

Minutes of the County Commissioners of Worcester County, Maryland

August 4, 2026

Theodore J. Elder, president
Madison J. Bunting, Jr., vice president
Caryn G. Abbott
Anthony W. Bertino, Jr.
Eric J. Fiori
Joseph M. Mitrecic
Diana Purnell

Following a motion by Commissioner Fiori, seconded by Commissioner Purnell, with Commissioner Abbott momentarily out of the room and Commissioner Bertino absent, the commissioners unanimously voted to meet in closed session at 9:00 a.m. in the Commissioners' Conference Room to discuss legal and personnel matters permitted under the provisions of Section 3-305(b)(1), (7), (14), and (16) of the General Provisions (GP) Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to perform administrative functions permitted under the provisions of Section GP 3-104. Also present at the closed session were Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Candace Savage, County Attorney Roscoe Leslie, Public Information Officer Kim Moses, and Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and Deputy Director Pat Walls. Topics discussed and actions taken included the following: a personnel update, hiring Barry Betts, LaQuasia Johnson, and Christopher McMorris as communications specialist trainees within Emergency Services and Tommy Tubbs as a general laborer maintenance worker II within the Water and Wastewater Division; discussing the contents of a proposal; receiving legal advice from counsel; and performing administrative functions.

Following a motion by Commissioner Mitrecic, seconded by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously voted to adjourn their closed session at 9:30 a.m.

Commissioner Bertino was absent from the closed session, but joined the meeting prior to the start of open session.

After the closed session, the commissioners reconvened in open session. Commissioner Elder called the meeting to order, and following a morning prayer by Peggy Briggs of St. Paul UMC in Berlin and pledge of allegiance, announced the topics discussed during the morning closed session.

The commissioners presented commendations to Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) students who took first place during the 2026 SkillsUSA Maryland State Championships and placed among the top 10 nationally, and to Hailey Renshaw for winning the 2026 Future Farmers of America Agricultural Sales Contest.

Commissioner Elder opened the floor to receive public comments.
There being no public comments, Commissioner Elder closed the floor.

The commissioners reviewed and approved the July 21, 2026 open and closed session minutes.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Fiori, the commissioners unanimously approved by consent agenda item numbers 2-17 as follows: approved a revised emergency generator grant funding commitment for Mystic Harbour Well House No. 2; scheduled a public hearing for the Berlin Enterprise Zone redesignation; scheduled Citizen Scrap Tire Drop-Off Day for Saturday, October 3 and Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day for Saturday, October 31; approved an agreement for mobile mammography services at the Snow Hill Health Department; approved the Assateague Island radio frequency use agreement for mutual aid communications; accepted the Beech Tree Place public water and wastewater utilities into the County system; approved renewal of the Water and Wastewater work order system agreement; approved the purchase of two enclosed landscape trailers for Public Works; approved the purchase of a replacement rough terrain vehicle for the Solid Waste Division; approved the lease purchase of a replacement paving compaction roller for the Roads Division; approved a change order for additional corrosion protection work at the Ocean Pines Wastewater Treatment Plant; awarded a contract for overhead door replacements at the Riddle Farm and Mystic Harbour water treatment plants; approved an over-expenditure for emergency heavy equipment maintenance; awarded a contract and accepted a donation for a shade structure at the Newtown Playground; and accepted a donation and approved installation of a shade sail at the Ocean Pines Library outdoor learning space.

Pursuant to the request of Public Works Director Dallas Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously approved the lease of a Caterpillar 303.5 Mini Excavator and Caterpillar 908 Loader for use within the Water and Wastewater Division through the Sourcewell Purchasing Program for \$25,000 per year and \$40,000 per year, respectively.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously awarded engineering services for the Ocean Pines Well No. 2 upgrades project to George, Miles & Buhr, LLC in the amount of \$31,200.

Pursuant to the request of Mr. Baker and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously approved the lease purchase of a Caterpillar 313 Excavator through the Sourcewell Purchasing Program at an annual cost of \$56,600.

