



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

October 5, 2026

SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE DAY

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

- I. Agenda – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Agenda for Monday, October 5, 2026.
- II. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, September 29, 2026.
- III. Introduction of Legislation:

A BILL TO AMEND CHAPTER 24 (BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS) OF THE TALBOT COUNTY CODE FOR THE PURPOSE OF REPEALING AND REENACTING ARTICLE II (BOARD OF TOURISM) TO ESTABLISH A NEW BOARD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM AND SET FORTH THE MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES, AND FUNCTIONS THEREOF was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for introduction. Prior to introduction, County Attorney Patrick Thomas, stated that the purpose of the legislation is to consolidate the existing Economic Development Commission and the Tourism Board into a single board, the Board of Economic Development and Tourism. He stated that if approved, the legislation will take effect on March 1, 2027. Ms. Haythe stated that the Departments of Economic Development and the Tourism Office were combined in 2016; however, the boards were not combined at that time. She stated that since we the County has a new director, she had requested that the Office of Law draft legislation which would combine the boards to align with the guidelines of the IEDC (International Economic Development Council). She stated that if approved, the legislation would not become effective until March 1, 2027, in order to allow time for the new combined board to be in place. Ms. Mervine, read the following statement into the record:

"Good evening, Council members and County leadership. Before I begin, I wanted to be very clear that I am deeply grateful for the dedicated service both boards have provided. Their commitment, experience, and longstanding contributions have laid the foundation for the work we are discussing tonight, and we sincerely appreciate every member who serves and continues to serve. Their efforts have brought Talbot County to where it is today, and this proposed structure builds on their important work, not replacing it. I'm also here to talk about what the forward-looking steps for our county look like. The creation of this unified board will help us modernize our approach, align with the practices as nationally recognized standards from IEDC, the International Economic Development Council. We went by their recommendations and the industry sectors quite closely, and I believe it will strengthen our ability to compete, collaborate, and grow."

The legislation was introduced by Mr. Callahan, Ms. Haythe, Mr. Leshner, Ms. Mielke, and Mr. Stepp as Bill No. 1655. A public hearing was scheduled for Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room, South Wing, Talbot County Courthouse, 11 North Washington Street, Easton, Maryland 21601.

IV. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

V. Council Comments:

Ms. Haythe – Ms. Haythe stated that she was wearing pink in recognition of October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month and in celebration of those who are survivors of breast cancer. She stated that she enjoys helping women celebrate being free from cancer this month and every month.

Ms. Mielke- Ms. Mielke concurred with Ms. Haythe's comments and thanked her for her support.

Mr. Leshner - No comments.

Mr. Stepp - No comments.

Mr. Callahan - Mr. Callahan expressed his appreciation to Ms. Haythe for her comments, stated that it means a lot to him as he lives with a two-time survivor of breast cancer, congratulated all those who have made it through and have survived breast cancer, and stated that he is proud to be a part of the movement to support those facing breast cancer.

Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council voted to adjourn and to reconvene on Tuesday, October 13, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. in 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 4:11 p.m.

The transcript of the Tuesday, October 5, 2026, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

VI. Summary of Closed Session Held on October 5, 2026:

There was no Closed Session.

VII. Meeting with Elected Officials from Easton, Oxford, Queen Anne, St. Michaels and Trappe – The

Talbot County Council met with elected officials from the incorporated municipalities of Talbot County on Tuesday, September 29, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Talbot County Free Library, 100 W. Dover Street in Easton. The following were in attendance: Megan Cook, Mayor, Town of Easton; Don Abbatiello, President, Easton Town Council; Robert Rankin, Member, Easton Town Council; Andy Kitzrow, Town Manager, Town of Easton; Katrina Greer, President, Commissioners of the Town of Oxford; Holly Wahl, Town Manager, Town of Oxford; Phil Starkey, Mayor, Town of Queen Anne; Dawn Starkey, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Queen Anne; Don Richardson, Town Manager, Town of St. Michaels; Michael Sullivan, Vice-President, Trappe Town Council; Daniel Deakins, Commissioner, Town of Trappe; Pete Leshner, Vice-President, Talbot County Council; Lynn Mielke, Member, Talbot County Council; Dave Stepp, Member Talbot County Council; Clay Stamp, Talbot County Manager; Jessica Morris, Assistant County Manager; Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager for Talbot County; and Stephanie Mervine, Director, Talbot Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Update from Talbot County:

