

June 4, 2024

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 6:00 p.m., with the following present: Ronald H. Fithian, President; Albert H. Nickerson; and John F. Price. The meeting convened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to observe a moment of silence, hoping for an end to global unrest. Let us pray for those less fortunate outside the United States.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, was also present.

PUBLIC HEARING – THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 PROPOSED COUNTY BUDGET

A public hearing was held for the proposed Fiscal Year 2025 County budget. Public information regarding the above-mentioned hearing and minutes are posted on the County's website at <https://www.kentcounty.com/commissioners/meeting-agenda>.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is given that the Commissioners of Kent County will hold a public hearing to discuss the voluntary creation of five Agricultural Land Preservation Districts on June 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room of the R. Clayton Mitchell Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, Maryland. The hearing is open to the public, and the public is encouraged to attend. Staff read the public notice into the record.

CONSENT ITEMS

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the following items:

1. Regular Session Minutes, May 21, 2024
2. Liquor Minutes, May 21, 2024

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Shelley Heller, County Administrator, announced that June 11, 2024, is designated as a Legislative Day. The Commissioners may sit 45 days each year to enact legislation; such days may, but need not, be consecutive. Staff anticipated the need for a legislative day on June 11, 2024, to accommodate the upcoming holiday schedule.

Shelly Neal-Edwards, Director, Department of Social Services, joined Ms. Heller in recommending Jasmine Robinson and Lisa Mazingo to fill two vacancies on the Social Services Advisory Board. Ms. Robinson will fill an unexpired term due to expire on April 30, 2025, and Ms. Mazingo will fill a three-year term due to expire on May 31, 2027. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners

unanimously approved the appointment of the recommended candidates to fill two vacancies as presented.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Shelley Heller, County Administrator, shared an update regarding the Chestertown Business Campus Entrance Funding. The County has returned \$450,000.00 to the general fund rather than creating an escrow account. The Board's decision serves the County's and its taxpayers' best interests. A letter dated May 30, 2024, to Jesse Parks, KRM Development Corporation, and Kate Goodall Gray, The Dixon Group, Inc., from Ms. Heller documented the change. Kent County remains committed to identifying any funding assistance available when KRM is ready to proceed with the project.

On May 21, 2024, The Board requested staff respond to communications sent by Carol L. Niemand, Community Relations Liaison, Shrewsbury Church, concerning homelessness and housing projects. Ms. Heller responded that Ms. Niemand was referred to local and regional agencies with expertise and resources that could assist Ms. Neimand's efforts.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Commissioners received correspondence dated May 30, 2024, from the Maryland Department of the Environment Water and Science Administration. The letter served as notification of an application received and the opportunity for a hearing scheduled for June 13, 2024, regarding Water Appropriation and Use Permit No. KE1999G014/04 to Duck Puddle Farming Enterprises, LLC, and was available for review.

The Commissioners received a correspondence dated May 20, 2024, from Kevin J. Shearon, P.E., LEED AP of DMS & Associates, LLC. The letter serves as notification of Camp Fairlee's proposal to construct one sensory cabin on lands owned by ESSD-M, Inc., also known as Map 35, Parcel 2, and was available for review.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comments were in effect, and no comments were offered by the public.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS

The Commissioners were provided with a copy of the ARPA Spend Plan outlining the approved expenditures to date for informational purposes.

CONTINGENCY FUND

Regular Session Minutes

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The FY2024 Contingency balance as of May 21, 2024, is \$159,252.00. The FY2024 use of Fund Balance is \$128,225.00.

At 6:54 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, June 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

June 4, 2024

PUBLIC HEARING PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2025 COUNTY BUDGET

In compliance with and according to Maryland Annotated Code Tax-General and Tax Property Articles, the County Commissioners of Kent County held a public hearing on Tuesday, June 4, 2024, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, Maryland, on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget beginning July 1, 2024.

County Commissioners Ronald H. Fithian, Albert Nickerson, and John F. Price were in attendance, as were Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance.

The public hearing notice was duly advertised and included in the record. Commissioner Fithian read the notice and public hearing procedures for testifying. The rules for a public hearing were in effect. At 6:04 p.m., the hearing began.

