

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday April 30, 2024 (Legislative day)**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in person, at 8:59 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  
Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator  
Wes Adams, County Attorney  
Carol A. DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners

*\* Amanda M. Stewart, M.Ed., County Commissioner was absent for the morning in person portion of the agenda.*

**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 Bowling, Coates, Patterson, Collins were present.

*\*Commissioner Stewart was absent.*

*Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson and Collins were in person.*

**Recognition: Employee Length of Service, January- March 2024; Top Performer, First Quarter (January-March, 2024) and Top Performer 2023**

The Commissioners recognized employees' years of service for January through March 2024. The Top Performers for the first quarter of 2024, Ms. Karolina Krzywda, Office Associate II, Aging & Human Services Division, Ms. Carolyn Savoy, Aging Program Specialist, Ms. Renee Nesbitt, and Ms. Emma Newcomb, Program Assistants I, and Ms. Ashley Caywood, Nutrition Aide, Department of Community Services were recognized.

The Top Performer of 2023, Ms. Kimberly Moyer, Care Manager Aging & Human Services Division, Department of Community Services, was also recognized.

*\*Break 9:14 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.*

*The Commissioners continued the session in a hybrid format.*

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, Collins were present.

*\*Commissioner Stewart was absent.*

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**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday April 30, 2024 (Legislative day)**

**Commissioners' Comments**

Commissioner Collins spoke of the celebration of life he attended for Mr. Robert K Rausch and his contributions to Charles County and requested a moment silence in his honor.

Commissioner Patterson thanked the community for the event hosted at JP Ryon School.

**Approval of the Minutes of April 23 and April 24 2024**

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of April 23, 2024. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of April 24, 2024. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

**Announcement**

Next Scheduled Session(s): May 7-8, 2024

**Approval Items**

**Budget Amendments and Budget Transfers**

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services)

**FY2024 Budget Amendment Increase #617 To Purchase Parcel Adjacent to Pisgah Landfill**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2024 Budget Amendment Increase #617 for three hundred and ninety thousand dollars (\$390,000.00).

*\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

**Change Order # 3 NPDES: Hunt Club Estates/ Bridle Path Stream Restoration**

(Mr. Brian Kagarise, Acting Chief of Capital Services, Mr. Bernard Cochran, Deputy Director-Utilities, Department of Public Works)

A motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve Change Order #3 for a credit of two hundred and twenty one thousand five hundred and twenty seven dollars and seventy eight cents (\$221,527.78). *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday April 30, 2024 (Legislative day)**

**Lease: Stanhaven**

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve this lease agreement. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

**Request: To Light Up Charles County Green During the Month of May for Mental Health Month**

(Dr. Dianna Abney, Health Officer, Charles County Department of Health)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve this request. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

**Action on Boards and Commissions**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Robert Ansell as Citizen Member to the Board of Fire & Rescue. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor to appoint Timothy Hunt as Delegate Member and Edward Godwin as Alternate Member to the Maryland Fire Service Personnel Qualifications Board, Inc. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

**Discussion: Apply for Department of Justice (DOJ) Community Based Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIP)**

(Commissioner Collins)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson, and Collins present, voting in favor apply for this grant. *\*Commissioner Stewart was absent for the vote.*

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

Ms. Renesha Miles, Chief Equity Officer, Department of Human Resources; and Ms. Jennifer Harris, Chief of Media Services, Office of the County Administrator, provided an update and an overview of the plan to meet with the community during the summer months to collaborate on this requested change. Staff will bring back their proposal for approval before February 2025.

**FY2025 Budget Work Session: General Fund Overview and Governmental Capital Improvement Projects Overview**

Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Ms. TaTanya Bowman, Assistant Chief of Budget, Ms. Kelli Sherer, Budget Analyst II, and Ms. Marla Chicwak, Budget Analyst I, Department of Fiscal and

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday April 30, 2024 (Legislative day)**

Administrative Services, met with the Commissioners for a work session on the FY2025 Budget. Mr. Dyer provided a recap of the breakdown of the proposed FY2025 General Budget percentage of the budget allocated to each agency and division compared to ten (10) years ago percentages. The proposed FY2025 budget percentages was based on the Community Budget Engagement Survey results. There was over three hundred (300) responses to this survey, which was more than the number of people who testified at the budget public hearing. Ms. Sherer and Ms. Chicwak continued with an overview of the Special Revenue Funds, which account for certain revenue sources that are legally restricted or committed to expenditures for specific purposes. The work session also included a review of Enterprise Fund, Proposed Vehicle and Equipment List, Proposed New Position List All Funds, and the Tax Differential Comparison Updated Assessment Information.