Clay Stamp introduced Stephanie Mervine, the new Director of the Talbot County Department of Economic Development and Tourism. Mr. Stamp stated that Ms. Mervine replaces Cassandra Vanhooser who recently accepted a position with the State as the Managing Director of the Maryland Department of Commerce Office of Tourism. He expressed his appreciation to Ms. Vanhooser for her work with the Economic Development Commission and the Tourism Board on developing a Strategic Plan to move the County forward and to Kristen Goller for stepping up and doing a great job after Ms. Vanhooser left. He stated Ms. Mervine is a native of Wicomico County who has lived throughout the country and is an accomplished economic development professional who brings a wealth of experience to Talbot County. Ms. Mervine stated that during her first 30 days in the job she will be on a listening tour, incorporating some of the best practices she has learned throughout her career in order to adapt them to Talbot County's needs based on the Strategic Plan. Ms. Mervine stated that the Department of Economic Development and Tourism's BRE (Business, Retention and Expansion) Program will go live on September 30, 2026; the Program, which she utilized as the Economic Development Director for three counties when she worked in Oklahoma, involves working with the businesses in each community to learn how they have done in the past, how they are doing at present and what they hope to be doing in the future, to understand the uniqueness of Talbot County, and to work with elected officials of the towns and other partners, including the Chamber of Commerce, to learn where the attraction to that particular community is and to learn where there are gaps; the information gathered will be entered into a database. She stated that it will take approximately a year to meet with everyone and to begin to see trends which can then be correlated to the Strategic Plan. Ms. Mervine invited everyone to an event the Department of Economic Development and Tourism will be hosting in recognition of Economic Development Week in Maryland. The event will be held at The Ivy in Easton on Thursday, October 1, 2026, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Mr. Stamp stated that economic development and tourism is all of us and the County wants to collaborate with the municipalities on projects we can do together.

Senior Citizens Task Force – Mr. Stamp stated that the County, at Ms. Mielke's suggestion, established a Senior Citizens Task Force in August 2025 and the Task Force provided a report to the Council in June 2026 which outlined the following framework to address housing stability and homelessness in Talbot County: Preventing homelessness and housing instability before crisis occurs (how do we provide wrap-around services to senior citizens in the community who currently live at home, and make those services more robust so that the individuals can stay in their homes); Strengthening crisis response systems for older adults experiencing housing emergencies (identify

shelters, including the possibility of a low barrier shelter which the county currently does not have); and Expanding access to permanent housing solutions which are affordable, accessible and appropriate for seniors (how do we address the long-term housing issue for seniors). Mr. Stamp stated that the Senior Citizens Task Force requested that the Council issue a Request for Proposals (RFP), which it did, to have a consultant develop the framework developed by the Task Force into a plan. He stated that Council had received a proposal and will be considering it at an upcoming Council meeting. Ms. Mielke stated that she will be asking the Task Force, at its next meeting, for their thoughts on the creation of a “dementia village” concept for senior citizens, the perfect place for which would be, in her opinion, the property behind the new regional medical center, and to work on a plan and possible grant funding which might be available for the concept. She stated that, in her opinion, the village concept could be combined with housing for nurses working at the hospital who could also act as a support system for individuals living in the village.

Public Safety Complex Open House – Mr. Stamp stated that the County will be hosting an open house for the Public Safety Complex on Marys Court on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.

