

COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY.

WORK SESSION MINUTES

January 20, 2026

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, Donna Culberson 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 five Council Members present which constitute a quorum.

Approval of Minutes

On a motion made by Councilwoman Hamilton, seconded by Councilwoman Culberson, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of January 6, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations

Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #143

Cecil County Public Schools (CCPS) Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Denise Sopa presented CCPS Budget Amendment #143.

CFO Sopa stated Budget Amendment #143 was approved by the Board of Education in December for the month of November 2025.

CFO Sopa reviewed restricted and unrestricted revenues which included donations from community groups, the Health Department, Federal and State grants and student activity events. She noted that some items had been cut at the Federal level and subsequently reinstated.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the Title 1 Coordinator is a temporary position. CFO Sopa answered in the negative, stating that the Title 1 Coordinator is a budgeted position.

Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #144

CFO Sopa presented CCPS Budget Amendment #144, which she noted is subsequent to Budget Amendment #143.

CFO Sopa reviewed restricted and unrestricted revenues which included donations from community groups, the Health Department, Federal and State grants and student activity events. CFO Sopa stated that Budget Amendments #143 and #144 provide 3-year comparisons and the percentage of budget that each department has expended.

Councilwoman Culberson queried a \$318,000 expense on the Community Services line. CFO Sopa stated that Concentration of Poverty funding is budgeted into and drawn from the Community Services account.

Andrew Ondish, Deputy Director of Finance

Monthly Review of County Contracts – November 2025

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish provided the Monthly Review of County Contracts in excess of \$100,000 for November, 2025 pursuant to County Charter Section 516. A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Deputy Director Ondish reviewed expenses incurred during the month of November 2025, including contracted services under Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), equipment, and emergency repairs.

Councilwoman Culberson requested that all CIP related expenses include their assigned Project Number.

Monthly Review of County Contracts – December 2025

Deputy Director Ondish reviewed expenses incurred during the month of December 2025, including CIP's and Microsoft software licensing.

President Miller queried if the Port Deposit Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) expansion was specifically related to Bainbridge development. Deputy Director Ondish stated his uncertainty that WWTP expansion was specifically related to Bainbridge development, adding that any development specifically at Bainbridge was to attract business to the area.

Vice President Meffley queried if right-of-way acquisitions associated with the Belvidere Road project utilized grant funds that were previously received from the Upper Shore Regional Council (USRC). Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that funds for right-of-way acquisitions associated with the Belvidere Road Project were separate from previously received grant funds from USRC. Deputy Director of Finance Ondish stated that the USRC grant funds were utilized for construction costs associated with the Belvidere Road Project. Director of Public Works Scott Flanigan noted that the USRC grant has been fully drawn down.

Financial Update – 2nd Quarter Fiscal Year 2026

Deputy Director of Finance Ondish advised Council that the 2nd Quarter Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) report was created via the County's new OpenGov software, noting the improved efficiency of data collection and reporting. A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Deputy Director Ondish noted that expenses and revenues were tracking similarly to the second quarter of the previous fiscal year. He stated the reason that Property Tax revenue is at 99% of budget is the result of upfront billing and collection.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried what was included in the Charges for Services line. Deputy Director Ondish stated that the Charges for Services line includes collection of fees for permits, dog licenses, business licenses, Parks and Recreation field rentals, etc.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried what was included in the Contributions and Other line. Deputy Director Ondish stated that the Contributions and Other line is a holding account that includes specific grant funds, donations from businesses, etc.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if the Discount line included Real Property Tax discounts for Seniors and Military. Deputy Director Ondish answered in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the Charges for Services line should be broken down to reflect individual transactions. Deputy Director Ondish stated the report before Council is an overview of activity, adding that individual line items are viewable in the OpenGov software.

Deputy Director Ondish noted that expenses for the Department of Human Resources (HR) were tracking higher than 50% due to upfront payment of insurances. He noted that Grants to Municipalities was at 99% due to upfront payment of Safety Grants for funding of Municipal Crossing Guards.