Pursuant to the request of Procurement Officer Ed Welch and upon a motion by Commissioner Bertino, the commissioners unanimously awarded the purchase of 72 replacement automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to Stryker Medical in the amount of \$118,910.88. The replacement units will update existing County AEDs that have reached the end of their service life and were procured through a State of Maryland cooperative purchasing contract, which resulted in significant cost savings.

Pursuant to the request of Information Technology Director Brian Jones and upon a motion by Commissioner Purnell, the commissioners unanimously approved an over-expenditure for the County-wide camera system maintenance budget and awarded the annual maintenance contract to Absolute Security.

Pursuant to the request of Human Resources Director Stacey Norton and upon a motion by Commissioner Abbott, the commissioners unanimously approved reclassifying one roads worker III position to an office assistant III position within the Roads Division to improve administrative support and customer service while ensuring continuity of operations. Ms. Norton said the change will have no fiscal impact on the FY27 budget.

In response to questions by Commissioner Bertino, Chief Administrative Officer Weston Young advised that more than 12,000 property owners qualify for the Homestead Property Tax Credit, and there is approximately \$15.2 million in the Budget Stabilization Fund. Commissioner Bertino made a motion for staff to present the commissioners with options at their September 1 meeting to issue a one-time rebate to Homestead Property Tax Credit recipients by distributing the balance of the Budget Stabilization Fund.

During discussion, Commissioner Mitrecic staunchly opposed the proposal, expressing concern that the Budget Stabilization Fund includes substantial revenue generated by nonresident property taxpayers, particularly in Ocean City, and arguing that distributing the fund to Homestead Tax Credit recipients would benefit only a limited segment of taxpayers. He contended that the reserve should instead remain available to address future County needs, including school construction, a new public safety building, water and wastewater infrastructure improvements, and utility projects. He concluded that depleting the fund could result in future tax increases and clarified that he would explore all available options to challenge implementation of this course of action if approved.

Commissioner Abbott suggested expanding staff's review to include other potential uses for the fund, such as debt reduction and contributions toward Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB). In response to questions from Commissioner Abbott, Mr. Young advised that approximately \$2.8 million in the Budget Stabilization Fund had already been designated for the Buckingham Elementary School project. He added that staff would need time to determine the legal and administrative mechanisms necessary to implement any rebate program.

Commissioner Fiori opposed the motion, stating that the Budget Stabilization Fund contains revenue contributed by both resident and nonresident taxpayers. He argued that a rebate limited to Homestead Tax Credit recipients was not equitable, and reducing the reserve could impair the County's financial stability and lead to future tax increases.

Commissioner Elder expressed support for using the funds to provide direct financial relief to resident taxpayers through a one-time rebate. Commissioner Fiori reiterated that limiting the rebate to Homestead Tax Credit recipients would benefit only a small portion of County taxpayers and maintained that the reserve should remain intact for future fiscal needs.

Following the discussion, Commissioner Bertino's motion failed by a vote of 3-4, with Commissioners Bertino, Bunting, and Elder voting in favor and Commissioners Abbott, Fiori, Mitrecic, and Purnell voting in opposition.

Reflecting on the July 21, 2026 public hearing for Rezoning Case No. 453, Commissioner Bunting said that even if the request had not been withdrawn, he would have voted against the rezoning due to the pressure that continued development is placing on MD Rt. 589. He concluded that it is time for the commissioners to act to address those pressures.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Bunting, the commissioners unanimously directed staff to develop language to impose a moratorium on rezoning applications involving upzoning on MD Rt. 589 from U.S. Rt. 50 to U.S. Rt. 113. Commissioner Mitrecic added that the commissioners should seek input from Maryland State Highway Administration officials when they meet with them next week at the Maryland Association of Counties summer conference.

The commissioners answered questions from the press, after which they adjourned to meet again on , 2025.