

COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY

WORK SESSION MINUTES

December 16, 2025

OPEN SESSION – Elk Room

4:30 P.M.

NOTE: The recording and transcription of this meeting are available on the County website at www.cecilcountymd.gov

PRESENT: Council Members: Robert Meffley, Rebecca Hamilton, Al Miller and Dawn Branch; Council Manager L. Michelle Henson; Council Assistant Christine Palmer; members of the Administration and members of the public.

Call to Order

President Miller called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. and announced that there were four Council Members present which constitute a quorum.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilwoman Hamilton, seconded by Councilwoman Branch, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of December 2, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations

Briefing – Conowingo Dam Water Quality Certificate – Adam Ortiz, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment

Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Deputy Secretary Adam Ortiz stated the purpose of his appearance was to provide a briefing regarding the status of the Water Quality Certificate (WQC) issued for the Conowingo Dam (the dam).

Deputy Secretary Ortiz thanked Council for inviting him to the meeting to discuss the WQC.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz stated MDE conducted negotiations with Constellation Energy (Constellation), owner of the dam, to determine Constellation's role in attaining MDE's goal of clean water from the dam to the Chesapeake Bay. He stated Constellation agreed to invest \$341 million in cleanup efforts, including dredging, stream bed and shoreline stabilization, living shore line projects, invasive species removal and initiation of fresh water mussel habitats. He stated that the settlement of \$341 was an increase from the financial requirements of the previous WQC.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz expressed his recognition of the importance of dredging, noting that the area presented physical challenges to operation of dredging equipment.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz noted that while Constellation stated the responsibility for silt deposits at the dam belonged to entities upstream in Pennsylvania, \$19 million was earmarked for a dredging feasibility study.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz announced the creation of an advisory work group to include MDE and stakeholders to develop a path forward.

MDE Wetlands and Waterways Deputy Program Manager Heather Nelson stated that the Susquehanna River provides 50% of the fresh water to the Chesapeake Bay.

Deputy Program Manager Nelson stated that a WQC was issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) in 2017 but was challenged and subsequently revised in 2018. She stated a revised WQC was issued in 2025 and has since been challenged.

Deputy Program Manager Nelson stated that the 2025 WQC requires sediment control measures and dredging, which was not included in the 2018 version.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz noted that the State of Maryland is committed to reaching a settlement agreement regarding the WQC, reiterating the importance of input from stakeholders.

Vice President Meffley, referring to the planned dredge feasibility study, stated that the Clean Bay Coalition previously obtained core samples of the material and identified vendors who expressed interest in obtaining the material.

Vice President Meffley, referring to Gov. Moore's announcement in May, 2025 regarding the planned dredge feasibility study, stated that water quality will be improved upon removal of the material behind the dam.

Vice President Meffley expressed concerns regarding Port Deposit and the length of time it is taking to reach a solution. Deputy Secretary Ortiz stated formation of an advisory workgroup will assist in moving toward implementation of dredging.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz noted that some barriers to dredging are engineering challenges, disposal of dredge materials and how to maintain the area behind the dam.

Deputy Program Manager Nelson noted that funds will become available once FERC issues the final WQC for the dam.

Councilwoman Branch stated she attended a meeting with MDE representatives and other stakeholders during the recent Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Winter Conference, during which it was noted that initiation of dredging could take up to 6 years. She stated the dam is 100 years old, and expressed concerns for Port Deposit, Perryville and other downstream areas that are impacted by the dam.

Councilwoman Branch expressed appreciation to Deputy Secretary Ortiz and Deputy Program Manager Nelson for attending the Work Session, adding her desire to address the issues at the dam as soon as possible.

President Miller opened the floor to members of the audience who wished to speak.

Mr. Wayne Tome, Sr., President of the Water Witch Fire Department, expressed concerns regarding dwindling grant opportunities to assist first responders with acquisition of equipment for rapid-water rescue operations.

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger expressed appreciation to Deputy Secretary Ortiz and Deputy Program Manager Nelson for attending the Work Session.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger noted that 6% of the funding identified in the 2025 settlement agreement is allocated to dredging, adding that dredging of the material behind the dam is most important to Cecil County. He expressed his agreement with Council regarding the need to address the dam without delay.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger queried why dredging payments are spread over 50 years. Director of Administration Schneckenburger questioned the initiation of fresh water mussel habitats, stating that Cecil County is more concerned about the demise of oysters.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger provided copies of letters from municipalities and Artesian Water regarding impacts associated with the dam, noting that Harford County Government has expressed interest in joining with Cecil County to obtain a resolution.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that all shore counties should be included in discussions regarding the WQC and operations at the dam.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz, referring to Director of Administration Schneckenburger's query regarding fresh water mussels, stated that mussels are proven to help with water quality, adding that the fresh water mussel habitat and stream bank stabilization operations will be funded upfront.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz stated that the \$19 million allocated for dredging is a baseline fee, adding that the payments are spread over 50 years because the dredge effort must be sustained over several decades.

