

May 13, 2025

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 10:00 a.m., with the following present: Ronald H. Fithian, President, Albert H. Nickerson, and John F. Price. The meeting was convened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to remain silent for Frank Newsome, and Wayne Fletcher's son, Bubba, and their families.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney, were also present.

CONSENT ITEMS

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners, by unanimous vote, approved all five consent items as presented:

1. Regular Session Minutes, May 6, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, May 6, 2025
3. Closed Session Minutes, May 6, 2025
4. Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, Weed Control Budget Adjustment
5. Mr. Mattson, FY2025 Vehicle Orders- Quote No. 8491426, Quote No. 8870884, and Quote No. 8870891

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

National Emergency Medical Services Week, May 18-24, 2025 – Pete Landon, the Director of the Office of Emergency Services, and Logan Quinn, Chief of Emergency Services, began with opening remarks emphasizing the importance of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and their work. It is imperative to acknowledge paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), and other prehospital care providers who respond to medical emergencies and save countless lives daily. Commissioner Price read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Mr. Landon and Mr. Quinn.

National Public Works Week, May 18-24, 2025 – Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works, and Carrie Klein, Deputy Director, provided background information regarding National Public Works Week. It is important to convey the contribution of public works to the public and their daily lives. The Public Works Department is responsible for planning, building, managing, and operating the many facets of the community. They help provide an infrastructure of services in water and wastewater, roads, stormwater, public buildings, parks and grounds, public landings, solid waste collection, and many other areas. They make our communities great places to live, work, and play. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record and presented it to Mr. Mattson and Ms. Klein on behalf of the Public Works employees. Also, in attendance from various departments under Public Works were: Daniel Bitter, Division Chief, County Roads (CR), Orville "Lee" Layton, Roads Supervisor, CR, Christopher "CJ" Atkinson, Motor Equipment Operator III, CR, Curtis Merritt, Motor Equipment Operator II, CR, Eric Thessen, Operator-In-Training, Water and Wastewater (WWW), Jeffrey "Bart" Smith, Utility Technician, WWW, Donald Teat, Maintenance Worker II, Building Maintenance, James "Greg" Welch, Jr., Maintenance Worker II, Grounds Maintenance, and James "Craig" Burton, Motor Equipment Operator III, Environmental Operations.

PUBLIC HEARING – CODE HOME RULE BILL NO. 3-2025 FOX HUNTING CLUB DOG KENNELS LICENSE PROCESS

A public hearing was held on Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2025, Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennels License Process. Public information regarding the above-mentioned hearing and minutes is posted on the County's website at <https://www.kentcounty.com/government>.

MILLINGTON SENIOR VILLAGE

Frank Hodgetts, President of HomePartnership Inc., updated the Commissioners on the Millington Senior Village project and requested assistance. Cost increases have resulted in the project being estimated at \$21,000,000.00. Mr. Hodgetts asked for a letter of intent from the County to identify a source of the additional \$425,000.00 if needed. Discussion took place. Mr. Hodgetts will send information to the staff for legal review.

PLANNING, HOUSING, AND ZONING

Rob Tracey, Associate Planner, Planning, Housing, and Zoning (PHZ), requested approval to schedule a public hearing. The Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board and Planning Commission have recently reviewed the applications to establish a farming preservation district. The applications exceeded the minimum requirements and were recommended for approval. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved scheduling a public hearing to review four (4) agricultural preservation district applications.

Bill Mackey, Director of PHZ; Jamie Williams, Director of Economic Tourism and Development; and Joanne McNamara, Grants Program Administrator, requested approval to submit a grant application to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to fund commissioning a Housing Study for Kent County. According to the 2020 Maryland State Housing Needs Assessment, Kent County is one of only two counties out of nine on the Eastern Shore where 100% of its census tracts were rated as demonstrating 'moderate to high' need for housing, and 0% of its census tracts rated 'low to lowest' need for housing (Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, prepared by the National Center for Smart Growth and Enterprise Community Partners, pg. 51, Table 18). Anecdotally, affordable homeownership and rentals are reported to be out of reach for many Kent County residents, and a lack of adequate housing is cited as a top concern for businesses in Kent County as a barrier to workforce recruitment and expansion. As the least populous County in Maryland, with a population of approximately 19,000 individuals, the Kent County government has limited resources available to quantify the housing needs among County residents, conduct meaningful qualitative and quantitative analysis on the current and projected gaps that exist between key Kent County demographics and corresponding housing and rental stock, and identify potential processes or infrastructure challenges that hinder addressing those gaps and present potential strategies that the County and its municipalities can pursue based on comparable case studies and/or geographically similar counties. With the proposed application for grant funding, Kent County seeks funding to procure professional services to conduct a comprehensive study that includes participation of Kent's five municipalities and relevant community-based stakeholders. The resulting deliverables will support the County's ability to propose strategies for Kent County's housing future that will improve the quality of life for

