

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in hybrid format, virtually and in person, at 9:00 a.m. with the following persons in attendance:

Reuben B. Collins II, Esq., President, County Commissioner  
Ralph Patterson, II, M.A., Vice President, County Commissioner  
Gilbert O. Bowling, III, County Commissioner  
Thomasina O. Coates, M.S., County Commissioner  
Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed., County Commissioner  
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. Commissioners Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins were present.

*\*Commissioner Bowling was absent.*

*\*At about 9:24 a.m. Commissioner Bowling joined the session.*

**Recognition: Charles County Department of Emergency Services 9-1-1 Fire/ Emergency Medical Services Communications Center Outstanding EMS Program Award**

The Commissioners recognized members of the Charles County Department of Emergency Services 9-1-1 Fire/Emergency Medical Services Communication Center who received an award as the Outstanding Emergency Medical Services Program by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems for the implementation of its innovative approach to reducing death and disability in the prehospital care field.

**Additional Proclamation(s) Issued for May 2023**

2023-49 National Public Works Week

**Proclamation(s) Issued for June 2023:**

2023-50 Pride Month

2023-51 PTSD Awareness Month

2023-52 Women's Veterans Day

2023-53 Juneteenth Day

The Commissioners were joined by members of the Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and Dr. Dianna Abney, Health Officer, Charles County Department of Health to receive proclamation 2023-50 Pride Month; members of the Charles County Commission for Veterans Affairs to receive proclamations 2023-51 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Month and proclamation 2023-52 Women's Veterans Day; and members of the Department of Public Works to receive proclamation 2023-49 National Public Works Week.

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

**Approval of the Minutes for May 2, 9, 10, 16, and 17, 2023**

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of May 2, 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of May 9, 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of May 10, 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of May 16, 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of May 17, 2023.

**Announcement**

Next Scheduled Session(s): June 13-14, 2023

**Approval Items**

Budget Amendments and Budget Transfers

(Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Director, and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Mr. Martin Harris, Director, Department of Public Works; Ms. Jennifer Harris, Chief of Media Services, Office of the County Administrator)

**FY2023 Budget Transfer Request #322 Zencity Community Engagement Interface**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2023 Budget Transfer Request #322 for sixty-two thousand dollars (\$62,000.00).

**FY2023 Budget Transfer Request #287 To Cover Water and sewer Electricity Overages**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve FY2023 Budget Transfer Request #287 for four hundred and eighteen thousand five hundred dollars (\$418,500.00).

**Request for Contingency Funds: Healthy Families Southern Maryland**

Ms. Dina Barclay, Director, Department of Community Services

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve this contingency transfer not to exceed sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000.00).

**Agreement: Fraternal Order of Police**

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Chief of Budget, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Ms. Alexis Blackwell, Director, and Ms. Megan Donnick, Deputy Director, Department of Human Resources)

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the agreement with the Charles County Fraternal Order of Police giving Commissioner Collins authority to sign this agreement.

**\*\*To Be Rescheduled\*\* Discussion: Options Related to Heirs Legislation SB92**

**\*\*To Be Rescheduled\*\* Bi-Monthly Update: Western Parkway Roadway Improvements**

**Closed Session**

At 9:50 a.m., motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed with all Commissioners 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)(8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss appointments to the Charter Board and Commissioner Committee Assignment; receive one update on one (1) potential litigation issue; discuss one (1) personnel matter; and receive legal advice related to Commissioners' procedures. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep negotiations, strategies, advice, and personnel information confidential.

**Summary Closed Session Items**

At 10:05 a.m. the Commissioners went into closed session.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel- Board Appointment to Task Force**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto and Christina Elkins.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on appointments to the Task Force to Study School Bus Operator Contracts and Wages. Official action took place later this day under Additional Approval Items- Actions on Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel- Board Appointment to Charter Board**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto and Christina Elkins.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on appointments to the Charter Board. Official action took place later this day under Additional Approval Items- Actions on Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

**3-305(b)(7)(8) Legal Potential Litigation**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Terrah Dews, Kyle McGee and Viola Vetter.

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, and Ms. Terrah Dews, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, and Mr. Kyle McGee and Ms. Viola Vetter, Grant & Eisenhofer, reviewed a process for proposed analysis of data and potential future options to be presented to Charles County Attorney's Office for the Board of Commissioners to review related to potential litigation case.

The Commissioners reached a consensus to move forward and begin initial investigation for options and viable claims.