Commissioner Fithian reminded everyone that the hearing was open and invited the public to testify or comment. Commissioner Fithian offered opening remarks. Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, reviewed the Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Budget via a presentation. Ms. Merritt explained the categories of the County's revenue sources. Currently, Kent County's property tax rate is \$1.022 per \$100.00 of the assessable base, and the income tax rate is 3.20%, the highest allowed rate by the State of Maryland. Ms. Merritt reviewed the level of funding by function. Ms. Merritt reviewed historical revenue data for property tax, income tax, and other revenues. The proposed budget estimates the County's Fund Balance to end FY2024 at 29.7% and FY2025 at 15.5%. These projections are above the 7.5% target. Personnel actions included a salary increase of 6% on July 1, 2024, for employees. The budget includes funding for the addition of four (4) Emergency Medical Technician-Basic (EMT-B) positions and a grant manager. Ms. Merritt reviewed recurring and non-recurring expenditures. For FY2025, Kent County Public Schools (KCPS) will receive \$728,000.00 above last year's funding. The minimum local effort increased by \$173,000.00, as mandated by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. An additional \$554,500.00 was added to the minimum local appropriation. KCPS's funding is \$20,382,670.00 for FY2025. The County's efforts to address the budget challenges included the following:

- Property Tax Rate \$1.022 per \$100.00 of the assessable base (No change).
- Water and Sewer Rates increase 4%
- Five (5) New Positions
- Downsizing/Restructuring five (5) positions
- Capital Projects/Expenditures
- Upcoming State Mandates (Public School Funding, Time to Care Act)
- New initiatives

WRITTEN COMMENTS

The following written comments were received before the hearing: a letter of thanks

from Robin Davenport, Executive Director, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of the Mid-Shore; and Stephanie Gosman, Chairperson, Museums of Kent County. Letters of concern advocating for additional funding for the KCPS from Robbi Behr; Ashley Spittel, and Judi O'Brien.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following comments were received from the audience during the public hearing: Bill Flook advocated for school funding; Mike Waal expressed unease with the County's future ability to fund KCPS due to the unknowns of Blueprint for Maryland's Future; Dr. Clifford Coppersmith, President, Chesapeake College; and Dr. Karen Couch, Superintendent, KCPS both expressed appreciation for the County's efforts to fund their budgetary requests. Dr. Coppersmith submitted a written copy of his testimony for the record.

The presentation and all related documents can be viewed at <https://www.kentcounty.com/commissioners/meeting-agenda> or by contacting the Commissioners' Office at 410-778-4600, and press 4, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Commissioner Fithian announced that written comments will be accepted until Friday, June 7, 2024, by close of business. The Commissioners are scheduled to adopt the proposed rates and the FY2025 County Budget on June 11, 2024. The public hearing concluded at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk/ KATE Manager

Approved:

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

June 4, 2024

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, was 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 21, 2024.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Commissioner Fithian read a public notice into the record. Notice an application has been made by David R Rinehart, President, and Hilari M. Rinehart, Secretary, representing Hilco, Inc., to upgrade from a Class B, Country Inn, Beer, Wine, and Liquor License with Caterer's Privilege (CP) to a Restaurant Class B, Beer, Wine, and Liquor License with Caterer's Privilege (CP) on the premises known as Brampton Bed and Breakfast Inn, 25227 Chestertown Road, Chestertown, MD 21620, which shall authorize the holder thereof to keep for sale and to sell Beer, Wine, and Liquor at the place therein described, for on-premises consumption, or elsewhere. A hearing on the application will be held in the County Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr. Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, MD on June 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at which time any exceptions to the application will be heard.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSES

The Bayside H.O.Y.A.S. submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) liquor license application to sell beer only during Juneteenth festivities. This is a two-day event, to be held on June 14 -15, 2024, from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Fountain Park. There being no objections, on a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the per diem liquor license application for The Bayside H.O.Y.A.S as presented.

Sgt. Preston Ashley, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 228, submitted two (2) applications for Special Class C per diem licenses. The Auxiliary would like to sell beer only during the Rock Hall 4th of July festivities and Waterman's Day. The events are scheduled for July 4, 2024, from 10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Rock Hall Civic Center, Rock Hall, and July 7, 2024, at the Rock Hall Bulkhead from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Rock Hall. There being no objections, on a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved both per diem liquor license applications for Sgt. Preston Ashley, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 228, as presented.

At 6:54 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Nickerson, seconded by Commissioner Price; the Commissioners unanimously approved adjourning the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, June 11, 2024, 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