds and the four corresponding new bond riders were provided for review. SiriusPoint America Insurance Company has assumed the surety liability of Pennsylvania Insurance Company and issued new rider numbers accordingly. The amounts of the four bonds remain unchanged, as listed below:

Decommissioning – \$1,041,032.00
Landscaping – \$2,776,007.69
Sediment Control – \$4,109,076.83
Stormwater Management – \$331,899.32

DPHZ staff verified that each bond rider correctly corresponded to its original bond number. The second page of each bond rider included a Bond Rider Acceptance Acknowledgment requiring signature and date by the President of the Board of County Commissioners.

Letters of Concern Regarding 2025 SB0931 and HB1036 and the Impacts on Kent County: On April 14, 2026, the Commissioners discussed the increasing number of solar panel projects in the County and reviewed previous efforts to intervene in various solar initiatives. Commissioner Price proposed sending letters to the Governor, the Public Service Commission, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Senate President, Senators, and Delegates. These letters would request amendments to recently passed acreage mandates that do not align with the needs of the Eastern Shore, while also advocating for greater local consideration and input. A letter was submitted for the Commissioners' consideration, and they suggested adding additional language. The original letter was revised to include the language the Commissioners suggested at the 4/28/26 meeting. Letters addressed to each representative requested were provided for review.

Upon the letters being signed, a copy will be placed in the Kent News and the Tidewater Trader as requested.

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 28, 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.

At 10:52 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, May 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

FY2027 BUDGET WORK SESSION HELD ON MAY 12, 2026

A budget work session was held on May 12, 2026, at 1:00 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; Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, and Bob Gast, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance.

Ms. Merritt provided an overview of the General Fund budget.

At 1:05 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, and carried unanimously to go into a closed session to discuss personnel and public safety 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.

Staff and the public departed the hearing room. Ms. Heller, Ms. Merritt, Mr. Gast, and Lacey Townsend, Clerk, remained for the closed session.

CLOSED SESSION, PERSONNEL

Topics to be discussed: Discussions regarding requests for increases in compensation and hours, and requests for new positions for several departments.

Reasons for closing: Discussions regarding compensation necessarily include the qualifications of specific individuals, which should be safeguarded.

Pete Landon, Director, Office of Emergency Services; Carla Gerber, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning; Jamie Williams, Director, Economic and Tourism Development; and Michael Sutton, Director of Human Resources, explained the details of each personnel request and its budgetary consequences.

At 2:36 p.m., on a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the closed session and reconvened in an open budget work session. Commissioner Price summarized that, in a closed session, the Commissioners discussed personnel and compensation, and that staff will move forward as discussed.

BUDGET WORK SESSION CONTINUED

Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, joined the Budget Work Session at 2:37 p.m. Mr. Mattson provided information regarding the County fleet vehicle leases. Discussion took place.

Mr. Mattson provided information on the multiple roofing projects under consideration during the budget process. Discussion took place. Mr. Mattson departed the meeting at 2:53 p.m.

Further budgetary discussion took place.

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the budget work session. The budget work session ended at 3:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lacey M. Townsend
Clerk

Approved:

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

May 12, 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, May 5, 2026.

BONNIE PEARSALL, INSPECTOR, KENT ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT (KATE)

Inspector Pearsall conducted inspections for the FY2026 Third Quarter. Her report is as follows:

Alcohol Establishments: Inspector Pearsall conducted routine inspections of fifty-nine alcohol establishments in Quarter 3 (January, February, March); some establishments could not be inspected because they were closed for the season.

Inspector Pearsall conducted thirty-two Mystery Shopper Compliance Checks using an underage cadet to ensure that an ID is requested from anyone who appears to be 30 years of age or younger. Three establishments received caution cards for failing to ask for ID. Inspector Pearsall continues to visit establishments to issue educational materials.

Alcoholic Beverage Licenses Updates: Two establishments (Osprey Point and Riley's Mill Ale Works) met the contingencies required for renewal and were issued their alcohol beverage licenses. One establishment (Marzella's by The Bay) decided not to renew their alcoholic beverage license during the 2026-2027 renewal process.

Tobacco Establishments: Inspector Pearsall conducted twenty-nine mystery shopper compliance checks with a cadet over the age of 21 to ensure establishments are asking for ID from anyone who appears to be 30 years of age or younger. One establishment received the caution card for failing to ask for an ID.

The KATE team continues to seek responsible 18- to 20½-year-olds for compliance checks with tobacco retailers, as well as responsible 21- to 27-year-olds to serve as "Mystery Shoppers" who will use caution or thank-you cards to check alcohol establishments for compliance, ensuring they ask for proper identification from their patrons.

At 10:52 a.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, May 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Liquor Minutes
May 12, 2026
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THE BOARD OF LICENSE COMMISSIONERS
OF KENT COUNTY, MARYLAND

Lacey M. Townsend
Clerk

Approved:

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