

## **COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY**

### **WORK SESSION MINUTES**

**March 17, 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](http://www.cecilcountymd.gov)

**PRESENT:** Council Members: Robert Meffley, Rebecca Hamilton, Al Miller, Donna Culberson and Dawn Branch; Council Manager L. Michelle Henson; 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 Vice President Meffley, seconded by Councilwoman Branch, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of March 3, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

On a motion made by Councilwoman Culberson, seconded by Councilwoman Branch, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Closed Session of March 3, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

#### **Presentations**

##### **Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #146**

Cecil County Public Schools (CCPS) Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Denise Sopa presented CCPS Budget Amendment #146.

CFO Sopa stated Budget Amendment #146 reflected activity for the month of February 2026.

CFO Sopa reviewed restricted and unrestricted revenues which included grants to support teachers and special education.

CFO Sopa stated that the transaction detail by category information on page 2 provided details regarding revenue additions to balance department budgets.

CFO Sopa stated that unrestricted revenues were broken down into categories and objects on page 3.

CFO Sopa stated that budget totals appear on page 5, and page 6 provides a 3-year comparison of unrestricted expenditures.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the data on page 2 reflected budget amendments. CFO Sopa stated that budget amendment data is designated with a dash or a zero, adding that the data is reflected on page 1.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if leftover funds were moved to other areas within the budget. CFO Sopa stated funds are only moved within departments, adding that some categories must be estimated at the beginning of the year, resulting in budget amendments.

Councilwoman Hamilton, referring to the Maryland Department of Education Blueprint requirement that school systems track spending for each student, queried CCPS' procedure. CFO Sopa stated CCPS utilizes a work book that tracks spending for each student and is subsequently reported to the State monthly.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if each school maintains its own work book. CFO Sopa stated that CCPS utilizes one work book with separate tabs for each school.

**Fair Hill Nature Center Program and Spring Capital Campaign Overview – Laura Hannan, Executive Director**

Fair Hill Nature Center Executive Director Laura Hannan introduced herself to Council. She stated that the Fair Hill Nature Center (FHNC) is a 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendor to CCPS, adding that County funding to CCPS supports FHNC's programs, adding that FHNC has served the school system since 1990.

Executive Director Hannan stated that FHNC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit which operates at the Fair Hill Natural Resources Management Area.

Executive Director Hannan provided an overview of programs at FHNC, including provision of binoculars, fishing rods, etc., adding that FHNC expanded hours of operation to include weekends from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm.

Executive Director Hannan stated that FHNC has initiated a Capital Campaign, the goals of which are creation of a nature-based playscape, an endowment fund to safeguard the FHNC from economic uncertainty, and improvements to existing structures.

Councilwoman Branch commended the FHNC for programs that reach children and adults. She expressed concerns that State level budget issues that are passed to CCPS could negatively impact student participation in FHNC programs.

Executive Director Hannan concurred with Councilwoman Branch's concerns, stating that FHNC may look to serving school districts outside of Cecil County to augment funding cuts.

Vice President Meffley commended Executive Director Hannan and the FHNC for expansion of programs over the years. He stated the importance of the team of volunteers who support the FHNC.

President Miller commended Executive Director Hannan and the FHNC, expressing his appreciation to the FHNC for agricultural education programs for children.

Councilwomen Hamilton and Culberson expressed appreciation to Executive Director Hannan.

**Prescription Drug Affordability – Vincent DeMarco, Maryland Citizens' Health Initiative**

Maryland Health Care for All Coalition President Vincent DeMarco and Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board Executive Director Dr. Andrew York introduced themselves to Council.

Mr. DeMarco stated the purpose of their appearance was to provide an overview of efforts to lower prescription drug costs for Maryland's citizens. He provided a fact sheet regarding the history and current activities of the Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board, a copy of which was placed in the record of the minutes.

Mr. DeMarco stated that the Medicaid program is initiating limits on what patients pay for certain prescriptions.

Mr. DeMarco stated that the General Assembly passed legislation in 2019 to make prescription drugs more affordable for state and local government employees, adding that the legislation will eventually expand to include all Marylanders.

Mr. DeMarco stated that drug manufacturers based their initial resistance to the legislation on potential financial impacts to research, adding that the legislation draws funding from previously tax-exempt direct-to-consumer advertising costs.

Mr. DeMarco stated that the Maryland Prescription Drug Affordability Board (Board) is an independent State agency that selects drugs to determine if they can be made more affordable. He stated that goals of the Board include partnering with local government Human Resources teams. He advised Council that residents who cannot afford their prescription drugs can be referred to the Board.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the Board provides residents with affordability resources for specific drugs. Mr. Demarco stated the Board will provide residents with affordability resources for any prescription drugs.

