



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

April 14, 2026

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 of Tuesday, April 14, 2026.
- II. Minutes – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Minutes of Tuesday, March 24, 2026.
- III. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, March 31, 2026, Tuesday, April 7, 2026, and Tuesday, April 14, 2026.
- IV. Proclamation – Child Abuse Prevention Month – April 2026 – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record which spoke of the importance and the collaboration needed among citizens, human service agencies, medical and mental health providers, law enforcement, legal experts, and elected officials to support those children and their families who have been victims of child abuse, and to promote awareness of child abuse and its signs so that all children have an opportunity to grow up in a safe, healthy and carefree environment. Upon motion by Ms. Mielke, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the proclamation by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Mr. Leshner – Aye

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe - Aye

Linda Webb, Director of Talbot County Department of Social Services, stated that, according to the National Children’s Alliance, approximately 532,000 children were victims of abuse and neglect in the United States in 2024 and the National Centers for Disease Control reports that approximately 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 13 boys in the United States are estimated to experience child sexual abuse. Ms. Webb stated that in the last fiscal year, the Talbot County Department of Social Services responded to 87 reports of child physical or sexual abuse, or neglect; the Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) conducted 80 forensic interviews and 53 medical examinations for victims of suspected child sexual abuse. She stated that the CAC provided 2,114 children and adults with services including family advocacy, life skills groups, peer support and emergency financial support. Ms. Webb stated that the trauma of child abuse causes children to lose their sense of safety and trust of the world and harms their relationships, and when left untreated, increases the child’s risk of depression, PTSD, substance abuse disorders, risky sexual behaviors and increased risk for violence against themselves or others, and physical health issues. Ms. Webb stated that the Department of Social Services and

its partner agencies also provide prevention services including intensive case management services to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors, parent education, a respite program for family members, and delivers the *Empower Me* program, a body safety program designed to prevent child sexual abuse, to each elementary school and various groups in the county. She introduced several staff members of the Department of Social Services Child Welfare and the CAC; the CAC will be holding open house tours on Wednesday, April 22nd at 9:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m., and an *Empower Me* presentation will be held at the Talbot County Free Library – Easton Branch on Thursday, April 23rd from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Ms. Webb expressed her appreciation to the Council for the proclamation and their continuing support.

- V. Proclamation – April 25, 2026 – “Talbot Day” –The Clerk read a proclamation into the record which recognized April 25th as the official birthday of Talbot County; this year marks the 365th anniversary of the founding of Talbot County as well as the 250th anniversary of the founding of our nation. The proclamation encouraged citizens, the business community, arts community, faith community, school community, and community leaders to celebrate the beauty, history, culture and traditions of Talbot County which continue to define its character by joining with the County in the festivities planned for this milestone year. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the proclamation by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager, briefed the Council on events planned for Talbot Day which will be celebrated this year on Sunday, April 26, 2026, beginning at 4:00 p.m. on the front lawn of the Courthouse. She stated that following presentation of the Citizen and Service Awards, the celebration will continue on the back lawn of the Courthouse (West Street) from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. with lawn games, arts and crafts, Touch-a-Truck, live music and free ice cream. More information by be found at talbotcountymd.gov/talbotday. Ms. Kilmon then presented Council with a limited-edition Talbot County Challenge Coin commemorating the 365th anniversary of the founding of the county. Council members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Kilmon and all those whose efforts helped with planning the celebration of Talbot Day.

- VI. Presentation and Request from Talbot Soil Conservation District – Shawn Smith, CPESC, District Manager, Talbot Soil Conservation District - Mr. Smith stated that the Talbot Soil Conservation District was established under COMAR (Code of Maryland Regulations) but is not a State entity; therefore, the erosion and sediment control fees and stormwater fees assist the Soil Conservation District with its mission: to assist farmers, landowners and the community with conserving soil and water resources while protecting the Chesapeake Bay by providing technical assistance with designing and installing Best Management Practice (BMPs), conservation planning, and stormwater and erosion control. Mr. Smith stated that the Soil Conservation District does not receive County, State or federal funding and as such, the erosion and sediment control fees collected provide operational funding for the District. He outlined the various facets of the proposed fee structure for the coming year, including the elimination of a separate application fee, which has been, instead, merged into the review fee. He stated that the Soil Conservation District, at its January 2026 meeting, had approved the proposed fee structure as outlined; Council discussion then ensued with Mr. Smith. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the proposed fee structure as presented by voting 3 – 2 as follows:

