

**Regular Meeting of County Commissioners**  
**Tuesday September 10, 2024 (Legislative Day)**

**Note: Joint Meeting with Charles County Board of Education: Blue Print Law Requirements and Multi-Year Strategic Budget**

Commissioners Coates, Stewart, and Collins; Ms. Deborah Hall, Acting County Administrator, and Ms. Carol DeSoto, Clerk to the County Commissioners, Office of the County Administrator; Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney; and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services, joined Dr. Maria Navarro, Superintendent and staff members, Charles County Public Schools; and the Board of Education members to discuss Charles County Public Schools Educational Financial Forecasting. The meeting concluded with outlining the need for continued work between staff members of the Charles County Public Schools and the Charles County Government Staff. Dr. Navarro also indicated that she would plan a future joint meeting in 2025.

The regularly scheduled meeting of the County Commissioners was convened in hybrid format, virtually and in person, at 2:01 p.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. Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins were present in person. *\*Commissioner Patterson was absent.*

*\*Commissioner Patterson joined session virtually at about 2:25 p.m.*

**Commissioners' Comments**

Commissioner Stewart:

- Thanked Staff for continued updates during the August break.

Commissioner Bowling:

- Reminded everyone that this was the week of the Charles County Fair and that it was the one hundredth (100<sup>th</sup>) year anniversary of the Charles County Fair.

Commissioner Collins:

- Read the following statement:

*“On behalf of the Charles County Board of County Commissioners, I want to provide a brief update to the public on a recent change to the status of the funding for the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit (SMRT) Project.*

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*We recently learned through the release of the DRAFT Maryland Fiscal Year 2025-2029 Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) that the available budget for this project was reduced from its previously funded amount of thirty(\$30M) million dollars to a two point one (\$2.1M) million dollars.*

*This proposed cut is significant and would be devastating to our attempts to bring much need rapid transit to Southern Maryland. The Board is particularly concerned that these cuts are potentially in violation of the State Transportation Article which mandates that:*

*‘The State appropriate these funds to match federal earmarks, so that the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) can PROMPTLY start and complete Environmental impact studying, planning, designing and engineering so that there is a record of decision.’*

*In fact, just this year, Charles and Prince George’s County entered into a partnership with MDOT to complete the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and achieve a record of decision over the next two (2) years.*

*While we understand that the State is attempting to cut costs across state transportation programs, including Development and Evaluation projects, the SMRT project is different because the State Legislature passed a law that REQUIRES the State to fund it under a mandated formula.*

*Currently, that project has thirty (\$30M) million dollars allocated to its budget, which consists of ten (\$10M) million dollars in federal earmarks and twenty (\$20M) million dollars in State budget allocations. Additionally, there is another five (\$5M) million dollars in federal earmarks currently working its way through the federal appropriations process.*

*Just six (6) weeks ago, Senators Cardin and Van Hollen along with Congressman Hoyer were here in Charles County celebrating this latest earmark award of five (\$5M) million dollars, which, once allocated, would require the State to match with additional five (\$5M) million dollars in next year’s budget.*

*In total, once all the earmarks are received, this project should be fully funded at forty (\$40M) million dollars. The Current DRAFT CTP appears out of compliance with the State Statutory mandate that this project be completed promptly. The transportation code contemplated that the State fund this project over a five (5) year period from 2023-2027 and not push it out to some undetermined time in the future.*

*It took years, even decades to get to this point with SMRT, our highest priority transportation project. Completion of the NEPA phase is simply not possible with a two (\$2M ) million-dollar budget. We need to keep these dedicated federal and state matching funds in the transportation plan budget as it is essential for the County’s efforts to build a resilient and sustainable community where every resident can thrive. On behalf of our County’s Government and all of our residents, I urge state leaders to revise the draft transportation plan, because we are not just building infrastructure for Charles County with this rapid transit project – we are building a brighter future for all of Southern Maryland and our entire community.”*

**Approval of the Minutes of July 23, 2024**

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the minutes of July 23, 2024. \*Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.

**Announcement**

Next Scheduled Session(s): September 17-18, 2024.

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Approval Items

Budget Amendments and Budget Transfers

(Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative; Mr. Jason Groth, Acting Director, and Ms. Catherine Reisinger Deputy Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management; Ms. Jenifer Ellin, Acting Deputy County Administrator, Office of the County Administrator; and Mr. Martin Harris, Director, Mr. Bernard Cochran, Deputy Director-Utilities, and Ms. Samuel Walter, Program Manager-Utilities, Department of Public Works)

FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #368 Carryover Contract Charter Board Media Campaign

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates but there was no second. The motion died.

FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #537 Department of Planning and Growth Management Carryover Contract Services Budget

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to FY2025 Budget Amendment Increase #537 for eighty-seven thousand one hundred dollars (\$87,100.00)

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

FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #648 Detention Center Pump Station Rehabilitation Project

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve FY2025 Budget Transfer Request #648 for two hundred and twenty-eight thousand five hundred dollars (\$228,500.00). *\*Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Health Department FY2025 CORE Funding Agreement - Revised

(Dr. Diana Abney, Health Officer, and Ms. Karen Waldbauer, Charles County Health Department)

A motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, seconded by Commissioner Bowling and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve this revised agreement and allow Commissioner Collins to sign this agreement. *\*Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

Approval: FY2026 Budget Calendar

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

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, and Collins present, voting in favor to approve the FY2026 Budget Calendar. *\*Commissioner Patterson was not present for the vote.*

*At about 2:25 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session virtually.*

Letter: Deer Cooperator Permit Letter-Schlager Farms

(Mr. Russell Schlager, Schlager Farm and Ms. Danielle Mitchell, Assistant Deputy County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney, Charles County)

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

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*Request: The Legacy of Honor Project to Display a Missing Man Table (POW/MIA) on September 20, 2024*

(Commissioner Collins)

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to approve this request.

Commissioner Bowling indicated that he would be submitting an agenda request about the lost World War II soldier's remains that were brought home in the County.

*Discussion: Proposed Suspension on Park and Recreation Fee(s) Increase*

(Commissioner Bowling, Ms. Kelli Beavers, Director, Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Mr. Ju'Wann Jones, Chief of Recreation, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism; and Mr. Jacob Dyer, Acting Director, Department of Fiscal and Administrative Services)

The Commissioners agreed with staff's recommendation to bring this item back in late winter of 2024 or Spring of 2025 with options related to these amenities. Staff indicated that they would begin the process of a deep dive into all the fees for Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.

*\*At about 3:01 p.m. Commissioner Patterson joined session in person.*

**Briefing and Request to Introduce: Proposed Bill 2024-(13) Zoning Text Amendment 24-184**  
**Additional Transitional Provisions for the Waldorf Activity Center Zones**

Ms. Amy Blessinger, Planner III, Ms. Cathy Thompson, Assistant Chief of Planning, and Mr. Charles Rice, Planning Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management explained that this proposed Bill would create new five-year transitional provisions to modify specific zoning requirements in the Waldorf Central Zone and Action Urban Center Zone in the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor (WURC). Provisions include modifying mixed-use building requirements and removing requirements to purchase Transferable Development Rights (TDRs). The changes would be re-evaluated towards the end of the five-year period. Revisions would also be made to improve the clarity of the zoning requirements.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to introduce Proposed Bill 2024-(13) Zoning Text Amendment 24-184 Additional Transitional Provisions for the Waldorf Activity Center Zone.

A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Patterson and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to schedule the public hearing on Tuesday, October 29, 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 3:12 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Stewart, 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)(7)(8) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland to discuss a settlement agreement; to review a contract

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agreement; to discuss a lease agreement; and to review vacancies on Commissioner appointed 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 3:22 p.m., the Commissioners went into closed session.

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

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

Mr. Wes Adams, County Attorney, Office of the County Attorney for Charles County provided an update on a potential litigation settlement agreement.

The Commissioners reached a consensus to continued authority and opt in on this settlement agreement.

**3-305(b)(3)(7) Contract Agreements**

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

Staff reviewed the contract agreements

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

**3-305(b)(7) Lease Agreement Amendments**

Present: Commissioners Bowling, Coates, Stewart, Patterson, and Collins, Wes Adams, Deborah Hall, Carol DeSoto, Jenifer Ellin, Danielle Mitchell, Elizabeth Theobalds, and Jennifer Harris

Staff reviewed the information related to this lease and improvement requests.

The Commissioners reached a consensus to move forward with this lease agreement amendments and improvements options.

**3-305(b)(1) Personnel: Discuss Appointment on a Commissioner Appointed Board**

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

Ms. Carol DeSoto, Clerk to the Commissioners, reviewed vacancies on Commissioner appointed Boards and Commissions.

The Commissioners reached a consensus on these appointments. Officially action will take place on September 17, 2024 under Additional Approval Items- Action on Boards and Commissions.

At 3:56 p.m., a motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Coates and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to end this close session.

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At about 4:02 p.m. the Commissioners returned to open session.

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present in person.

**Update: Goals and Objectives- Quality of Life**

Ms. Kelli Beavers, Director, Mr. Sam Drury, Deputy Director, Mr. Tim Drummond, Chief of Parks, Ms. Ashley Chenault, Chief of Tourism, Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism; Ms. Dina Barclay Director, Ms. Laura Gustafson, Deputy Director, Department of Community Services; and Ms. Cathy Thompson, Assistant Chief of Planning, Mr. Jeffrey Barnett, Chief of Transit, and Mr. Jason Groth, Acting Director, Department of Planning and Growth Management, updated Commissioners on how their departments are working to improve the Quality of Life in Charles County. This included housing programs, recreation programs and improvements to park facilities, aging and human services programs, VanGo transit program, and tourism programs.