*\*At about 10:22 a.m. Commissioner Stewart joined the session virtually.*

Commissioner Bowling informed the Commissioners that the Town of La Plata's budget is still unbalanced and is considering increasing the Town's tax rate from thirty two cents (.32) to thirty five cents (.35). He expressed the need for the Town of La Plata to collaborate with the County so the burden of all the new housing in the Town of La Plata does not put the burden on the whole County, such as the Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) agreement the County provided for the development in La Plata off Washington Avenue.

Mr. Dyer informed the Commissioners that any proposed changes to the tax differential would require a public hearing before final adoption of the FY2025 budget.

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 on the Town of La Plata's Tax Differential. 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).

**Closed Session**

At 11:15 a.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Coates 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 an agreement related to a property and a potential agreement/MOU; to discuss a potential litigation matter; and discuss appointments to Boards and Commissions. The reason for moving into closed session is to keep legal advice, negotiations, strategies, and personnel information confidential.

**Summary Closed Session Items**

At about 11:33 a.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday April 30, 2024 (Legislative day)**

**3-305(b)(7) Legal: Discuss an Agreement Related to a Property**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Judy Michaels, Jason Groth, and Victoria Rickett.

Staff reviewed the proposed agreement request from the organization and the process related to proceeding with this request.

The Commissioners reached a consensus for staff to continue the process as outlined.

**3-305(b)(7) Legal: Discuss Potential Agreement**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Dina Barclay, Jason Groth, Jacob Dyer, and Rita Wood.

Staff reviewed the proposed agreement from the business and discussed with the Commissioners impact of this agreement.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on how to proceed and provided staff with directions.

**3-305(b)(7)(8) Legal: Discuss a Potential Litigation Matter**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Elizabeth Theobalds, Charles Rice, Ray Shumaker, and Jason Groth.

Ms. Elizabeth Theobalds, Deputy County Attorney, and Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County reviewed the potential litigation matter and steps the County is pursuing.

The Commissioners agreed with Mr. Adams' overview of how the County Attorney's Office will proceed.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel-Discuss Appointments to Boards and Commissions**

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

Ms. Christina Elkins, Assistant Clerk to the Commissioners, reviewed vacancies on Boards and Commissions with the Commissioners.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on these appointments and provided directions on how to proceed.

Official action will take place on May 7, 2024 under Approval Items-Action on Boards and Commissions.

At 12:46 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 close session.

At about 3:31 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present.

*\*Commissioner Stewart was virtual.*

*Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Patterson and Collins were in person.*

**\*TO BE RESCHEDULED\* Briefing: Feasibility of Logo on Water Tower to Promote the County**

**Briefing: State of Recreation, Parks & Tourism**

Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Mr. Ju'Wann Jones, Chief of Recreation, Mr. Tim Drummond, Chief of Parks and Grounds, and Ms. Ashley Chenault, Chief of Tourism, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, presented the overview of the State of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. It included an overview of projects in process and upcoming projects; usage of services, advertising, programs, services and facilities. The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism is working on moving into a new facility at Centennial Street and bringing broadband and electric service to Mallows Bay. Future development plans include a feasibility study for the Mallows Bay Visitor Center and a long-range functional master plan for the department.

**Commissioner's New Business**

There was no new business discussed.

**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:

- Expressed appreciation for all the town hall meetings but prefers the interactive format and did not like Commissioner Coates' Town Hall format which was government people talking to the people but no real interaction with the people. Concerned that the Commissioners' public Comments is scheduled at 5:00 p.m. which can be a conflict for many people.
- Critical of the Commissioners about her lack of performance and attendance. Questioned the motives of some of the Commissioners and suggested that their focus on pushing for charter is a refusal to govern appropriately. The speaker also raises concerns about the lack of accountability in the charter system and urges the public to retain the current form of government and vote out those who do not show up. The Commissioners provided no response to the public comments on April 9, 2024, Commissioner Patterson refused to deny the allegations, that he insisted on a quid pro quo related to ethics board appointments; he continues to cover for Commissioner Coates; and what is going on with Prince George's investigation of him in the school system. He questioned if Commissioner Collins is endorsing this approach. Appears the Commissioners are not listening to the public.
- Agreed with the previous speaker that Commissioner Patterson should discuss concerns related to his employment in Prince George's County. He discussed Jason Groth's (Acting Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management) comments about the aquifers and believes this misrepresents the issue. Expressed the lack of trust from the community and the insufficiency of the reports and plans presented.

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday April 30, 2024 (Legislative day)**

At about 4:41 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Patterson, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with all the 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