

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF CAROLINE COUNTY
Health and Public Services (HAPS) Building
403 S. 7th Street, Room 111
Denton, MD 21629

Minutes
August 8, 2023

Present: President J. Travis Breeding; Vice President Larry C. Porter, Commissioner N. Franklin Bartz, III; County Attorney, Stewart Barroll

The meeting convened at 9:00AM

Following the pledge of Allegiance, President Breeding called for **public comment** and there was none.

Presidents Report: President Breeding stated that during the August 1, 2023, Commissioners meeting, the Commissioners met in closed session to discuss a personnel issue. Present were the commissioners and Stewart Barroll, County Attorney. After discussion, a motion was made to take steps to affect the separation of an employee from the County. The motion carried. The employee was summonsed and there was a discussion regarding the terms of the separation.

Interim Administrative Functions: The County Commissioners stated the importance of having an official discussion regarding specific roles moving forward, while the County awaits hiring a new County Administrator. President Breeding stated that he would like to discuss specific roles that need to be delegated out to senior staff, to ensure the County remains seamless during this transition. Mr. Breeding explained that the Board currently felt there was no need to appoint an officially interim county administrator, however they would need to formally approve Daniel Fox, Director Office of Finance, to be the Chief Financial Officer for the County. On motion by Commissioner Porter, seconded by Commissioner Bartz, the Commissioners motioned to approve Daniel Fox, Chief Financial Officer, until further notice. This will allow Mr. Fox to approve purchases as well as handle any financial issues that doesn't need to go in front of the Board.

Regarding Caroline County Investment Board, on motion by Commissioner Porter, Seconded by Commissioner Bartz, the Commissioners motioned to Appoint Daniel Fox as the temporary Purchasing Officer. Mr. Fox already sat on the Investment Board; however, the County Administrator had previously acted in the compacity of Purchasing Officer.

With Mr. Fox handling any financial discrepancies or needs in the next upcoming months, the Board felt Katheleen Freeman, Director of Planning and Codes, should oversee any personnel issue that my occur. President Breeding, as well as Sherry Bratton, Director, Office of Human Resources, agreed Ms. Freeman take on these responsibilities until a new County Administrator is hired. Ms. Freeman would handle and disciplinary issues, as well as grievances, or Hard Ship Leave requests. On motion by Commissioner Bartz, seconded by Commissioner Porter, the motion to allow Katheleen Freeman to make decisions regarding Caroline County's Personnel Rules and Regulations.

The Commissioners requested staff make sure all boards and commissions, former County Administrator, Jeremy Goldman sat on, be reviewed and given to another staff member.

Ms. Bratton was asked to pull up the current Class Specifications for County Administrator of Caroline County. The Board, as well as staff began workshopping and adding additional language edits to the class specifications. The Commissioners stressed the need for the County Administrator moving forward to evaluate department heads, as well as be evaluated by the Board. Staff was then directed to finalize changes and bring back for adoption during an upcoming meeting.

The Commissioners thanked staff for coming together and delegating duties at this time. They all emphasized the need for open communication to be promoted between County Department Heads and the Board. They stated that all Department Heads should feel comfortable approaching and communicating with the three Commissioners moving forward.

Sherry Bratton, Director, Office of Human Resources; and Debbie Bowden, Director of Economic Development: Discussion of Class Specification of Director of Economic Development: Ms. Bratton, and Ms. Bowden workshopped the class specifications for the future Economic Development Director. Ms. Bowden stated that she extends her expertise at this time to allow for a smooth transition, as her final end date in this role is September 24th. President Breeding stressed the need for the future position to focus more heavily on workforce development and retention. Ms. Bowden explained, that with some edits, she felt the class specification covered what the County was looking for. She expressed the need to broaden the organization listed in the document to allow for the new director to create their own path in County with future relationships.

Commissioner Bartz asked if Ms. Bowden sat on specific County Boards as a requirement in her position, and she stated that most she did voluntarily to learn more and build relationships. Ms. Bowden stated that she would provide a workflow transition memo to the Board in the upcoming weeks to allow for a smooth transition before she officially exists. On motion by Commissioner Porter, seconded by Commissioner Bartz, the Class Specification for Director of Economic Development was approved. Staff was directed to begin advertising the position immediately.

Consent Agenda: the following items were approved by unanimous consent:

- Minutes – August 1, 2023 - Closed
- Caroline County Sheriff's Office – PRAR Initiative Grant Agreement - \$25,000
- Caroline County Department of Emergency Services – Chesapeake Community College Student Affiliation Agreement
- Caroline County Department of Emergency Services – Purchase Order #2024-057 – Fred Frederick Chrysler, Dodge and Jeep – 2024 Dodge Ram 4X4 Chassis - \$78,725
- Caroline County Department of Emergency Services – FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Agreement - \$30,000

Commissioner Porter stated that he would like a more in-depth discussion regarding the PRAP Initiative Grant Agreement, which granted the Caroline County Sheriffs Office (CCSO) with funds in the amount of \$25,000. Major James Henning stated that this grant was offered to the County through the Governor's Office. He stated that it was not required, and the CCSO put in for funds because the grant was offering retention funds and personalized police gear for deputies. He stated that he did not know if there was a specific formula the State went off of to distribute the funds, however Talbot County had only received \$20,000 for the same grant. Commissioner Porter thanked him for the information.

