

RESOLUTION NO. 24-19

RESOLUTION TO PURCHASE PROPERTY

Recitals

- A. The commercial fishing industry is an integral and essential part of Worcester County's economy; and
- B. The sport fishing industry is an integral and essential part of Worcester County's economy; and
- C. The commercial fishing industry and the sport fishing industry in Worcester County are dependent on the commercial marine support provided in and around the West Ocean City Harbor; and
- D. The West Ocean City Harbor is one of the only, if not the only, harbor in the State of Maryland that supports commercial and sport fishing with direct access to the deep water of the Atlantic Ocean; and
- E. The existence of the commercial fishing industry at the West Ocean City Harbor is directly connected to federal support in maintaining the Ocean City Inlet; and
- F. Without the Ocean City Inlet providing access to the Atlantic Ocean, which likely requires federal support, the West Ocean City Harbor, the commercial fishing industry, and the sport fishing industry would cease to exist in any meaningful way; and
- G. The County's existing Comprehensive Plan emphasizes the need to maintain the West Ocean City Harbor as a commercial harbor and resist zoning changes requested to allow waterfront residential housing to be developed; and
- H. The Comprehensive Plan recommends promoting complementary commercial development to stimulate tourism in the West Ocean City Harbor, but emphasizes that those uses should remain secondary to commercial marine activities; and
- I. The Comprehensive Plan also emphasizes the need to retain the existing seafood and processing facilities; and
- J. The West Ocean City Harbor is zoned as a Commercial Marine District (Worcester County Zoning and Subdivision Article, § 1-214), which has the purpose and intent of preserving and protecting the County's commercial fishing industry while allowing for commercial, industrial, and recreational uses; and

- K. It is difficult to calculate the exact economic value to Worcester County of either the commercial fishing industry or the sport fishing industry due to the overlap with and impact on other areas of the economy including, but not limited to, tourism, the restaurant business, hotels, rental properties, and the like; and
- L. A 2018 report summarized the economic impact of the Maryland Coastal Bays watershed, cited the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (“NOAA”), and provided the following statistics: of the approximately 7500 total jobs in Worcester County, approximately 2500 were considered watershed jobs, of the \$381 million of total County revenue, approximately \$127.5 million was tied to the watershed, and of the \$155 million in wages paid in the County, \$51.9 million were paid to watershed related jobs; and
- M. According to NOAA, which maintains annual statistics of the number of pounds of fish and the dollar value landed in each port in the United States, the port of Ocean City’s commercial fishing industry between 2014 and 2023 landed a high of \$7.2 million dollars in one year and a low of \$3.7 million dollars in another year; and
- N. In 2023, the 51st annual White Marlin Open had 400 boats fish, 3500 anglers in contention, a top prize of \$6.2 million, an additional \$4.3 million in prize money, and 602 billfish released (White Marlin Open Magazine, 2023 Review, p. 19); and
- O. It was estimated that the White Marlin Open created 130 jobs which paid \$5 million in wages in 2015; and
- P. A 2009 Report generated by Maryland’s Department of Business and Economic Development estimated that the total (direct and indirect) economic impact of the White Marlin Open was approximately \$21 million, a number which is undoubtedly higher in 2024; and
- Q. Certain infrastructure is required to maintain the commercial marine activities including, but not limited to, piers, wharves, and docks of suitable size and variety, which are properly equipped, in close proximity to real property containing structures of the type that support all aspects of the commercial fishing industry and the sport fishing industry including, but not limited to, processing and other logistical support; and
- R. The locations in the West Ocean City Harbor with the existing required infrastructure are few in number; and

- S. There are no undeveloped parcels in West Ocean City Harbor which could provide the requisite support to the Commercial and Sport fishing industries if developed; and
- T. The private sector has not undertaken complementary commercial development in the vicinity of West Ocean City Harbor in the manner and at the rate desirable.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that, the County Commissioners of Worcester County finds that the West Ocean City Harbor must be maintained as a commercial maritime harbor in order for the commercial and sport fishing industries to continue in Worcester County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the maintenance of a commercial maritime harbor at West Ocean City Harbor is a critical component of the County's economy and benefits the public in countless ways some of which are referenced herein; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that properties which meet the applicable criteria set forth herein include, but are not limited to, the real property owned by James and April Reese, located at 12933 Harbor Road, Ocean City, Maryland 21842-9275, Lot 68 through 77 & unplatted point to the East of Lot 77, Harbor Road, and the real property owned by the Martin Fish Company LLL, located at 12929 Harbor Road, Ocean City, Maryland 21842-9275, Lots 63 through 67, S. Harbor Road, PL 1 Ocean City Harbor, and each real property is more fully described in the Land Records; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, in coordination with the County Attorney and outside legal counsel and consultants retained as necessary, the Chief Administrative Officer is to identify and take all necessary steps to purchase real properties in the West Ocean City Harbor that will be utilized to support the commercial and sport fishing industry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Administrative Officer, with the consent of the commissioners, is expressly authorized to initiate condemnation proceedings in order to implement this resolution; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Chief Administrative Officer is to obtain final approval from the Commissioners before committing the County to any specific dollar amount with respect to any purchase, is to ensure regular updates and updates as necessary are provided to the Commissioners, and is to otherwise ensure the Commissioners are kept informed.

And Be It Further Resolved that this resolution takes effect upon passage.

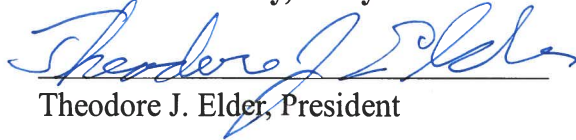
Passed And Adopted this 17th day of December, 2024:

Attest:



Weston S. Young
Chief Administrative Officer

**County Commissioners of
Worcester County, Maryland**



Theodore J. Elder, President



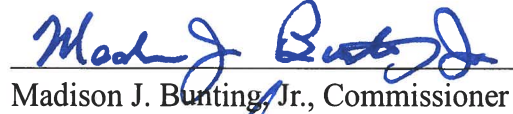
Eric Fiori, Vice President



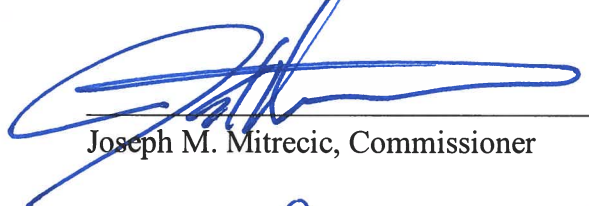
Caryn Abbott, Commissioner



Anthony W. Bertino, Jr., Commissioner



Madison J. Bunting, Jr., Commissioner



Joseph M. Mitrecic, Commissioner



Diana Purnell, Commissioner