

County Council of Dorchester County
Open Meeting Minutes
October 22, 2024

The County Council of Dorchester County convened into Open Session on October 22, 2024 at 6:02 p.m., in Room 110 of the County Office Building, 501 Court Lane, Cambridge, Maryland 21613. A roll call of the members was conducted. Present in Room 110 were: George L. Pfeffer, Jr., President; Mike Detmer, Vice President; Rob Kramer, Jr.; and, Ricky C. Travers. Also present in Room 110 was: Irene Barnes, Executive Administrative Specialist. William V. Nichols and Jerry Jones, County Manager, were absent.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Pfeffer led the invocation and the pledge of allegiance.

FINANCIAL REPORT: CASH AND INVESTMENTS

Councilman Pfeffer reported total cash and investments as \$35,032,137.60.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon motion by Councilman Detmer, seconded by Councilman Kramer, the Council approved the Consent Agenda, by a 4 to 0 vote (Councilman Nichols absent).

APPROVAL OF DISBURSEMENTS

The Council approved the vouchers as presented, with Councilman Travers abstaining from payments made to Simmons Center Market.

Senator Richard Colburn invited the Council and Mr. Jones to a Veterans' Day breakfast being held at the American Legion-Post 91 on Monday, November 11, 2024 at 7:30AM, with guest speaker Governor Wes Moore.

Upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Kramer, the Council adjourned into Legislative Session, by a 4 to 0 vote (Councilman Nichols absent).

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PUBLIC HEARING – FY2024-2025 BUDGET AMENDMENT

BILL NO. 2024-9 AN ORDINANCE CONCERNING: AMENDING THE 2024-2025 ANNUAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE OF DORCHESTER COUNTY.

Ms. Barnes said a public hearing is being conducted on Bill No. 2024-9 for the purpose of amending the FY25 Budget to incorporate the Department of Water and Wastewater Services (DWWS).

Councilman Pfeffer asked for public comments, hearing none, the public hearing was closed.

Councilman Pfeffer explained that the budget amendment is needed to incorporate the DWWS into the County budget, including its wastewater service fees, which have not been increased.

Upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Kramer, the Council adopted Bill No. 2024-9, by a 4 to 0 vote, the roll call was as follows: Pfeffer – aye; Detmer – aye; Kramer – aye; Nichols – absent; and, Travers – aye.

Upon motion by Councilman Detmer, seconded by Councilman Travers, the Council adjourned into Open Session, by a 4 to 0 vote (Councilman Nichols absent).

OPEN SESSION

ANNUAL TRANSPORTATION MEETING - MEETING WITH MDOT OFFICIALS

Samantha Biddle, Deputy Secretary, The Secretary's Office, Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), introduced herself, along with the following representatives who provided brief overviews of their divisions, priorities and completed/future projects within the County: Will Pines, Administrator; State Highway Administration (SHA); Mark Crampton, District 1 Engineer, SHA; Melissa Williams, Director of Planning and Program Development, Maryland Transportation Authority; Travis Johnston, Director, Office of Local Transit Support, Maryland Transit Administration; Chrissy Nizer, Administrator, Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration; Ashish J. Solanki, Director, Office of Regional Aviation Assistance, Maryland Aviation Administration; and, Bob Munroe, Deputy Executive Director of Administration and Environment, Maryland Port Administration.

The Council discussed the following concerns:

Intersection – US50 & MD16 Mount Holly Road

Mr. Crampton said the Traffic Feasibility Study (TFS) for a fully functioning traffic light at the intersection of US50 and MD16, to provide access to the eastbound lane, ties into an access permit for Royal Farms. He said the contemplated improvements is to install a t-intersection.

Intersection – MD16 Mount Holly Road & Chateau Road

Mr. Crampton said the intersection of MD16 and Chateau Road will be further reviewed after the t-intersection of US50 and MD16 has been installed, to see how it affects traffic issues on Chateau Road.

Intersection – US50 & Linkwood Road

Mr. Crampton said the intersection of US50 and Linkwood Road will continue to be monitored to see if a fully functioning traffic light is needed, however, the crash history doesn't warrant this, so it is being tabled at this time.

Crossovers – US50 – Bucktown Road to Mount Holly Road

Mr. Crampton said the stretch of roadway on US50 from Bucktown Road to Mount Holly Road is being reviewed to improve the safety of crossovers, such as the issue at Rise Up Coffee. He said this is in process and may be addressed by changing the crossovers to j-turns. In response to

Councilman Detmer's inquiry, Mr. Crampton agreed to hold poster sessions and he will have more information to come.