*\*At 11:31 a.m. Commissioner Collins left closed session.*

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

*\*Break 11:33 a.m. – 12:03 p.m.*

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

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Alexis Blackwell, and Kevin Karpinski.

Ms. Deborah Hall, Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator, reviewed request related to an employment contract.

*\*At about 12:07 p.m. Ms. Hall left the closed session.*

Ms. Alexis Blackwell, Director, Department of Human Resources, provided the Commissioners with more detailed information related to the employment contract.

The Commissioners reached a consensus related to this employment contract.

*\*At about 12:19 p.m. Ms. Hall returned to closed session.*

**3-305(b)(7) Legal: Related to Commissioners' Procedures**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Alexis Blackwell, Kevin Karpinski

Mr. Kevin Karpinski, Outside Counsel, Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT), provided an overview of the proposed change to the Commissioners' Rules of Procedures.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on the agreement, Commissioner Coates abstained from this decision. Official action took place later this day under Additional Approval Items-Proposed Amendment to the Commissioners' Rules and Procedures.

At 12:24 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this closed session.

The Commissioners returned to open session at 5:00 p.m.

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present.

**Additional Approval Items**

**Action on Boards, Commissions and Committees**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Commissioner Collins and Commissioner Stewart to the Task Force to Study School Bus Operator contracts and Wages.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to reappoint Claude Humbert and Benjamin Watkins to the Board of Appeals.

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Cheryl Botts as District One (1) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Sarah Hammett as District One (1) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Marjorie Chiles as District Two (2) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Mary Stokely as District Two (2) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Ramonda Davis as District Three (3) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Christopher Harrington as District Three (3) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Eileen Lynch-Britt as District Four (4) member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Gregory Waring as District Four (4) member to the Charter Board. Commissioners Bowling and Stewart were opposed. A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-no; Commissioner Coates-yes; Commissioner Stewart-no; Commissioner Patterson-yes; Commissioner Collins-yes. The motion passed three (3) to two (2).

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Dottery Butler-Washington as At-Large member to the Charter Board. Commissioners Bowling and Stewart were opposed.

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

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

Commissioners Stewart and Bowling clarified that this was not personal but felt that elected officials, such as school board members, should not sit on this board. Wanted to allow more people the opportunity to engage in the process. They indicated that this politicized the process.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint William Smith as Alternate member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint Michael White as Alternate member to the Charter Board.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to appoint James Crawford as Alternate member to the Charter Board.

**Proposed Amendment to the Commissioners Rules and Procedures**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the proposed second amendment to the Commissioner Rules of Procedures as presented. *\*Change highlighted in yellow below.*

***Proposed 2nd Amendment to Commissioner Rules of Procedure***

*Like County employees, Commissioners are required to refrain from intimidating and disruptive workplace behaviors. Charles County is committed to maintaining an environment where all employees and all others who work here are able to work free from discrimination and harassment in any form. Intimidating, coercive and disruptive behaviors contribute to work errors, can demoralize and intimidate staff, may cause good employees to seek new positions in a more professional setting, and are not reflective of the County's values. Discrimination and/or harassment by any Commissioner, in any form, will not be tolerated.*

*Commissioners are also required to refrain from bullying behaviors directed towards County employees and all others who work here. Bullying is a pattern of repeated behavior that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to the County's legitimate business interests. Bullying behavior may take many forms including physical, verbal, or written acts or behaviors. Workplace bullying often involves abuse or misuse of power. A single physical, verbal, or written act or behavior generally will not constitute bullying unless especially severe and egregious.*

*Commissioners should also treat each other with respect and professional decorum. While disagreement with other Commissioners may be a normal part of the political process, there is no justification for any Commissioner to harass, defame, or bully another Commissioner.*

*Any County employee who believes he or she has been subjected to behavior by a Commissioner that violates this policy may file a complaint with the County's Director of Human Resources. The Director will, in his/her discretion, either engage an outside professional to investigate the complaint or arrange for County Human Resources personnel to investigate the complaint.*

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

*The investigator or investigators will interview witnesses and review documents and other information as they deem necessary. When the investigation is complete, the findings of the investigation shall be presented to the Commissioners in a closed session.*

*The Commissioners shall determine whether any action should be taken against the Commissioner or Commissioners against whom the complaint was made. No action may be taken without the unanimous support of all Commissioners who are not the subject of a sustained complaint. Remedial actions available to the Commissioners include, but are not limited to, public censure and/or suspension of the Commissioner's pay for one or more 30-day periods.*

*Commissioners may not engage in any retaliatory action against any person who brings a good faith complaint against a Commissioner. Any act of retaliation shall be deemed a violation of this policy.*

**Public Comments**

Commissioners held an open session to receive public comments on any issue. This agenda item was added for the Commissioners to listen to feedback only, twice each month during their regular meetings.