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

VII. Introduction of Legislation:

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE 2026-2027 ANNUAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for introduction. Prior to introduction, County Manager, Clay Stamp, expressed his appreciation to the Council for all their hard work on the budget; he stated that following a thorough review, the budget being presented for introduction is, in his opinion, a reasonable, baseline budget. He stated that the County continues to utilize the conservative budgeting process as it has in past years by underestimating revenues and overestimating expenditures. He stated that the County's budgeting priorities for FY27 are Public Safety, Education and other services provided by the County, while being cognizant of policy shifts at the federal level, the shifting of fiscal responsibilities from the State to local jurisdictions, the overall increase in goods and services on a global level and workforce challenges related to the competition for talent. Mr. Stamp stated that the strategies utilized in developing the FY27 Budget will hold the budget below the FY26 level, and is, in part being accomplished by limiting any new positions to only those positions for which funding has been secured. He stated that the County continues to focus on completing existing capital projects including extension of sewer and roadways and building projects. Martha Sparks, Finance Director, utilized a PowerPoint presentation to outline various facets of the proposed FY27 Budget which totals \$159,100,000. She stated that the proposed budget continues the County's conservative budgeting practices which have placed the County in a healthy financial position. She stated that the FY26 General Fund Revenues are anticipated to slightly exceed budgeted projections and expenditures are on track to meet budgeted levels. She stated that the FY26 Budget has supported improvements in government services, community support, and communications; she highlighted several accomplishments made during FY2025-2026, including construction of the North EMS Station in Cordova which will improve emergency response times in that part of the county; the purchase of new heart monitors, stair chairs and power stretchers for the County's paramedic units; increased support for the county's volunteer fire departments; continued maintenance of county roads; including the widening and the upgrading of Goldsborough Neck Road in partnership with the Town of Easton and Mid-Shore Regional Council for improved safety and access on that road, and which supports future economic growth for Mistletoe Hall Commerce Business Park and Talbot Commerce Park. Other projects outlined by Ms. Sparks included the Chapel Road culvert replacement project, the St. Michaels Library expansion and renovation project, improvements to the County owned pools: the George Murphy Pool in Easton and the Bay Hundred Pool in St. Michaels, and establishment of the Office of Community Partnerships to strengthen collaboration among agencies, nonprofit partners and community stakeholders to improve access to resources. Ms. Sparks reiterated Mr. Stamp's previous statement regarding the County's budgeting philosophy to underestimate revenues and overestimate expenditures. She stated that the proposed FY27 Budget prioritizes investments in infrastructure and includes Property Tax revenues of two percent (2%) over FY26 revenues in accordance with the County Charter, and an additional one cent (\$.01) to the Property Tax rate as approved by Talbot County voters in November 2020 and November 2024, the funding which is to be used for Public Safety, and a 1.47 cent (\$.147) Education Supplement; there are no changes to the Income Tax rate or increases in the Schedule of Fees for FY27. She stated that Income Tax rates remain volatile due to the State of Maryland approving a higher tax rate on higher income earners. She stated that the last time the State enacted similar increases, Talbot County's Income Tax revenue decreased by 40% due to out migration and it took a decade for the County to recover. She stated that maintaining a low Income Tax rate reduces the risk of out migration of high-income earners. Ms. Sparks provided information on General Fund

Reserves and the close of FY25 totaled \$106 million, \$24.9 million of which is the Rainy Day Reserves, \$7.5 million is in Risk Mitigation Reserves, \$4.8 million is in permanent Public Improvement Reserves, and \$44.3 million is in Unassigned Reserves. She stated all the balances were calculated in accordance with the Reserve Policy adopted by the Council in February 2025 and provide 30% coverage of General Fund Expenditures (excluding financing costs). Ms. Sparks stated that reserve funding demonstrates strong financial management to credit rating agencies, allowing the County to obtain lower interest rates and reduced borrowing costs, as well as the funding of small capital projects without borrowing and emphasized that reserve funds should only be used for non-recurring purchases, projects or payments – not ongoing expenses.