Vice President Meffley queried if the program is well-received from large and small counties. Mr. DeMarco stated all counties they have visited expressed concerns regarding drug costs.

President Miller commented regarding excessive prescription drug advertising on television. He thanked Mr. DeMarco and Dr. York for their attendance.

Mr. DeMarco requested Council's support for HB0484/SB0987, which provide for up to \$5 million in funding assistance for Medicaid programs and the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange Fund.

## **Review of Legislative Agenda**

### **Introduction of Resolutions**

#### **Resolution No. 08-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 08-2026 Appointment – Local Management Board – Betty Johnson, Rachel Wright, Suanne Blumberg, George Stanko, and Stephen Yates

Director of Finance Raymond Hamm, attending on behalf of Director of Administration Schneckenburger, stated that Administration supports the appointees, whose experiences include Law Enforcement, Cecil County Public Library and counseling services.

Director Hamm, referring to Council's previous request for wider advertising of Board and Committee vacancies, stated that vacancies are now advertised via social media.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried the duties of the Local Management Board. Director Hamm stated the Local Management Board consists of Social Services and other agencies which support residents who are experiencing financial and other issues.

President Miller stated that the Local Management Board is overseen by the Department of Community Services. He commended Director Dave Trolie for the many services provided to Cecil County's citizens.

#### **Resolution No. 09-2025**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 09-2026 Appointment – Board of Library Trustees – Ravi Gupta

Director Hamm stated that Administration supports the appointment of Dr. Ravi Gupta to the Library Board of Trustees.

#### **Resolution No. 10-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 10-2026 Supplemental Appropriation – Wastewater Enterprise Fund – Department of Public Works – Wastewater Services – Washington Street Force Main Repair

Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Scott Flanigan stated Resolution No. 10-2026 provides for a Budget Amendment to cover expenses related to emergency repairs of the Washington Street force main.

Director Flanigan provided an overview of the force main and the rupture that led to the emergency repairs, including contracting septage haulers to remove material during the event.

Councilwoman Culberson confirmed that the requested \$200,000 would not be drawn from the General Fund Balance. Director Flanigan responded in the affirmative, stating that Wastewater Services is an Enterprise Fund.

Discussion ensued regarding the age and construction of the Washington Street force main.

Director Flanigan stated that DPW has initiated a Capital Improvement Project (CIP) to proactively identify infrastructure issues.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if maintenance of the Washington Street Force Main was previously funded. Director Flanigan stated that the maintenance specifically of the Washington Street Force Main was not previously funded.

#### **Resolution No. 11-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 11-2026 Supplemental Appropriation – General Fund Balance – Department of Public Works – Roads Division – Snow Removal

Director Flanigan stated that Resolution No. 11-2026 provides funding related to the recent removal of snow and ice from County roads. He added that the funds will also cover the costs of contracted snow removal services, emergency meals for employees during snow removal operations, vehicle maintenance and repair, etc. He stated the funds will be drawn from the General Fund Balance, supplementing the original budget of \$300,000.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if DPW routinely utilizes contractors for snow removal. Director Flanigan stated that use of contractors depends upon the magnitude of a snow event, adding that DPW does not have the staff to cover 610 miles of roads for which the County is responsible.

Vice President Meffley queried Mr. Flanigan's opinion of using brine on roads prior to a snow event. Director Flanigan stated that the use of brine is an effective pretreatment, offsetting the issues associated with use of road salt.

President Miller stated he heard several positive comments regarding the County's response to the recent storm events.

#### **Resolution No. 12-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 12-2026 Approval – Amendment – Purchasing Manual

Director Hamm and Procurement Manager Connie Kamit presented an overview of the revised Purchasing Manual, henceforth identified as the Procurement Manual. The revisions were reviewed via Power Point Presentation and placed in the record of the minutes. Director Hamm asked Council to review the Procurement Manual, which will become effective on July 1, 2026.

Director Hamm stated the manual was last updated in 2018, adding that Manager Kamit directed the recent revision process in accordance with Maryland and County Codes. He stated any entity that expends County funds is tied to the manual.

Director Hamm stated that the Procurement Manual includes processes for expense approval and competitive bids. For reference, Director Hamm stated that the Procurement Office processed 1400 requests and 197 competitive bid solicitations in 2025.

Director Hamm stated that the Procurement Manual provides details regarding purchases and approvals. He stated the updated manual provides for instances in which a Director's designee can approve certain purchases. He stated the draft manual was reviewed by all Directors, adding that 150 suggestions were received.

