



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

May 27, 2025

Present – President Chuck Callahan, Vice President Pete Leshner, Keasha N. Haythe, Lynn L. Mielke, Dave Stepp (via telephone), County Manager Clay Stamp, and County Attorney, Patrick Thomas.

- I. Agenda – The Agenda of Tuesday, May 27, 2025, was brought forward for approval. Ms. Mielke made a motion to amend the agenda to remove *Request from Easton Airport to Apply for and Accept Airport Improvement Program (AIP) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Grant Funding* from Item X. County Manager’s Report, and to defer the request until the next meeting; Mr. Leshner seconded the motion and the Council approved the Agenda, as amended, by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- II. Minutes – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Minutes of Tuesday, April 15, 2025 and Tuesday, April 22, 2025

- III. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, May 20, 2025, and Tuesday, May 27, 2025.

- IV. Proclamation : 40th Anniversary of Chesapeake Music – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record in recognition of the 40th anniversary of Chesapeake Music, based in Easton, Maryland. The proclamation spoke of the impact Chesapeake Music has had over the past 40 years bringing world-class music to a growing audience of all ages on Maryland’s Eastern Shore and beyond, from providing year-round programming with Interlude concerts featuring talented musicians and rising stars, from the field of classical, jazz and crossover music in Easton’s Ebenezer Theater, culminating in an annual Chamber Music Festival. The Proclamation also noted the impact Chesapeake Music has had with its YouthReach programming, in partnership with Talbot Arts and the Talbot County Public Schools by providing master classes for middle school band students with graduate music students from the University of Maryland. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council unanimously approved the Proclamation by voting 5-0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

Mr. Leshner presented the Proclamation to David Faleris, Executive Director, Chesapeake Music and encouraged the public to attend this year's annual Chamber Music Festival themed *Reflection and Celebration* which will be held from June 6 through 14, 2025. For more information visit www.chesapeakemusic.org.

V. Eligible for Vote:

BILL NO. 1585, AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE 2025-2026 ANNUAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE, was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for vote. Prior to the vote, Finance Director Martha Sparks and Assistant Director Kaitlin Foster-Clark, requested consideration of amendments as reviewed and recommended at the final budget work session held on May 13, 2025.

Amendment 1 was brought forward for consideration and introduced by Mr. Leshner and Ms. Haythe. Amendment 1 includes a decrease in the FY26 capital outlay budget in the amount of \$1,030,700 for several departments which is a result of capital outlay items that were able to be purchased in FY25 using fourth quarter transfers; restores funding back to the original request for Upper Shore Aging, Inc. and the Talbot County Free Library; includes retirement costs for Chesapeake Community College in the amount of \$12,858 and retirement costs of \$440,098 for Talbot County Public Schools teachers' pensions as mandated by the State of Maryland; minor amendments related to grants; an increase in the appropriation to Talbot County Public Schools by \$1,100,000 including \$500,000 in increases for Talbot County Public Schools staff and \$600,000 for nine designated positions including two social workers, six instructional assistants for multilingual learners and Special Education students and one Special Education Teacher. Amendment 1 includes an educational supplement of \$.105 cents with projected revenues related to the education supplement of \$1,540,098. Amendment 1 failed by a vote of 2-3 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Nay
Mr. Stepp – Nay (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Nay
Ms. Haythe – Aye

Amendment 2 was brought forward for consideration and introduced by Mr. Callahan, Mr. Leshner, Ms. Mielke, Ms. Haythe and Mr. Stepp. Amendment 2 includes a decrease in the FY26 capital outlay budget in the amount of \$1,030,700 for several departments which is a result of capital outlay items that were able to be purchased in FY25 using fourth quarter transfers; restores funding back to the original request for Upper Shore Aging, Inc. and the Talbot County Free Library; includes retirement costs for Chesapeake Community College in the amount of \$12,858 and retirement costs of \$440,098 for Talbot County Public Schools teachers' pensions as mandated by the State of Maryland; minor amendments related to grants; an increase in the appropriation for Talbot County Public Schools by \$600,000 for nine designated positions including two social workers, six instructional assistants for multilingual learners and Special Education students and one Special Education Teacher. Amendment 2 includes an educational supplement of \$.106 cents with projected revenues related to the education supplement of \$1,040,098. Amendment 2 passed by a vote of 4-1 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Nay

Ms. Haythe – Aye

Bill No. 1585, as amended, was then brought forward for vote. The Council approved Bill No. 1585, as amended, by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

Bill No. 1585, as amended, is effective July 1, 2025.

