

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in hybrid format, virtually and in person, at 9:01 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, Acting County Administrator  
Jenifer Ellin, Acting 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. *Commissioners Bowling, Patterson and Collins were in person; Commissioners Coates and Stewart were virtual.*

**Proclamation(s) Issued for March 2024**

2024-11 National Women's History Month  
2024-12 Social Work Month  
2024-13 National Deaf History Month  
2024-14 National Nutrition Month  
2024-15 Good Sportsmanship Month  
2024-16 Irish American Heritage Month  
2024-17 National Vietnam War Veterans Day  
2024-18 National Agriculture Day

The Commissioners were joined by Ms. Kaprese James, Ms. La Tisha Henderson, and Ms. Milka Hailu, Charles County Commission for Women, to receive proclamation 2024-11 National Women's History Month; Ms. Aleata Dawkins, Ms. Elizabeth Orff, Ms. Rachelle Thomas, Ms. Elizabeth Lee, Ms. Markeeta Dixon, Ms. Wanda Collins, Ms. Deborah Guled, and Ms. Jessica Talley, Charles County Department of Social Services, to receive proclamation 2024-12 Social Work Month; Dr. Dianna Abney and Ms. Amber Starn, to receive proclamation 2024-13 National Deaf History Month; Mr. Renaldo Walston, Chair, and members of the Charles County Commission for Veterans Affairs to receive proclamation 2024-17 National Vietnam War Veterans Day; Members of the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism to receive 2024-15 Good Sportsmanship Month; and members of the Department of Economic Development, Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, Charles county Farm Bureau; and Charles County Soil Conservation District to receive proclamation 2024-18 National Agriculture Day.

*\*Break 9:29 a.m. – 9:35 a.m.*

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)**

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present. *Commissioners Bowling, Patterson and Collins were in person; Commissioners Coates and Stewart were virtual.*

**Commissioners' Comments**

*Note: Summary of Public Comments on February 7, 2024 was attached to the agenda.*

Commissioner Collins requested that Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney respond to the comment related to Zoning Text Amendment 22-173 related to the attorney representing the applicant being the same attorney that represent Commissioner Collins in County litigation case.

Mr. Adams reviewed the Ethics Law and that Commissioner Collins representation had already concluded and he opined that there was no conflict of interest.

Commissioner Bowling questioned Mr. Adams about an upcoming issue related to the Aviation Business District topic and if a Commissioner with known business interest would be consider a conflict of interest. Mr. Adams explained that the topic later today was administrative act and not substantive so the Commissioner could vote on it to schedule a public hearing.

Commissioner Bowling queried about the ongoing case with the Commissioners related to the appeal with Commissioner Coates. Mr. Adams explained that once Commissioner Collins and Pattersons cases were dismissed, the appeal is legally against the four (4) Commissioners against the one (1) Commissioner and the Board of County Commissioners action in 2020 survives.

**Approval of the Minutes of February 27 and February 28, 2024**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of February 27, 2024.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of February 28, 2024.

**Announcement**

Next Scheduled Session(s): March 12-13, 2024.

**Legislative Update: 2024 Maryland General Assembly Session**

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Associate County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney; Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Steve Proctor; Mr. Joseph Green; and Ms. Sherrie Simms, Lobbyists, GS Proctor and Associates, Inc., joined the Commissioners to provide an update on the 2024 Maryland General Assembly Session.

The Charles County Legislative Proposals

- HB440 *Motor Vehicle Registration - Exceptions for Golf Carts and Low Speed Vehicles - Cobb Island* Letter of support sent. Hearing on March 7, 2024.

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners  
Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)

- HB972 *Motor Vehicles – Off-Highway Vehicles – Clarifications and Revisions*  
Statewide Bill. Sent letter of support with amendments.
- HB690 *Charles County - Adult Protective Services Review Board - Membership*  
Letter of support sent. Prefers our submitted language.
- HB1321 *A proposal to enact a Parkland Dedication Ordinance to require property developers pay a fee to be used instead of dedicating land (i.e., "fee-in-lieu"), or a combination of dedication or construction of recreational facilities*

The Commissioners reached a consensus to send a letter of support.

- HB687 *Charles County – Governing Bodies of Common Ownership Communities – Member Training*  
Letter of support sent. Hearing on March 8, 2024.

Ms. Mitchell reviewed other State proposed legislation:

- HB974 *Prince George's County - Speed Monitoring Systems - Indian Head Highway PG 306-24*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling to send a letter of opposition but there was no second. The motion failed.

- HB899/SB0691 *Higher Education – Firefighters and EMS Recruitment and Retention – Scholarship and Loan Repayment Assistance*  
Letter of support sent.
- HB1090 *Revitalizing Neighborhoods Through Homeownership Program and Fund – Established*  
Approved sending a letter of support but waiting to cross over to send it.
- SB651/HB882 *Business Regulation - Sale of Motor Fuel - Pricing Signage (Gas Price Gouging Act)*  
Letter of support sent.
- HB1407 *County Tier 1 Renewable Sources – Generating Systems, Capacity, and Generation – Prohibition, Studies, and Plans*

The Commissioners reached a consensus to send a letter to Delegate Wilson and Delegates on the impact this Bill may have on the County and request to consider potential amendments.

