



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

January 27, 2026

Present – President, Chuck Callahan, Vice President Pete Leshner, Keasha N. Haythe, Lynn L. Mielke, Dave Stepp, Assistant County Manager Jessica Morris, and County Attorney, Patrick Thomas. County Manager Clay Stamp was absent.

- I. Agenda – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Agenda of Tuesday, January 27, 2026.
- II. Minutes – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Minutes of Tuesday, January 13, 2026.
- III. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, January 20, 2026, and Tuesday, January 27, 2026.
- IV. Update from Department of Social Services – Linda Webb, Director, Talbot County Department of Social Services – Ms. Webb expressed her appreciation to the Council for funding and other support the County provides to the Department of Social Services and stated that the Department is currently in the final phase a four-year reaccreditation cycle, whereby it is required to meet various benchmarks in the areas of administration and management; service delivery administration and services. She stated that the year-long process for renewal of accreditation concludes at the end of January and that the Department had received positive feedback related to its transparency, the commitment, passion and professionalism of its staff, its caring attitude for the individuals it serves, the ability to adjust to the changing needs of the community and the organization, its strong community partnerships, etc. Ms. Webb then briefed the Council on the various services and programs offered by the Department of Social Services. She provided updates, including statistical information, on the following: Child Welfare and Adult Services which, in FY25, provided out-of-home placement (foster care) for 16 children and stated that there are 6 adults under guardianship, provided 366 overnight respite opportunities for parents of children with specific health or behavioral needs as well as evidenced-based nurturing parenting education programs; Family Investment Program – Ms. Webb stated that the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provided \$634,631 in monthly assistance to over 2,200 households (3,800 + individuals) and that Talbot County received \$388,400 in SUN Bucks (Summer SNAP for school-aged children), providing meals to over 3,200 children in June, July and August of FY24. She stated that Talbot County was one of only six counties in the state selected to participate in the program; Child Support Program – Ms. Webb stated that during FFY25, over \$2 million in child support was collected and disbursed; a young fathers/non-custodial parent employment program, conducted in partnership with the Talbot County Detention Center, had 24 enrollees resulting in 18 job placements and collected approximately \$53,000 in child support monies; Citizens Emergency Fund – Ms. Webb stated that funding provided by Talbot County was used to provide emergency needs for individuals who do not qualify for other programs including food, payment of utilities, medical expenses, transportation, etc. She stated that the Department of Social Services works closely with the Neighborhood Service Center, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and Chesapeake

Multicultural Resource Center to try to fully meet the needs of the individual or family; Children’s Advocacy Center – Ms. Webb stated that the Center, in partnership with the University of Maryland Shore Regional Medical Center, serves residents of Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s and Talbot counties, and utilizes a multi-disciplinary team of professionals (medical, Child Protective Services, State’s Attorney, law enforcement, mental health) to provide a regional medical program serving child survivors of sexual abuse, serious physical abuse, and/or extreme neglect, and the non-offending caregiver. She stated that County financial support provides funding for the Children’s Advocacy Center for fingerprinting of service providers, insurance coverage, Web and IT services, training for the multidisciplinary team, alarm services, interpreter/translation services, etc. Ms. Webb stated that funding provided by the County also assists with recruitment, employee development and retention, and she outlined various initiatives utilized to accomplish recruitment, retention and staff development goals; and Community Connections – Ms. Webb stated that the County financially assists with the Empower Me program, a child abuse prevention program that teaches safety skills; the Department of Social Services now provides the program to every school system in the county, reaching over 700 students and adults last year; 75 community education outreach events were held, and included reaching individuals staying at the Days Inn in Easton, events at the Talbot County Free Library, providing Child Protective Services Mandated Reporter training for various community organizations, traveling with the Maryland Food Bank mobile food market, “Shop the Truck”, as well as working at various festivals and other events in the Talbot County community. Council members commended Ms. Webb for the services the Department of Social Services provides to Talbot County residents. Ms. Webb will continue to update the Council on a regular or as-needed basis.

- V. Presentation of Planning Commission’s Recommendations on Cannabis Zoning Text Amendment – Brennan Tarleton, Planning Officer – Mr. Tarleton stated that the Planning Commission, at its meeting on Wednesday, December 3, 2025, reviewed a proposed cannabis zoning text amendment which had been requested by Ms. Haythe, and approved by the Council at its Tuesday, November 5, 2025 meeting for forwarding to the Planning Commission. He stated that the Maryland Cannabis Administration is tasked with the licensing process for dispensary facilities and growing and processing facilities but has delegated the zoning for the facilities to the counties and municipalities. Mr. Tarleton stated that the proposed text amendment updates the minimum lot size from 20 acres in the prior legislation to a minimum of 75 acres for the growing and processing of cannabis, and requiring a major site plan review for the growing and processing of cannabis; a Special Exception is required for dispensaries. He stated that the Planning Commission voted 5 – 0 to recommend approval of the proposed text amendment with the following two modifications: (1) changing cannabis processing for cannabis grown off-site from a permitted use to a Special Exception use in the Limited Industrial (LI) district; and (2) excluding the growing and processing of cannabis from protections set forth under Talbot County’s Right to Farm Law as outlined in Chapter 128 of the Talbot County Code. At Ms. Haythe’s request, County Attorney, Patrick Thomas, will draft legislation to include the Planning Commission’s recommendations. The legislation is anticipated to be introduced at an upcoming Council meeting.