residents and support economic development needs, while maintaining the interests of conservation and preservation critical to Kent County's historic and cultural traditions. The grant application request is for \$37,000.00. Upper Shore Regional has pledged an additional \$13,000.00. If the grant is awarded, the County will receive a total of \$50,000.00 to devote to the effort of conducting the study. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the submission of a grant application to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development for funding to develop a comprehensive Housing Study for Kent County, Maryland.

FINANCE

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Office of Finance, presented the third quarter Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2025 dated March 31, 2025. Ms. Merritt reported that revenue is up by 6%, and income tax is the most significant reason for that increase. Revenue has decreased due to a decline in property transfer and recordation taxes. Discussion took place. Expenditures have a favorable variance of 6%, primarily due to salaries, benefits, and operating costs. Further discussion took place. Ms. Merritt gave an overview of capital projects.

Ms. Merritt stated that staff received an offer from James Cook to purchase a tax sale property for a reduced amount. This property has been in tax sale for eleven years without being purchased. This property will be offered at tax sale on May 22, 2025, for \$20,210.39, which includes the County, State, and Rock Hall taxes and interest due on the property. In previous situations, the County has agreed to waive the County's interest and offer the property at public auction/sale for a reduced price. If the County's interest of \$7,141.83 is waived, the tax sale price will be lowered to \$13,068.56. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to waive the County's interest on tax sale property 05-021413.

HUMAN RESOURCES

James Miller, Director of Human Resources (HR), and Rachel Morlock, HR Administrative Specialist I, requested approval to fill two Paramedic Shift Supervisor vacancies for the Office of Emergency Services department. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved a conditional offer to promote both the recommended candidates as presented.

PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Mattson gave an update on projects throughout the County. The updates were regarding the Emergency Medical Services construction, Bayside Landing, Millington Wastewater Plant, and Worton Water and Wastewater Plant replacement of wells # 5 and # 6. The new pumps and the pipe are estimated at \$45,500.00. More information will be available at the May 20, 2025, meeting.

Commissioner Fithian asked Mr. Mattson and Mr. Landon about the status of the 911 Center building leak. Mr. Mattson stated that the temporary fix is still in place. The contractor has submitted a repair quote, which will be reviewed shortly.

Commissioner Price asked staff if the pipe at the Kent County Courthouse had been repaired. Mr. Mattson stated that it had.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, stated that the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) has four legislative priorities to advance through the General Assembly each year. These initiatives reflect county needs and promote practical, statewide solutions. In recent years, MACo initiatives have focused on infrastructure investment, modernizing local revenue structures, public safety recruitment, and emergency response capacity. MACo receives legislative initiative proposals from county governing bodies, elected officials, affiliate organizations, chapter groups, county agency leaders, and professional staff. In the fall, the Legislative Committee will adopt the 2026 Initiatives. Discussion took place. The Commissioners agreed to submit the following initiative for MACo to consider for the 2026 Legislative Session: Legislative initiative to waive or pause the Blueprint.

An email correspondence was received from Michael Bayrd, Intergovernmental Affairs Director, Office of Government Affairs, Comptroller of Maryland, in response to the letter sent regarding Delayed Responses and Service Gap issues with the Comptroller's Office. Mr. Bayrd's email correspondence was provided for the Commissioners' review. A virtual meeting has been offered. Ms. Williams and Rose Osborn, Administrative Specialist of Economic and Tourism Development, joined the conversation to discuss the role of the Economic and Tourism Development staff in helping the establishments comply with the Comptroller's office. Comptroller Brooke Lierman would like an in-person meeting in July 2025. Discussion took place. No action was taken.

The County continues exploring options for relocating the Board of Elections to the former Worton Elementary School. On December 17, 2024, the commissioners approved the Eighth Amendment to the Kent County Board of Elections Lease with KRM-GSM, LLC., granting a six-month extension. Both parties wish to extend the lease term by another six (6) months. The price per month increases by \$135.00, including rent and CAM. The price per square foot is still within industry standards. The Ninth Amendment to the Lease was presented for the Commissioners' approval. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Ninth Amendment to the Lease with KRM-GSM, LLC.