Ms. Sparks outlined various components of the proposed FY27 Budget which include the required local funding share for Talbot County Public Schools in the sum of \$57 million, plus an additional \$1.8 million for capital projects (Easton Middle School roof and exterior repairs to the Talbot County Education Center), \$619,801 for teachers' pensions and \$307,663 for Universal Pre-K as mandated by the State; the appropriation to, and debt service for, Talbot County Public Schools totals 43% of the FY27 operating budget. She stated that the FY27 proposed budget also includes a 3.0% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and one (1) performance-based step for County employees; no new general government positions are included in the proposed budget without an identified funding source. She stated that Fund Balance reserves will be used as follows: \$5.5 million for Capital Outlay (equipment) purchases; \$4.6 million for Capital Projects; and \$2.2 million for Recreation Fund Capital Projects. Ms. Sparks outlined how revenue estimates were derived, stating that Property Taxes are the County's largest revenue source (46.5%) and that the education supplement is incorporated into the Property Taxes but resets to zero (0) each year. She stated that the other primary source of revenue for the County is Income Taxes (25.1%). Other local taxes such as Recordation and Transfer taxes are 9.4% of General Fund revenues. She stated that General Fund expenditures have increased 5%, mainly as a fixed cost related to the County's workforce; Capital Outlay increased by \$2.4 million to \$5.5 million, \$2.3 million of which is the County's contribution to the construction cost of the Queen Anne's Technical Center at Chesapeake College. She stated that also included in the proposed FY27 budget is a one-time transfer of \$2.3 million to the Recreation Fund for various Capital Outlay and Capital Improvement projects for the Talbot County Community Center, Hog Neck Golf Course and recreational programming. She stated that the total proposed Property Tax rate has been calculated at \$0.8180, which includes an education supplement of \$0.0147, provided an example of the amount of Property Tax increase on a property assessed at \$300,000, and the amount of Property Tax increase since 2019. She provided information on the Tax Differential provided to residents in the incorporated towns, stating that the total benefit to the property owners was \$4.1 million in FY25. She stated that although Talbot County has had the lowest Property Tax rate in the state for many years, it will no longer retain that distinction due to the increased educational costs mandated by the State under the Blueprint for Education and the fact that the County's Charter-mandated revenue cap limits its flexibility to increase Property Tax revenue. Ms. Sparks stated that if the County chooses to not take the two percent (2%) increase each year as provided for in the Charter, or the additional one cent (\$.01) in a year as approved, the County cannot make up the lost revenue in future years, even if education or other mandated cost rise sharply. She stated that Talbot County has the second lowest Income Tax rate in Maryland (2.4%). Ms. Sparks concluded her presentation by stating that bond rating agencies, Fitch and Moody's Investor Service, affirmed the County's credit rating at AAA and Aa1, respectively, as of May 15, 2025. Council members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Sparks, her staff, Mr. Stamp, Ms. Morris and all department heads for the time and effort spent on developing the budget. The legislation was introduced by Mr. Callahan, Ms. Haythe, Mr. Leshner, Ms. Mielke, and Mr. Stepp as Bill No. 1625. Public hearings were scheduled for Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room, South Wing, Talbot County Courthouse, 11 N. Washington Street, Easton, Maryland 21601 and at 7:00 p.m. at Easton Elementary School, 307 Glenwood Avenue, Easton, Maryland 21601.