President Miller noted that material from the dam was previously utilized for a sod farm, which was successful.

President Miller noted that Pennsylvania has initiated Best Management Practices (BMP's) which will eventually lower silt deposition at the dam.

Rick Garber, Senior Director of Programs and Partnerships for North Bay Education stated the facility is a large public / private partnership for environmental education. He stated that North Bay's operations are hampered by debris that travels downriver from the dam, adding that a North Bay employee spends 6 hours per week removing debris in order for students to conduct their environmental investigations. He added that North Bay's research vessel is consistently hampered by debris.

Senior Director Garber expressed his concern that a major storm event will have a devastating effect on the Bay and the striped bass industry.

Senior Director Garber expressed appreciation for discussions between Cecil County and MDE.

President Miller, noting that Constellation is required to remove debris from the river, expressed concerns that the company is not performing this task effectively.
President Miller expressed appreciation to all in attendance.

Vice President Meffley stated his recognition that Constellation is not to blame for the buildup of material at the dam, adding that the problem belongs to everyone, and requires cooperation to address the issue.

Vice President Meffley stated that he has been involved in this issue for many years and expressed appreciation to all in attendance.

Deputy Secretary Ortiz expressed his desire to convene a working group, adding his hope to bring Constellation and representatives of Pennsylvania to the discussion.

Animal Services Update – Director of Community Services David Trolio, Director of Animal Services Abigail Bingham, Animal Welfare Enforcement Officer Daniel Puhalski

Director of Community Services David Trolio stated Animal Services has been a division of Cecil County Government for 10 years as of June 30, 2025, adding that the number of animal intakes increased substantially in that timeframe.

Animal Welfare Enforcement Officer Daniel Puhalski provided an overview of the response process, stating that Animal Services responds to calls regarding domestic and non-domestic animals.

Officer Puhalski stated that Animal Welfare Enforcement Officers are required by the State of Maryland to obtain certification as Animal Control Officers, adding that the training is provided as part of Animal Services' onboarding of new Officers. He noted that Animal Welfare Enforcement Officers will also participate in customer service / de-escalation training.

Officer Puhalski stated that Animal Services is generally associated with dogs and cats, adding that Animal Services also responds to non-domestic animals. He stated Animal Services also conducts community outreach regarding livestock.

President Miller, referring to the dangers of Avian Flu, expressed concerns that State agencies do not participate in Animal Services' investigations of small chicken flocks.

Director Trolio stated that the County's Animal Services Ordinance is currently under review, adding that the last significant change occurred in 2012. He stated that the group reviewing the current Ordinance includes representatives from the Sheriff's Office, Office of the State's Attorney, Animal Services and the County's Legal Department.

Director Trolio stated Animal Services is developing policies for new body-worn cameras which will be utilized by Animal Welfare Enforcement Officers.

Director of Animal Services Abigail Bingham stated that Animal Services works to honor the bond between humans and their animals. She stated the goal is to help people keep their pets, adding that Animal Services provides a pet food pantry that operates 24 hours per day throughout the year. She stated that Animal Services provides a Pet Haven, which provides 30 days of free boarding for a pet whose owner is experiencing issues and is unable to take care of the pet.

Director Bingham stated that the Maryland Department of Agriculture provides grant funding for spay / neuter programs.

Vice President Meffley commended the services provided by Animal Services and the many volunteers who work at the facility, adding that he receives consistent, positive feedback.

Review of Legislative Agenda

a. Introduction of Bills

- 1) Bill No. 2025-01 Amendment – Cecil County Code – Chapter 110 – Taxing District, Special – Stormwater Management Facility Maintenance Districts

Director of Public Works Scott Flanigan stated that the County operates stormwater management (SWM) under a State-issued Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit.

He stated the parameters of the permit include control measures that include inspection and management of public and privately-owned SWM facilities.

Director Flanigan stated that several SWM facilities owned by Homeowners Associations (HOA's) are in various states of non-compliance with MS4 regulations, which could lead to regulatory impacts on the County. He noted that MDE requested a list of SWM facilities that are currently out of compliance, adding that this is the first time the County has received a request of this type. Stormwater Management Division Chief Van Funk stated that many privately owned SWM facilities are out of compliance, adding that the goal of his division is to increase voluntary maintenance by SWM facility owners.