Councilwoman Culberson noted that the County's Investment Earnings was higher than budgeted. Deputy Director Ondish stated that the County participates in the Maryland Local Government Investment Pool, the rate of return for which is tied to Federal Interest Rates. He noted that the County is spending down bonding reserves which will result in a decrease in investment earnings.

Discussion ensued regarding Income Tax Revenues. Councilwoman Hamilton queried if Income Tax received in November, 2025 was based upon payment of Income Taxes for 2024. Deputy Director Ondish answered in the affirmative.

Deputy Director Ondish noted that Casino Revenues are down slightly, due to the increase in at-home video lottery. Councilwoman Branch queried if the Town of Perryville will continue to receive its current allotment of 35% Gaming Commission funds. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that the Town of Perryville's current Gaming Commission agreement is coming to an end and will be negotiated for a 15-year renewal.

Deputy Director Ondish noted that Enterprise Funds Revenue is down slightly. Councilwoman Culberson queried why the Capital Outlay line was at 106%. Deputy Director Ondish stated that the Capital Outlay account funds projects, adding that funds are loaded at the beginning of the fiscal year and allocated during the end of the fiscal year.

Councilwoman Culberson queried why the Waste Water Services Revenue line was at 26%. Deputy Director Ondish stated sewer billing revenue for December has not yet been received.

Deputy Director Ondish stated that the OpenGov software provides Department Directors with the ability to view data in real time.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if reports will be posted to the County's website. Deputy Director Ondish answered in the affirmative.

Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)

Deputy Director Ondish presented the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), a copy of which was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Deputy Director Ondish expressed appreciation to the Finance Team for their work on the ACFR. He stated that the ACFR is comprised of data collected during the 6 months following the close of the previous fiscal year. He stated the data is collected from County departments, fire companies, libraries and the school system. He stated that page 12 of the ACFR provides an overview of the County's performance during the previous fiscal year. He added that the goal is to reduce the number of budget amendments during FY26.

Councilwoman Branch queried when the ACFR is due to the State of Maryland. Deputy Director Ondish stated the ACFR is due to the State of Maryland on December 31st. He noted that bond holders and the School Board rely on data contained in the ACFR.

Councilwoman Hamilton requested the Unassigned Fund Balance. Deputy Director Ondish stated that the Unassigned Fund Balance stands at \$47,642,135.

Budget Schedule Discussion

Deputy Director Ondish asked Council for input regarding scheduling of Department budget presentations. He stated his expectation of increased efficiency in budget presentations, adding that the OpenGov software provides streamlined reporting and review of budget line items in real time. He requested Council input regarding review of several departments on a non-Legislative Session Day, resulting in fewer days of budget presentations, vs. presentations from fewer departments spread over several days, including Legislative Session Days, as has been done in the past. He stated the purpose of his query was that in the past, presentations have run close to the start of a Legislative Session, resulting in no break between Budget meetings and Legislative Sessions.

Councilwoman Hamilton expressed support for following the same schedule as in the past.

Discussion ensued regarding Budget presentations and scheduling of follow-up presentations if needed.

OpenGov Reveal/Training Update

Deputy Director Ondish provided an overview of the OpenGov software via Zoom presentation, noting that data is refreshed each evening. He stated that the OpenGov screen view will mirror the Budget books that are distributed to Council.

Deputy Director Ondish demonstrated the ability to review itemization of budget line items for greater detail.

President Miller, referring to the proposed Budget Hearing schedule, noted that the Finance and Administration teams will be offsite for participation in a previously scheduled drill on April 28th.

Vice President Meffley stated his anticipation that budget presentations will be more efficient due to the data being readily available via OpenGov.

Discussion ensued regarding amending meeting times to provide additional time for Council questions. Councilwoman Branch suggested commencing the May 21st Public Hearing at 6:00 pm.

Councilwoman Hamilton expressed her desire for the public's ability to see all budget information and ask questions. Deputy Director Ondish stated the information will be available to the public.

