



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

September 23, 2025

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

- I. Agenda – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Agenda of Tuesday, September 23, 2025.
- II. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, September 16, 2025, and Tuesday, September 23, 2025.
- III. Proclamation: Suicide Prevention Month – September 2025 – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record in recognition of September as “No Matter What...You Matter” Suicide Prevention Month. The proclamation spoke of the prevalence of suicide at a rate not seen since the early 1940s, the percentage of middle and high school aged youth in Talbot County who have contemplated suicide, and the efforts by both public and private organizations to reduce the number of suicides through the provision of adequate and accessible behavioral healthcare services for citizens of all ages facing mental health challenges. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the proclamation by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

Beth Ann Dorman, CEO, For All Seasons, Inc., Alexa Seip, 1st Vice Chair, Board of Directors, For All Seasons, Inc., and Dr. Sharon Pepukayi, Member, Board of Directors, For All Seasons, Inc., were in attendance on behalf of For All Seasons, Inc. Ms. Seip briefed the Council on the services provided by For All Seasons, Inc., the accessibility of services through their open access program which provides individuals who walk in during select hours to meet with a therapist the same day and encouraged everyone in the community to check in with friends, family and neighbors to see how they are doing. Individuals seeking behavioral health assistance should visit the For All Seasons, Inc. website at www.forallseasons.org or call (410) 822-1018. Council discussion ensued with Ms. Dorman, Dr. Pepukayi and Ms. Seip regarding various facets of behavioral healthcare assistance. Ms. Dorman expressed her appreciation to the Council for their continued support of For All Seasons, Inc.

Mr. Stepp presented the Proclamation to Ms. Dorman, Ms. Seip, and Dr. Pepukayi who accepted on behalf of For All Seasons, Inc.

- IV. Proclamation: Alopecia Awareness Month – September 2025 – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record in recognition of September as Alopecia Awareness Month. The proclamation spoke of the 7.1 million Americans who are affected by the condition, Alopecia Areata, an autoimmune disease which causes uncontrollable hair loss, and the efforts of the National Alopecia Areata Foundation™ (NAAF) which advocates and provides community support for those affected and encourages support for research for better treatments and a cure. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the proclamation by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

Dr. Annie Mewborn, group site leader for the Eastern Shore Alopecia Areata Foundation and the walk site coordinator for the 2025 Easton Walk for Alopecia, expressed her appreciation to the Council for sponsoring the proclamation which, in her opinion, shines a light on the often-invisible struggle for those with the condition. She stated that the condition is “not just about hair”, often affecting an individual’s emotional health, self-esteem and daily life. She stated that the purpose of the Easton Walk for Alopecia, scheduled for Saturday, September 27, 2025, at Idlewild Park, is to bring awareness to the condition, to stand with those affected, and to raise funds to support NAAF’s mission for better treatments and a cure. Council members expressed their appreciation to Dr. Mewborn for bringing the matter to their attention.

Ms. Haythe presented the Proclamation to Dr. Mewborn who accepted on behalf of the Eastern Shore Alopecia Areata Foundation.

- V. Update on Talbot County Food Pantries and Community Resource Expo – Saturday, October 18, 2025 – Catherine Poe, Chair, Talbot County Hunger Coalition – Ms. Poe briefed the Council on the upcoming Community Resource Expo to be held on Saturday, October 18, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Easton Elementary School located at 307 Glenwood Avenue. She stated that the event provides “one stop” shopping for Talbot County citizens in need and features 50 non-profit vendors offering, dental and other health screenings; heating assistance; children’s books; home repairs; legal assistance; veteran’s assistance and other services for free; groceries, paper products and personal care items which will also be available for free, and interpreters will be available. She stated that a free lunch will be provided by Sodexo through the St. Michaels Community Center kitchen. Ms. Poe expressed her appreciation to the Council and County Manager, Clay Stamp, for supporting the use of a Delmarva Community Services bus for transportation to the event for those individuals who otherwise would not be able to attend. Ms. Poe then provided statistical information outlining the need for the Resource Expo and the nine (9) food pantries and three (3) meal providers in Talbot County. She stated that 11% of Talbot County residents are food insecure and 15% of children are food insecure, stating that many individuals in the county are having to skip meals due to cost or so their children can have a meal. She stated that 7,733 individuals in Talbot County (1,430 of whom are children) receive SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits; the county’s nine (9) food pantries and three (3) meal providers serve approximately 3,000 individuals each week (12,000 per month and 144,000 a year) which costs the larger food pantries approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000 per month. Ms. Poe provided information on the cost for an individual living in Talbot County, of \$40,646, after taxes, and stated that someone working at the minimum wage rate of \$15.00 per hour, working full-time (2,080 hours) per year, will only earn \$31,200. She stated that 30% of Talbot County residents are senior citizens and 1 in 4 depends upon Social Security for their income, stating that the average Social Security check is \$2,008 per month or \$24,080 a year. She stated that events like the Resource Expo help senior citizens and the working poor learn what resources are available to them and how to access the assistance they need. Ms. Poe expressed appreciation to the many sponsors of the Resource Expo and to the individuals in attendance who helped organize the event. Council members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Poe for her work with the Talbot Hunger Coalition.