- VI. Update and Recommendation by Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism and Easton Utilities on Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Office of Statewide Broadband Grant to Difficult to Serve Properties – Cassandra Vanhooser, Director of Economic Development and Tourism and John Horner, President and CEO, Easton Utilities, requested Council consideration to return \$400,000 of the \$1.1 million received as part of the Difficult to Serve Properties grant award by the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Office of Statewide Broadband. Ms. Vanhooser and Mr. Horner explained that as a result of a recent conversation with the DHCD Office of Statewide Broadband, Easton Utilities carefully reviewed their grant portfolio for the Connect Talbot project and identified \$400,000 that could be returned to the State for reallocation to other jurisdictions that are still working on completing their broadband buildouts. Part of their rationale is that the Difficult to Serve Properties grant provides the best option for partial return because other DHCD grants require less matching funds. Mr. Horner noted that this return of funding does not change the fact that Talbot County will be the first county to be fully funded to provide broadband services to all unserved properties. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council unanimously approved the recommendation to return \$400,000 in grant funding through the Difficult to Serve Properties grant awarded by DHCD Office of Statewide Broadband by voting 5-0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- VII. Update on Neighborhood Service Center's Designation as Talbot County's Community Action Agency – Mr. Stamp provided a briefing on the Neighborhood Service Center's (NSC) designation as the County's Community Action Agency in follow-up to an inquiry made at the Council's April 15, 2025 meeting. He noted that in 1964 the federal government launched the "War on Poverty" and created Community Action Agencies (CAAs) to address poverty through community-driven solutions, funded directly by the federal government. In 1981 the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act replaced direct federal funding with block grants to states, consolidating various programs while maintaining the core mission of CAAs: reducing poverty and promoting self-sufficiency. Under the State of Maryland's Housing and Community Development Article §8-104 of Maryland law, counties may designate a CAA; however, such designation does not obligate a county to provide funding. Designated CAAs must meet state oversight requirements, including annual reporting to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development to ensure fiscal and programmatic compliance. Mr. Stamp noted in January 1985, the Talbot County Council

designated the NSC as the official CAA. Although not legally required, the County has provided funding support which averaged \$83,000 annually from 2008 until 2020 then increased each year to \$374,472 in FY 2025 (for both operating and capital funding). Most of NSC's funding is derived from federal, state, and private sources and the County's involvement is limited to its authority to designate the CAA, representation on the NSC board as outlined in its bylaws. In closing Mr. Stamp noted that NSC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by bylaws, with representation from local government, community organizations, and individuals who support its mission. NSC operates independently of the Talbot County government. As the designated CAA, the NSC reports to the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Council thanked Mr. Stamp for the information provided.

VIII. County Manager's Report:

- A. Talbot County Public Works Advisory Board – Requested Council approval for the reappointment of Cory Buxton to a four-year term on the Public Works Advisory Board; said term will expire on May 1, 2029. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the reappointment by voting 5 - 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe - Aye