VI. County Manager’s Report:

- A. Talbot County Commission on the Aging – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Jacqueline Kreinik to the Talbot County Commission on the Aging; said term will complete the unexpired term of Terry Satchell which will expire on April 1, 2027. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Leshner, 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 Emergency Services Advisory Board – Requested Council approval for the reappointment of Ruth Sullivan to a three-year term on the Emergency Services Advisory Board; said term will expire on February 1, 2029. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the reappointment by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- C. Talbot County Local Emergency Planning Committee – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Paula Miller to the Emergency Services Advisory Board as a representative of the Talbot County Health Department; said term will complete the unexpired term of Rich Taylor which will expire on August 1, 2028. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, 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

- D. Request for Letter of Support – Requested Council approval of a request from Eastern Shore Land Conservancy for a letter in support of their Rural Legacy Program and its two areas of focus for FY27: the Tuckahoe Rural Legacy Area and the Eastern Shore Heartland Rural Legacy Area (southeast of Trappe); Council discussion ensued with Elisa Deflaux, Planner III, Department of Planning and Zoning; no County funds are required. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the letter of support by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- E. Request from Department of Public Works – Ray Clarke, County Engineer, requested Council approval to have the Department of Public Works to apply for grant and loan funding from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) under the Intended Use Plan for the following County sewer projects: (1) \$20.0 Million for the Region V (Tilghman) Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade to Enhanced Nutrient Removal

(ENR) capabilities; (2) \$6.0 Million for improvements to the Region V (Tilghman) Sewer Collection System; (3) \$2.5 Million for improvements to the Region II (St. Michaels) Martingham Sewer Collection System; (4) \$3.0 Million for improvements to the Region II (St. Michaels) Unionville, Tunis Mills and Copperville Pump Station; (5) \$3.0 Million for improvements to the Region II (St. Michaels) Royal Oak, Newcomb and Bellevue Pump Station; (6) \$2.5 Million for improvements to the St. Michaels Pump Station; and (7) \$150,000 for a planning grant to determine what equipment needs to be replaced at the Region II (St. Michaels) ENR Wastewater Treatment Plant which has been in operation for 20 years. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Clarke as each project was brought forward. Mr. Clarke stated that he is also requesting to increase the amount sought for the Calhoon MEBA sewer extension project from \$1.0 to \$1.5 million in the event that additional funds are needed for required sludge removal. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the request by voting 5 - 0 as follows:

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

- F. Request from Hog Neck Golf Course – Requested Council approval of the request from Hog Neck Golf Course to award a contract to Mid-Atlantic Tree Experts in the sum of \$53,400 for tree removal at Hog Neck Golf Course to help ensure that sunlight reaches the newly installed greens and no trees inhibit the golf cart paving project; funding for the project was included in the FY26 Budget. Council discussion ensued with Rich Setter, General Manager/Head Golf Professional, Hog Neck Golf Course, Owen Sutherland, Superintendent, Hog Neck Golf Course. Elisa Deflaux, Planner III, Department of Planning and Zoning confirmed that the trees scheduled for removal are not within the Forest Conservation Area of the golf course property. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the request as presented by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

VII. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

VIII. Council Comments:

Ms. Mielke - Ms. Mielke commended those County employees who brought us through the recent snowstorm so quickly and safely. She stated that, in her opinion, they deserve a lot of credit for their diligence and thoroughness in helping the citizens of Talbot County get around.

Mr. Leshner - Mr. Leshner stated that this morning at the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting, it was announced that Talbot County was the recipient

of funding to develop a Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Plan and that we were one of the two counties in Maryland, the other county was Howard County, and one of only four successful applicants in the state of Maryland in receiving the federal grant funds. He stated that the grant will allow the work of the Committee to move forward. Mr. Leshar congratulated department heads Cassandra Vanhooser and Emily Gilmer, Committee Chair, Heather Grant, and all those individuals who contributed to submitting the successful grant application. He stated that, in his opinion, this is an enormous step. Mr. Leshar stated that last summer, we saw a local pastor, a long-time contributing member of the community, taken into custody by Immigration and Customs Enforcement; more recently we saw a 5-year-old detained on immigration charges, saw Renee Good, a mom, shot on the street by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent, with seeming impunity, and this weekend, we saw Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse, similarly killed on the street. He stated that, in his opinion, these grim scenes, are not who we are as Americans and these actions do not reflect American values or the standards of federal officers. He stated that in a nation governed under the rule of law we must all be held accountable; those responsible for these heinous acts, and those who lead them must be held to account. He stated that, on the other hand, this weekend, we experienced another winter storm and are now digging out. He stated that he witnessed neighbors helping neighbors, checking on more elderly neighbors and digging them out, and looking out for one another. He recounted the story of the 87-year-old mother of one of his colleagues who was checking in on her more elderly neighbors, making sure they were OK. He stated that, in his opinion, this is who we are – as Americans, as Marylanders, and as residents of the Eastern Shore. Mr. Leshar concluded his comments by stating that there is more winter weather on the way – stay safe and keep looking out for each other.