Update on County Projects – Mr. Stamp stated that the County is finishing up the following projects: the North EMS Station in Cordova, the Chapel District Elementary School and the paving of County roads. He stated that the County had the opportunity to purchase property adjacent to Bellevue Park Ferry Landing with Program Open Space (POS) funding which will allow the County to expand the area of the park. Mr. Stamp concluded his update by stating that County Engineer, Ray Clarke, had retired; the new County Engineer is Josh Elliott who has been with the County for several years.

Updates from Towns:

Easton – Mayor Cook provided an update on downtown Easton traffic light upgrades and pedestrian crossing signals. She stated that work should be completed at the corner of Washington St. and Goldsborough Streets prior to the Waterfowl Festival (November 13 – 15, 2026); paving has been completed on the Rails-to-Trails extension through Moton Park; and work continues on the West Glenwood Avenue stream restoration project. She encouraged everyone to attend Fall Kick-off activities in Easton on October 3 – 4, 2026 – pumpkins will be on display and there are events for everyone. She stated that the Comprehensive Plan will go before the Town Council in November and is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2026; the ribbon-cutting for Vetagro in Mistletoe Hall Commerce Business Park is scheduled for the week of October 5th and a recent ribbon-cutting was held for Easton Utilities’ new well. Mayor Cook stated that the Brookletts building had been sold, the Town will be moving to OpenGov in approximately six months, the Easton Fire Department had held its first training at its Emergency Services Training Campus and encouraged everyone to stop by the *Who Framed You* shop on Harrison Street to view the work of the artist who is painting the crab for the New Year’s Eve Crab Crawl, a new event for the town. Mr. Abbatiello expressed his appreciation to Ms. Mielke for her service to the citizens of Talbot County over the past four years and for her support and wished Mr. Leshner and Mr. Stepp good luck in the November elections. He expressed his appreciation to the County for their consideration to increase the LOSAP (Length of Service Award Program) for volunteer firefighters, which, in his opinion, is important to helping the firefighters in Talbot County remain an all-volunteer force; tax incentives, home purchase assistance, college tuition reimbursement have previously been established.

Queen Anne – Mayor Starkey stated that the Town is hoping to purchase a 2-acre waterfront property on Main Street in Queen Anne for use as a public access point and kayak launch. He stated that 5,000 square feet of the property is in Queen Anne's County with the remainder in Talbot County; the Town has submitted a grant application to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) but stated that the process can be long and the Town will be requesting Council's consideration to use \$75,000 in County Program Open Space (POS) funding for the project. Mr. Starkey expressed his appreciation to Talbot County for their assistance with the paving of potholes on Chairs Alley in Queen Anne. He stated that the Town has had several issues with new residents doing major renovations without the Town having plans for the renovations; several stop-work orders have been issued.

Oxford – Ms. Wahl stated that the Commissioners adopted the Town's 2025 Comprehensive Plan in August. She then provided updates on the following projects: the Oxford Inn is anticipated to complete work on the building in the next several months - the owners have requested to renew their permit for another six months due to substantial issues with the foundation of the building; once work is completed, the Inn will be used to provide a boutique hospitality experience; Robert Morris Inn – Ms. Wahl stated that the building remains in foreclosure and bankruptcy proceedings, but the bank recently authorized funding for stabilization of the building; Critical Infrastructure Upgrades – Ms. Wahl stated that the Town is prioritizing in-house staff capability versus contracting out work; the Town is constructing a test well to provide a redundant water source in order to increase the town's water capacity while also reducing water loss, completing arsenic removal, water system upgrades and addressing longstanding stormwater projects. She expressed her appreciation to the County Council and the County Manager for their support to remedy the flooding issues on the Oxford Causeway, the only ingress and egress to the town. Ms. Wahl stated that the Town is working on requesting a three-year \$1.6 million NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) earmark to fund a study on coastal resiliency; she stated that the Town is continually assessing its risk and exposure through several public/private partnerships to ensure that all agreements are serving the public interest.