Director Hamm stated that Director expense approval limits were increased, noting that this was a response to the volume of over 400 expense approvals that were sent to the Director of Administration in 2025. He stated increasing Director approval limits provided for increased awareness at the Department level.

Director Hamm stated the threshold for Purchase Orders has been raised from \$2,500 to \$5,000 which affected about 20% of the smaller quotes processed by Procurement.

Director Hamm stated that the Procurement Manual provides DPW Construction Division with a process to save costs for design build construction projects.

Director Hamm stated that the Procurement Manual updated the meal allowance to reflect Federal allowances.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if increases in expense approvals would be kept within Department budgets. Director Hamm answered in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Branch queried the process for creation of purchase requisitions. Manager Kamit stated after a requisition is initiated, it is forwarded to the Department Director or designee for approval. Once approved it moves to Procurement for review by the Purchasing Agent. If the expense is over \$5,000 then 3 quotes must accompany the requisition. The process then moves to Finance for verification of the correct GL Account, and once approved, the requisition is returned to Procurement for final processing.

Vice President Meffley expressed support for the Procurement Manual.

Councilwoman Hamilton stated that the bid process can be cumbersome for small businesses. Director Hamm concurred with Councilwoman Hamilton, adding the importance of obtaining bids at all levels. He stated the goal of awarding bids to small businesses when possible.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if 3 quotes are required if an expense is not going out to bid. Manager Kamit answered in the affirmative, stating that expenses more than \$5,000 require 3 quotes.

Deputy Director of Finance Ondish stated that designation an alternate approver streamlines the process when a temporary increase is requested for a Purchasing Cards.

Director Hamm stated the Procurement Manual provides a flow chart for each time of solicitation which gives ownership to the Director and/or designee.

Director Hamm stated the OpenGov system provides a process for review and scoring of bids. He stated that bids are scored based upon specific criteria to assure consistent comparison among bidders. He stated the formal award and change order processes remain in place. Director Hamm stated the policy provides a 6% price advantage to a local contractor.

Director Hamm stated that unspent funds are returned to the General Fund, with the exception of CIP funds.

Director Hamm stated that vendors must be in good standing with the State of Maryland, and when applicable, bonding is required. He added that the Procurement Manual maintains Council review of contracts in excess of \$100,000.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the Procurement Manual ensures that the same vendor is not consistently awarded the same contracts. Manager Kamit stated certain vendors offer specialized services, adding that the County requires vendors to disclose all activity with the County.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if Department fund balances are rolled into the General Fund Balance. Deputy Director Ondish responded in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Culberson queried if the Procurement Manual included a policy regarding gifts from vendors. Director Hamm answered in the affirmative.

### **Consideration of Resolutions**

#### **Resolution No. 06-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 06-2026 Appointment – Adult Public Guardianship Review Board – Mary Falkenstein

Director of Finance Raymond Hamm stated that Resolution No. 06-2026 provided for the reappointment of Mary Falkenstein to the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board.

Director Hamm stated that Administration supported the reappointment of Mary Falkenstein to the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board.

#### **Resolution No. 07-2026**

Council Manager Henson stated for the record:

Resolution No. 07-2026 Supplemental Appropriation – General Fund Balance – State of Maryland – State Department of Assessments and Taxation

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish stated that Resolution No. 07-2026 provided supplemental funds to address an error in billing from the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT).

Deputy Director Ondish stated that Resolution No. 07-2026 provides for the reconciliation of a billing error from the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT).

#### **New Business**

Cecil County Public Schools Budget Amendment #146

#### **Council Manager Report**

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

Council Manager Henson reminded Council that training on the County's OpenGov Software is scheduled for March 24<sup>th</sup>, and asked members to bring their laptops.

#### **State Legislative Update**

President Miller asked Council to consider supporting HB0484/SB0987.

Deputy Director Ondish extended County Executive Streight's condolences to Council Executive Assistant Christine Palmer and her family regarding the recent passing of her father-in-law David Palmer.

Deputy Director Ondish expressed appreciation to IT Jr. Support Specialist Jeff Baker for his assistance during the meeting.

President Miller thanked Deputy Director Ondish for his comments.

#### **Council Member Items**

Council deferred Council Member Items to the Legislative Session.

#### **Adjournment**

President Miller requested a motion to adjourn the Work Session.

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

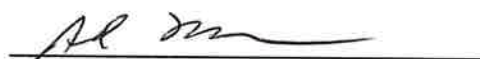
President Miller adjourned the work session at 6:21 pm.

The next County Council Work Session will be held on Tuesday, March 24, 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](http://www.cecilcountymd.gov)

Approved:



L. Michelle Henson  
Council Manager

  
Al Miller, Council President