- VI. Presentation by Talbot County Public Schools of FY27 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – Kevin Shafer, Director of Operations, Talbot County Public Schools - Mr. Shafer utilized a PowerPoint presentation to outline the FY27 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for Talbot County Public Schools and requested Council approval to submit the CIP to the State Interagency Commission (IAC) for School Construction for approval of State funding. Mr. Shafer stated that the only item on the CIP for FY27 is a request for funding for replacement of the roof at Easton Middle School at a total cost of \$4,095,000; the request from the State totals \$1,950,000 with local funding in the amount of \$2,145,000. Mr. Shafer also provided information on future projects for FY28 through FY32, including replacement of the HVAC systems at Easton High School, Easton Middle School and White Marsh Elementary School, exterior brick work at Easton Middle School, and a Feasibility Study for the future renovation of Easton High School. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved forwarding a letter to the State in support of the FY27 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) as presented, contingent upon the availability of funding at the time the project is brought forward, by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- VII. Request for Abatement of FY26 County Real Property Taxes – Martha Sparks, Finance Director – Ms. Sparks named the owners of 32 parcels who are requesting abatement from FY25-26 County Real Property Taxes and stated that the requests total \$48,922.78; a decrease of \$20,831.82 from the requests for FY24-25. She stated that the owners of the properties are all non-profit or governmental entities which meet the State criteria for abatement. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the request by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

VIII. County Manager's Report:

- A. Adult Public Guardianship Review Board – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Amanda Andrew to the Adult Public Guardianship Review Board as the psychiatric Nurse Practitioner representative on the Board; said term will complete the unexpired term of Dr. Michael Flaherty which will expire on January 1, 2027. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the appointment by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

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

- B. Commission on the Aging – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Wendy Palmer to the Commission; said term will complete the unexpired term of Brenda Stone which will expire on April 1, 2026. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the appointment by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

- C. Upper Shore Aging Board of Directors – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Jo Ann Asparagus Murray to a three-year term on the Board of Directors; said term will expire in September 2028. Upon motion by Ms. Mielke, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the reappointment by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

- D. Request from Talbot Watermen Association – Requested Council approval to forward a letter in opposition to proposed modifications to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass. Jeff Harrison, President, Talbot Watermen Association, stated that the proposed modifications, which would, if approved, institute a 12% reduction in the commercial harvest of striped bass in Maryland, would, in the opinion of the Talbot Watermen Association, severely negatively impact the livelihood of commercial watermen in Talbot County, a main economic driver in the county. Mr. Harrison stated that charter boat business would also suffer economic hardship. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Harrison and Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio of R&R Solutions, consultant to the Talbot Watermen Association, who stated that all other Eastern Shore counties have expressed their opposition to the proposed modifications. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved forwarding a letter to the State in opposition to the proposed modifications to the Interstate Fishery Management Plan for Atlantic Striped Bass by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

- E. Presentation of Letters of Interest for SFY26 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program – Mr. Stamp stated that the Council received notification from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) that the SFY26 CDBG grant funding in the sum of \$800,000 was available to non-profits in the county. He stated that the County received six (6) letters of interest from non-profit organizations in Talbot County and the Talbot County Department of Planning and Zoning for requests totaling \$2.2 million. Mr. Stamp stated that the requests were reviewed by the County with DHCD staff and the County is proposing to partner with the following organizations: Building African American Minds (BAAM); the Neighborhood Service Center and the St. Michaels Community Center; applications are due at the State by Friday, October 24, 2025; the required public hearing and Council's consideration of an administrative resolution will be scheduled to Tuesday, October 14, 2025. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved having the County partner with the three (3) organizations as presented by Mr. Stamp by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