St. Michaels – Mr. Richardson stated that the town of St. Michaels had approximately 10,500 visitors per week this past summer. He stated that a 29-unit townhouse development project is in the planning stages and the Town is working closely with the developer and architectural team to ensure that the architecture is a good fit for St. Michaels; the development project will be located at the entrance to the town, adjacent to the former Suburban Propane property. He stated that the developer requested that the Town waive the fee and in lieu of requirements for trees which need to be removed; however, the Town did not do so and will now be working with the developer to plant approximately 500 trees throughout the town. Mr. Richardson expressed his appreciation to Brian Moore, Superintendent of Roads and County Facilities, and the Talbot County Sheriff's Office for their assistance with moving a boat off the road which had been at that location for a good while. Mr. Richardson provided an update on several Town projects to protect housing and the community, including a third well to ensure the town has enough availability of water during its busiest months; he stated that the Town has submitted grant requests for federal and State funding for four shovel-ready projects to combat sea level rise and climate change; the Town has also received support from the Department of Natural Resources for bulkheads and public boat slips; he stated that the Rails-to-Trails extension will be completed in the near future and the Town is in the final stages of completing the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process; the Town is working with the Public County Land Conservancy and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy on the San Domingo Creek Park project – which includes a new pier, installation of meadows and reforesting a portion of the property while still maintaining open space; the entrance will be off West Chew Avenue and parking will be located off Boundary Lane.

Trappe – Mr. Sullivan welcomed Dan Deakins, newest member of the Trappe Town Council. Mr. Sullivan stated that Mr. Deakins is a resident of Lakeside at Trappe, which now has a new builder, Ryan Homes, who has purchased 45 lots. He stated that the Town has now issued 237 permits to date. He stated that the Town's wastewater treatment plant ENR (Enhanced Nutrient Removal) treatment upgrade is still under review by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE); construction is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2027 with an estimated completion date of 18 months from start of construction. Mr. Sullivan stated that the Trappe Volunteer Fire Company issued a request for bids for their new building; the Fire Company received a sizable federal grant for the project. Mr. Sullivan invited everyone to attend the Nace's Day Celebration to be held on Saturday, November 7, 2026 – the parade will start at 1:00 p.m.

Following updates by each of the municipalities, Mayor Starkey stated that the Talbot County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and the Oxford Fire Company will celebrate their 100th anniversaries in 2027 and will have a joint celebration in Oxford on May 22, 2027. Mr. Stamp expressed his appreciation to Mr. Starkey and Jimmy Easton for their leadership with the Talbot County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association. Ms. Mielke suggested that a course be offered to young people on how to ride bicycles safely in traffic; it was noted that Talbot Thrive host bike rodeos at various schools and is planning to partner with (BAAM) Building African American Minds in the near future.

The meeting concluded at 5:45 p.m.

		TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT 9/29/2026	
OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK			
OPERATING FUNDS AT		9/22/2026	\$ 42,249,518.52
Total ADP Monthly Payroll PPE 9/30/2026			(16,373.66)
Returned Paymentus Payments			(21,048.00)
Returned Checks #10056, #109768			(13,866.58)
Airport Merchant Portal Hosting 9/2026			(11.00)
Repurposing Merchant Portal Hosting 9/2026			(15.00)
Roads Merchant Portal Hosting 9/2026			(15.00)
Interest on Accounts 8/2026			233,140.83
Deposits			2,435,976.42
Checks			(134,745.53)
ACH Disbursements			(850,299.77)
Voided Check			4,350.33
OPERATING FUNDS AT		9/29/2026	\$ 43,886,611.56
PETTY CASH FUNDS			\$ 18,455.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
		<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)		3.86%	\$ 24,503,902.38
Bayvanguard Bank		3.89%	\$ 11,781,679.93
Shore United Money Market Account		3.63%	\$ 65,887,210.30
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL			\$ 102,191,247.61
TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS			\$ 146,077,859.17