

COUNTY COUNCIL OF CECIL COUNTY

WORK SESSION MINUTES

July 14, 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, Al Miller, Donna Culberson, Rebecca Hamilton and Dawn Branch; Council Manager L. Michelle Henson; Council Executive 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 Culberson, seconded by Councilwoman Branch, the Council moved to approve the minutes of the Council Work Session of July 7, 2026. The motion passed unanimously.

Presentations

Discussion – Affordable Housing

Maryland Department of Community Development – Mira Morgan, Senior Policy Analyst and Jordan Gilmore, Director, Office of Policy Development

Senior Policy Analyst Morgan and Director Gilmore, representing the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) presented an overview of affordable housing in Cecil County via Power Point Presentation, a copy of which was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Director Gilmore stated that there is a shortage of affordable housing in Maryland as well as across the country. He stated the reason for the shortage is that annual residential building continues to remain at about 40% of levels prior to the 2008 financial crisis. He added that the lack of available housing has resulted in higher costs, noting that approximately 50% of renters pay more than 30% of their monthly income for housing and utilities.

Policy Analyst Morgan stated that statistics indicate younger renters are struggling to afford rent and home ownership resulting in driving residents away from Maryland. She stated this trend will negatively impact Maryland's economy.

Director Gilmore reviewed data which illustrated the need for additional housing units to meet demand.

Policy Analyst Morgan reviewed obstacles to residential building, including costs of materials, interest rates, and restrictive regulations. She stated that DHCD received a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist with improving approval timelines.

Director Gilmore stated that 16% of land in Cecil County is zoned for residential use in Cecil County adding that current zoning regulations deter denser housing. He stated that larger lot sizes lead to higher housing costs by reducing cluster development.

Director Gilmore noted that Maryland is the 6th most regulated state in the US, leading to fewer affordable home options for young people as well as senior citizens. He stated that the best way to address denser housing is to direct new building toward population centers.

Policy Analyst Morgan stated that the majority of Cecil County Public Schools (CCPS) are below capacity. She stated the importance of providing affordable housing to teachers, which will result in them remaining in the state.

Director Gilmore stated DHCD efforts to reduce costs of building through incentives that include property tax abatements, revising fees and using publicly owned land for housing to reduce purchase costs.

Councilwoman Branch thanked Policy Analyst Morgan and Director Gilmore for their presentation, adding her concerns regarding housing costs. She stated that the Interagency Commission for School Construction (IAC) has outstanding payments to Cecil County regarding the North East Middle / High School facility.

Councilwoman Culberson stated that Cecil County cannot be compared with areas such as Baltimore City, stating that Cecil is a rural county with large amounts of farmland. She added that many residents are in mid- low-income brackets and unable to afford housing costs. She expressed concerns that State efforts to streamline building requirements are dictating how local governments regulate building within their own communities.

Councilwoman Culberson requested input from the Department of Land Use and Development (LUDS) regarding impacts resulting from the State's goal of relaxing regulations.

Vice President Meffley stated that improvement in efficiency needs to begin at the State level, adding that State regulations negatively impact construction of infrastructure. He stated that DHCD's proposals for affordable housing may work in other areas but would not fit in Cecil County.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if DHCD's assessments including the housing ownership market. Director Gilmore answered in the affirmative.

Councilwoman Hamilton requested clarification regarding Director Gilmore's comments that the free market does not provide for affordable housing, which results in the need for government subsidies. Director Gilmore stated that housing developers report that houses priced between \$400,000 and \$500,000 generally sell out. He stated that the issue is identifying affordable housing for retirees and those with disabilities, etc. He stated that affordable housing is not profitable for builders, adding that government can require affordable units via capping of rents.

Councilwoman Hamilton stated that some of DHCD's points regarding building costs were based upon State regulations, such as sprinklers. She queried DHCD's efforts at reducing State restrictions. Director Gilmore stated that DHCD is working at the State level to address restrictions. He added that Gov. Moore issued an Executive Order in September 2025, directing State departments to streamline the process and reduce red tape. He stated the goal of DHCD to put forth policies that result in affordable housing.

Vice President Meffley queried if the State offered financing programs for developers. Policy Analyst Morgan stated that DHCD provides financing programs for developers as well as low-income tax credits and gap financing. She stated that DHCD is involved in the financing of most of the affordable housing in Maryland.

President Miller noted that Maryland ranks low for affordable housing. He expressed concerns regarding unfunded mandates from the State of Maryland.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger, referring to the Starter and Silver Home Act which was passed during the 2026 Legislative Session, stated that Cecil County would not support upzoning that would result in high density housing, adding that upzoning results in crowding. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that several citizens are opposed to large developments, will increase pressure on County government to resist upzoning.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated he generally supported the intent of the Starter and Silver Home Act, noting that government cannot affect the free market with the intention by dictating lower prices to developers.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried if the State restricted foreign entities and/or conglomerates from purchasing large amounts of properties for rentals. Director Gilmore stated he was unaware of a State restriction.

