

April 2, 2024

FY2025 BUDGET WORK SESSION HELD

A budget work session was held on April 2, 2024, at 10:13 a.m., with the following present: Commissioner Ronald H. Fithian, Commissioner John F. Price, and Commissioner Albert H. Nickerson. Also in attendance were Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, and Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance.

Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer, Office of Finance offered an overview of revenues and expenditures and then presented the department's budget. Bryan DiGregory, State's Attorney, State's Attorney Office; Harris Murphy, Administrative Judge, Circuit Court; Cheemoandia Blake, Kent County Board of Elections; Dennis Hickman, Sheriff, Harry Kettner, Captain, and Kim Dixon, Office Manager, Kent County Sheriff's Office; Captain Allan Haniffee, Acting Warden, Steve Wallace, Captain, and Monaca Stickland, Office Manager, Kent County Detention Center; Pete Landon, Director, Office of Emergency Services; Daniel Mattson, Director, Daniel Bitter, Division Chief, County Roads, and Mark Dixon, Maintenance Supervisor, Department of Public Works; Scott Boone, Director, Information Technology; Jill Coleman, Director, Parks and Recreation; Bill Mackey, Director, Planning, Housing, and Zoning; Rosemary Ramsey Granillo, Director, Kent County Local Management Board; Jamie Williams, Director, Economic and Tourism Development; Lisa Mazingo, Director, Kent Family Center; Jim Miller, Director, and Jennifer White, HR Business Partner, Human Resources; and Sondra Blackiston, Clerk/KATE Manager, Commissioners' Office were in attendance. Each agency, department, or division presented its respective FY2025 budget. The Commissioners took a lunch recess at midday and the budget work session ended at 3:23 p.m.

A meeting of the County Commissioners of Kent County was called to order at 6:01 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 remain standing for a moment of silence for the unrest around the world, in gratitude for a beautiful Easter day; and if everyone would keep Pat Merritt, Chief Finance Officer of the Finance Department in their thoughts and prayers, she lost her mother last night.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator, was 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, March 26, 2024
2. Liquor Minutes, March 26, 2024
3. Public Hearing Minutes, March 26, 2024
4. Closed Session Minutes, March 26, 2024
5. Chestertown Volunteer Fire Company, Raffle Only, June 17, 2024
6. Main Street Rock Hall, Raffle Only, August 10, 2024

APPOINTMENT

Proclamation - April 2024 is Kent County Child Abuse Prevention and Child Advocacy Appreciation Month: Shelly Neal-Edwards, Director, Kent County Department of Social Services, gave an overview of Kent County Child Abuse Prevention and Child Advocacy Appreciation Month. Commissioner Nickerson read the proclamation into the record. In attendance along with Ms. Neal-Edwards was Christina Russell, Child Welfare Supervisor, Margaret Allen, Child Advocacy Center Coordinator, Amanda Plummer, Child Advocacy Center Family Advocate, Lindsay White, Child Advocacy Center Forensic Interviewer, Chief Ron Dixon, Chestertown Police Department, and Bryan DiGregory, State's Attorney.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

On a motion by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to go into legislative session.

3rd Read and Vote - Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2024 Short-Term Rental Tax

AN ACT concerning Chapter 152 Taxation, Article III Hotel Rental Tax. For the purpose of ensuring equal treatment of all transient lodging including short-term rentals. By repealing Chapter 152 Taxation, Article III Hotel Rental Tax, and reenacting with amendments Chapter 152 Taxation, Article III Short-Term Rental Tax herein. A public hearing was held for the proposed Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2024 Short-Term Rental Tax. Jamie Williams, Director of Economic and Tourism Development, was present to give a brief overview of the bill and to answer any questions from the Board. Ms. Williams reminded everyone that this is not a new tax being proposed. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the adoption of Code Home Rule Bill No. 3-2024 Short-Term Rental Tax as presented.

On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously agreed to close the legislation session and went back into regular session.