Director Flanigan stated that the Cecil County Code (the Code) provides for the County to repair privately owned SWM facilities and recover the costs via tax lien. He stated this process is lengthy and can lead to issues when a property is placed for sale.

Director Flanigan stated the Code provides for creation of Special Taxing Districts, adding that a SWM Special Taxing District would provide an avenue for the County to collect and retain funds for maintenance and repair of privately owned SWM facilities.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if a timeframe for completion of privately owned SWM facility maintenance and repair was established. Director Flanigan stated that he could not provide a specific timeframe, adding that the goal is to encourage voluntary participation in SWM facility maintenance and repair.

Councilwoman Hamilton stated that the County provided the labor associated with maintenance and repair of SWM facilities and queried how the County covers its costs. Director Flanigan stated the option of placing a lien upon the property was a long process, adding that a Special Taxing District eliminates the potential of placing an encumbrance on the land.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried the length of time a Special Tax District would be in place. Director Flanigan stated that Council would determine establishment of and the length of time that a Special Taxing District would remain in place.

Vice President Meffley requested a template to identify the process and timeframe that included inspection, notice of violation and estimated time for repair. Director Flanigan concurred.

President Miller noted that several departments, including MDE and Soil Conservation are involved in SWM issues. Director Flanigan answered in the affirmative, stating that the Department of Public Works is responsible for enforcement.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that several discussions were held prior to bringing the Bill to Council. He stated that County Administration does not want to use taxpayer funds to address a group of owners who do not maintain their SWM facilities, adding that a Special Taxing District provides targeted income for the County to conduct maintenance and repairs.

Councilwoman Hamilton, referring to notes regarding civil and criminal penalties, queried if fines would be applied to the HOA or residents. Director Flanigan stated that MDE holds the permittee, in this case Cecil County, responsible for enforcement of MS4 permit requirements, and would therefore fine the County for violations.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried the number of Special Taxing Districts that would be created in the first year. Division Chief Funk stated his estimation that 3 – 5 Special Taxing Districts would be created in the first year.

Director Flanigan stated the County currently has \$500,000 budgeted for maintenance and repair of privately owned SWM facilities, stating the limitations of funding would result in taking several years to address all facilities in need of attention.

b. Introduction of Resolutions

1) Resolution No. 82-2025 – Appointment – Administrative Charging Committee – Devon Perry
Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger stated Resolution No. 82-2025 fills a vacancy left by William Cain, who resigned prior to completing training for this committee. He stated that

Mr. Perry currently serves on the Police Accountability Board and has completed the training required for Administrative Charging Committee members.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if Mr. Perry also serves on the Board of Appeals. Director Schneckenburger answered in the affirmative.

2) Resolution No. 83-2025 – Appointment – Board of Electricians – Frederick Craig, Jr.
Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated Resolution No. 83-2025 fills the last remaining vacancy on this Board.

b. Consideration of Resolutions

1) Resolution No. 81-2025 – Approval – Nuisance Flooding Plan 2025-2030
Director of Land Use and Development Services (LUDS) Stephen O'Connor stated that Resolution No. 81-2025 was introduced on December 2nd, adding that the Planning Commission recommended approval of the Nuisance Flooding Plan 2025-2030 (the Plan) with 3 additions. Councilwoman Hamilton queried if Council's approval of Resolution No. 81-2025 would disregard the Planning Commission's recommended additions. She queried if Resolution No. 81-2025 should be amended to include the Planning Commission's recommendations. Council Manager Henson suggested that LUDS incorporate the Planning Commission's recommendations into the Plan, adding that consideration of Resolution No. 81-2025 should be deferred to an upcoming meeting.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Henson stated the report was included in the Council's meeting packet.

Council Member Items

Council deferred Council Member Items to the Legislative Session.

Adjournment

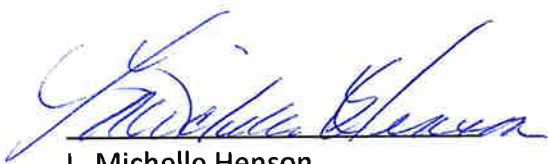
President Miller requested a motion to adjourn the Work Session.

Councilwoman Branch made motion to adjourn the Work Session, which was seconded by Vice President Meffley.

President Miller adjourned the work session at 6:46 pm.

The next County Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, January 6, 2026 at 4:30 pm in the Elk Room of the County Administrative Building. The session will be livestreamed on the County Council's webpage at www.cecilcountymd.gov

Approved:



L. Michelle Henson
Council Manager


Al Miller, Council President