The Men's Health Network (MHN) requested a proclamation for Men's Health Week, June 9-15, 2025. A Representative from MHN could not attend the meeting to receive the proclamation in person; it will be mailed to the requester.

Francoise Sullivan, Chair of the Kent County Chapter of Delmarva Pride Center, has requested that June 2025 be proclaimed Kent County Pride Month. A proclamation was offered to the requester.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

Commissioner Fithian provided information regarding the Friends of Eastern Neck Island. He clarified that there is no federal oversight of the island. Monday, May 12th, Commissioner Fithian contacted Congressman Harris's office and was informed that a meeting would be scheduled to explore potential next steps. Once this meeting is arranged, the Commissioners will be invited to attend.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in place. Francoise Sullivan, Chair of the Kent County Chapter of Delmarva Pride Center, suggested submitting a legislative initiative to change the wealth formula to the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo).

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS

The Commissioners received a copy of the final ARPA Spend Plan report.

CONTINGENCY FUND

The FY2025 Contingency Fund balance as of May 6, 2025, is \$4,209.00. The FY2025 use of Fund Balance is \$680,572.00.

At 11:51 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 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

FY2026 BUDGET WORK SESSION HELD ON MAY 13, 2025

A budget work session was held on May 13, 2025, at 1:04 p.m., with the following present: Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian, Commissioner John F. Price, and Commissioner Albert H. Nickerson. Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, were also in attendance.

At 1:02 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; and (10) To discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including: (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans.

Staff and the public departed the hearing room. Ms. Heller, Ms. Merritt, Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, and Harry Kettner, Captain, Kent County Sheriff's Office, and Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk, remained for the closed session.

CLOSED SESSION, PERSONNEL

Topics to be discussed: Staffing levels and staff safety according to such levels, and to restructure the daily operation of a safety facility.

Reasons for closing: Personnel matters related to staffing capacity, compensation, performance, and restructuring should be private and confidential.

At 2:34 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 work session. Commissioner Price summarized that in a closed session, the Commissioners discussed operational matters that they believe will provide extra revenue that could be utilized in other areas of the County.

BUDGET WORK SESSION CONTINUED

Ms. Merritt and Ms. Heller continued with the budget overview, funding changes, adjustments, and other budgetary matters. During the discussion, Pete Landon, Director of the Office of Emergency Services, Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works, and Jim Miller, Director of Human Resources, provided information to the Commissioners. The Commissioners discussed a funding reserve for capital projects. The budget work session ended at 3:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

May 13, 2025

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 Thomas N. Yeager 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 6, 2025.

At 11:51 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 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.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

May 13, 2025

PUBLIC HEARING

County Commissioners Ronald H. Fithian, Albert Nickerson, and John F. Price were in attendance, as were Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney; and Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning.

The public hearing was duly advertised. Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney, read the notice into the record. The rules for a public hearing were in effect.

CODE HOME RULE BILL NO. 3-2025 FOX HUNTING CLUB DOG KENNEL LICENSE PROCESS

The public hearing commenced at 10:22 a.m. in the County Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, MD. A public hearing to discuss Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2025, Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennel License Process, AN ACT to amend the Public Local Laws of Kent County, Maryland, by revising Chapter 64 Animals, by adding a new Article II, and providing for an effective date. This Article establishes requirements for licensing Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennels in Kent County. It covers only the physical facilities where hounds are kept.

Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning, provided a summary and further details of the legislation's intent. Discussion took place. Mr. Yeager also noted that the written comment period will remain open until the close of business on May 16, 2025.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

During the public hearing, citizens were invited to sign the testimony log and offer comments on the proposed legislation. The following audience members provided comments during the public hearing in support of Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2025: Genevieve MacFarlane, Esquire, Law Offices of Stevens Palmer, LLC, Attorney Representative for Wicomico Hunt Club, Inc.; Eden Kloetzli, Master of Foxhounds, Wicomico Hunt Club, Inc.; and Ed Fry, Master of Foxhounds, Wicomico Hunt Club. Mr. Frey suggested changing the language in the bill that refers to "nutrient management" to "waste management". Mr. Mackey and the Commissioners agreed that this request would be considered.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

No written comments were received at the time of the public hearing.

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to close the public hearing for Code Home Rule Bill 3-2025 at 10:33 a.m. and for the record to remain open until the close of business on Friday, May 16, 2025. The legislative bill is scheduled to be considered for a vote on Tuesday, May 20, 2025.

Public Hearing Minutes - Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2025 Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennel License
Process

May 13, 2025

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Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk/ KATE Manager

Approved:

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