- Mr. Stepp - Mr. Stepp expressed his appreciation to County staff for everything they are doing to keep the roads cleared and us safe – EMS, Public Safety, and our officers, in all they are doing in this cold weather. He encouraged everyone to be safe, particularly as the ice re-freezes at night.
- Ms. Haythe - Ms. Haythe concurred with Ms. Mielke’s and Mr. Stepp’s comments, expressing their appreciation to County employees for clearing the roads and keeping us safe. She also expressed her appreciation to local businesses and the Town of Easton and everyone who has been out in the weather. Ms. Haythe concluded her comments by encouraging individuals to continue checking on their neighbors, particularly their elderly neighbors who may live alone.
- Mr. Callahan – Mr. Callahan concurred with his colleagues’ comments regarding the hard work County employees have been doing over the past few days. He requested prayers for the family whose house caught fire. He stated that the family safely escaped, which is the important thing. Mr. Callahan stated that the Council is here to help with tragedies like this and if the family needs any direction as to services, the County is glad to help. Mr. Callahan concluded his comments by stating that he had coordinated with

Brian Moore, Superintendent, Roads and County Facilities, and Jessica Morris, Assistant County Manager, on the County’s response to the weather-related event and that, in his opinion, the County is blessed to have such a great team of employees.

Upon motion by Ms. Haythe seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council voted to reconvene on Thursday, January 29, 2026, and Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom with Providence Strategies for a briefing on the Maryland General Assembly legislative session - the meeting is open to the public; and to reconvene on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, in Open Session then adjourn into Closed Session 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 ended at 5:58 p.m.

The transcript of the Tuesday, January 27, 2026, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

IX. Summary of Closed Session Held on January 27, 2026:

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

Time of closed session: 4:35 p.m. End 4:55 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, Leshner, Haythe, 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:

Topic Description	Statutory Authority	Reason for Closed Session Discussion	Persons Present	Action Taken
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,	No action

			Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	
To discuss personnel matter in the County Manager’s Office	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Discussion involves specific individual	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action
To discuss personnel matter in Public Works	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Discussion involves specific individual	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
1/20/2026**

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK			
OPERATING FUNDS AT	1/13/2026		\$ 48,877,133.33
Community Center Sales & Use Tax Due 1/20/2026			(523.26)
Golf Course Sales & Use Tax Due 1/20/2026			(353.74)
Roads Sales & Use Tax Due 1/20/2026			(322.06)
Returned Paymentus Payments			(3,814.18)
Bank Charges 12/2025			(3,875.38)
Deposits			1,712,604.74
Checks			(151,132.16)
ACH Disbursements			(1,295,767.90)
EFT's			(274,540.47)
Wire Transfers			(5,780,911.86)
OPERATING FUNDS AT	1/20/2026		\$ 43,078,497.06
PETTY CASH FUNDS			\$ 17,855.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
		<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)		3.76%	\$ 23,828,052.93
Bayvanguard Bank		4.00%	\$ 11,485,844.07
Shore United Money Market Account		3.88%	\$ 64,107,757.60
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL			\$ 99,439,509.60
<u>TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS</u>			\$ 142,518,006.66



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
1/27/2026**

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK

OPERATING FUNDS AT **1/20/2026** **\$ 43,078,497.06**

Total ADP Payroll PPE 1/16/2026	(1,062,071.80)
Airport Merchant Portal Hosting 1/2026	(11.00)
Repurposing Merchant Portal Hosting 1/2026	(15.00)
Roads Merchant Portal Hosting 1/2026	(15.00)
Returned Checks #2746, #809	(392.63)
Returned Paymentus Payments	(753.85)

Deposits	717,188.07
Checks	(64,178.75)
ACH Disbursements	(1,388,873.79)

OPERATING FUNDS AT **1/27/2026** **\$ 41,279,373.31**

PETTY CASH FUNDS **\$ 17,855.00**

INVESTMENT FUNDS

	<u>Yield</u>		
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	3.75%	\$	23,906,340.69
Bayvanguard Bank	4.00%	\$	11,485,844.07
Shore United Money Market Account	3.64%	\$	64,312,391.04

INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL **\$ 99,722,430.80**

TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS **\$ 141,001,804.11**