

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday September 20, 2022**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in hybrid format, virtually and in person, at 9:02 a.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 was absent  
Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed., County Commissioner  
Mark Belton, County Administrator  
Deborah Hall, Deputy County Administrator  
Wes Adams, County Attorney  
Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

**Call to Order/Pledge**

Commissioner Collins called the meeting to order and began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present.

**Announcement of Additional Proclamation(s) Issued in September 2022**

The Commissioners were joined by Mr. Keith Grasso, Island Music Company, to receive Proclamation 2022-61 Rocktober Fest 2022, which is scheduled on October 1, 2022.

**Comments**

There were no comments.

**Monthly Charles County Health Department Update: Infectious Disease and Vaccinations**

Dr. Dianna Abney, Health Officer, Charles County Department of Health; Ms. Michelle Lilly, Director, Department of Emergency Services; Ms. Jennifer Harris, Chief of Media Services, Office of the County Administrator; and Mr. Jason Stoddard, Director of Safety, Charles County Public Schools provided a monthly update on COVID statistics.

Dr. Abney reviewed the current COVID statistics. She reviewed the positivity rate which was nine-point eight one percent (9.81%). The case rate per one hundred thousand (100,000) was thirteen point nine one (13.91). Charles County has the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) lowest case rate in the state. She reviewed death statistics, hospitalization trends, and post-vaccination infection data. Dr. Abney shared vaccination data and reviewed information on COVID-19 booster doses and the timeline to receive them as well as the Charles County booster percentages. She discussed the new Bivalent Booster as well. She discussed the new vaccine, Novavax, which differs from the mRNA or viral-vector vaccines. She also reviewed vaccination and testing site's locations and times. She also discussed the distribution of at home test kits and KN95 masks. Dr. Abney also provided information on Monkeypox (MPX) symptoms, cases, how it is spread and who is at risk as well as statistics on MPX. She concluded her update with the reminder to get the FLU shot this year and every year and tips for healthy habits in the Fall.

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Ms. Lilly indicated that as of June 2022 Emergency Services stopped tracking the virus and relaxed Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) requirements.

Ms. Harris indicated that the County's communication efforts is focused on supporting the Health Department and stay healthy promotions.

Mr. Stoddard provided an update on the schools' take-home tests and PPE available for students and staff, as well as continuing to monitor COVID-19. There have no issues since the schools have been open.

The Commissioners expressed interest in receiving a Health Department Updates bi-monthly or quarterly on all health-related topics but would defer to Dr. Abney's decision.

Dr. Abney informed the Commissioners that she would like to another shorter update next month and then determine how often to provide a "Health of the County Report" to the Commissioners.

**Approval of the Minutes of September 20 and 21, 2022**

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of September 20, 2022.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of September 21, 2022.

**Announcement: Next Scheduled Commissioner Session(s): October 4 and 5, 2022.**

**Reminder: September 28, 2022 Public Hearings at 6:00 p.m. Hughesville Volunteer Fire Department Proposed Bond Issuance and 6:30 p.m. Third Quarter Board of County Commissioners' Town Hall Meeting**

**Briefing: Update on Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland**

Mr. John Hartline, Ms. Melinda Bowling, Ms. Ruthy Davis, Craig Sewell and Mr. Greg Holtz, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, provided an update on the programs provided by the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland. Highlights included fiscal 2023 funding, the summer youth program, Mobile Career Center, business engagement, annual regional hiring events, Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission partnership and work in Charles County, Wheels to Wellness program, heritage partnership with Southern Maryland Heritage Area, and Rural Maryland Economic Fund.

*\*Break 10:51 a.m.-11:04 a.m.*

**Quarterly Update: Chief Equity Officer**

This topic was rescheduled for the afternoon.