There were sixteen (16) citizens who provided comments in person and virtually. Four (4) submitted written comments were read.

**Commissioners' Comments**

Each of the Commissioners provided remarks and feedback related to the comments received during the Public Comments portion of the agenda.

Commissioner Stewart:

- Expressed her concern raised about Commissioner Coates' statement that she was threatened by the KKK and stated that no one should be threatened. She was unaware of this threat and asked her colleagues that if a threat like this is received to notify the police and all colleagues,
- Reiterated what Commissioner Collins stated that staff will look into the Smallwood pool issues.
- Development suggestions and she has sent agenda request related to this topic.
- Courthouse, all Commissioners were briefed and will think outside the box to fund the new courthouse.
- Announced her Town Hall meeting on June 8, 2023 at Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center. The topic is public safety.

Commissioner Bowling:

- Agreed that staff will look into the Smallwood pool issues to see if there is anything that can be done.
- These Public Comment sessions important has a variety of comments and great idea to continue moving forward.

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners  
Wednesday May 24, 2023

- Believes that there are things that the County Government has been doing for a long time and need to be fixed. Elected Officials set the tone. But does not believe that there is overall issue or tone related to racism in County Government.
- Should not villainize directors or county administrator because when this issue came up there was a report and four (4) Commissioners agreed that this happened and voted on it. Agreed that residents should be outraged on the amount of taxpayer money being spent on this issue. Nothing has changed since the original vote was taken back then and wants the right thing to be done and avoid corruption.
- There is a second report by an independent investigator. Need to hold elected officials accountable. Doing the right thing.

Commissioner Collins:

- There will be a public process and opportunity for the public to weigh in on large capital projects, like the courthouse.
- The Charter Board process will begin June 1 and there will be ample opportunity for residents to weigh in and express their opinions. All these meetings will be made public and for public engagement.
- Smallwood pool will be looked into.
- Response to the second report is a legal question. He requested that the County Attorney respond.

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, responded to the general process not the specifics of the case. He stated that reports are private under Personnel Law, and a closed session item protected by law. County is operating on the correct legal authority related to this second report. Advises caution in the area of personnel law if to put in open session. If there is a release of information, it should be extremely sanitized more than just omitting names to protect all parties.

Commissioner Patterson:

- Thanked staff for their help and support at his first town hall meeting.
- Will not speak on the second investigation report.
- Will look into pool issues.
- Community Centers and development issues will be looked into.
- Agrees that the Public Comments session is very important.
- Have right to get information, submit a Public Information Act (PIA) request.

Commissioner Coates:

- Thanked everyone for their comments and concerns. Her message then and now is solidarity to bring the community together. She stated that she never ever and reiterated discriminated or had any racial intent against anyone. There was only one side to that first report and that she



**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Wednesday May 24, 2023**

had not given her side. Her press conference was for her to give her side. Wants to move forward, and that she is not stepping down. She is speaking up for her community.

- She stated that she had no problem back then releasing that report.
- She said that Mr. Belton stated that she is not doing this to me because I am white. She added that people know me, and it has to stop. She is speaking to her truth of solidarity and bringing the community together.
- All other issues have been addressed.
- Thanked Ms. Swan, Piscataway Conoy part of her heritage, too.

Commissioner Collins agreed to Commissioner Stewart's request to add a discussion on the Public Comment process to the next agenda.

The next scheduled Public Comment times were announced for June and July.

**Commissioner's New Business**

Commissioner Bowling requested to add to the next agenda a discussion on the Commissioners' Rules and Procedures related to the amendment. When queried by Commissioner Collins to be more specific, Commissioner Bowling stated that it was a violation to the Commissioners' Rules and Procedures and requested it for Open Session, he read from the Commissioners Rules of Procedures Amendment June 9, 2020:

“...Commissioner should also treat each other with respect and professional decorum. While disagreement with other Commissioners may be a normal part of the political process, there is no justification for any Commissioner to harass, defame, or bully another Commissioner. ..”

Commissioner Collins agreed to this agenda request.

At 7:18 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to adjourn.

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Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

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Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President