

County Council of Dorchester County
Open Meeting Minutes
February 4, 2025

The County Council of Dorchester County convened into Open Session on February 4, 2025 at 5:01 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.; William V. Nichols; and, Ricky C. Travers. Also present in Room 110 were: Jerry Jones, County Manager; Charles MacLeod, County Attorney; and, Irene Barnes, Executive Operations Specialist.

Upon motion by Councilman Kramer, at 5:02 p.m., seconded by Councilman Nichols, the Council unanimously adjourned into Closed Session, pursuant to the following sections of Title 3 of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Annotated Code, §3-305(b)(1) to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom it has jurisdiction; §3-305(b)(13) to comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter; and, §3-305(b)(7) to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice. The Written Statement for Closing a Meeting under the Open Meetings Act is attached hereto.

OPEN SESSION

The County Council of Dorchester County convened into Open Session on February 4, 2025 at 6:10 p.m., in Room 110 of the County Office Building, 501 Court Lane, Cambridge, Maryland 21613. 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 were: Jerry Jones, County Manager; Charles MacLeod, County Attorney; and, Irene Barnes, Executive Administrative Specialist. William V. Nichols rejoined the meeting after it began.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Pfeffer led the invocation and the pledge of allegiance.

CALL FOR ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

After publication of the agenda, the Commendation for Ryan Clark – 2024 Maryland 4H State Archery Competition was removed, and Bay Restoration Fund Wastewater, and Supplemental Assistance Grant Applications – MDE – Water & Wastewater was added.

Upon motion by Councilman Detmer, seconded by Councilman Travers, the Council unanimously approved the amended agenda.

FINANCIAL REPORT: CASH AND INVESTMENTS

Councilman Pfeffer reported total cash and investments as \$32,945,917.14.

Councilman Nichols rejoined the meeting.

CLOSED SESSION SUMMARY

The Council convened into a Closed Session at 5:02 p.m. on February 4, 2025 to discuss the following items pursuant to Title 3 of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Annotated Code §3-305(b)(1), (13) and (7):

1. Notifications of recent personnel changes within the County were provided;
2. Personnel matters relating to specific individuals and positions;
3. Received legal advice from the County Attorney regarding the following:
 - a. Proposals from a specific industry to build on County owned property;
 - b. Potential disposition of County owned property;
 - c. Advertising requirements regarding a specific matter;
 - d. Requests from a specific organization; and,
 - e. An Agreement relating to a specific project.

CONSENT AGENDA

Upon motion by Councilman Travers seconded by Councilman Nichols the Council unanimously approved the Consent Agenda.

- County Council Open Session Minutes – January 21, 2025
- Accounts Payable Disbursement Report – Week Ending January 31, 2025
- Administrative Office of the Courts – AY2025 Courthouse Security Funding – Circuit Court
 - Request of William Jones, Judge, Circuit Court, to accept the AY2025 Courthouse Security Funding through the Administrative Office of the Courts.
- Request to Advertise for Proposals – Towing Services – Public Works
 - Request of the Public Works Highway Division to advertise a request for proposals for County towing services.
- Letter of Support – FY25 Educational Facilities Master Plan – Dorchester County Public Schools
 - Request of Patrick Murphy, Facilities Manager, for a letter of support for the FY25 Educational Facilities Master Plan – Dorchester County Public Schools.
- Cooperative Agreement – Noxious Weeds – Maryland Department of Agriculture
 - Request of Tiffany Hatridge, Plant Protection & Weed Management, Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), to renew a Cooperative Agreement between MDA and Dorchester County for cooperation in the control and eradication of noxious and certain invasive weeds for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.
- Waterway Improvement Funds Grant Awards – Public Works
 - Request of the Public Works Highway Division to confirm Water Improvement Fund grant awards through the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for: 1) \$50,000.00 towards the Back Creek Marina Renovations; 2) \$250,000.00 towards the Tylers Cove Marina Phase 2; and, 3) \$250,000.00 towards the Trenton Street Boat Ramp Improvements.

PROCLAMATION

NATIONAL OUTDOOR SHOW MONTH – FEBRUARY

The Council presented a Proclamation declaring February as National Outdoor Show Month.

PRESENTATIONS

BLACKWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Marcia Pradines Long, Complex Leader, Chesapeake Marshlands, provided information on projects and happenings at Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge.

Ms. Long answered questions posed by the Council during the presentation.

CAMBRIDGE RESILIENCY INITIATIVE UPDATE – CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

C. Bucky Jackson, City Engineer, City of Cambridge, introduced Lawrence A. White, Make Cambridge Resilient Project Manager, City of Cambridge, who presented an update on the Make Cambridge Resilient Initiative, including the following:

- 1) A flood mitigation project along the Choptank River that extends from Cambridge Creek to connect Pinks Pond;
- 2) Increasing the elevation up to seven feet;
- 3) Constructing berms in front of residents' properties; and,
- 4) Using one third of Gerry Boyle Park for stormwater management.

Mr. White answered questions posed by the Council after the presentation.

The Council asked Mr. White to work with the property owner of Pinks Pond regarding a proposed connection.

Upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Nichols, the Council unanimously adjourned into Legislative Session.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

INTRODUCTION – 911 FEE INCREASE

Ms. Barnes said for introduction is legislation to amend Chapter 85 – Emergency Telephone Charge, § 85-1 of the Dorchester County Code by increasing the 911 fee for Dorchester County, Maryland to \$2.00 per month.

Upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Detmer, the Council unanimously agreed to proceed with the publication of a public hearing.

Upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Detmer, the Council unanimously adjourned into Open Session.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

ACTION ITEMS

EVENT REQUEST – WILD GOOSE CHASE – FRIENDS OF BLACKWATER

Upon motion by Councilman Travers seconded by Councilman Nichols the Council unanimously approved the request of Sherry Murray, Volunteer, Friends of Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, to hold the Wild Goose Chase, a women's bicycle ride, on Sunday, September 14, 2025, using Egypt Road Park as a rest stop from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Council acknowledged that a Certificate of Insurance will be provided.

EARMARK REQUESTS DISCUSSION

The Council directed Mr. Jones to compile a list of requests to submit an application for FY26 Congressionally Directed Spending Projects. The following projects were suggested:

- Rehabilitating sewer pipe lines and pump stations;
- Design and study of the Hoopers Island causeway; and,
- Dorchester County Health Department building on Race Street.

POLL CONFIRMATIONS

Upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Detmer, the Council unanimously confirmed its decision in the interim of meetings, via poll, to:

- Provide a letter of support for House Bill 222 (cross-filed with Senate Bill 175) entitled "Public Safety - Corrugated Stainless-Steel Tubing for Fuel Gas Piping Systems - Requirements and Prohibitions" for the purpose of prohibiting the sale, offer for sale, transfer, or distribution of corrugated stainless steel tubing that does not meet certain qualifications; requiring certain tubing used in the construction of fuel gas piping systems in certain buildings to meet certain qualifications; and generally relating to corrugated stainless steel tubing, by a 5 to 0 vote.
- Provide a letter of opposition for House Bill 321 (cross-filed with Senate Bill 303) entitled "Pharmacy Benefits Managers – Definition of Purchaser and Alteration of Application of Law" for the purpose of altering the definition of "purchaser" for the purpose of certain provisions of State insurance law governing pharmacy benefits managers to exclude certain nonprofit health maintenance organizations; and repealing certain provisions that restrict applicability of certain provisions of law to pharmacy benefits managers that provide pharmacy benefits management services on behalf of a carrier, by a 4 to 0 vote.

BAY RESTORATION FUND WASTEWATER & SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE GRANT APPLICATIONS – MDE – WATER & WASTEWATER

Upon motion by Councilman Travers seconded by Councilman Kramer the Council unanimously approved the request of Marilyn Williams, Grant Writer, on behalf of Peter McElroy, Water & Wastewater Director, to confirm a \$489,500.00 Bay Restoration Fund Wastewater and Supplemental Assistance Grant application through the Maryland Department of the Environment for a three year performance period and no match requirement for the design and construction of replacement pump stations for the Pinks Pond and Algonquin wastewater treatment stations.

COUNCIL'S COMMENTS

Councilman Travers expressed his condolences to the family of the late Jeff Hurley and noted Mr. Hurley's dedication to the community.

Councilman Detmer: 1) said a Choptank Solar and Storage Open House will be held on February 5, 2025 from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at the Packing House; 2) suggested that the Council firm up a list of solar recommendations to present to the Planning Commission; 3) said the Comptroller's Office had an internal 1099 printing issue; and, 4) expressed that there are massive budget challenges underway.

Councilman Pfeffer: 1) reiterated Councilman Detmer, adding that, preliminarily, the State is asking for an additional \$3-4 million, increasing the Board of Education (BOE) funding mandate to \$27 million, which may result in a 10% property tax increase; 2) said the BOE already has a \$10 million shortfall which totals to roughly \$14 million in deficits 3) stated that employee reductions were implemented years ago, however, further cuts are not possible as the County is already operating with minimal staff; 4) welcomes all budget suggestions, which can be sent to info@docogonet.com; and, 5) highlighted that these mandates must be paid, otherwise the State withhold income taxes from the County, causing additional financial shortfalls.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Kathleen Abbott, resident, said the National Outdoor Show will be held on February 21-22, 2025.

Sharon Smith, resident, suggested that residents reach out to the local legislators by mail and phone to express their budget concerns. Council encourages the community to send letters.

Morgan Tolley, resident, suggested putting the legislators' addresses on social media.

Mr. Jackson suggested revisiting the necessity of all facilities and consolidating schools. Councilman Pfeffer said there are 4,500 students in the County, and they are brainstorming ideas with the BOE, but do not want to put the kids at risk. He said the County cannot afford the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

COUNCIL'S COMMENTS

Councilman Nichols reflected on previous budgets, expressing that this year is the worst budget he has seen and noted his stance on not raising the property tax rate.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, and upon motion by Councilman Travers, seconded by Councilman Kramer, the Council unanimously adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

ATTEST:

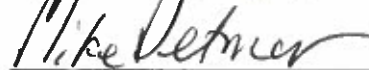


Jerry Jones
County Manager

THE COUNTY COUNCIL
OF DORCHESTER COUNTY:



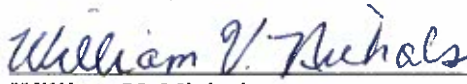
George L. Pfeffer, Jr., President



Mike Detmer, Vice President



Rob Kramer, Jr.