**Annual Update: Maryland Association of Counties (MACo)**

Ms. Laura Everngam-Price, President, and Mr. Michael Sanderson, Executive Director, Maryland

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Association of Counties (MACo) provided an update of the 2022 Legislative Session, including transportation funding, affordable housing, Police Accountability Boards, and education. Ms. Everngam-Price reviewed MACo's legislative initiative process.

*\*At 11:26 a.m. Commissioner Stewart left session due to connectivity issues.*

**Closed Session**

Commissioner Bowling requested providing an update related to a personnel issue during closed session.

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, indicated that since this issue related to public safety and personnel, that it would fall in the guidelines for closed session and notification.

At 11:58 a.m., Commissioner Bowling made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Rucci, and Collins present, voting in favor to move into Close Session where all or a portion of this session may be closed pursuant to Section 3-305(b)(1)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to review one (1) lease agreement and to discuss one (1) personnel issue related to Boards and Commissions and one (1) additional personnel issue. The reason for going into closed session is to keep strategies, negotiations and personnel information confidential. *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

**Summary Closed Session Items**

At 12:10 p.m. the Commissioners went into closed session.

**3-305 (b)(7)Agreement: Lease Renewal**

Present Commissioners Collins, Rucci, Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Mark Belton, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, and Danielle Mitchell.

Ms. Deborah Hall, Deputy County Administrator and Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Associate County Attorney, reviewed the lease renewal options agreement.

The Commissioners reached a consensus. Official action on this agreement took place later this day under Approval Items.

**3-305 (b)(1)(7) Personnel**

Present Commissioners Collins, Rucci, Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Mark Belton, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Deborah Hall.

Mr. Mark Belton, County Administrator, Office of Charles County Administrator, announced the newly hired Director of Public Works and provided a copy of his resume.

**3-305 (b)(1)(7) Personnel-BCC**

Present Commissioners Collins, Rucci, Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Mark Belton, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Deborah Hall.

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Commissioner Stewart reviewed her concern related to an appointed member's behavior since he represents the County on a Commissioner appointed Board.

The consensus of the Commissioners was to have the County Attorney send a letter admonishing this behavior and notice that this type of behavior in the future could be grounds for removal from the appointed board.

**3-305 (b)(1)(7) Personnel**

Present Commissioners Collins, Rucci, Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Mark Belton, Deborah Hall, Wes Adams, Carol DeSoto, Deborah Hall.

Commissioner Bowling brought a personnel issue related to public safety to the attention of the Board.

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, indicated that no action is required at this time, and it was just information for situational awareness.

At 12:50 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Rucci and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this close session.

At 1:32 p.m., the Commissioners returned to open session.

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present.

**Approval Items**

*FY2023 Budget Amendment Increase #261 Indian Head Manor Project*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Rucci and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2023 Budget Amendment Increase #261 for four hundred and eighty-four thousand dollars (\$484,000.00).

*FY2023 Budget Amendment Increase #467 Potential Property Acquisition Costs*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Rucci and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2023 Budget Amendment Increase #467 for forty-one thousand dollars (\$41,000.00).

*FY2023 Budget Amendment Increase #470 Emergency Services Replacement of ES-68*

A motion was made by Commissioner Rucci, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2023 Budget Amendment Increase #470 for thirty-six thousand one hundred dollars (\$36,100.00).

*Amendment to the Charles County Pension Plan (CCPP)*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the Amendment to the Charles County Pension Plan (2022-2)

*Agreement- Lease Renewal for Economic Development Department Office*

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the renewal of the lease as presented.

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**Follow-Up Work Session: 2023 Preliminary State Legislative Proposals**

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Associate County Attorney II, Office of the Charles County, County Attorney and Ms. Deborah Hall, Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator for Charles County, reviewed the legislative proposals presented at the September 14, 2022 public hearing. Ms. Mitchell reminded the commissioners that the Charles County Legislative package is submitted to the Delegation by the second week of October.

- A proposal to adopt legislation requiring emergency inpatient psychiatric admission be available in Charles County and every county in Maryland.