Deputy Director Ondish stated that larger department presentations will be scheduled individually while smaller departments will be grouped together.

President Miller queried if the Elk Room's technology will provide public viewing of OpenGov during the FY27 Public Hearing. Deputy Director Ondish answered in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Branch queried if the OpenGov system communicates with the County's current MUNIS system. Deputy Director Ondish answered in the affirmative.

Director Hamm stated that the Finance Department will present Departments with a template of questions prior to budget hearings. He stated the purpose of the template is to provide uniform information to Council, such as current and projected number of employees, financial impacts resulting from legislation from the State of Maryland, etc. He stated the template will improve the efficiency of department presentations.

Review of Legislative Agenda

Introduction of Resolutions

Resolution No. 02-2026

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 02-2026 Appointment – Economic Development Commission

Carl D. Roberts, Robert Palsgrove, Michael Travers, Charles (Ed) Jones, JoAnn Dawson, Mary Bolt, Bernard DeMarinis, Amy DiPietro, Vincent Fiorelli, Michael Ratchford, Woody Jackson, Jeffrey Lawson, Christopher Brown, Alice Crothers, Joan Pirrung, Rachel Wright and Deirdre Smith

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that Administration has been working on reappointments and recruiting new members of the Economic Development Commission (EDC). President Miller commended the appointees from the agriculture community.

Councilwoman Hamilton, noting representatives of utilities and the library, queried if appointments were based upon a person's position. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that appointees are based upon their interaction with the business community, citing the library's working relationship with the Small Business Administration.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried the Administration's perception of the EDC. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated the EDC serves an advisory role to the County, providing information regarding where the County has been and where it is going. He stated members of the EDC will serve on the Strategic Plan Committee to identify growth opportunities.

Vice President Meffley queried if Mayors can serve on the EDC. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that Mayors are ex-officio members of the EDC and do not require appointment via Resolution.

Councilwoman Hamilton requested increased communication regarding scheduled EDC meetings. She suggested sending a calendar invite and follow-up reminders of scheduled meetings. Councilwoman Hamilton added that she supports the EDC and wants success for the commission.

Resolution No. 03-2025

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 03-2025 Supplemental Appropriation – General Fund Balance Department of Public Works Roads Division – Asphalt Overlay

Director of Finance Hamm stated that in years past, a relatively low amount of funding was allocated for asphalt overlay operations during budget presentation, adding that the amount was subsequently amended once projects were identified. He stated that an additional \$2.8 million will be requested for asphalt overlay projects at the beginning of the upcoming budget cycle.

Director of Public Works Scott Flanigan noted that the County maintains 600 miles of roads, adding that annual maintenance could run to \$7 million.

Councilwoman Branch queried if the additional \$2.8 million will result in a starting budget of \$3.8 million. Director Hamm answered in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Culberson queried the amount of roads that the additional funding will address. Director Flanigan stated that approximately 12 miles of road maintenance will be funded. Director Flanigan stated the ideal situation is to maintain sections of roads every 20 years, adding that this would require maintenance of 30 miles of road each year. He noted that maintenance includes patching as well as milling and asphalt overlay.

Vice President Meffley queried if the County utilized millings from road projects. Director Flanigan stated that contractors include retention of the millings as part of their asphalt overlay contracts with the County.

President Miller commended Public Works Roads Division regarding recent maintenance at Calvert Road and Sylmar Road.

Consideration of Resolutions**Resolution No. 01-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 01-2026 Appointment – Commission on Aging – Denise Hill, Julianne Graham, Lisa Beeman, Jamie McCloskey and Mark Hill

Introduced and ordered posted on January 6, 2026; and scheduled for consideration on January 20, 2026.

Director of Administration Dan Schneckenburger stated that the terms of the reappointments expire June 30, 2028.