Connector Road – Neelson Street – MD307 & MD392

Councilman Pfeffer explained that Neelson Street, Hurlock Maryland, connects MD307 and MD392, which causes heavy traffic because it is used as a cut through. He said in the past, the State of Maryland has paved the road, and John Avery, Town Manager, Hurlock Maryland, is requesting the State to pave Neelson Street again. Mr. Crampton agreed to contact Mr. Avery to discuss further.

Roundabout – RT14 & MD392 (Dockins)

Mr. Crampton said a survey has been completed to install a roundabout at the intersection of RT14 & MD392 (Dockins), with the final design of the project to be completed in FY2028, and advertised in FY2029. Councilman Pfeffer asked for public comment. Dawn Stanley, resident, recounted her experience with the Dockins intersection as a retired Emergency Medical Technician, and as a survivor of a near death car accident that occurred at the intersection. Steve Tolley, Mayor, East New Market Maryland, added that he was on the scene of Ms. Stanley's accident, stating that his initial thought was that she was dead. Mr. Tolley said the community has suffered greatly due to the design of this intersection and many have been advocating for this to be changed. A discussion ensued regarding the safety of this intersection and US50, as well as increasing communication regarding US50 operations.

Roundabouts – MD16 Ocean Gateway – Future & Existing

Mr. Crampton said he is looking into the concerns of the future and existing MD16 Ocean Gateway roundabouts regarding the curbs, blocked views and limited space for tractor trailers and farm equipment. Councilman Pfeffer relayed comments from the agricultural community and said this should be taken into account when installing future roundabouts on Ocean Gateway and Mount Holly Road.

Noxious Weeds on State & County Roads

Mr. Crampton said noxious weeds on State and County roads are continually being sprayed, and asked that the Council notify the State when they see or hear about the siting of noxious weeds.

Councilman Detmer expressed concerns regarding: 1) the need for a west side connector to join the MD343 bypass to Chesapeake Drive to take pressure off of Washington Street; and, 2) safety concerns and accidents at the intersection of Stone Boundary and MD16.

In response to Councilman Kramer's inquiry related to dredging and the James Island project, Mr. Munroe said soil samples and a copy of the tests will be provided to the Council.

In response to Councilman Detmer's concern, Mr. Crampton said a study has been completed on the Eldorado drainage issues and a resolution is in the works, however funding may be an issue when it comes time to acquire grounds, and they will need to obtain State and Federal permits, along with right-of-ways.

In response to Councilman Travers' questions, Mr. Crampton said he is unsure of when the access permit will be granted for the MD16 and Mount Holly intersection, however, they understand what is needed.

Deputy Secretary Biddle recapped the discussion and said they will be looking into all concerns in the short term and finding a path forward. She said communication related to US50 will be increased.

Johnny Mautz, State Senator, expressed: 1) concerns about the US50 operations, suggesting that traffic reports should be provided on the radio; and, 2) that MDOT needs to create a plan on how to manage this in the future so this doesn't happen again.

In response to an inquiry by Tom Hutchinson, State Delegate, Mr. Crampton said the asphalt mixture being used on MD33 in St. Michaels allows for paving at a minimum temperature of 40 degrees, whereas the mixture being used on US50 is made for higher volumes of traffic to extend the life of the road, which sets at temperatures of 50+ degrees. Delegate Hutchinson commended MDOT for installing higher grade crosswalks.

Sheree Sample-Hughes, State Delegate, thanked MDOT for addressing several prior and current concerns, and the constituents for providing real life examples.

Christopher T. Adams, State Delegate, thanked MDOT and Ms. Stanley for their time. He said he has not heard this kind of testimony, as he did at this meeting. He said the Dockins intersection project has ears and attention, and asked to be updated on anything that is needed.

Councilman Pfeffer thanked Deputy Secretary Biddle, and the MVA. He said he thoroughly enjoys the online services provided by the MVA.

FY25 MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY LEGISLATIVE SESSION - MEETING WITH LEGISLATORS

The Council discussed and pursued the following topics with Senator Mautz, Delegate Adams, Delegate Hutchinson, and Delegate Sample-Hughes for the 2025 Legislative Session:

Lease Advertisements

To amend the Annotated Code of Maryland Local Government Article §10-312(f) County property; housing projects; franchise; required notice to allow the County to enter into a lease for a term of five years or less without providing notice of publication for three successive weeks.

Senator Mautz said this will be resubmitted for the 2025 Legislative Session.

Passing on the Shoulder

To consider legislative or other initiatives to address accidents caused by vehicles passing on the shoulder under the Transportation Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, §21-304 When Passing on Right is Permitted, (a)(1) if the overtaken vehicle is making or about to make a left turn.