- F. Request from Department of Public Works – Mr. Stamp stated that at the September 9, 2025 work session with representatives of the village of Claiborne regarding the Claiborne water system, Council had, by way of consensus, authorized moving forward with having a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) completed to assist in determining options for the residents. County Engineer, Ray Clarke, outlined the County’s open-engineering contract (Bid No. 22-08), listed the firms which were awarded contracts under Bid No. 22-08, and outlined the criteria by which Department of Public Works projects are assigned a specific project. Mr. Clarke requested Council approval to award the contract for the PER for the village of Claiborne water system to Rauch, Incorporated in the sum of \$29,814.75, and to utilize FY26 Contingency Funds for the cost of the PER. Martha Sparks, Finance Officer, certified that the Contingency Funds are available. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the request as presented by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

- G. BID NO. 23-09, GOLDSBOROUGH NECK ROAD AND GLEBE ROAD CULVERT REPLACEMENT – EASTON – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND - Ray Clarke, County Engineer, stated that he had been notified by the County Roads Superintendent that a culvert on Chapel Road in Easton needs to be replaced as soon as possible. Mr. Clarke stated that he had met with representatives of the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to discuss the matter and a “post permit action” which would allow the County to move forward with replacement of the culvert without first securing the permit from MDE to do so. Mr. Clarke stated that his office contacted David A. Bramble, Inc., who submitted a proposal in the sum of \$1,379,483. He stated that David A. Bramble, Inc. had previously installed bottomless culverts on County projects and is the current contractor for the Goldsborough Neck/Glebe Road Culvert Replacement project (Bid No. 23-09). Clay Stamp, County Manager, stated that Chapel Road is a County primary road and the section of roadway referenced by Mr. Clarke could become very vulnerable with any significant rain or storm event. He stated that David A. Bramble, Inc. has agreed to hold the unit pricing on the existing competitively bid contract and requested Council approval to award Change Order No. 2 for Bid No. 23-09 to David A. Bramble, Inc. in the sum of \$1,379,483 for replacement of the culvert on Chapel Road. Upon motion by Ms. Mielke, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the request by voting 4 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Aye

Council discussion ensued with Mr. Clarke regarding the reopening of a portion of Goldsborough Neck Road at its intersection with Glebe Road. Mr. Clarke stated that the project is anticipated to be completed by November 4th; Mr. Clarke will continue to update the Council as the project moves forward.

- H. Groundbreaking for North EMS Station – Mr. Stamp stated that on Monday, September 29, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. the groundbreaking ceremony for the North EMS Station (11455 Cordova Road, Cordova) will take place and everyone is invited to join the Council at the event.

IX. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

X. Council Comments:

Mr. Stepp No comments.

Ms. Mielke Ms. Mielke commented on the recent passing of The Honorable Judge John C. North, II. She stated that she first met Judge North 46 years ago in this room when he was the District Court Judge. She stated that she was also acquainted with him through the Miles River Yacht Club for about ten years in her capacity as a member of the race committee for the log canoe races. She stated that, in her opinion, Judge North was a brilliant contributor to antique and classic cars for which he was well known. Ms. Mielke concluded her comments by saying that, in her opinion, he had a positive effect on the community and will be missed.

Ms. Haythe - No comments.

Mr. Callahan - No comments.

Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council voted to reconvene on Tuesday, September 30, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room for a work session with Cassandra Vanhooser, Director of Economic Development and Tourism, on the Feasibility Study for a Talbot County Welcome Center and at 5:00 p.m. for a meeting at the Talbot County Free Library, Easton Branch, with elected officials from the towns of Easton, Oxford, Queen Anne, St. Michaels and Trappe; to reconvene on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, 5:00 p.m. in the cafeteria of the Chapel District Elementary School (11430 Cordova Road, Cordova) for a joint meeting with the Talbot County Board of Education; and to reconvene on Tuesday, October 14, 2025 at 2:30 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room for the annual meeting with the local delegation; and to convene at 3:30 p.m. in Open Session and immediately 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 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp - Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe - Aye

The meeting ended at 6:09 p.m.

The transcript of the Tuesday, September 23, 2025, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

XI. Meeting with Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) President, Board of Directors, Jack Wilson and MACo Executive Director, Michael Sanderson – The Council met with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Sanderson on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room; Mr. Callahan, Ms. Haythe, Ms. Mielke and Mr. Stepp were in attendance. Council welcomed Mr.

