

June 3, 2025

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 was convened with the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Fithian asked everyone to remain silent for Kenny Hickman's family after his passing and the Kent County High School graduates for their safe travels and for making the world a better place.

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

PUBLIC HEARING – FY2026 PROPOSED BUDGET

A Public Hearing was held on the FY2026 Proposed Budget. Information regarding the abovementioned hearing and its minutes is posted on the County's website at <https://www.kentcounty.com/government>

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

The Commissioners presented Dr. Mary McComas, Superintendent of Kent County Public Schools, with a special Commissioners' Citation for the extraordinary work she has done and continues to do for the citizens and students at Kent County Public Schools.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Commissioner Fithian read the public hearing notices into the record.

Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2025 Fox Hunting Club Dog Kennels 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. This legislation was adopted on May 20, 2025, with amendments, and the provisions of this Act shall take effect on July 4, 2025. A complete copy of the legislative bill is available in the Commissioners' Office, 400 High Street, Chestertown, MD, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and on the County's website.

A hearing will be held on June 10, 2025, at 10:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell, Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, Maryland. The public hearing is scheduled to discuss the voluntary creation of Agricultural Land Preservation Districts for the following: Lecter C. Jones and Sons, Inc., 12824 Massey Road, (Map 16, Parcel 20), Lester C. Jones and Sons, Inc., 13013 Massey Road (Map 16, Parcel 8), Lester C. Sons and Sons, Inc., located on Massey Road (Map 16, Parcel 55), and Fairfield One, LLC., located on Locust Grove Road (Map 14, Parcel 30). The agenda for the meeting will be published online 24 hours in advance of the meeting on the County's website.

CONSENT ITEMS

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

1. Regular Session Minutes, May 20, 2025
2. Liquor Minutes, May 20, 2025
3. Closed Session Minutes, May 20, 2025
4. Department of Social Services Advisory Board – Appointment of Lisa Mazingo
5. Office of Emergency Management – FY2026 Police Accountability and Community Transparency (PACT) Grant Application for Police Accountability Infrastructure for \$149,045.00
6. Kent County Detention Center – Increase Purchase Order with CorrectRx by \$70,000.00
7. Kent County Sheriff's Office – FY2026 PACT Grant Application for Equipment for \$27,248.00
8. Environmental Operations – American Paving Fabrics, Inc., Project Cost of \$51,866.00 for Nicholson Drop-off Center Surface Treatment Areas

APPOINTMENT

Kent County Public Library - Robert Bell, Executive Director, Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works (PW), Joanne McNamara, Grants Program Administrator, and Jay Silcox, Silcox Engineering and Drafting, gave a status update on the Library Roof Grant and the condition of the building as it is. The Maryland State Library Agency (MSLA) awarded a grant to replace the roof at Kent County Public Library's Chestertown Branch. Matching funds must be certified, an extension must be requested, or the County must decline the grant. MSLA has expressed unwillingness to modify the grant scope and amount. The library staff asked to increase FY2026 Capital Funding by \$219,000.00 to match funding and proceed with the grant. The award is consistent with the County's application submitted in late May 2024. The scope of the grant consists of replacing the existing library roof with a new metal roofing system, to include soffit vents. Project cost is estimated at \$551,000.00, with an additional allowance of \$47,000.00 for replacing roof decking; therefore, the estimated total of work is \$598,000.00. The awarded grant requires a 50% County match, resulting in a necessary funding of \$299,000.00 from the County. Currently, the FY2026 budget has \$80,000.00 in capital funds budgeted toward replacing the library roof. This assumed that the grant scope and associated funding could be reduced/value engineered to replace the existing shingle roof with a new shingle roof, retrofitted to incorporate soffit vents. It was recently brought to PW's attention that the existing roof was funded by an MSLA grant in 2009. PW was also recently informed that the 2008/2009 grant application had been for a new metal roof but was ultimately scaled down to the existing shingle roof. As the roof funded by the 2009 grant did not achieve a 15-year life span, and the previous grant had been received and revised, MSLA is firm on the awarded scope. PW did not know this context when they assisted library staff with preparing and submitting the 2024 grant, nor during the FY2026 budget process. Per the recent meeting between PW, the Library, and the Grants Administrator, staff were informed that the Library Foundation is unwilling to contribute toward this grant funding. The library roof has had limited to no leaking issues since repairs were made in Spring 2024. A recurring issue has recently resurfaced, with leaking near the

