

May 7, 2024

FY2025 BUDGET WORK SESSION HELD

A budget work session was held on May 7, 2024, at 3:00 p.m., with Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian, Commissioner Albert H. Nickerson, and Commissioner John F. Price.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, were also present.

During the work session, Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Officer of Finance, and Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works, discussed fiscal recommendations regarding the capital requests. Jim Miller, Director of Human Resources, proposed three personnel discussions. The Board briefly discussed the on-call pay rate and tabled two discussion items. Tim O'Brien, Council Member, and Larry DiRe, Town Manager of Town of Chestertown; and John Queen, Director, and Reverend Henry Sabetti, member of Bayside H.O.Y.A.S.; requested funding for FY2025. Pete Landon, Director of Office of Emergency Services, also joined the work session and provided information to the Board. Karen Couch, Superintendent of Kent County Public Schools (KCPS), offered the Commissioners a revised 2025 proposed budget. Ms. Merritt presented the general funding overview, new positions, allocations, and capital. Other parts of the budget were evaluated, and potential reductions were discussed. Ms. Merritt presented documentation of the discussion of changes, recurring cost reduction options, and targeted fund balance. The work session concluded at 5:20 p.m.

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 H. Price. The meeting convened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to remain standing for a moment of silence for all the unrest around the country.

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 unanimously approved the following items:

1. Regular Session Minutes, April 23, 2024
2. Liquor Minutes, April 23, 2024
3. Rock Hall Volunteer Fire Company, Raffle Only, May 8 – December 31, 2024
4. Kent School, Inc., Raffle Only, May 10, 2024
5. Radcliffe Creek School. Raffle Only, May 25, 2024
6. Kent and Queen Anne's Rescue Squad, Raffle Only, June 29, 2024
7. Kent 4- H Triple Shot Shooting Sports Club, Raffle Only, July 20, 2024
8. Greater Rock Hall Business Association, Rock Hall Transportation
Request for \$20,000.00 of Contingency Funds

9. Maryland Green Schools, 2024 Certificates of Recognition, for Henry Highland Garnet Elementary School and Rock Hall Elementary School
10. Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, Environmental Operations Division: Rebuilding Together Tipping Fee Waiver in the amount of \$96.00
11. Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, Kent County Sheriff's Office, FY2025 Sex Offender Compliance and Enforcement in Maryland Grant Program (SOCM) Application for \$2,538.00 in grant funds.

PROCLAMATION AND RECOGNITION

May 5 – 11, 2024 is Correctional Employees' Week and Employee of the Year: Every year the Commissioners dedicate a week to honor Correctional Officers and recognize Kent County Detention Center's Employee of the Year. This year Officer Stephanie Switalski was awarded Employee of the Year. Officer Switalski began working with the Kent County Detention Center in February of 2022. Officer Switalski helps maintain the pre-trial release, re-entry, and medication-assisted treatment programs. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record. Acting Warden Allan Hanifee, Captain Steve Wallace, Officer Monaca Stickland, and Officer Switalski accepted the proclamation on behalf of KCDC. Commissioner Fithian read the certificate of recognition into the record. Officer Switalski kindly accepted her certificate as well.

RECOGNITIONS

Jill Coleman, Director of Parks and Recreation, gave an overview of the work completed along the park trail in Worton. Patti and Dave Eason from D&D Contracting generously donated sixteen (16) platforms for the Storywalk project at Worton Park. Their generous contribution of time, resources, and skill made it possible for the department to swiftly and easily bring Storywalk to life. Commissioner Price read the certificate into the record. Certificates of appreciation were presented to Dave and Patti Eason, Mike Crites, Caleb Pritchett, and John Wirth of D&D Contracting.

APPOINTMENTS

Kent County Sheriff's Office (KCSO): Harry Kettner, Captain, KCSO gave an overview of the FY2025 Police Accountability, Community, and Transparency (PACT) Grant Program Application. The KCSO equipment program enhances trust between law enforcement and citizens, creating a safer community. Funds provide equipment, installation, and training, along with cloud-based footage storage fees for vehicle cameras. The KCSO plans to buy five vehicle cameras for new patrol vehicles. Cost includes licensing, installation, training, service upgrades, and video storage. The amount of grant funding is \$66,498.00. This is not a fund-matching grant. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the application submission for the FY2025 Police Accountability, Community, and Transparency Grant Program and signed the Certified Assurances and the Certification Regarding Lobbying forms.

