



# TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

August 27, 2024

Present – President Chuck Callahan, Vice President Pete Leshner, Keasha N. Haythe, Lynn L. Mielke, Dave Stepp, County Manager Clay Stamp, and Attorney Charles “Chip” MacLeod (substituting for County Attorney Patrick Thomas).

- I. Agenda – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Agenda of Tuesday, August 27, 2024.
- II. Minutes – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Minutes of Tuesday, July 9, 2024.
- III. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, August 20, 2024, and Tuesday, August 27, 2024.
- IV. Introduction of Kurt Fuchs, Manager of External Affairs, Easton Utilities – Kelly Simonsen, Director, Corporate Communications, Easton Utilities Commission, introduced Kurt Fuchs, recently hired by Easton Utilities as the Manager of External Affairs. Ms. Simonsen stated that Mr. Fuchs, an Eastern Shore native, brings 20 plus years of experience in various government and external affairs organizations to the position, including Horizon Farm Credit and the Maryland Farm Bureau. She stated that Mr. Fuchs’ focus will be on evaluating public policy, regulatory shifts and cultivating external relationships. Mr. Fuchs stated that he looks forward to working with the County, the Town of Easton, and Easton Utilities’ customers. Council welcomed Mr. Fuchs to his new position.
- V. Presentation of Certificates of Recognition to Talbot Softball Junior League All-Star Team – Gregg Dadds, Head Coach, Talbot Softball Junior League team, briefed the Council on the team’s rise to the Maryland Junior League State Championship, a first for Talbot Softball, and participation in the regional tournament in Connecticut. Council members congratulated members of the team and their coaches on their accomplishment, and the parents for their support. The Clerk read a certificate of recognition into the record which spoke of the contributions of each team member and coach to the Talbot Softball team. Mr. Stepp presented certificates of recognition to the following players: Josey Bissonette, Paige Bodle, McKenna Brach, Kayleigh Burkhardt, Leah Dadds, Madi Fisher, Katelyn Gay, Ryleigh Groce, Mercy Haddaway, Ella Kennedy, Lane Kennedy, Natalee Lyons, Evelyn Mautz and Leah Smith; and coaches, Greg Dadds, Head Coach; Danny Bissonette, Coach; John Brach, Coach; and Jed Gay, Coach. Senator Johnny Mautz then presented Senate Citations to each of the players and coaches in attendance.
- VI. Presentation and Request for Approval of Local Abatement Plan for Talbot County for Opioid Restitution Funds – Joe Gamble, Talbot County Sheriff – Sheriff Gamble stated that the County Council charged the Local Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council (LDAAC) with making a recommendation to the County Council as to how to spend the opioid restitution funds that will be forthcoming from the various lawsuits throughout the country as a result of the National Opioid Settlements. He stated that the monies will be sent to the State of Maryland which will then

distribute the funds to participating jurisdictions throughout the state. He stated that an LDAAC subcommittee met several times over the past nine months and provided the Council with its recommendations. Sheriff Gamble outlined LDAAC's priorities for use of the funding as follows: \$130,000 to continue funding the medicated-assisted treatment program at the Talbot County Detention Center to assist inmates with overcoming addiction. He stated that grant funding awarded in the sum of \$130,000 was used in the past year for the unfunded State mandated program; however, all the grant funding has been utilized; and funding for micro-grants for small non-profits in the community which supply addiction treatment, education and other services to individuals to help bridge some gaps in services. He stated that the smaller non-profits seldom, if ever, receive grant funding; applications for the micro-grants could be made through the County Council and he outlined the process by which the applications would be processed by his staff. Council discussion ensued with Sheriff Gamble who concluded his presentation by encouraging everyone to attend the **Talbot Goes Purple** kickoff on Saturday, August 31<sup>st</sup> from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Anchor Church in Easton. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the Local Abatement Plan for use of opioid restitution funds by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe

VII. County Manager's Report:

A. Talbot County Economic Development Commission – Requested Council approval for the appointment of John Horner, President & CEO of Easton Utilities, to a three-year term on the Talbot County Economic Development Commission; said term will expire on June 30, 2027. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the appointment by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