**Commissioners' New Business**

There was no new business discussed.

*\*Break 4:54 p.m. – 5:04 p.m.*

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present in person.

**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 four (4) people who provided comments in person and one (1) person who provided virtual comments. Any written comments received were added to the website for the public to view.

**Summary of Public Comments**

**In Person:**

- Speaker informed the Commissioners that residents were watching them and had concerns with the lack of leadership displayed by Commissioner Coates, Patterson and Collins. Also requested that the Commissioners revisit the legislation for the removal of a Commissioner.
- Speaker shared information related to the Charter Board and the members out in public to answer questions. He expressed concerns related to Commissioner Bowling's comments on social media and signs related to "NO Charter."
- Speaker questioned the Commissioners on their feedback policy during public comments and again requested the Commissioners to elaborate on their decisions and voting choices and specific comments they make in public.

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- Speaker expressed gratitude for funds used for the Sears building; requested better coordination of individual town hall meetings; and requested to revisit the legislation to remove a Commissioner.

**Virtual:**

- Speaker expressed frustration with lack of representation from certain Commissioners and lack of information.

*\*Break 5:23 p.m. – 6:02 p.m.*

**Roll Call**

A roll call was taken. All Commissioners were present in person.

**Public Hearing: 2025 Preliminary State Legislative Proposal**

The Commissioners were joined by the Charles County Delegation to hear legislative proposals for the 2025 State Legislative Session. Commissioner Collins explained that no action would be taken tonight. The follow up work session will be scheduled on September 24, 2024.

- A proposal to adopt legislation to deter squatter/trespassers.  
**Proposed by: Robin Woods**
- A proposal to amend the Maryland Homeowners Association Act.  
**Proposed by: Gloria Sawyers**
- A proposal to provide flexibility for intrafamily transfers in the Tier 4 septic zone.  
**Proposed by: Cooper Raleigh**
- A proposal to provide certain minimum notice to school bus companies before terminating their contract.  
**Proposed by: Mark Koch, President Charles County School Bus Contractors Assoc.**
- A proposal to make mini golf exempt from Charles County Admission and Amusement tax.  
**Proposed by: Doug Roth of Scary Strokes**
- A proposal to rename the stadium alcoholic beverage license and allow for sale and consumption throughout the stadium.  
**Proposed by: David Martinez, Esq.**
- A proposal to remove the required petition of support for applicants for an alcoholic beverage license.  
**Proposed by: Kathleen Quade, Chair Board of License Commissioners**
- A proposal to amend the process for trial boards in connection with sustained complaints of police misconduct.  
**Proposed by: Granville Johnson, Chairman Police Accountability Board**

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- A proposal to exclude certain complaints of police misconduct involving vehicle collisions from the review of the administrative charging committee.  
**Proposed by: Granville Johnson, Chairman Police Accountability Board**
- A proposal to prohibit chiefs of law enforcement agencies from providing their recommendation for lesser discipline to police officers when making an offer of discipline based upon the administrative charging committees' findings of a sustained charge of police misconduct.  
**Proposed by: Granville Johnson, Chairman Police Accountability Board**
- A proposal to allow county employees commissioned as special police officers to use their police powers to protect elected officials and employees.  
**Proposed by: Central Services Division Charles County Government**
- A proposal to dissolve the gaming permit review board.  
**Proposed by: the Office of the County Attorney/Clerk to the Board of County Commissioners**
- A proposal to require identification or satisfactory proof of identification so that a police officer may issue a citation for the violation of smoking cannabis in public.  
**Proposed by: Charles County Sheriff's Office**
- 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 proposal for state funding to support a public-private partnership for school construction to address space needs of full day prekindergarten under the Blueprint.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal for state funding to support a county sidewalk program to enhance the walkability of the Waldorf Urban Redevelopment Corridor (Old Washington/Leonardtown Rd)  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal to create Urban Bike Trail to connect the existing Indian Head Rail Trail to various destination on or near the Potomac River and points north, terminating at National Harbor.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal to commit state resources to the development of a ferry service connecting Indian Head to National Harbor and Alexandria, VA.  
**Proposed by Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal for enabling legislation to establish a classification of real property known as "blighted property" and to implement a higher property tax rate on that class of properties.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal seeking state funding to establish a mentorship program designed to reduce violent acts committed by and against the youth of Charles County.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**



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- A proposal seeking state funding to create real-time crime centers.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal seeking state funding to support the creation of murals throughout the county.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal seeking state funding to support the creation of an application competition.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**
- A proposal seeking state funding to assist with the creation of a housing trust fund.  
**Proposed by: Commissioner Collins**

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to keep the public record open until September 20, 2024.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bowling, seconded by Commissioner Stewart and passed, with all Commissioners present, voting in favor to close this public hearing

At 9:14 p.m. A motion was made by Commissioner Coates, seconded by Commissioner Bowling 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