



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

March 25, 2025

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

- I. Agenda – The Agenda of Tuesday, March 25, 2025, was brought forward for approval. Mr. Stepp made a motion to amend the Agenda to add an item to the County Manager’s Report to join with neighboring counties in issuing a letter to Congressman Andy Harris in support of funding for the renovation of the Whitsitt Center; the motion was seconded by Mr. Leshner. The Council approved amending the Agenda by voting 4 – 0 as follows:
 - Mr. Callahan – Aye
 - Mr. Stepp – Aye
 - Mr. Leshner – Aye
 - Ms. Mielke – Aye
- II. Minutes – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Minutes of Tuesday, February 25, 2025.
- III. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, March 18, 2025, and Tuesday, March 25, 2025.
- IV. Presentation of FY2023-2024 Audit – Chris Lehman, Partner, SB & Company, LLC; Martha Sparks, Talbot County Finance Director - Mr. Lehman utilized a PowerPoint presentation to outline the procedures for the audit, the scope of services provided, and responsibilities of the County and the auditors in preparing the audit. Mr. Lehman provided a summary of the results of the audit which included the issuance of a clean or unmodified opinion on the County’s financial statements. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Lehman and Ms. Sparks as various facets of the presentation were brought forward. Ms. Sparks stated that Mr. Lehman and his team had been a part of the review team of the recently established Reserve Policy for the County prior to its recent adoption via an administrative resolution. Council members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Lehman and his team, and to County staff for all their hard work to complete the audit.
- V. Introduction of Administrative Resolutions:

An ADMINISTRATIVE RESOLUTION PICK UP RESOLUTION FOR THE MARYLAND STATE RETIREMENT AND PENSION SYSTEM OF TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for introduction. Prior to introduction, Donna Pardieu, Director, Talbot County Department of Administrative Services, stated that Talbot County currently participates in the Law Enforcement Officers Pension System (LEOPS) which provides enhanced retirement, disability and survivor benefits to participants and their families. As of July 1, 2025, the current employees of the Talbot County Detention Center will be eligible to participate in

the Correctional Officers' Retirement System (CORS), as will those officers hired after July 1, 2025. Mr. Leshar stated that the County's ability to include additional employees in the pension system, as previously provided for Sheriff deputies, is, in his opinion, important for recruitment and retention. The administrative resolution was introduced by Mr. Callahan, Mr. Leshar, Ms. Mielke and Mr. Stepp. The Council approved the administrative resolution by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Mr. Leshar – Aye
Ms. Mielke - Aye

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIANS EMPLOYED BY TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS' PENSION SYSTEM was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for introduction. Prior to introduction, Donna Pardieu, Director, Talbot County Department of Administrative Services, stated that the goals of the administrative resolution are to provide enhanced retirement, disability and survivor benefits to participants and their families and to aid in recruitment and retention of employees. She stated that there are currently 26 EMTs who will be eligible to participate in the system. County Manager, Clay Stamp, stated that, if approved, the administrative resolution will authorize EMTs of the Talbot County Department of Emergency Services to participate in the State public safety pension system. The administrative resolution was introduced by Mr. Callahan, Mr. Leshar, Ms. Mielke, and Mr. Stepp. The Council approved the administrative resolution by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Mr. Leshar – Aye
Ms. Mielke - Aye

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A TRANSFER OF LOCAL DETENTION CENTER OFFICERS OF TALBOT COUNTY TO THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS' PENSION SYSTEM was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for introduction. Donna Pardieu, Director, Talbot County Department of Administrative Services, stated that the Correctional Officers' Pension System (CORS) provides enhanced retirement, disability, and survivor benefits to participants and their families and there are approximately 40 Corrections Officers who are eligible to participate. Ms. Pardieu expressed her appreciation to the Council and Mr. Stamp for their support during the process of working to make the retirement systems available to the County's Public Safety employees. The administrative resolution was introduced by Mr. Callahan, Mr. Leshar, Ms. Mielke, and Mr. Stepp. The Council approved the administrative resolution by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Mr. Leshar – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye

VI. Discussion of General Assembly Legislation:

- Renewable Energy Certainty Act – Public Utilities – Generating Stations – Generation and Siting – (SB 931 / HB 1036)

was brought forward for discussion. Mr. Leshar stated that the State is looking to attain its renewable energy goals by siting utility scale solar energy generating facilities and is specifically looking to Eastern Shore farmland to be able to reach those goals. He cited as examples, projects which can be seen along U.S. Rt. 50 along MD Rt. 404 and in Cordova. He stated that several years ago the County Council approved legislation establishing guidelines to ensure that the county's best farmland is reserved only for growing crops and is not turned into solar generating facilities. Mr. Leshar stated that the proposed State legislation would, if approved, preempt local legislation and local zoning regulations related to the siting of solar generating facilities. He stated that the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) has been lobbying against the legislation and Talbot County has joined with other counties in opposing the legislation to help ensure that local decision-making plays a role in the siting of the solar facilities. Council discussion ensued. Upon motion by Mr. Leshar, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved forwarding letters in opposition to Maryland SB931 and Maryland HB 1036 by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Mr. Leshar – Aye
Ms. Mielke - Aye

VII. County Manager's Report:

- A. Talbot County Board of Electrical Examiners – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Joseph Nordike to the Board of Electrical Examiners; said term will complete the unexpired term of Mr. Joseph Secrist and will expire on April 1, 2027. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshar, the Council approved the appointment by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye
Mr. Leshar – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye

- B. Talbot250 Commission – Requested the appointment of the following individuals to the Talbot250 Commission: Charles Powers (Tilghman Watermen's Museum); Cindy Orban (resident – town of Easton); Emma Poole (Talbot County Free Library); Ja'Lyn Hicks (Water's Edge Museum in Oxford); Ms. Jerry Seiler (General Perry Benson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution); Jill Ferris (Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum); Joan Levy (Talbot County arts community); Mary Eileen Russell (unincorporated areas of Talbot County); Richard Skinner (resident – town of St. Michaels); Dr. Sharon Pepukayi (Talbot County Public Schools); Stacey Radcliffe (unincorporated areas of the town of Easton); Wesley Hagood (Colonel Tench Tilghman Chapter of the Maryland Society of the Sons of the American Revolution); and Pete Leshar (Council liaison); Kristen Goller (Department of Economic Development and Tourism; Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager; and Jaelon

Moaney will serve as the administrative team. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the appointments by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- C. Talbot County Property Tax Assessment Appeals Board – Mr. Stamp stated that there are currently three (3) vacancies on the Talbot County Property Tax Assessment Appeals Board – one (1) full member and two (2) alternates. Individuals interested in serving on the Board may obtain more information on the County website or by calling the County Manager’s Office at 410-770-8010.

- D. Assignment of Lease Agreement for Oxford-Bellevue Ferry – Requested Council approval to assign the lease for the Oxford-Bellevue Ferry from OBFY, Inc. to the new owner of the Ferry, JETTYLIGHT, LLC. Capts. Judy and Tom Bixler, owners and operators of the Oxford-Bellevue Ferry for the past 24 years, introduced Capt. Jim Andrews, the new owner who will carry on the tradition of operating the historic ferry. The Captains Bixler expressed their appreciation to Talbot County and to the Council for their support during their years of ownership. Council expressed their appreciation to the Bixlers for their many contributions to Talbot County during their time of ownership and wished Capt. Andrews the best as he assumes ownership. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved assigning the lease for the operation of the Oxford-Bellevue Ferry to JETTYLIGHT, LLC by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

Capt. Judy Bixler stated that there will be a Blessing of the Ferry on Friday, April 4, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. at the ferry dock and invited everyone to attend.

- E. Request for Letter of Support – Requested Council approval of a request from the Talbot Watermen Association, Inc. for a letter in support of their application for a FY26 Maryland Heritage Areas Non-Capital Grant in the sum of \$30,000; if approved, the funding will be used for the installation of signage and interpretive panels at three (3) Talbot County public landings to preserve and promote the local heritage of Talbot County watermen. Council discussion ensued with Jeff Harrison, President, Talbot Watermen Association and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, on behalf of Talbot Watermen Association, who stated that the Association is working with the Talbot County Departments of Economic Development and Tourism and Parks and Recreation on the project. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved forwarding a letter in support of the grant application by voting 4- 0 as follows:

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

- F. Request from Neighborhood Service Center – Requested Council approval of the request from the Neighborhood Service Center to utilize \$16,500 in Contingency Funds, which the Finance Director has certified are available, to provide security and fire monitoring equipment upgrades at the Neighborhood Service Center. Council discussion ensued with Marilyn Neal, Executive Director, Neighborhood Service Center. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the use of Contingency Funds as outlined by voting 4 - 0 as follows:

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

- G. Request from Talbot County Health Department and Talbot County Commission on Aging – Requested Council approval of a request from the Talbot County Health Department and the Talbot County Commission on Aging for a letter in opposition to potential budget cuts to the Talbot County Health Department’s Senior Care Program in the FY 25 and the proposed FY 26 State Budgets; and to request the use of Contingency Funds in the approximate sum of \$24,000 should funding for the remainder of FY 25 be eliminated. Council discussion ensued with Carrie Ottey, Community Health Nurse Program Supervisor, and Jenna Marchi, Vice Chair, Talbot County Commission on Aging, regarding the effects the potential cuts would have on the most vulnerable elderly citizens in Talbot County. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved forwarding a letter in opposition to the proposed budget cuts for FY 25 and proposed cuts for FY26 to the Senior Care Program by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- H. Request for Letter of Support – Requested Council approval of a request from the Trappe Volunteer Fire Company for a letter in support of an application for Maryland FY 26 Community Project Funding; if approved, the funding will be utilized toward the construction of a replacement firehouse for the Town of Trappe. Cheryl Lewis, speaking on behalf of the Trappe Volunteer Fire Company, stated that approximately a year ago, Congressman Andy Harris expressed his support of the Fire Company for federal funding assistance to replace the aging firehouse, which was constructed in 1951, is no longer structurally sound and cannot house newer equipment. She stated that the Fire Company not only serves Trappe and the surrounding area, but a large portion of Talbot County and even a portion of Dorchester County. Council discussion ensued with Ms. Lewis regarding the specifics of the request. Mr. Stamp expressed his appreciation to the Trappe Volunteer Fire Company for permitting Talbot County to

maintain a paramedic unit at the firehouse. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved forwarding a letter in support of the application by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- I. Bid No. 23-03, PORTABLE SANITARY CHEMICAL TOILET SERVICE – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Department of Parks and Recreation to extend the current contract with Pierson’s Comfort Group for Bid No. 23-03 in a sum not to exceed \$46,147 for the 2025 season. Council discussion ensued with Emily Gilmer, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved extension of the contract as outlined by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- J. Bid No. 24-21, BELLEVUE HARBOR PIER RE-DECKING, 5536 BELLEVUE ROAD, ROYAL OAK, TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Department of Parks and Recreation to award Bid No. 24-21 to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, Dissen & Juhn, LLC in the sum of \$85,280; a total of nine (9) bids were received. Mr. Stamp stated that the cost of the project is 100% reimbursable by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, who concurs with the award recommendation. Council discussion ensued with Emily Gilmer, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the award by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- K. Request from Department of Parks and Recreation – Requested Council approval of a request from the Department of Parks and Recreation to award the proposal for the purchase and installation of a new generator for the Talbot County Community Center to Barnes Electric, Inc. in the sum of \$211,950, and the use of a temporary generator from Barnes Electric, Inc. in the sum of \$19,000 for a period of 10 weeks while the new generator is being installed. Council discussion ensued with Brian Harris, Facilities Manager, Department of Parks and Recreation. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved the award as outlined by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- L. Request from Roads Department – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Superintendent of Roads and County Facilities, to piggyback off a Maryland State Highway Administration contract with David A. Bramble, Inc. for the paving of approximately 14 miles of primary high volume County roads including Black Dog Alley, Almshouse Road, Glebe Road, Goldsborough Neck Road and Airport Road in the sum of \$1.2 million; funding for the paving project is available in the FY25 Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Fund. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved entering into the contract with David A. Bramble, Inc. as outlined by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- M. Bid No. 23-12, Septic Tank Effluent Pump (STEP) System Equipment – Purchase Only – Requested Council approval of the request by the Department of Public Works for the purchase of 20 Orenco Septic Tank Effluent Pump (STEP) systems in the sum of \$6,940.00 each, delivered, for a total of \$138,000. Ray Clarke, County Engineer, stated that Bid No. 23-12, approved by the Council on November 14, 2023, authorized the purchase of 200 Orenco STEP system pumps to be used in the sewer service area outlined in Resolution No. 235. He stated that the cost of the STEP systems will be reimbursed to the County by users of the tanks. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved the request by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- VIII. Public Comments: Members of the public were afforded the opportunity to comment on matters of interest to them.

IX. Council Comments:

Mr. Leshner - Mr. Leshner congratulated Easton High School's ACE Mentor Program for their winning project design. He stated that the program, which is supported by local volunteers in the architectural, construction and engineering fields, guides teams from Easton High School, St. Michaels High School and Sts. Peter and Paul High School and judges the projects. He stated that County engineers volunteer as well. Mr. Leshner stated that his wearing, in his opinion, of an unusually loud tie was on purpose in recognition of March 25 as Maryland Day and he wished everyone a Happy Maryland Day.