B. Talbot County Local Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Kevin Hartmann to a four-year term on the Talbot County Local Drug and Alcohol Abuse Council; said term will expire on July 1, 2028. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the appointment by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- C. Talbot County Police Accountability Board – Requested Council approval for the reappointment of Mr. Chris Rice and Ms. Jo Ann Murray to four-year terms on the Talbot County Police Accountability Board as representatives of the Easton area and Sheriff Area 3, respectively; said terms will expire on August 1, 2028. Upon motion by Ms. Mielke, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the reappointments by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- D. Request from Town of Trappe – Requested Council approval of a request from the Town of Trappe for a letter in support of the Town of Trappe’s application for a Community Parks and Playground Grant. If approved, the funding would be used to develop a girls’ softball field with batting cage and the installation of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant restrooms at the Home Run Baker Park Sports Complex, a County owned property. Since the County property is within the municipal borders of the town, the County is ineligible to apply for the grant. He stated that the Talbot County Parks and Recreation Advisory Board expressed support of the Town’s application at its meeting on July 18<sup>th</sup>; if funding is approved, the County and the Town would enter into a Joint Use Agreement; Council discussion ensued with Brian Schmidt, President, Trappe Town Council. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the request for a letter in support of the Town’s application for grant funding as presented by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- E. Bid No. 22-07, ENGINEERING SERVICES COMPREHENSIVE WATER AND SEWER PLAN UPDATE - 2022-2023 REPORT OF THE REVIEW – Amendment No. 1 - Requested Council approval to award Amendment No. 1 for Bid No. 22-07 in the sum of \$36,654 to Rauch, Inc., bringing the total contract to \$166,184. Council discussion ensued with County Engineer, Ray Clarke, who stated that the amount requested in Amendment No. 1 reflects a modification of the original scope of services in order to expand the public’s involvement in development of the Report of the Review; as such, additional meetings with the municipalities, Planning Commission, Public Works Advisory Board, and Department of Public Works staff were held. Council discussion ensued. At Ms. Mielke’s request, vote on the matter was postponed until the September 10<sup>th</sup> Council meeting in order that staff could obtain additional details on the request.
- F. Bid No. 20-04, ENGINEERING DESIGN SERVICES – FERRY POINT MARINA WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT – TRAPPE – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND – Amendment No. 4 – Requested Council approval of Amendment No.

4 to Bid 20-04 in the sum of \$31,520.00 to Rauch, Inc. to complete engineering services for the Ferry Point Marina wastewater treatment plant project. If approved, Amendment No. 4 would bring the total contract to \$206,274; funding for Amendment No. 4 is available in the Capital Projects Fund. Discussion ensued with County Engineer, Ray Clarke, who stated that once completed, the property owners connected to the wastewater system will be billed. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved Amendment No. 4 by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe - Aye

VIII. Public Hearing:

Bill No. 1577, AN EMERGENCY BILL TO AMEND BILL NO. 1231 FOR THE PURPOSE OF COORDINATING THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF MARYLAND ROUTE 662C TO FACILITATE TIMELY CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HOSPITAL AND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER BY SHORE HEALTH SYSTEM, INC. AND MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC ON OCEAN GATEWAY (U.S. ROUTE 50) DURING THE 2025 SUMMER TRAVEL SEASON, was read into the record by the Clerk and the legislation and Amendment No. 1 were brought forward for public hearing. Attorney, Charles “Chip” MacLeod, stated that the amendment before the Council, if approved, would incorporate two (2) agreements into the legislation: an amendment to the Road Transfer Agreement by and between the State Highway Administration (SHA) and Talbot County (Exhibit A); and the Road Inspection and Contribution Agreement by and between Talbot County and Shore Health System (Exhibit B). Members of the public were then afforded an opportunity to comment on Amendment No. 1 and the legislation. Ken Kozel, President and CEO, University of Maryland Medical System Shore Regional Health, read a statement into the record which emphasized the importance of the Regional Medical Center project to Shore Regional Health, the University of Maryland Medical System, the Talbot County community and the entire mid-Shore region from the standpoint of the provision of healthcare to the region and the economic impact of same. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Kozel and Ryan Showalter, Attorney for Shore Regional Health, regarding various facets of the project, including the timeline for completion. Ms. Mielke requested Council’s consideration to postpone the vote on Amendment No. 1 and Bill No. 1577 until the Council meeting of Tuesday, September 10, 2024. Council discussion again ensued. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Leshner, Bill No. 1577 was brought to third reader with the Council voting 4 – 1 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Nay  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