front windows. This issue is somewhat inherent to the design, which has gutters running across the 'bump-outs' at windows, rather than along the perimeter of the bump-outs. Rotting is evident in this location, and a smaller project may be able to be scoped, which includes reconstruction of bump-out areas and redirecting of gutters/addition of downspouts to bypass the 'internal gutter system. PW has begun engaging other contractors to reduce the scope/cost of metal roof replacement to potentially downsize the award, with scope acceptable to MSLA, if rolled over into FY2027. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved rolling the FY2026 State award funds into the FY2027 Budget. Due to the previous budget discussion, a citizen asked for funding clarification regarding the library roofing project.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, advised Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, requested approval to order new furniture for the departments before the price increase scheduled for June 1st. Approval was granted. Ms. Merritt received a quote and requested Commissioner Fithian's signature before the June 3rd meeting. Commissioner Fithian approved the price commitment on May 28, 2025.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENT

Each Commissioner provided remarks on the budget process and emphasized the challenges they will face in the coming years.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in place. No comments were made.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

As a Local Official, Kent County Commissioners received notice that Zeiset Farms, LLC has applied for a Permit to Appropriate and Use Waters of the State, which has been assigned permit application number KE2025G003/01. The applicant seeks to appropriate and use an annual average of 165,000 gallons of groundwater per day (gpd) and an average of 1,000,000 (gpd) during the month of maximum use for crop irrigation. Water will be withdrawn from four wells in the Columbia aquifer. The project is located at 24704 Chestertown Road, Chestertown, Kent County, Maryland.

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 20, 2025, is \$4,209.00. The FY2025 use of Fund Balance is \$680,572.00.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:08 p.m., Commissioner Price made a motion, 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) (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; (3) to consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto; and (7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice. There are two matters to be discussed during the closed session.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney; Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works; and Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1: CONSIDER THE ACQUISITION OF REAL PROPERTY AND LEGAL ADVICE

Topic to be discussed: Consult the County Attorney for legal advice and consider the acquisition of property.

Reason for closing: Legal advice from the County Attorney is private, and to protect specific details about the proposed property.

Dan Mattson, Director, Public Works, provided an update on the status of a property acquisition. The County's appraisal for this project was discussed. Supporting documents were provided. Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney, offered his legal opinion. All criteria have been met to proceed.

At 7:34 p.m., Mr. Mattson was briefly excused from the closed session.

MATTER NO. 2: PUBLIC SECURITY

Topic to be discussed: The daily operations of a safety facility and the different options available.

Reason for closing: Details about public security need to be kept private for safety reasons.

The Commissioners met in a closed session to discuss the operation of a safety facility. Shelley L. Heller, the County Administrator, summarized the funding in the proposed budget for FY2026.

At 8:14 p.m., Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, and Harry Kettner, Captain, Kent County Sheriff's Office; Pete Landon, Director of the Office of Emergency Services; Mr. Mattson; and Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Office of Finance, joined the closed session. A lengthy joint discussion occurred.

At 9:02 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Price, seconded by Commissioner Nickerson; the Commissioners unanimously adjourned the closed session and reconvened in open session.

OPEN SESSION

MATTER NOS. 1: LAND ACQUISITION AND LEGAL, AND 2: PUBLIC SECURITY

Commissioner Price summarized that two topics were addressed during the closed session discussions. First, the possibility of a land acquisition was considered, and staff received guidance to proceed as instructed. Second, a public safety issue was discussed, but no action was taken. Staff were advised to proceed as discussed.

At 9:03 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 10, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

June 3, 2025

**PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2026 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 3, 2025, in the Commissioners' Hearing Room, R. Clayton Mitchell Jr., Kent County Government Center, 400 High Street, Chestertown, Maryland, on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget beginning July 1, 2025.

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 Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance.

Thomas N. Yeager, County Attorney, stated that the public hearing notice was duly advertised and read the public hearing notice into the record. The reading of the procedures for testifying was waived. The rules for a public hearing were in effect. At 6:03 p.m., the hearing began.