**Proposed by: Carol DeHaven, C.N.M., M.S., Inc.**

Mr. Noel Cervino, President and Chief Executive Officer, University of Maryland Charles Regional Medical Center, indicated that this issue was important but that including this legislative proposal was not the best way to get there. He suggested a future discussion with the Board of Commissioners, hospital, and State was needed.

The Commissioners agreed that this will need more follow up work.

- A proposal to adopt legislation that would prohibit an unlicensed establishment from allowing the consumption of alcohol on their premises.

**Proposed by: Charles County Sheriff's Office**

Ms. Mitchell requested that the Commissioners hold deciding on this proposal until the Board of License Commissioners (Liquor Board) can discuss at their October 13, 2022 meeting.

The Commissioners agreed to scheduling this discussion on October 18, 2022.

- A proposal to adopt legislation to prohibit operating unregistered motor vehicles, such as all-terrain vehicles, from being operated on a highway.

**Proposed by: Charles County Sheriff's Office**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Rucci and passed with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package.

- A proposal Heirs Property Rights

**Proposed by Commissioner Stewart**

Commissioner Stewart reviewed her proposal, added today, about heirs' rights to property without clear titles.

The Commissioners directed Ms. Mitchell to research how other jurisdictions handle this and bring back on October 18, 2022.

- A proposal for a Property Tax Credit for Volunteer Emergency Responders

**Proposed by Commissioner Bowling**

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The Commissioners agreed that they will need to work with the delegation to get this legislation from last year, HB1416, to pass.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package.

- A proposal to adopt legislation to legalize golf carts and low speed vehicles on Cobb Island.  
**Proposed by: Faye Hilton, Vice President Cobb Island Citizen Association**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package.

- A proposal to adopt legislation to reduce the speed limits at all Indian Head Rail Trail crossings to 30 miles an hour.  
**Proposed by: Carol DeHaven**

The Commissioners directed Ms. Mitchell to research what State Highway Administration (SHA), and Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) can do. This item will be brought back on October 18, 2022.

- A proposal to adopt legislation to hire 25 Family and Community Engagement Liaisons for Charles County Public Schools.  
**Proposed by: Denise Joseph**

This is being addressed through the Charles County Public Schools.

- A proposal to adopt legislation allowing for a creation of a new Alcohol Gift Basket Retailer to allow for alcohol to be included in personalized gift baskets.  
**Proposed by Yolanda Y. Dupree**

Ms. Mitchell requested that the Commissioners hold deciding on this proposal until the Board of License Commissioners (Liquor Board) can discuss at their October 13, 2022 meeting.

The Commissioners agreed to scheduling this discussion on October 18, 2022.

*\*At about 2:33 p.m. Commissioner Stewart left session due to technical issues.*

- A proposal to adopt legislation that would mandate Public School buses to have adequate air Conditioning that cools the bus to 70 degrees with the maximum number of students, drivers, and attendants on board.  
**Proposed by: Carlos Childs**

This will need to be handled through the Charles County Public Schools. It was suggested that Mr. Childs address this with the Board of Education.

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- A proposal to adopt legislation to have a lead testing study concerning J.C. Parks Elementary and Matthew Henson Middle Schools' students, faculty, and their families.  
**Proposed by: Carlos Childs**

Need to come up with a process for these issues but not limited to just this, a process for Environmental Justice. County will need to explore this more. Will need a future briefing from the Department of Health.

- A proposal to adopt legislation that would change the minimum age requirement for Charles County School Board from 21 years old to 18 years old.  
**Proposed by: Carlos Childs**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Rucci and failed with Commissioners Bowling and Rucci present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package. Commissioners Coates and Collins were opposed. *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Rucci-yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Stewart-absent; Commissioner Collins-no; The motion fails, two (2) to two (2), no majority.

- A proposal to adopt legislation that would mandate a property owner to recognize the rights of tenants to organize a union in any building with 3 or more units or houses that are owned by the same property owner.  
**Proposed by: Carlos Childs**

There was no consensus to include in the legislative package.