ECONOMIC AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Jamie Williams, Director of Economic and Tourism Development requested a letter of support for the Washington Square Development proposal. Staff has been working with Agora Commercial Realty Advisors since the purchase of the Washington Square Shopping Center. The purchasers have been responsive in attracting new businesses to the shopping center and are working closely with the Town of Chestertown and KRM Development, as adjacent property owners. The Washington Square Development plans include multiple retail stores on the 1st floor and apartment units on the 2nd and 3rd floors totaling 24 apartment units. The total project size will be 30,000 square feet. The Town of Chestertown hearing board reviewed the plans, was unanimously in favor of the development project, and provided the necessary approvals

required to move forward. This redevelopment will also tie together the newly built YMCA, residential community, and Dixon campus all located around the shopping center. An application has been submitted for financial assistance through the Neighborhood Business Works (NBW) Program for the Washington Square Development. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved signing the letter of support for the Washington Square Development, Department of Housing and Community Development Neighborhood Business Works loan application.

PLANNING, HOUSING, AND ZONING

Bill Mackey, Director of Planning, Housing, and Zoning requested approval of Resolution 2024-04, To Allow Temporary Storage Units with Certain Conditions. A Resolution to instruct the Director of Planning, Housing, and Zoning to allow for the temporary placement of shipping containers, which are not addressed in, nor would be subject to, the Kent County Land Use Ordinance, specifically to allow for placement of shipping containers temporarily for storage purposes on properties in Kent County, where such containers are reasonably screened from view by users of adjacent public roadways or public parks, and for which a permit shall not be required; and extending said temporary authorization until further study of storage needs and containers is undertaken. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 2024-04 to allow temporary storage units with certain conditions. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously amended the previous motion to include temporary placement of storage units that would be permitted outside the one-hundred-year-old flood plain.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator: On behalf of the Ethics Commission requested approval to reappoint members John Carroll and Larry Haniffee to serve on the Ethics Commission for another three-year term ending March 31, 2027. Discussion took place. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved reappointing the two members to serve a three-year term ending March 31, 2027, on the Ethics Commission.

TOWN OF MILLINGTON

Millington Senior Village Project: Kevin Hemstock, Mayor of Millington, and Wayne Starkey, Council Member, thanked the Board for their support of the Millington Senior Village project. Mr. Starkey advised the town office received three calls alone today inquiring about the senior housing availability.

Commissioner Fithian read a thank-you letter from the Board addressed to Jacob R. Day, Secretary, of the Maryland Department of Housing for the support received for the Millington Senior Village project. The letter was signed by each Commissioner and placed in

the mail respectively. Both letters received from Secretary Day and the Board's thank you letter were available for review.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Commissioner Fithian read the thank you letter addressed to Secretary Day into the record, no further discussion from Ms. Heller was needed.

At the March 26, 2024, meeting, Mr. James Saunders asked the County to maintain the Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, Worton, Maryland parking lot due to the excessive use of Kent County Public Schools bus transportation. Mr. Yeager requested a letter from the Mt. Olive AME Church Trustees authorizing the County and releasing the County of liability associated with maintaining the parking lot. Staff received a waiver letter from the Board of Trustees for AME Church, which was available for review, and shared with the Public Works department for recordkeeping.

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS

Based on the discussions during the budget session conducted this morning, Commissioner Fithian stated there are funds available this year that will be permitted to be used for a few items/projects that could be done this year and would not be included in the FY2025 budget. The following motions were made regarding these items/projects:

Circuit Court – The Court Smart system needs to be replaced. The current software system is nine years old. To ensure the security of the Court, on a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved \$31,577.00 from contingency funds for the Court Smart system installation.

Office of Emergency Services / Emergency Medical Services – The current personal protective equipment (PPE) in the County's apparatus is expired. A request for \$10,000.00 for the replacement of PPE was presented by Pete Landon, Director of Emergency Services. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved to authorize replacing the expired PPE equipment for \$10,000.00 to be paid out of contingency funds.

400 High Street / Government Center – Three windows are deteriorating and rotten in the government building. A request to repair or replace the windows for \$10,000.00 was received. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved the use of contingency funds for \$10,000.00 to repair or replace the windows at 400 High Street.