The Council approved Amendment No. 1 to Bill No. 1577 by voting 4 – 0 – 1 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Abstain  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

Bill No. 1577, as amended, was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for vote. The Council approved Bill No. 1577, as amended, by voting 4 – 1 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner – Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Nay  
Ms. Haythe – Aye

Bill No. 1577, as amended, is effective immediately.

IX. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

X. Council Comments:

Mr. Stepp – Mr. Stepp stated that, in his opinion, it was nice to see a courtroom full of not only our youth, but full of folks who have a reason to celebrate, and that it was wonderful to celebrate the Junior League Softball Champions. He stated that he is looking forward to the kickoff of **Talbot Goes Purple** on Saturday night to bring in September, the fall season with the kids back in school.

Mr. Leshner – Mr. Leshner stated that while at the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Summer Conference week before last, the Council had the opportunity to meet with the Secretary of Transportation Paul Wiedefeld and his agency heads to discuss safety issues at various intersections with State roads in Talbot County. He stated that some of the issues have been brought forward from previous years, but the Council continues to revise the issues as new concerns are raised, and to offer alternative priorities. He stated that he had attended the session on Maryland's Vision Zero – the goal of which is to reduce vehicle crash fatalities to zero. He stated that, in his opinion, it is a lofty goal, but everyone needs to acknowledge that almost all of the vehicle crashes are the result of choices people make, whether speed related, aggressive driving, drivers and/or passengers not wearing seatbelts, and driving while impaired or distracted – all are choices. He stated that Maryland has a dashboard on Vision Zero which tracks fatalities and that the County works with the Secretary of Transportation and the State to try to make roads safer, improve intersections and to make the driving environment as safe as possible and that the strong message of the MACo session was that we will never achieve Vision Zero unless driving behaviors are addressed.

Ms. Mielke – Ms. Mielke reiterated her support for the University of Maryland Medical System’s new hospital. She stated that she appreciated Mr. Kozel outlining plans for more transparency with the project but, in her opinion, she does not think the Council has enough information regarding the request for road closure and the issue has not been addressed as to why it’s such an emergency. She stated that, in her opinion, the issues have not been addressed as to how much it would have cost to redesign the building to take that whole corner off the road. Ms. Mielke stated that the individuals who signed the petition (opposing the closure of MD Rt. 662) are, in her opinion, the ones who are going to suffer the most since we are talking about the road being closed for six months, not just a few weeks. She concluded her comments by reiterating her position and the feelings of the citizens of Talbot County who are going to be impacted the most: farmers, residents, and others who use the road.

Ms. Haythe – Ms. Haythe concurred with Mr. Stepp’s comments and stated that, in her opinion, it was exciting to see the Talbot Softball Junior League girls here today and that youth truly gives her energy, and it’s inspiring to work with young women and see them here this evening. She expressed her appreciation to Mr. Stepp for all his hard work in helping to start the organization. Ms. Haythe congratulated Mr. Callahan on his upcoming wedding and wished him the best.

Mr. Callahan - Mr. Callahan expressed his appreciation to his colleagues for their best wishes and support. He reiterated the comments of Mr. Stepp and Ms. Haythe, stating that the girls’ softball team winning the State Championship is, in his opinion, a special moment for the community. Mr. Callahan concluded his comments by expressing his appreciation to Mr. MacLeod for stepping in for Patrick Thomas who is on vacation and to Martha Sparks for her participation earlier today at the work session to discuss proposed changes in the County’s Accommodations Tax rate as a way of providing more money for the municipalities.

Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council voted to adjourn and to reconvene on Tuesday, September 10, 2024, in Open Session and to immediately convene into Closed Session at 3:30 p.m. as listed on the statement for closing that meeting, and for the regularly scheduled meeting at 5:00 p.m. by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan - Aye  
Mr. Stepp – Aye  
Mr. Leshner - Aye  
Ms. Mielke – Aye  
Ms. Haythe - Aye

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

The transcript of the August 27, 2024, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

XI. Work Session on Accommodations Tax – Martha Sparks, Finance Director; Cassandra Vanhooser, Director, Department of Economic Development and Tourism; Clay Stamp, County Manager – The Council held a work session with Ms. Sparks and Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Stamp on Tuesday, August 27, 2024, at 2:30 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room; Harold Klinger, long-term member, Talbot County Tourism Board, and former owner of Martingham, a residential golf community in St. Michaels, Maryland, and Attorney Charles “Chip” MacLeod, were also in attendance. Ms. Vanhooser stated that the current accommodations tax rate in Talbot County is 4% and the Tourism Board is proposing that the rate be increased to 6% as a way to offset to increased costs of serving visitors to the county (i.e., trash collection, sidewalks, etc.). Mr. MacLeod stated that Talbot County’s statute for the 4% rate is tied to the State statute; therefore, the first step would be, if Council supports an increase, would be to request that the Local Delegation introduce legislation to do so during the 2025 Legislative Session. Mr. Klinger provided a history of the accommodations tax in Talbot County, stating that it was first established in 1986 at a rate of 3% and was raised to 4% in 2005 where it remains. He emphasized that Talbot County residents do not pay an Accommodations Tax, it is only paid by visitors to Talbot County. The County retains the first 5% of the amount of Accommodations Tax collected as an administrative fee; the remaining portion is distributed to the municipality from which it originated, with the general understanding that the monies returned will be used to fund tourism in that municipality. Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Klinger utilized a PowerPoint presentation to provide information on Accommodations Tax rates in other Maryland counties and Baltimore City, a history of Talbot County Accommodations Tax revenue, for the County and each municipality for FY 2009 – 2024, and proposed additional revenue which would be generated for each with a 1% increase (to 5%) and a 2% increase (to 6%). Ms. Sparks briefed the Council on current Talbot County Code and State regulations relating to the grace period for late payment of Accommodations Tax to the County by the municipalities, and the penalty for same. She stated that only Talbot County and Wicomico County have an extended grace period (120 days) and requested Council consideration to support a change to § 20-426 of the Maryland Local Government Code and § 172-8 of the Talbot County Code (Talbot County Public Accommodations Tax Code) to have a penalty of 10% be imposed within one (1) month after the payment is due; she outlined the reasons for the request. Council discussion ensued. At Council’s request Ms. Vanhooser will contact each of the municipalities and request that they formally vote whether to support the proposal for a 2% increase in the Accommodations Tax. The Council will be meeting with the Local Delegation to discuss the upcoming 2025 Legislative Session. The work session concluded at 3:12 p.m.

XII. Summary of Closed Session Held on August 27, 2024:

1. Statement of the time, place, and purpose of the closed session:

Time of closed session: 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Place of closed session: County Council Office  
Purpose of the closed session: To consider various matters as set forth in the statement for closing the meeting

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:

Names of members voting aye: Callahan, Haythe, Leshner, Mielke, Stepp  
Members opposed: None  
Abstaining: None  
Absent: None

3. Statutory authority to close session and listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:

| <b>Topic Description</b>  | <b>Statutory Authority</b> | <b>Reason for Closed Session Discussion</b>   | <b>Persons Present</b>   | <b>Action Taken</b>                   |
|---|----------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| To discuss a personnel matter in the Department of Corrections                            | GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)        | Discussion involves specific individual   | Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Charles MacLeod, Susan Moran | No action                             |
| To discuss appointments to various County boards and committees                           | GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)        | Public discussion would discourage individuals from volunteering to serve   | Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Charles MacLeod, Susan Moran | No action                             |
| To consider acquisition of property in Easton for a public purpose and lease negotiations | GP § 3-305(b) (3) (7)      | To protect the County’s bargaining position regarding the potential acquisition of real property for a public purpose | Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Charles MacLeod, Susan Moran | Council concurred with recommendation |