- A proposal to adopt legislation to reduce speed on Bannister Circle and allow use of speed cameras.  
**Proposed by: Robin Hoiler, Board of Directors, Bannister Neighborhood Association, Inc.**

This is under County authority and needs to be sent through the Traffic Safety Committee.

- A proposal to amend the Alcoholic Beverages Article to include an "Agritourism License" in Charles County.  
**Proposed by: Sue Greer, Esq.**

Ms. Mitchell requested that the Commissioners hold deciding on this proposal until the Board of License Commissioners (Liquor Board) can discuss at their October 13, 2022 meeting.

The Commissioners agreed to scheduling this discussion on October 18, 2022.

*\*At about 3:05 p.m. Commissioner Rucci left session.*

- A proposal to ensure posting notifications of newly introduced legislation and enacted legislation is sufficient when the bill is posted to an internet website ordinarily used by the public body to provide information to the public.  
**Proposed by: County Attorney's Office**

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The Commissioners directed Ms. Mitchell to update with an amendment to include posting at senior centers, too.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, and Collins present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package.  
*\*Commissioners Stewart and Rucci were not present for the vote.*

*\*At about 3:13 p.m. Commissioner Rucci returned to session.*

- A proposal to provide housing relief for seniors in the form of mandated rent stabilization.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II. Esq.**

Ms. Mitchell was directed to look at Montgomery County's program and reach out to developers.

The Commissioners agreed to scheduling this discussion on October 18, 2022.

- A proposal to define "blighted property" as a sub-classification in the Tax-General Article.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II. Esq.**

This needs to have a more specific definition for sub class definition. Need to work with the Delegation.

- A proposal to create a Housing Trust Fund in Charles County.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II. Esq.**

This is not needed since do not need enabling legislation.

- A proposal to establish a Maryland Commission for Civil Rights office in Charles County.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner President Reuben B. Collins, II. Esq.**

Delegate Davis will address this during the 2023 Legislative Session.

- A proposal to provide a senior resident's tax discount.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Vice President Bobby Rucci**

The Commissioners agreed to scheduling this discussion on October 18, 2022.

- A proposal to require notice homeowners and land owners of the types of businesses being built in the community  
**Proposed by Dr. Karla Kornegay**

Need information for Southern Maryland Association of Realtors (SMAR) on what type of disclosures are included.

- A proposal to require that a reserve of no less than ten (10) active or retired Administrative Law Judges be established by the Office of Administrative Hearings to serve on Trial Boards convened pursuant to



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Public Safety Article 3-101 et. seq. (MD Police Accountability Act), who have been trained in accordance with §3-106.

**Proposed by Wes Adams, County Attorney**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Rucci, and Collins present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package. *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

- A proposal to remove Charles County from the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland  
**Proposed by Commissioner Coates**

Update was given in the morning by the Tri-County Council. Need what the provisions require in State Code. Will review on October 18, 2022.

- A proposal to establish a Revenue Authority  
**Proposed by Commissioner Collins**

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Rucci and passed with Commissioners Coates, Rucci, and Collins present, voting in favor to add to the legislative package. Commissioner Bowling was opposed *\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.* A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Rucci-yes; Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Stewart-absent; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passes three (3) to one (1).

**Quarterly Update: Chief Equity Officer**

*\*This will be rescheduled on October 4, 2022.*

**Update: Commissioners' Goals and Objectives- Goal 3: Environment**

*\*This will be rescheduled on October 4, 2022.*

**Bi-Monthly Update: Western Parkway Roadway Improvements**

*\*This will be rescheduled on October 4, 2022.*

**Commissioner's New Business**

There was no new business discussed.

At 4:00 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Rucci, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Rucci, and Collins present, voting in favor to adjourn.

*\*Commissioner Stewart was not present for the vote.*

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Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President