Call for Final Reading of Bills**Bill No. 2025-11**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Bill No. 2025-11 Amendment Cecil County Code Chapter 110 Taxing District, Special, Stormwater Management Facility Maintenance Districts

Introduced and ordered posted on December 16, 2025; Public Hearing scheduled on January 6, 2026; and scheduled for consideration on January 20, 2026.

Director Scott Flanigan noted that Vice President Meffley requested a timeline for establishing the Stormwater Management (SWM) Facility Maintenance Special Tax District (District). He presented a draft of the timeline, outlining activities including the initial SWM inspection, notification to property owners regarding planned implementation of the District, initiation of the District if approved by 2/3 of the property owners, and completion of repairs. Director Flanigan noted that the draft timeline will undergo legal review prior to presentation Council.

Councilwoman Culberson requested clarification of locations of proposed Special Tax Districts. Director Flanigan stated that the Districts would be created for areas served by a specific SWM facility.

Councilwoman Culberson queried the number of neighborhoods in which Districts would be created. Director Flanigan stated the number of neighborhoods in which Districts would be created is dependent upon the number of failing SWM facilities.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), as part of the County's renewal of its Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit, requested a list of failing SWM facilities as well as the County's plan to bring the facilities into compliance.

Councilwoman Culberson queried the number of facilities that are not in compliance. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated the County would initially address the worst 10 – 12 facilities. Director Flanigan noted that approximately 98 facilities are in various states of non-compliance.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated it is incumbent upon the County to provide a plan to MDE.

Councilwoman Hamilton stated that the Special Tax District would provide reimbursement of maintenance expenses to the County on an annual basis versus placement of a lien on the property which could take many years to collect.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that the proposed Special Tax District is a tool that the County can use to clean up SWM facilities without using taxpayer funds.

Councilwoman Hamilton noted that the proposed timeline provides 20 days for property owners to respond regarding creation of the District, and suggested a longer timeframe.

President Miller expressed support for creation of the Special Tax District.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the State placed a deadline for submission of the County's plan to address non-complaint facilities. Director Flanigan stated that a plan was submitted to the State, adding that MDE will respond after its review.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if Homeowners Association (HOA) dues could be utilized for SWM facility maintenance. Director Flanigan stated use of HOA dues is between the HOA and homeowners.

Vice President Meffley stated that the proposed Special Tax District should be advertised, adding that public outreach is needed.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if a District would be created after Council approval. Director Flanigan answered in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if the District's taxes would be collected in the next fiscal year. Director Flanigan answered in the affirmative.

New Business

Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #143

Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #144

Old Business

Rezoning File 2025-05

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Rezoning File 2025-05 Applicant: EcoWood Resource Group, LLC, Henry Ray. Property Location: 0 W Old Philadelphia Road, North East MD 21901 Election District: 5, Tax Map: 031D, Parcel 0485 Property Owner: EcoWood Resource Group, LLC Presently Zoned: Low Density Residential (LDR) Proposed Zoning: Employment Mixed Use (EMU)

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that Administration offered no further comments.

Rezoning File 2025-06

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Rezoning File: 2025-06 Applicant EcoWood Resource Group, LLC, Henry Ray. Property Location: 760 W Old Philadelphia Road, North East MD 21901 Election District 5, Tax Map: 031D, Parcel: 0170 Property Owner: EcoWood Resource Group LLC Presently Zoned: Low Density Residential (LDR) Proposed Zoning: Employment Mixed Use (EMU)

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that Administration offered no further comments.

Council Manager Report

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

Council Manager Henson, referring to the proposed 2026 Meeting Calendar, advised Council that Council Assistant Christine Palmer included due dates for delivery of presentation materials for upcoming meetings. She stated the purpose of clarifying meeting material due dates was to provide Council time to review meeting presentation.

Council Member Items

Council deferred Council Member Items to the Legislative Session.

Adjournment

President Miller requested a motion to adjourn the Work Session.

Councilwoman Hamilton made motion to adjourn the Work Session, which was seconded by Councilwoman Culberson.

President Miller adjourned the work session at 6:52 pm.

The next County Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, January 27, 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