400 High Street / Government Center – There appears to be a structural issue in the basement of the government building. It was requested that the Board authorize staff to hire an engineer to evaluate the structural damage. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and

seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioners unanimously approved \$1,800.00 to pay for an engineer's structural evaluation and recommendation to be paid from contingency funds.

Department of Public Works / Water and Wastewater Division – A request for several repairs and expenses in the amount of \$188,675.00 in the department's budget was made, along with a request for a sewer jetter camera nozzle for \$14,065.00. On a motion made by Commissioner Price and seconded by Commissioner Nickerson, the Commissioner unanimously approved to use American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds currently available to pay for those items in FY2024.

LETTERS FOR SIGNATURE

Public Landings and Facilities Board: An interest form was received from a citizen interested in serving on the Public Landings and Facilities Board. Dan Mattson, Director of Public Works received a copy for review.

Social Services Advisory Board: Portia Turner resigned from the Social Services Advisory Board, effective December 21, 2023. The Board sent a letter to Ms. Turner in gratitude for her service.

Workforce Investment Board: An interest form was received from a citizen interested in serving on the Workforce Investment Board. All documentation was sent to Daniel Schneckenburger, Executive Director, Upper Shore Workforce Investment Board for review.

The Commissioners sent letters to citizens expressing gratitude for their interest in serving on a board or committee and for their service.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The procedures for public comment were in effect. Comments were not offered by the public.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

The Board received a copy of a letter dated March 15, 2024, from Matt Godbey, Maryland Department of the Environment notifying the Board the Tidal Wetlands Division received an application from The Wharf at Handy's Point, Inc. 23153 Green Point Road, Worton, MD 21678. The letter and Concept Plan were provided.

Notifications from the Planning, Housing, and Zoning Office were received. An application was received regarding Camp Fairlee, Major Site Plan (Concept Review). An application was received regarding a proposed new convenience store and deli to be located at 10816 Worton Road. The Kent County Planning Commission will review the site plan application during the scheduled meeting, on Thursday, April 4, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

Kate Van Name, Executive Director, Kent Attainable Housing sent an announcement For Immediate Release: Kent Attainable Housing, Inc., was awarded \$810,000.00 in Congressional Funding to address Affordable Housing in Kent County, Maryland. The complete release was available for review.

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. See the above-mentioned approvals for FY2024 ARPA funds.

CONTINGENCY FUND

The FY2024 Contingency balance as of March 5, 2024, is \$235,149.00. The FY2024 use of Fund Balance is \$128,255.00.

CLOSED SESSION

At 6:37 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; and (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.

Shelley L. Heller, County Administrator; Jim Miller, Director, Human Resources; Captain Allan Haniffee, Acting Warden, Kent County Detention Center; Sondra M. Blackiston, Clerk and Lacey T. Cox, Deputy Clerk II, were also in attendance.

MATTER NO. 1: PERSONNEL AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Jim Miller, Director, Human Resources (HR), and Captain Allan Haniffee, Acting Warden, Kent County Detention Center (KCDC), joined the closed session to discuss the below-noted matter.

Topics to be discussed: To discuss current staffing levels and the safety of staff according to such levels and restructuring the daily operation of a safety facility.

Reasons for closing: Personnel safety matters related to staffing capacity and restructuring of the daily operation of the safety facility should be private and confidential.

Tonight's discussion was initiated to hear about the appropriate staffing levels needed for the Kent County Detention Center (KCDC) until a Regional Detention Center (RDC) is constructed and in operation. Acting Warden Haniffee submitted a confidential memorandum with several options for the Board to consider.

At 7:29 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 that dealt with the staffing levels of a facility here in the County. The Board decided to instruct the staff to proceed as discussed.

At 7:30 p.m., on a motion by Commissioner Nickerson and seconded by Commissioner Price, the Commissioners unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting. The Board is scheduled to meet again on Tuesday, April 9, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sondra M. Blackiston
Clerk

Approved:

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

April 2, 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, March 26, 2024.

At 7:30 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, April 9, 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