- Mr. Stepp – Mr. Stepp concurred with Mr. Leshner’s comments regarding Maryland Day and stated that we are exactly one month away from Talbot Day. He expressed his appreciation to Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager, and County staff for all the work they are doing to make Talbot Day a continued celebration and stated that he was looking forward to it.
- Ms. Mielke - Ms. Mielke reiterated a speaker’s comments during the Public Comments segment of the meeting, encouraging everyone to attend the Welcome Home parade (Downtown Easton to VFW Post 5118 on Glebe Road), ceremony (laying of wreath at Vietnam War Memorial on the Courthouse grounds), and event (at VFW Post 5118) be held on Sunday, March 30th to mark the 50th anniversary of the ending of the Vietnam War.
- Mr. Callahan - Mr. Callahan offered get well wishes to Ms. Haythe and her family and expressed his appreciation to County staff for all their hard work on the budget.

Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council voted to adjourn and to reconvene on Tuesday, March 27, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room for a work session on the FY26 Budget; to convene on Monday, March 31, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. for a joint work session with the Easton Town Council and representatives of Easton Utilities Commission at the Town of Easton offices located at 14 S. Harrison Street in Easton to discuss a proposed joint grant application to the Maryland Economic Development Administration for the Regional Medical Center project; followed by a 5:30 p.m. joint meeting between the County Council and the Board of Education at the Easton High School Culinary Arts Program located at 723 Mecklenburg Avenue, Easton; and to reconvene in Open Session on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 3:30 p.m. and to adjourn into Closed Session as listed on the statement for closing that meeting, then for the regularly scheduled meeting at 5:00 p.m. by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

The transcript of the March 25, 2025, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

X. Summary of Closed Session Held on March 20, 2025:

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

Time of closed session: 6:25 p.m. to 7:05 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:

Topic Description	Statutory Authority	Reason for Closed Session Discussion	Persons Present	Action Taken
To discuss personnel matter regarding compensation for County employees	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Discussion involves specific individual	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Martha Sparks, Kaitlin Foster Clark	No action

XI. Summary of Closed Session Held on March 25, 2025:

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

Time of closed session: 3:45 p.m. to 5:00 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, Mielke, Stepp
 Members opposed: None
 Abstaining: None
 Absent: Haythe

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 personnel matter regarding compensation for County employees	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Discussion involves specific individual	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Martha	No action

			Sparks, Kaitlin Foster Clark, Donna Pardieu	
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, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action
To seek legal advice regarding litigation involving a former County employee	GP § 3-305(b)(7)(8)	Attorney-client privilege regarding legal advice	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
3/18/2025**

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK

OPERATING FUNDS AT 3/11/2025 \$ 25,085,760.87

Harland Deposit Tickets/Golf & Community Ctr (139.85)

Interest on Accounts 2/2025 70,397.74

Deposits 1,313,685.90

Checks (135,616.87)

ACH Disbursements (1,174,769.12)

EFT's (2,261.08)

Wire Transfers (695,827.54)

OPERATING FUNDS AT 3/18/2025 \$ 24,461,230.05

PETTY CASH FUNDS \$ 18,105.00

INVESTMENT FUNDS

Yield

Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP) 4.41% \$ 23,076,011.37

Bayvanguard Bank 4.15% \$ 11,102,086.96

Shore United Money Market Account 4.33% \$ 81,918,266.73

INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL \$ 116,114,470.06

TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS \$ 140,575,700.11



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
3/25/2025**

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK

OPERATING FUNDS AT	3/18/2025	\$ 24,461,230.05
Total ADP Payroll PPE 3/14/2025		(931,269.14)
Bank Charges		(4,665.97)
Deposits		872,709.19
Checks		(105,530.21)
ACH Disbursements		(1,146,720.92)
EFT's		(197,832.91)
Voided Checks		96.88

OPERATING FUNDS AT	3/25/2025	\$ 22,948,016.97
---------------------------	------------------	-------------------------

PETTY CASH FUNDS		\$ 18,105.00
-------------------------	--	---------------------

INVESTMENT FUNDS

	<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	4.42%	\$ 23,076,011.37
Bayvanguard Bank	4.15%	\$ 11,102,086.96
Shore United Money Market Account	4.33%	\$ 81,918,266.73

INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL		\$ 116,114,470.06
-------------------------------	--	--------------------------

<u>TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS</u>		<u>\$ 139,062,487.03</u>
--	--	---------------------------------