Wilson and Mr. Sanderson, who provided updates on the following topics: State Budget – Mr. Sanderson stated that some of the State’s fiscal issues relate to implementation of the Maryland Department of Education’s Blueprint Maryland’s Future (“the Blueprint”), noting that the State is now four (4) years into a ten (10) year rollout of the Blueprint. He stated that the State’s \$3 billion shortfall for FY26 has been lessened in part by slowing down State spending; more closely scrutinizing invoices for which counties receive State services; and by transferring 50% of teacher pension liabilities to the counties, a trend MACo considers troublesome. Mr. Sanderson stated that, in his opinion, the State wanted to put itself in a good fiscal position for the next two fiscal years and stated that although the 2026 and 2027 Legislative Sessions (the SFY27 and SFY28) should be good, the State is anticipated to face a \$2 to \$3 billion deficit in FY28. He stated that a report will be released at the end of calendar year 2026 which will provide details on where funding is being spent and will set up the timing for debate about education. He stated that in FY28, the financial strain related to the implementation of the Blueprint will be much more noticeable to counties due to increases in the funding required for implementation of the Blueprint, but which revenue they may not have and that school systems across the state will also experience the impact on an operational level as there may not be funding for some programs currently offered such as band; Affordable housing – Mr. Sanderson stated that estimates on the shortage of affordable residential housing units in Maryland range from 70,000 to 140,000 units and State legislation may come into play with regard to changes in local approval related to zoning, timetables, etc. He stated that, in his opinion, the debate over the lack of affordable residential housing units is primarily driving by efforts to increase the densities of downtown areas and the bill proposed in the 2025 Legislative Session failed as a “one size fits all”. He stated that MACo is working toward making sure any legislation which may be proposed in the 2026 Legislative Session is not overly burdensome to the counties; Energy – Mr. Sanderson stated that the cost of energy will definitely increase in the coming years as there are not enough sources to meet the demand. He stated that land use pressures continue for the siting of solar facilities including on the entire Eastern Shore, particularly in light of Maryland’s Clean Energy initiatives; and Highway User Revenue – Mr. Sanderson stated that the Highway User Revenue Fund, decimated in 2009, has gradually been increasing since that time through a multi-year bump; however, 2025 is the last of year of the increases and if legislation is not approved to extend the provision for increases, the counties will lose 20% to 30% of the gains they have received. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Wilson as various topics were brought forward. The meeting concluded at 3:30 p.m.

XII. Summary of Closed Session Held on September 23, 2025:

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

Time of closed session:	4:05 p.m. End 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, 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, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action
To discuss possible acquisition of property in Easton for a public purpose	GP § 3-305(b)(3)	To protect the County's bargaining position regarding the possible acquisition of real property for a public purpose	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action
For legal briefing regarding Supreme Court's decision in Foster Farm case	GP § 3-305(b)(7)	Attorney-client privilege regarding legal advice	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action

		TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT 9/16/2025	
OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK			
OPERATING FUNDS AT		9/9/2025	\$ 67,799,259.89
Bank Charges 7/2025			(11,762.98)
Interest On Accounts 8/2025			328,990.26
Deposits			1,988,671.52
Checks			(326,294.72)
ACH Disbursements			(2,004,969.44)
OPERATING FUNDS AT		9/16/2025	\$ 67,773,894.53
PETTY CASH FUNDS			\$ 18,105.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
		<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)		4.29%	\$ 23,498,534.50
Bayvanguard Bank		4.15%	\$ 11,329,684.41
Shore United Money Market Account		4.33%	\$ 63,458,423.85
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL			\$ 98,304,747.76
TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS			\$ 166,078,642.29

	TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND		
	WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT		
	9/23/2025		
OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK			
OPERATING FUNDS AT			9/16/2025
			\$ 67,773,894.53
TOTAL ADP PAYROLL PPE 9/12/2025			(1,020,175.84)
BANK CHARGES 8/2025			(10,732.39)
RESOLUTION 235 LOAN BALANCE REDUCTION			(1,574.00)
COMMUNITY CENTER SALES & USE TAX DUE 9/20/2025			(63.47)
GOLF COURSE SALES & USE TAX DUE 9/20/2025			(5,539.56)
ROADS SALES & USE TAX DUE 9/20/2025			(783.60)
RETURNED MONEY ORDER			(5.00)
Deposits			2,323,965.89
Checks			(287,568.23)
ACH Disbursements			(1,655,405.81)
EFT's			(262,965.91)
Wire Transfers			(5,370,873.57)
Voided Check #376007			5,769.48
OPERATING FUNDS AT			9/23/2025
			\$ 61,487,942.52
PETTY CASH FUNDS			\$ 18,105.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
			Yield
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)			4.26% \$ 23,584,704.33
Bayvanguard Bank			4.15% \$ 11,329,684.41
Shore United Money Market Account			4.33% \$ 63,458,423.85
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL			\$ 98,390,917.59
TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS			\$ 159,878,860.11