State's Attorney Office: Bryan DiGregory, State's Attorney, and Hope Clark, Recidivism Reduction Project Manager gave an update on the Recidivism Reduction Project. This is the first year for this project; performance measures for Quarters 1-3 were submitted.

Mike Waal, Citizen Presentation: During a citizen presentation, Mike Waal expressed his concerns about the fiscal impact of funding The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, also known as Kirwan Funding. He cited a report from the Department of Legislative Services dated January 2022 and presented various projections and charts he had created.

COUNTY ATTORNEY

Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney, advised this matter as a follow-up to the April 23, 2024, Commissioners' meeting, and provided further updates regarding the Right of Way on Sharp Street, Rock Hall. Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works, contacted Rock Hall Landing Marina regarding parking. During the last Commissioners' meeting, Recital 21, which is a portion of a larger document, was reviewed and discussed. Recital 21 granted an easement for parking at the restaurant as long as the restaurant is in existence. However, it did not specify any parameters or limitations for the restaurant's parking, which suggests that parking is shared by the marina and restaurant patrons on a first come first served basis. Upon further research and discussion, a plat will be drawn to show the County Right-of-Way and the parking spaces currently configured. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously directed Mr. Yeager to engage on our part with the (marina's) attorney in negotiations for a reduction in signage, to allow for six (6) spaces.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Scott Boone, Director of Information Technology requested approval for the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Home Stretch Grant Agreements and Broadband Contract with Internet Service Provider (ISP). On December 12, 2023, the Commissioners agreed to act as a pass-through. ThinkBig was the only ISP to submit a proposal to the County. On December 20, 2023, Kent County in partnership with ThinkBig Networks applied for the FY2024 Home Stretch – Difficult to Serve Properties Grant Program to the Office of Statewide Broadband through the DHCD. On March 5, 2024, the State sent the County a notice of intent to award \$929,100.00 for the project. The projects must be completed by December 31, 2025, and will not commence before June 1, 2024. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the Memorandum of Understanding with DHCD, and approved the Broadband Infrastructure Contract with ThinkBig Networks, LLC, and named ThinkBig Networks as the General Contractor.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Ms. Coleman requested the Board to approve Aiden Butler and Paige Miller to serve as student members on the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB). Letters were prepared

for Drew Davis and Melissa Landon thanking both students for their service to the PRAB. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved appointing the recommended candidates to serve the student member seats with terms to expire June 30, 2025.

Ms. Coleman requested approval to replace three (3) floors of the Community Center with FY2024 surplus capital funds from the replastering of the Community Center Pool which was completed under budget by \$18,202.09. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the replacement of three (3) floors within the Community Center (Library/Computer Room, Kids' Room, and Kitchen), in the amount of \$10,990.67, utilizing the FY2024 surplus capital funds.

Ms. Coleman requested approval to replace the turtle feature in the kiddie pool at the Community Center with FY2024 surplus capital funds from the above-noted project completed under budget. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the replacement of the turtle feature in the kiddie pool at the Community Center, in the amount of \$6,900.00, using FY2024 surplus capital funds.

Ms. Coleman requested approval to apply for the Maryland Department of Transportation Recreational Trails grant. The Recreational Trails Program funds the construction, maintenance, and restoration of recreational trails. The department wishes to apply for a grant not to exceed \$140,000.00 to transform the overlook trail at Turner's Creek into an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible hiking trail with signage, benches, and other features. This grant requires a 20% cash match or in-kind match (labor, equipment, volunteer hours, fringe benefit expenses for project employees, etc.). Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Nickerson and seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commissioners unanimously approved to apply to the Maryland Department of Transportation Recreational Trails Program, as requested.

Ms. Coleman requested approval to proceed with a project to celebrate the history of the Granary at Turner's Creek which was recently demolished. Sandy Adams, Administrative Specialist II, Parks and Recreation, read the Granary history narrative into the record. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved proceeding with crafting a bench from some of the leftover wood and showcasing an angled aluminum-mounted frame sign that narrates the history of the Granary.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Jim Miller, Director of Human Resources, on behalf of Mr. Mattson, requested approval to hire the recommended candidate to fill a Utility Technician vacancy in the Water and Wastewater Division. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved a conditional offer of employment to the recommended candidate.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator advised the Board that the Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board (USWIB) requested approval to appoint a candidate to fill a vacancy and to reappoint the current member. Letters were prepared and presented for signature for both Tom Timberman and Daniel Lessard thanking them for their service on the USWIB. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to appoint Christina Schindler, and Eric Kuster to the Board to serve three-year terms ending April 30, 2027.