Commissioner Porter asked Mark Sheridan, Director of Emergency Services, and Kathy Jo Marvel, Division Chief, if they felt their needs were being met regarding their partnership with Chesapeake College. Ms. Marvel stated that they currently have put four EMT's through the program and they have become successful paramedics and providers to the County. She stated that they are getting ready to enroll three more employees. Mr. Sheridan emphasized the need for the partnership with Chesapeake College to continue moving forward.

At 10:00 a.m. the Commissioner held a brief recess.

At 10:12 a.m. the meeting reconvened.

County Administrator's Report:

- Mr. Fox stated that he had brief conversation with Mr. Tim Ford, Maryland Environmental Services (MES), to discuss the next steps regarding financial services with extending the Landfill in Caroline County. Mr. Fox explained that MES has currently hired a firm PFM to do an official analysis of the debt capacity and all financial documents that MES has regarding the Landfill. He stated that once PFM is done with this audit, they will provide the findings to the neighboring counties for review. He stated that PFM was hired by MES for this service.
- He informed the Board that he, and Ryan White, Director of Public Works would be attending the meeting at the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) conference later next week, with MES. All updates regarding that meeting would be given to Board at a later date.
- Mr. White stated that he had updates on the River Road project. He explained that the request for a permit to move forward with the project, was moving forward to go on the agenda for the State Board of Public Works. He stated that the Holly Road project was also moving forward.
- Mr. White explained that he and the Commissioners could discuss more at the MACo conference when they have their annual sit down with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT).
- Mr. Fox informed the Board of an issue regarding the procurement of a passenger van for the Department of Recreation and Parks. Due to shortage in production of passenger vans as well as price increases, he needed further direction from the Board to proceed. He stated that in the FY2024 budget, Recreation & Parks allotted for the purchase of a van in the amount of \$ 41,000. Mr. Fox stated that the issue they are running into is most Ford Passenger Van's are \$61,000. He explained that they had found a Mercedes Van that was

\$42,000. The Board, as well as Mr. White all agreed that the purchase of a Mercedes could be risky due to any mechanical work that may need to be done in the future.

- Mr. Fox stated that there were funds that could be distributed out of the capital budget to offset the price if needed.
- The Board director Mr. Fox to move forward with the purchase of a Ford. Staff was director to add the purchase to an upcoming consent agenda.
- Mr. fox stated that his final item to run past the board is a request from the Hardship Leave Bank. He stated that the request is from a Planning and Codes employee. He explained that in consultation with Ms. Freeman, staff recommends approving the request and allowing for an adjustment to the contract for First State to cover the additional workflow, while this employee is out. He stated that the amount of cost is \$6,000 which would already be covered in First State's contract. This request would be covered in the contingency funds.
- Kaleigh Leager, Administrative Assistant, stated that a final decision needed to be made regarding the Lobbyist Contract with Mr. Bruce Bereano. As the Board is aware, Mr. Bereano does not hold any liability insurance, which the County originally requested.
- President Breeding stated that he was confident moving forwarding in the absence of the insurance if Commissioner Porter and Bartz agreed. On motion by Commissioner Porter, second by Commissioner Bartz, the Commissioners motioned to approve Mr. Bereano's contract with no liability insurance. Staff was directed to finalize the contract.

County Commissioners Open Discussion Period

- Commissioner Bartz stated that he wanted to thank staff for working together and openly communicating their concerns during this transitional period. He thanked everyone for remaining upbeat and positive.
- President Breeding stated that he sat in on a meeting with Mr. White regarding the River Road project. He stated that since the Board of Public Works would be issuing the permit for the project, a further discussion needed to be had with Dr. Simmions, Superintendent, Caroline County Public Schools. Mr. Breeding emphasized the importance of safety during this project.
- Staff was directed to follow up with Caroline County Public Schools to host a workshop regarding this project.
- President Breeding informed staff that the Delmarva Community Transit (DCT) building renovations has been postponed. He stated that any further discussion regarding this project and moving Upper Shoring Aging would be moved to a later date.
- Commissioner Porter stated that he would also like to extend his gratitude to County employees for taking on the extra responsibilities over this past week. He emphasized his appreciation for everyone stepping up when the County needed them.
- Mr. Breeding stated that staff has been great putting in the extra time and taking on the roles and extra responsibilities. He also stated to please continue to reach out to all three Commissioners moving forward, for any assistance or questions.

President Breeding called for **public comment**, and Revered Buddy Dunn shared that Caroline County is lucky to have such devoted employees that are willing to move the organization forward to help the citizens. He stated that everyone should be proud of their hard work and dedication.

At 10:54 on motion by Commissioner Porter, Seconded by Commissioner Bartz, the Commissioners unanimously adjourned Open Session and convened in **Closed Session** for the following:

“To Consider the Acquisition of Real Property”, Under the Authority:2014 Md. Code, State, Government 3-305(b)(3).

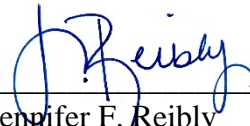
“To Discuss Pending Litigation” Under the Authority: 2014, Md. Code, State, Government 3-305(b) (8)

“To Discuss an Employment Resignation” Under the Authority: 2014: Md, Code, State, Government 3-305 (b)(1)

At 12: 08 p.m. on motion by Commissioner Porter, seconded by Commissioner Bartz, the Commissioner adjourned closed session and reconvened in open session.

President’s Report: President Breeding stated that the Commissioners met in closed session to get advice from the County Attorney regarding litigations, settlement agreements, as well as a county employees’ resignation. Directions was given to staff regarding how to proceed.

There being no further discussion the commissioners adjourned their meeting at 12:10 p.m.



Jennifer F. Reibly
Public Information Officer