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT  
08/20/2024**

**OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK**

**OPERATING FUNDS AT**

**8/13/2024**

**\$38,926,935.14**

Community Center Sales & Use Due 7/20/24

(47.14)



|   |                  |                               |
|---|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Golf Course Sales & Use Due 7/20/2024             |                  | (3,770.11)                    |
| Roads Sales & Use Due 7/20/2024                   |                  | (999.58)                      |
| Airport Merchant Portal Hosting 7/2024            |                  | (11.00)                       |
| Repurposing Merchant Portal Hosting 7/2024        |                  | (15.00)                       |
| Roads Merchant Portal Hosting 7/2024              |                  | (15.00)                       |
| Returned Checks #2407, #2070, #1167, #3242        |                  | (18,395.30)                   |
| Returned Paymentus Payments                       |                  | (14,141.28)                   |
| Bank Charges 6/2024                               |                  | (11,235.20)                   |
| Bank Charges 7/2024                               |                  | (9,962.42)                    |
| Interest on Accounts<br>7/2024                    |                  | 137,413.64                    |
| Deposits  |                  | 2,813,151.90                  |
| Checks  |                  | (166,973.86)                  |
| ACH Disbursements                                 |                  | (2,069,582.22)                |
| EFT's   |                  | (300,172.58)                  |
| Wire Transfers                                    |                  | (701,282.09)                  |
| Voided Checks #372544, #372978                    |                  | 529,249.00                    |
| <b>OPERATING FUNDS AT</b>                         | <b>8/20/2024</b> | <b><u>\$39,110,146.90</u></b> |
| <b>PETTY CASH FUNDS</b>                           |                  | <b>\$18,105.00</b>            |
| <b>INVESTMENT FUNDS</b>                           |                  |                               |
|   | <u>Yield</u>     |                               |
| Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP) | 5.32%            | \$22,441,015.28               |
| Bayvanguard Bank                                  | 4.68%            | \$10,832,192.46               |
| Shore United Money Market Account                 | 5.33%            | \$78,683,603.30               |

**INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL** **\$111,974,916.04**

**TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS** **\$151,085,062.94**



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT  
08/27/2024**

**OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK**

| <b>OPERATING FUNDS AT</b>                | <b>8/20/2024</b> | <b>\$39,110,146.90</b> |
|--|------------------|------------------------|
| Total ADP Payroll PPE 8/16/2024          |                  | (962,893.52)           |
| Community Center Sales & Use Due 8/20/24 |                  | (58.34)                |
| Golf Course Sales & Use Due 8/20/2024    |                  | (3,646.87)             |
| Roads Sales & Use Due 8/20/2024          |                  | (1,074.75)             |
| Enterprise Lease Pymt 7/2024             |                  | (30,634.10)            |
| Enterprise Lease Pymt 8/2024             |                  | (30,498.87)            |
| Harland Clarke Deposit Ticket Order      |                  | (139.85)               |
| Returned Checks #995209, #104, #159      |                  | (718.70)               |
| Deposits                                 |                  | 2,605,889.02           |
| Checks                                   |                  | (121,791.08)           |
| ACH Disbursements                        |                  | (2,756,147.28)         |
| EFT's                                    |                  | (108,239.29)           |

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| Wire Transfers   | (6,409,090.24) |
| Voided Checks #372375, #372441, #372442, #373124, #373127,<br>#372977, #373021 | 60,316.47      |

|                           |                  |                               |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>OPERATING FUNDS AT</b> | <b>8/27/2024</b> | <b><u>\$31,351,419.50</u></b> |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|

|                         |  |                    |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------|
| <b>PETTY CASH FUNDS</b> |  | <b>\$18,105.00</b> |
|-------------------------|--|--------------------|

**INVESTMENT FUNDS**

|   | <u>Yield</u> |                 |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP) | 5.32%        | \$22,441,015.28 |
| Bayvanguard Bank                                  | 4.68%        | \$10,832,192.46 |
| Shore United Money Market Account                 | 5.33%        | \$78,683,603.30 |

|                               |  |                                |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| <b>INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL</b> |  | <b><u>\$111,974,916.04</u></b> |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|

|  |  |                                       |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b><u>TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS</u></b> |  | <b><u><u>\$143,326,335.54</u></u></b> |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|