- B. Request to Designate Official Town Crier of Talbot County, Maryland – Requested Council approval of the request from Mr. Richard Culotta to designate him as the official Town Crier for Talbot County, Maryland so he can join the American Guild of Town Criers. Mr. Stamp stated that Mr. Culotta has received endorsements from the Town of Easton and the Col. Tench Tilghman Chapter of the SAR (Sons of the American Revolution). Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the designation by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- C. Request from Talbot County Roads Department – Requested Council approval of the request of the Superintendent of Roads and County Facilities to amend the existing contract with David A. Bramble, Inc. for the paving of the remaining portion of Glebe Road maintained by Talbot County at a cost of \$193,000, the funding for which is available. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the request by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- D. Bid No. 25-06, REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: TOURTALBOT.ORG WEBSITE REDESIGN – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Director of the Department of Economic Development and Tourism to award Bid No. 25-06 to Destination by Design in the sum of \$70,000 for redesign of the TourTalbot.org website. Cassandra Vanhooser, Director, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, stated that Destination by Design specializes in destination marketing; funding for the project was made available through a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration through the Maryland Office of Tourism Development in the sum of \$112,320. Council discussion ensued with Ms. Vanhooser. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved award as outlined by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- E. Request from Department of Public Works – Requested Council approval for the County Engineer’s request for the temporary closure of Goldsborough Neck Road from approximately June 15, 2025, to September 1, 2025, in order to expedite road widening improvements near its intersections with Villa Road (Easton). Council discussion ensued with Ray Clarke, County Engineer, who outlined the scope of the work and details of the detour route; he emphasized that the access to Villa Road will not be closed. Mr. Clarke stated that the improvements are part of a larger project for which the County received \$750,000 in funding from the Rural Economic Investment Fund which is required to be used by close of calendar year 2025. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the request for closure of Goldsborough Neck Road as outlined, by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- F. Bid No. 24-14, EMS NORTH STATION IN CORDOVA – DESIGN BUILD PROPOSAL – Change Order No. 3 – Requested Council approval of the County Engineer’s recommendation to award Change Order No. 3 for Bid No. 24-14 to Industrial Engineering Company, Inc. (IEC) in the sum of \$166,800.00 for the installation of a sprinkler system in the garage area of the new EMS North Station in Cordova utilizing a 25,000 gallon above-ground water storage tank. Mr. Clarke stated that the original project called for only the sleeping and office areas to have sprinklers; however, the State Fire Marshal requires the garage area to have sprinklers as well. Mr. Stamp stated that there are sufficient funds in the budget. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved Change Order No. 3 by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)

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

- G. Request from Department of Public Works – Requested Council approval for the Department of Public Works to apply for and accept Maryland Department of the Environment FY26 Bay Restoration Fund OSDS Grant funding in the sum of \$2,125,300; if approved, the funding will be utilized for the installation of On-Site Disposal System (OSDS) Denitrifying Treatment units for homeowners who have failed/failing septic systems. Mr. Clarke stated that in the past, Talbot County has received approximately \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 each year in Bay Restoration Fund grant funding. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the request by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- H. Request from Department of Technical Services – Requested Council approval to have the Department of Technical Services purchase 36 Dell computers, monitors, and accessories in the sum of \$85,054.85; said purchase will be made utilizing Dell's contract with the National Cooperative Purchasing Alliance (NCPA). Mr. Stamp stated that there are sufficient funds in the FY25 Budget for the purchase. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the purchase as outlined by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

- I. Request from Department of Technical Services – Requested Council approval to have the Department of Technical Services purchase network infrastructure devices from e-Plus Technology in the sum of \$260,010.49; said purchase will be made by piggybacking on a State of Maryland contract. Mr. Stamp stated that there are sufficient funds in the FY25 budget for the purchase. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved the purchase as outlined by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye
Mr. Stepp – Aye (via telephone)
Mr. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

IX. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

X. Council Comments:

- Mr. Stepp - No comments.
- Mr. Leshner - Mr. Leshner offered congratulations to the graduates of Chesapeake College, their families, faculty and administrators including those graduates of the nursing program who recently received their pins. He offered congratulations in advance to the graduates of Easton High School and St. Michaels High School and noted he will be attending both graduation ceremonies.
- Ms. Mielke - Ms. Mielke noted that the VFW on Glebe Road in Easton will be holding a Memorial Day celebration on Friday, May 30, 2025 starting at 3:00 p.m. and encouraged the public to attend to commemorate our local fallen heroes.
- Ms. Haythe - Ms. Haythe congratulated the graduates of Chesapeake College and noted that former Senator Ben Cardin was the commencement speaker. Ms. Haythe stated she too will be attending the graduation ceremonies at Easton High School and St. Michaels High School and extended congratulations to the graduates and their families noting that it takes a village to get everyone across the finish line to graduation.
- Mr. Callahan - Mr. Callahan thanked Ms. Sparks and Ms. Foster-Clark for their hard work on the FY26 budget.

Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Leshner the Council voted to reconvene on Tuesday, June 10, 2025, at 2:30 p.m. for a work session with the Planning Commission on a proposed text regarding short-term rentals and the Short-Term Rental Review Board; to adjourn into Closed Session following the work 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. Leshner – Aye
Ms. Mielke – Aye
Ms. Haythe – Aye

Mr. Stepp left the meeting prior to the vote.

The meeting ended at 6:09 p.m.