Ms. Heller, on behalf of Chesapeake College, requested approval to send a recommendation to Governor Wes Moore to appoint Erica Osterhout to serve as Trustee of Chesapeake College. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved staff to send a letter to Governor Wes Moore recommending the appointment of said candidate to serve as the Trustee of Chesapeake College.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Staff received correspondence from Todd Mohn, Administrator, Queen Anne's County (QAC), on April 30, 2024, requesting a letter of support addressed to Congressman Andy Harris regarding funding for the Eastern Shore Youth Crisis Center – Carter/Whitsitt Center. The letter was needed by the close of business on May 1, 2024, which Ms. Heller accomplished. The letters from the Queen Anne's County Commissioners, and Kent County, were made available for review.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Fithian asked that staff invite participants to attend the last meeting of every month to discuss current projects.

LETTERS FOR SIGNATURE

Sally Coleman submitted an interest form and resume to multiple Boards and Committees. Alexandria Baker resigned via email from the Kent County Library of Trustees on March 8, 2024. Candidates will be considered, however no recommendations to fill the current vacancy were offered. The Commissioners signed thank you letters to the above-noted persons.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in effect. The public did not offer comments.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDS

A copy of the ARPA Spend Plan outlining the approved expenditures to date was provided to the Commissioners for informational purposes.

CONTINGENCY FUND

The FY2024 Contingency balance as of April 23, 2024, is \$179,252.00. The FY2024 use of Fund Balance is \$128,225.00.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:28 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) (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. There were two (2) matters to be discussed during the closed session.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; Jim Miller, Director, Human Resources; Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk and Lacey T. Cox, Deputy Clerk II, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1: PERSONNEL

Topics to be discussed: To discuss options regarding the management of a County facility and personnel recommendations.

Reasons for closing: The qualifications of specific individuals are private and should be confidential.

Mr. Miller and Ms. Heller discussed a confidential memorandum concerning staffing levels at the Kent County Detention Center (KCDC). More data needs to be collected before any further changes to KCDC operations and staffing occur.

MATTER NO. 2: PERSONNEL

Topics to be discussed: An evaluation and/or compensation matter.

Reasons for closing: The details of certain employees' compensation should be shielded for privacy.

Mr. Miller discussed a specific employee's compensation and his findings and recommendations.

At 8:09 p.m., a motion made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the closed session and reconvened in an open session.

OPEN SESSION

Commissioner Price summarized the closed-session discussion for Matter No. 1 which dealt with the staffing levels of a facility in the County. No action was taken regarding this Matter. Commissioner Price summarized Matter No. 2 regarding the evaluation and compensation of an employee. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the recommended action that was discussed during the closed session.

At 8:10 p.m. on a motion made by Commissioner Nickerson and seconded by Commissioner Fithian, the Commissioners unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

May 7, 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, and Thomas N. Yeager, 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 23, 2024.

SPECIAL CLASS C LICENSE

Radcliffe Creek School submitted a Special Class C per diem liquor license application to sell Beer only for a 5K + 10 Mile Run event. The event will be held at Wilmer Park on Saturday, May 25, 2024, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. There being no objections, 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 Radcliffe Creek School.

KENT ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT (KATE)

It was reported that J.J.'s Deli and Liquor has permanently closed as of April 22, 2024. A closeout inspection was conducted by Bonnie S. Pearsall, Inspector, KATE and there was no alcohol on the premises, a bulk transfer was not required. License No. 4786 was voluntarily surrendered.

Uncle Charlie's Bistro has also permanently closed. Inspector Pearsall made multiple attempts to conduct a closeout inspection and was unsuccessful. License No. 4815 a Class B Beer, Wine, Liquor, with EXPR (Extended Privilege) has expired with no intent to renew.

These transactions will be recorded in the monthly report of retail license activity required by the Comptroller of Maryland, Field Enforcement Division.

At 8:10 p.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 14, 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