Robbie Larimer, Communications Division Manager, expressed safety concerns of the current law, adding that MD16 has had significant accidents since the law passed. Councilman Pfeffer asked the legislators to consider a statewide law amendment to prohibit passing on the shoulder.

Juvenile Crime

To consider legislative or other initiatives to address juvenile crime and unintended consequences of recent legislation.

A discussion ensued.

Corrections Facility Requirements

To consider legislative or other initiatives to address audio and visual requirements when housing juveniles that were waived as adults in the Corrections facility.

A discussion ensued. Delegate Sample-Hughes said she may be able to get local guidance from the state Correctional Commission. Councilman Pfeffer asked Delegate Sample-Hughes to also obtain guidance on managing the expenses of medical services for detainees, and if the State will assist with these costs.

Privatize Perc Testing

To consider legislative or other initiatives to privatize perc testing.

Delegate Hutchinson said legislation will be submitted to the House and Senate for the 2025 Legislative Session to consider a County pilot program.

A discussion ensued regarding the remaining initiatives. Delegate Hutchinson said: 1) letters of support will be needed; 2) bills relating to alcohol are heard separately so they do not need to be pre-filed; and, 3) bills should be submitted before January to allow time to evaluate and review.

Arts & Entertainment License

To amend the Annotated Code of Maryland Alcohol Beverage & Cannabis Article §19-1001 Arts & entertainment license to consider a new style of license for art establishments.

Venue License

To amend the Annotated Code of Maryland Alcohol Beverage & Cannabis Article §19-1002 Venue License to consider a new style of license for weddings or banquets.

Beer & Wine Festival License

To consider new legislation, or amendments to the Annotated Code of Maryland Alcohol Beverage & Cannabis Article §19-1304 Beer and wine festival license to allow licensees to sample spirits/liquor to patrons in addition to beer and wine

Beer & Wine Tasting License

To amend the Annotated Code of Maryland Alcohol Beverage & Cannabis Article §19-1306 Beer and wine tasting license to include liquor tasting to the license.

Distance Restriction from Place of Worship or School

To amend the Annotated Code of Maryland Alcohol Beverage & Cannabis Article §19-1601 Distance restriction from place of worship or school to exclude venue licensing and art and entertainment licensing

Beer, Wine & Liquor License Fees

To request State of Maryland approval of the Dorchester County, Maryland FY25 Schedule of Fees - Beer, Wine & Liquor License fees.

A discussion ensued regarding concerns relating to recycling and decommissioning solar. Delegate Adams said if a solar project has enough opposition, the Public Service Commission (PSC) should deny the project. He said the Eastern Shore Delegation will host a zoom meeting inviting the PSC, Maryland Energy Administration and Maryland Department of Agriculture to determine: 1) what the State is trying to do to rural farm land; 2) how it is meshing private property rights with the counties Planning & Zoning Departments; and, 3) is the PSC rightfully able to come to an adjudication to say a particular site is not the right location for a project. In response to Councilman Detmer's inquiry, Delegate Adams said 30,000 acres is needed to meet the State energy goal, and 25 of the projects in the queue are on the Eastern Shore. Councilman Pfeffer relayed a discussion at the Maryland Association of Counties summer conference where Councilman Travers spoke to Brian Feldman, Chair of the Education, Energy, & Environment Committee, Maryland Senate; CT Wilson, Chair of the Economic Matters Committee, Maryland House of Delegates; and Kumar Barve, Commissioner, PSC explaining that the County is 78% undevelopable and asked that they do not create a "one size fits all" legislative bill due to the uniqueness of Dorchester County. He said Commissioner Barve spoke to them directly afterwards and seemed to be very receptive and acknowledged the issues within the County. Councilman Pfeffer expressed concerns that solar is being put in places where houses should be built. The Council thanked them for their time.

COUNCIL'S COMMENTS

No comments.

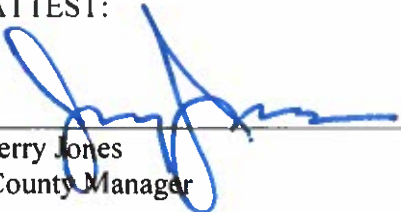
PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, and upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Detmer, the Council adjourned the meeting at 8:29 p.m., by a 4 to 0 vote (Councilman Nichols absent).

ATTEST:




Jerry Jones
County Manager

THE COUNTY COUNCIL
OF DORCHESTER COUNTY:




George L. Pfeffer, Jr., President




Mike Detmer, Vice President



Rob Kramer, Jr.



William V. Nichols



Ricky C. Travers

Approved the 4th day of November, 2024.