The transcript of the Tuesday, May 27, 2025, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

- XI. Work Session with Talbot County Agricultural Community (Farm Bureau, Agricultural Extension Office, Soil Conservation and USDA) – Prior to the County Council meeting, a Work Session was held with representatives from the agricultural community including Shannon Dill, University of Maryland Extension Office, John Swaine, Vice President Farm Bureau, Shawn Smith, Manager, Talbot Soil Conservation District and Logan Moore, USDA Farm Service Agency in Talbot County. Ms. Dill provided an overview of the Extension Office including their work with agriculture and food systems, home horticulture, watershed development, family consumer science program and the 4-H youth development program. Ms. Dill referenced the University of Maryland

Extension's 2024 annual impact report which provides an overview of services provided as well as volunteer hours tracked. Ms. Dill stated that the Extension Office, among other duties, provides assistance with nutrient management plans as well as pesticide recertification and training. She noted that the Women in Agriculture Program will be celebrating 25 years and the Corn Club will be celebrating 74 years. Mr. Swaine noted that the Talbot County Farm Bureau currently has 203 members with 146 voting members (either farmers, landowners or agribusiness). He reviewed new policies and amendments to policies adopted by the Talbot County Farm Bureau in October 2024 which include an Anti-Discrimination Statement to align with the Maryland Farm Bureau policy; and with regards to Talbot County policies, to state that the Farm Bureau is opposed to the establishment of a new bike or hiking path between the towns of Easton and Queen Anne on the abandoned railway; and in the event that Talbot County plans to regulate Food Processing Residuals (FPR) storage, they prefer an ordinance similar to that of Wicomico County. Shawn Smith, Manager, Talbot Soil Conservation District, noted that he and Mr. Swaine spent a great deal of time in Washington, DC and Annapolis, MD this year talking with legislators about issues and policies that affect soil conservation and the impact of the State's budget on his office. The Soil Conservation District manages best management practices for agriculture and soil and sediment erosion control. He invited the Council to attend the conservation tour in Talbot County planned for October 22, 2025 which will focus on three operations in the Wye River watershed. Ms. Moore noted that Talbot County farmers and producers have earned approximately \$3 million through Farm Service Agency programs. The Council members expressed their appreciation to the representatives of the agricultural community in attendance for helping to ensure that agriculture remains a vital part of the economy of Talbot County. Representatives of the agricultural community will continue to update the Council on a regular or as-needed basis.

XII. Summary of Closed Session Held on May 27, 2025:

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

Time of closed session: 3:40 p.m. to 4:00 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, 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 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 (via	No action

			telephone), Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	
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TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT 5/20/2025				
OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK				
OPERATING FUNDS AT				
	5/13/2025		\$	5,858,679.23
Transfer from Shore United Money Market Account				20,000,000.00
Total ADP Payroll PPE 5/09/2025				(991,289.59)
Bank Charges 4/2025				(7,765.07)
Interest on Accounts 4/2025				57,758.07
Deposits				607,814.41
Checks				(566,113.36)
ACH Disbursements				(1,307,222.19)
EFT's				0.00
Wire Transfers				0.00
Voided Checks				249.00
OPERATING FUNDS AT				
	5/20/2025		\$	23,652,110.50
PETTY CASH FUNDS				
			\$	18,105.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS				
		<u>Yield</u>		
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)		4.32%	\$	23,244,496.90
Bayvanguard Bank		4.15%	\$	11,177,855.61
Shore United Money Market Account		4.33%	\$	62,513,175.08
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL				
			\$	96,953,632.59
TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS				
			\$	120,605,743.09



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
5/27/2025

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK

OPERATING FUNDS AT **5/20/2025** **\$ 23,652,110.50**

Deposits	1,016,571.88
Checks	(98,977.49)
ACH Disbursements	(2,143,026.63)
EFT's	(361,601.89)
Wire Transfers	(4,092,596.82)
Voided Checks	423,315.00

OPERATING FUNDS AT **5/27/2025** **\$ 18,395,794.55**

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

INVESTMENT FUNDS

	<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	4.32%	\$ 23,244,496.90
Bayvanguard Bank	4.15%	\$ 11,177,855.61
Shore United Money Market Account	4.33%	\$ 62,513,175.08

INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL **\$ 96,953,632.59**

TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS **\$ 115,349,427.14**