Commissioner Fithian reminded everyone that the hearing was open and invited the public to testify or comment. Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance, reviewed the Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget via a presentation. Ms. Merritt explained the categories of the County's revenue sources. Kent County's property tax rate is \$1.022 per \$100.00 of the assessable base, which is a \$0.01 increase since 2001. The legislature increased the maximum income tax rate this year from 3.2% to 3.3%; the County will increase the income tax rate to 3.3% beginning calendar year 2026. The increase of funds will be reserved for the Middle School Project. 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 FY2025 at 36.4% and FY2026 at 7.8%. These projections are above the 7.5% target. Personnel actions included a salary increase of 5% on July 1, 2025, for employees. The budget includes funding for two (2) additional Emergency Medical Technician-Basic (EMT-B) positions. Ms. Merritt reviewed recurring and non-recurring expenditures. For FY2026, Kent County Public Schools (KCPS) will receive \$1,117,000.00 above last year's funding. The minimum local effort required is \$816,00.00. An additional \$301,000.00 was added to the minimum local appropriation. KCPS's funding is \$21,500,000.00 for FY2026. 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)
- Income Tax increase from 3.2% to 3.3%
- Water and Sewer Rates increase 4%
- Two (2) New Positions
- Downsizing/Restructuring five (5) positions
- Capital Projects/Expenditures
- Upcoming State Mandates (Public School Funding, Time to Care Act)

Each Commissioner provided remarks on the budget process and emphasized the challenges they will face in the coming years.

WRITTEN COMMENTS

The following written comment was received before the hearing: a letter of thanks from Clifford P. Coppersmith, President, Chesapeake College.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The following favorable comments were received from the audience during the public hearing: Herb Cain, Executive Director of Upper Shore Aging, and Dr. Mary McComas, Superintendent of Kent County Public Schools.

To view a copy of the presentation and all related documents, visit www.kentcounty.com/government or contact the Commissioners' Office at 410-778-4600 and press 4, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously closed the public hearing; anyone who wishes to comment can do so in writing until Friday, June 6, 2025. The Commissioners are scheduled to adopt the proposed rates and the FY2026 County Budget on June 10, 2025. The public hearing concluded at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk/ KATE Manager

Approved:

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

June 3, 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; Thomas N. Yeager, 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 20, 2025.

SPECIAL CLASS C

Bridges at Worthmore has submitted a Special Class C (Per Diem) Liquor License application to sell beer and wine during a fundraiser/open house event scheduled to take place on June 28, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Worthmore Equestrian Center, 11570 Still Pond Road, Worton, MD. Staff recommended approval. 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 Bridges at Worthmore.

KENT ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO ENFORCEMENT (KATE)

Inspector Pearsall provided a license update for Main Wine, LLC. On May 6, 2025, the Commissioners approved a Class D Beer, Wine, and Liquor License for Main Wine, LLC. On May 12, 2025, the applicant paid the required fee, and Liquor License No. 4919 was issued. This transaction will be recorded in the monthly report of retail license activity required by the Comptroller of Maryland, Field Enforcement Division.

Inspector Pearsall also informed the Commissioners that on May 20, 2025, Coleman's Tavern submitted a valid trader's/business license for 2024 and 2025. The establishment also produced documentation that the articles of revival submitted were cleared and in good standing with the State Department of Assessments and Taxation of Maryland. License No. 4772 was issued to Coleman's Tavern on May 20, 2025.

The Commissioners were informed that all alcoholic beverage license renewals were issued and will be recorded in the monthly report of retail license activity required by the Comptroller of Maryland, Field Enforcement Division.

Inspector Pearsall conducted the third round of Tobacco compliance checks on May 16th and 17th, 2025. During this check, twenty-nine (29) tobacco establishments complied and did not sell tobacco products to the Authorized Underage Purchaser (AUP). One establishment was not compliant and sold a tobacco product to the AUP; a citation was issued. An advertisement was placed in the Tidewater Trader acknowledging compliant establishments. Dollar General in Worton is now open to the public again.

Liquor Minutes

June 3, 2025

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At 9:03 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, June 10, 2025, 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