

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Thursday May 14, 2020**

The special meeting of the County Commissioners was convened virtually at 4:20 p.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Reuben B. Collins II, Esq., President, County Commissioner  
Bobby Rucci, Vice President, County Commissioner  
Gilbert O. Bowling, III, County Commissioner  
Thomasina O. Coates, M.S., County Commissioner  
Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed., County Commissioner  
Mark Belton, County Administrator  
Wesley Adams, County Attorney  
Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

**Call to Order/Pledge**

Commissioner Collins called the meeting to order, and Commissioner Bowling led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Discussion: Governor Hogan's Move to Phase One of Maryland's Roadmap to Recovery and Charles County's Plans for Reopening**

Dr. Howard Haft, Executive Director, Maryland Primary Care Program, Maryland Department of Health; Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Department of Emergency Services; Ms. Lisa Yates, President, Emergency Medical Services Association; Mr. Mark Kaufmann, Fire Chief; Mr. Noel Cervino, President/CEO, Dr. Joseph Moser, Chief Medical Officer, and Mr. William Grimes, Incident Commander, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center (UM-CRMC); Mr. Thomas Blanford, Chair, Charles County Chamber of Commerce; and Sheriff Troy Berry, Charles County Sheriff's Office, joined the Commissioners to discuss implementing Governor Hogan's phase one guidelines of Maryland's "Roadmap to Recovery."

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, reviewed Governor Hogan's order for allowing reopening of certain businesses and facilities subject to local regulation and the interpretive guide.

Dr. Haft explained that based on the metrics used by the Governor to move into phase one of reopening the State, an important indicator was hospital capacity in addition to a decline in numbers. He felt Charles County had the available hospital capacity for a surge protection and the numbers were declining. He also indicated that the virus will be around for a while, but that we need to emerge and still keep the social distancing and use of facemasks.

Ms. Lilly reviewed COVID-19 statistics from the Charles County Emergency Operation Center. She indicated that the weekly summary of new COVID positive and COVID deaths showed a decline. She also reviewed COVID cases in the County versus those in the Senior Care facilities; regional COVID positive case counts; and COVID positive case counts by zip codes. She concluded with a review of the Fire and EMS total incident volume comparison showing a decline as well.

Mr. Cervino, Dr. Moser and Mr. Grimes reviewed information related to UM-CRMC readiness to handle surge capacity, testing, personal protective equipment (PPE), staffing, and system utilization.

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Dr. Moser indicated they were discharging more COVID patients than they are admitting and that they were prepared.

Mr. Blanford shared information on a brief survey that he sent out to today to the twenty-six hundred (2600) businesses in the County. He currently had received one hundred and forty-five (145) responses of which fifty eight percent (58%) were in favor of the County reopening on May 15, 2020.

Sheriff Berry indicated the importance of educating the public of what is required and commended the residents for complying with the proper hygiene requirements, use of PPEs, and social distancing.

Commissioner Bowling felt that if the County chose to do anything different than the Governor's Order to move into phase one reopening it should be based on facts and numbers. He indicated that Prince George's County may be struggling since they had areas of population that are denser which contributes to have a greater number of cases.

In response to Commissioner Stewart's query of legal means to change course if the reopening caused a spike in numbers, Mr. Adams explained that local orders can supersede what is in the Governor's order, but they cannot be less restrictive. The Commissioners could always convene another session if needed. Commissioner Stewart indicated her concern for businesses but ultimately for the health of the residents.

Commissioner Coates expressed her concern about reopening with two (2) days' notice and felt there needed to be time to educate the business community, ensure testing is available and she had regional concerns related to the proximity of Prince George's County. She felt the County should delay opening for two (2) weeks.

Commissioner Collins indicated that this was the right process to hear from the experts but felt it was important to talk about a regional response. He felt that there were a lot of concerned residents, and the County could benefit from continued dialogue and should tie efforts to what Prince George's County does and take a regional perspective.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rucci, seconded by Commissioner Bowling, to reopen with the guidance of the Governor's order to reopen and to monitor progress daily. He also would encourage businesses to not reopen if they did not feel safe to do so. Commissioners Rucci and Bowling voted in favor of the motion. Commissioners Coates, Stewart and Collins were opposed.

A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Stewart-no; Commissioner Rucci-yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Collins-no. The motion failed two (2) to three (3).

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Stewart, Coates, and Collins voting in favor to institute the Governor's order (phase one) beginning on May 29, 2020. Commissioners Rucci and Bowling were opposed. A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Rucci-no; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to two (2).

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Commissioner Collins concluded by indicating that the County will reach out to Prince George's County to collaborate on a response and to look at a more uniquely tailored Charles County Response to phase one. Commissioner Bowling indicated that Calvert and St. Mary's Counties should be included in the collaboration as well.

At 6:07 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adjourn.



Carol A. DeSoto, Acting Clerk



Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President