- HB692/SB985 *Economic Development - County or Municipality Economic Development Authority - Powers and Use of Proceeds*  
No official amendments; Any changes to the language of this Bill will change the intent of the Bill.

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners  
Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)

Approval Items

Budget Amendments and Budget Transfers

There were no budget amendments or budget transfers.

Request for Congressional Federal Earmark Funds for County Projects/Initiatives

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services; Mr. Jason Groth, Acting Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, and Charles County Sheriff's Office)

*\*At about 10:30 a.m. Commissioner Stewart joined the session in person.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to send these letters.

Request for Letter of Support: Maryland Veterans Museum at Patriot Park (MVM) for Federal Funds

(Mr. Lawrence Abell, Maryland Veterans Museum)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve this letter of support.

Request for Letter of Support: Charitable Trust for Federal Funds

(Ms. Christie Burnett, Executive Director, Charles County Charitable Trust)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to send this letter of support. *Note: will update letter with requested funding amount.*

Request for a Letter of Support: Charles County Commission for Veterans Affairs Support of Veterans' Treatment in the Courts

(Mr. Renaldo Waltson, Chairman, and Ms. Laurie Cangelosi, Secretary, and Ms. Julie Bryson, Vice Chair, Charles County Commission for Veterans Affairs)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to send this letter of support with the amendment to send this letter to also send to Judge Wes; State Attorney Office, and the Charles County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC).

Request for Letters of Commitment: Charles County Resilience Authority

(Ms. Stacy Schaefer, Executive Director, Charles County Resilience Authority)

1. Resilience Forward and Resilience Authority Youth Core (RAYC) Ahead in Charles County: Building Equitable Climate Resilience with Urban Trees (Chesapeake Bay Trust)
2. Resilience Forward – Resilience Authority Youth Core (RAYC) Ahead initiative: Capacity Building for the Resilience Authority Youth and Young Adult Tree Corps and Equitable Climate Resilience (Maryland Department of Natural Resources)

Regular Meeting of County Commissioners  
Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve sending these letters of support.

Lease: United Way

(Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator)

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve this lease and waiver of hold over fee.

Request to Establish February as African American Heritage Month Instead of Black History Month in Charles County

(Commissioner Patterson)

The Commissioners directed staff to bring this topic back after discussions and input from the community.

**\*\* TO BE RESCHEDULED\*\* Briefing and Request to Introduce and Set Public Hearing: Bill 2024-() Short Term Rentals**

**Briefing and Request to Introduce and Set Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2024-(06) Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 22-174 MX Zone Revision of Sections 297-106 and 297-49**

Ms. Techiana Anderson, Planner III, and Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, briefed the Commissioners on the requested zoning text amendment revisions of Sections 297-106 and 297-49 of the Mix Use (MX) zoning. The requested amendment will add a definition of proposed housing, add a new zone purpose, and add language and note for proposed housing. The staff's position is that the maximum substitution of residential uses for commercial uses in the MX Zone can potentially cause a decrease in the commercial land base in Charles County. This is inconsistent with the intent of the Charles County Zoning Ordinance and 2016 Comprehensive Plan. The Applicant has not defined "Housing for Specific Populations." If approved the Applicant, hasn't proposed any conditions requiring a development to provide a minimum percentage of affordable housing.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to introduce Bill 2024-06 Zoning Text Amendment 22- 174 Mix Zone Revision of Sections 297-106 and 297-49.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 6pm in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

**Briefing and Request to Introduce and Set Public Hearing: Proposed Bill 2024-(07) Zoning Text Amendment #23-176 Aviation Business Park and Proposed Bill 2024-(08) Zoning Map Amendment #23-02 Aviation Business Park**

Ms. Amy Blessinger, Planner III, Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Mr. Joel Binkley, Planning Supervisor, and Ms. Cathy Thompson, Assistant Chief of Planning, Department of Planning and Growth Management; and Mr. Taylor Yewell, Chief of Commercial Development, Department of Economic Development, provided a presentation that outlined facts on the Maryland Airport, Economic Development Objectives, the Aviation Business Park Zone background and purpose.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to introduce Bill 2024-07 Zoning Text Amendment 23-176 Aviation Business Park and Bill 2024-08 Zoning Map Amendment 23-02 Aviation Business Park.

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 6pm in the Government Building at 200 Baltimore Street, La Plata, MD to be held hybrid, in-person and virtually.

**Closed Session**

At 12:21 p.m., motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling 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) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss appointments to Commissioner Appointed Boards and Commissions. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep personnel information confidential.

**Summary Closed Session Items**

At 12:30 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel: BCC Appointments**

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

Ms. Carol DeSoto, Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners, reviewed vacancies on eight (8) Boards and Commissions.