William V. Nichols



Ricky C. Travers

Approved the 18th day of February, 2025.

**PRESIDING OFFICER'S WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR CLOSING A MEETING
("CLOSING STATEMENT") UNDER THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT (General
Provisions Article § 3-305)**

This form has two sides. *Complete items 1 – 4 before closing the meeting.*

1. Recorded vote to close the meeting:

Date: 2/4/25; Time: 5:01 p.m.; Location: 501 Court Lane, Room 110,
Cambridge, MD 21613; Motion to close meeting made by: Kramer Seconded by: Nichols
Members in favor: Pepper, Detmer, Kramer, Nichols, Travers
Opposed: _____ Abstaining: _____ Absent: _____

2. Statutory authority to close session (check all provisions that apply).

This meeting will be closed under General Provisions Art. § 3-305(b) only:

(1) "To discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals"; (2) _____ "To protect the privacy or reputation of individuals concerning a matter not related to public business"; (3) _____ "To consider the acquisition of real property for a public purpose and matters directly related thereto"; (4) _____ "To consider a matter that concerns the proposal for a business or industrial organization to locate, expand, or remain in the State"; (5) _____ "To consider the investment of public funds"; (6) _____ "To consider the marketing of public securities"; (7) "To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice"; (8) _____ "To consult with staff, consultants, or other individuals about pending or potential litigation"; (9) _____ "To conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations"; (10) _____ "To discuss public security, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to the public or to public security, including: (i) the deployment of fire and police services and staff; and (ii) the development and implementation of emergency plans"; (11) _____ "To prepare, administer, or grade a scholastic, licensing, or qualifying examination"; (12) _____ "To conduct or discuss an investigative proceeding on actual or possible criminal conduct"; (13) "To comply with a specific constitutional, statutory, or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter"; (14) _____ "Before a contract is awarded or bids are opened, to discuss a matter directly related to a negotiating strategy or the contents of a bid or proposal, if public discussion or disclosure would adversely impact the ability of the public body to participate in the competitive bidding or proposal process." (15) _____ "To discuss cybersecurity, if the public body determines that public discussion would constitute a risk to: (i) security assessments or deployments relating to information resources technology; (ii) network security information . . . or (iii) deployments or implementation of security personnel, critical infrastructure, or security devices."

Continued →

3. For each provision checked above, disclosure of the topic to be discussed and the public body's reason for discussing that topic in closed session.

Citation (insert # from above)	Topic	Reason for closed-session discussion of topic
§3-305(b) (1)	To discuss the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notifications of recent personnel changes within the County were provided; • Personnel matters relating to specific individuals and positions; 	Public Discussion of applicant's names and job info could discourage people from applying for County jobs
§3-305(b)(13)	Same topics as above	Public Information Act, GP Section 4-310 and 311 requires us to shield recommendation letters and job applications
§3-305(b) (7)	To receive legal advice from the County Attorney regarding the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals from a specific industry to build on County owned property; • Potential disposition of County owned property; • Advertising requirements regarding a specific matter; • Abatement requests from a specific organization; and, • An Agreement relating to a specific project; 	Council does not want to waive the attorney-client privilege. See page 101, August 17, 2021, OMCB ruling (15 OMCB 99)

4. This statement is made by , Presiding Officer.

WORKSHEET FOR OPTIONAL USE IN CLOSED SESSION: INFORMATION FOR SUMMARY TO BE DISCLOSED IN THE MINUTES OF THE NEXT OPEN MEETING. (See also template for summary.)

➤ **For a meeting closed under the statutory authority cited above:**

Time of closed session: _____

Place: _____

Purpose(s): _____

Members who voted to meet in closed session: _____

Persons attending closed session: _____

Authority under § 3-305 for the closed session: _____

Topics actually discussed: _____

Actions taken: _____

Each recorded vote: _____

➤ **For a meeting recessed to perform an administrative function (§ 3-104):** Time: _____

Place: _____

Persons present: _____

Subjects discussed: _____

CLOSED SESSION SUMMARY
FEBRUARY 4, 2025

The Council convened into a Closed Session at 5:02 p.m. on February 4, 2025 to discuss the following items pursuant to Title 3 of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Annotated Code §3-305(b)(1), (13) and (7):

1. Notifications of recent personnel changes within the County were provided.
2. Personnel matters relating to specific individuals and positions;
3. Received legal advice from the County Attorney regarding the following:
 - a. Proposals from a specific industry to build on County owned property;
 - b. Potential disposition of County owned property;
 - c. Advertising requirements regarding a specific matter;
 - d. Abatement requests from a specific organization; and,
 - e. An Agreement relating to a specific project;