Andrew Ondish, Deputy Director of Finance

Monthly Review of County Contracts – March 2026

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish provided the Monthly Review of County Contracts in excess of \$100,000 for March 2026, pursuant to County Charter Section 516. A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Monthly Review of County Contracts – April 2026

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish provided the Monthly Review of County Contracts in excess of \$100,000 for April 2026, pursuant to County Charter Section 516. A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Councilwoman Hamilton, referring to costs associated with two races at Fair Hill stated one race was held, and queried if the County will be reimbursed for the second race. Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that the County is negotiating an amended Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Maryland Jockey Club, Inc., to conduct the second race. He noted that if a second race cannot be scheduled the MOU enables the County to call back the cost of the second race.

Monthly Review of County Contracts – May 2026

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish provided the Monthly Review of County Contracts in excess of \$100,000 for May 2026, pursuant to County Charter Section 516. A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Monthly Review of County Contracts – June 2026

Deputy Director of Finance Andrew Ondish provided the Monthly Review of County Contracts in excess of \$100,000 for June 2026, pursuant to County Charter Section 516. A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Vice President Meffley queried if the County received a rebate from the Contractor associated with the Glebe Road project. Director of Administration Schneckenburger answered in the negative, stating that the contractor made additional improvements associated with the project.

Andrew Ondish, Deputy Director of Finance

Financial Update – 3rd Quarter Fiscal Year 2026

Deputy Director of Finance Ondish presented the Financial Update for the 3rd Quarter of Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26). A copy of the report was reviewed and placed in the record of the minutes.

Deputy Director Ondish stated that March is three quarters through the fiscal year; and advised Council that he would focus on items that were above 75%.

Deputy Director Ondish stated that no funds were used from the Fund Balance.

Deputy Director Ondish noted that property tax funds will continue to flow toward the end of the fiscal year.

Deputy Director Ondish stated a substantial decrease in overtime costs within the Department of Emergency Services (DES), which he attributed to full staffing levels.

Deputy Director Ondish reviewed projections for utility costs and income tax payments.

Councilwoman Hamilton queried an increase in income tax revenue. Deputy Director Ondish stated that income tax is administered at the State level, adding that the State does not provide for reconciliation of the numbers.

Director of Administration Schneckenburger stated that some of the increase can be attributed to job growth, adding that Northrop Grumman and Ryder have added many jobs. He noted that commercial and industrial growth attribute to taxes.

Director of Finance Raymond Hamm noted that the stock market played a role in County revenue.

Deputy Director Ondish reviewed Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) Casino revenues. He stated revenue has declined due to online betting, adding that the downward trend is expected to continue.

Deputy Director Ondish noted that David Trolio, Director of the Department of Community Services does not depend upon VLT revenues when preparing his budget.

Deputy Director Ondish stated that Enterprise Funds are trending well, as are County investment funds.

Deputy Director Ondish stated that the County is meeting operational costs as well as paying down bonds. He stated the goal of paying cash without financing and paying associated interest.

Discussion – Fiscal Year Budget Presentation Date – Second Tuesday in April

Deputy Director Ondish noted that the State of Maryland's delivery of its budget is at the end of March, adding that most counties require delivery of their own budget by April 15th. He stated that Cecil County's requirement of April 1st can create conflict, especially when there are uncertainties at the State level. He requested Council's consideration of a Charter amendment to provide for delivery of the County budget on the second Tuesday in April, which would provide additional time to receive and process State budget information.

Councilwoman Branch expressed support for amending the date for budget delivery.

President Miller expressed support for amending the date for budget delivery.

Councilwoman Hamilton suggested amending the date for budget delivery to the second Monday in April, with presentation of the budget to Council on the second Tuesday in April.

Discussion ensued regarding presentation of the Charter Amendment via Resolution or via Referendum.

Council Manager Report

Council Manager Henson advised Council that the term of a Council-appointed member of the Ethics Commission will expire on September 17th. She stated that the member has not responded to queries regarding reappointment, adding that the vacancy will be advertised.

Council Member Items

President Miller announced that the Cecil County Fair will take place from July 24th through August 1st at Fair Hill.

Adjournment

President Miller requested a motion to adjourn the Work Session.

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

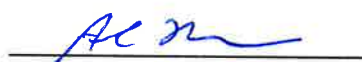
President Miller adjourned the Work Session at 6:23 pm.

President Miller announced that the next Work Session will be held on Tuesday, July 21, 2026 at 4:30 pm. 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