The Commissioners reached a consensus and provided directions on these vacancies. Official action will take place on March 12, 2024 under Approval Items- Action on Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

At 12:41 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, 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 2:31 p.m.

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)**

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present. *Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins were in person; Commissioner Coates was virtual.*

**Briefing: FY2024 General Fund Review-Second Quarter**

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, reviewed the FY2024 General Fund Report for the second quarter ending December 31, 2023. He explained that the FY2024 Adjusted Budget includes a thirty point eight (\$30.8) million dollar of fund balance use. Due to favorable revenues, it is projected that nineteen point nine (\$19.9) million dollars will be needed to offset the estimated net operating loss. He reviewed revenues in comparison to September 2023 report; commercial vs. residential property tax; expenditures in comparison to September 2023 report; the fund balance budget and fund balance policy. He also explained that the budget for FY2025 will be more challenging this year.

*\*At about 3:08 p.m. Commissioner Stewart left session and returned at about 3:24 p.m.*

**Briefing: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, reviewed the Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds of thirty-one million seven hundred and ten thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight dollars (\$31,710,758). They provided an update on the plan as of February 7, 2024 with the total obligations through December 31, 2023, total expenditures through December 31, 2023 and unobligated balance. They noted that Revenue Replacement for Career EMS freed up funds for stormwater projects in the Watershed Fund.

**Briefing: Statewide Efforts to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Ms. Beth Groth, Climate Resilience and Sustainability Officer, Department of Planning and Growth Management; Mr. Tom Dennison, VP, Government and Public Affairs and Mr. Jeff Shaw, VP, Distributed Energy & Sustainability, Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) joined the Commissioners to review the Statewide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Reduction Efforts. Their presentation included a review of the Greenhouse Gas reduction/Climate Solutions Now Initiative, the Maryland Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS), and EmPOWER Maryland.

**\*\*TO BE RESCHEDULED\*\* Briefing: State of Recreation, Parks & Tourism**

**Work Session: Bill 2023-12 Removal of Elected County Commissioner**

Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County, joined this work session and provided an overview of Bill 2023-12 Removal of Elected County Commissioner. The bill would create a process for removing an elected County Commissioner for claims of workplace misconduct and mechanisms for filling a vacancy if a Commissioner is removed. She reviewed that the bill was introduced in October 2023 and reviewed a variety of amendments made to the bill, including a provision that added harassment and discrimination as an ethics violation and would require unanimous approval for a Commissioner to be removed from office. The recommendation was to hold another public hearing related to the proposed amendments.

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)**

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and failed, with Commissioners Bowling and Stewart present, voting in favor to schedule a public hearing. Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins were opposed. A roll call of the vote was taken: Commissioner Bowling-yes; Commissioner Coates-no; Commissioner Stewart-yes; Commissioner Patterson-no; Commissioner Collins-no. The motion failed two (2) to three (3).

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with Commissioners Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to end consideration of Bill 2023-12 Removal of Elected County Commissioner. 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).

Commissioners Bowling and Stewart expressed dismay that the three (3) Commissioners would not schedule a public hearing to garner public input. Commissioner Bowling mentioned that the Charter Board indicated that the Charter would allow more accountability and transparency, but this Board of Commissioners could do this now, but is choosing not to. Commissioner Stewart expressed that she was not surprised that a certain group of elected officials would not hold a Commissioner who has done wrong accountable.

**Commissioner's New Business**

The Commissioners reached a consensus to Commissioner Bowling's request to have the Clerk's Office to post the attendance record of the Board of County Commissioners on a yearly basis.

*\*Break 4:14 p.m. - 5:01 p.m.*

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins were present. *Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins were in person.*

*\*Commissioners Coates was absent.*

**Commissioners' Public Comment Session**

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 three (3) people who provided comments in person and no virtual comments. Any written comments received were added to the website for the public to view.

**Summary of Public Comments**

In Person:

- Disappointed in the outcome of the conversation about the legislation for removal of a Commissioner. Also reviewed economic development opportunities and commercial tax bases related to the zoning text amendment for Aviation Business Zone around Maryland Airport.



Regular Meeting of County Commissioners  
Tuesday March 5, 2024 (Legislative Day)

- Discussed Health Care for Charles County Sheriff's Officers once retired. Disappointed he had not heard back from Commissioners Patterson and Collins.
- Discussed claims made from Commissioner Coates and Bruce Branch about her being threatened by the Ku Klux Klan on May 18, 2023. He believes she made false statements since he contacted the Civil Rights Division of the Maryland Attorney General's Office, The Charles County State's Attorney Office and the FBI and no action was reported or taken. Public Officials making false statements about the Ku Klux Clan threatening them is not a crime, but it is outrageous.

At 5:13 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Stewart, Patterson and Collins present, voting in favor to adjourn. *\*Commissioners Coates was not present for the vote.*

---

Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

---

Reuben B. Collins, II, Esq., President