VIII. Public Hearings:

Resolution No. 392, A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE TALBOT COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE WATER AND SEWER PLAN TO RECLASSIFY AND REMAP SIX

PARCELS OF REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 25516 BUSHEY HEATH ROAD, 25520 BUSHEY HEATH ROAD, 25524 BUSHEY HEATH ROAD, 25533 BUSHEY HEATH ROAD, 25575 BUSHEY HEATH ROAD, AND 25608 BUSHEY HEATH ROAD/SOLITUDE ROAD AND SHOWN ON TAX MAP 40 AS PARCELS 98, 86, 2, 82, 4, AND 110, RESPECTIVELY, FROM “UNPROGRAMMED” TO “S-1” IMMEDIATE PRIORITY STATUS PURSUANT TO APPLICATIONS FILED BY DANIEL D. HALEY AND DAWN A. HALEY, JACQUELINE H. SMITH AND FEDERAL QTIP RESIDUARY TRUST OF JERRY B. HOOK, KATHERINE A. HEIKES, KENNETH R. ADAMI AND BETH ADAMI, AND THE HARRY G. BROADMAN FAMILY TRUST, was read into the record and brought forward for public hearing. Prior to the public hearing, Josh Elliott, Assistant County Engineer, stated that the Public Works Advisory Board, at its meeting on Thursday, March 19, 2026, voted 4 – 0 to recommend that Council approve Resolution No. 392, with the condition that “S-1” designation for the 91.46± acre parcel located at 25608 Bushey Heath Road/Solitude Road be limited to the 10 acres surrounding the residence. Mr. Elliott stated that the Planning Commission, at its meeting on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, found Resolution No. 392 consistent with the 2016 Talbot County Comprehensive Plan by a vote of 3 – 0, after taking into account the revised map for the 25608 Bushey Heath Road/Solitude Rd. property. Members of the public were then afforded an opportunity to comment on the legislation. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved having the County Attorney draft an amendment to Resolution No. 392 to incorporate the language as approved by the Public Works Advisory Board and the Planning Commission by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

Resolution No. 392 is eligible for vote on Tuesday, April 28, 2026.

Resolution No. 393, A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE TALBOT COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE WATER AND SEWER PLAN TO RECLASSIFY AND REMAP A 26-ACRE PORTION OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 25662 AND 25664 ST. MICHAELS ROAD, ST. MICHAELS, MARYLAND AND SHOWN ON TAX MAP 32 AS A PORTION OF PARCEL 31, CONSISTING OF 112.0718± ACRES IN TOTAL, FROM “UNPROGRAMMED” TO “S-1” IMMEDIATE PRIORITY STATUS PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION FILED BY JAMES EDWARD HEIKES, TRUSTEE OF THE RESIDUARY TRUST UNDER THE WILL OF JAMES IRVING HEIKES, was read into the record by the Clerk and brought forward for public hearing. Prior to the public hearing, Josh Elliott, Assistant County Engineer, stated that the owner of the subject property had requested a change in priority status from “Unprogrammed” to “S-1” for two (2) existing residences in order to address the aging septic systems which are located in the Critical Area. Mr. Elliott stated that the resolution was inadvertently drafted to reflect that only one (1) EDU was being requested; however, the resolution reviewed by both the Public Works Advisory Board and the Planning Commission was based on two (2) EDUs. He stated that the Public Works Advisory Board, at its meeting on Thursday, March 29, 2026, recommended by a vote of 4 – 0 that Council approve the Resolution and that the Planning Commission, at its meeting on Wednesday, April 1, 2026, by a vote of 3 – 0 found Resolution No. 393 consistent with the 2016 Talbot County Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Elliott clarified that there are no remaining development rights on the portion of the property (26 acres) being requested to be connected to sewer. Members of the public were then afforded an opportunity to comment on the legislation and Council discussion ensued. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved amending Resolution No. 393 to clarify the intent for two (2) EDUs by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

The Council approved Resolution No. 393, as amended, by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- IX. Council Consideration of Recommendation from Planning Commission on Request for Proposed Text Amendment to §190-73.3 Talbot County Code was brought forward for consideration. Brennan Tarleton, Planning Officer, stated that the request for the text amendment was initiated by a Talbot County citizen in December 2025. He stated that if the proposed text amendment is approved, it would amend certain sections of §190-73.3A of the Talbot County Code regarding release of a Reserved Land Agreement or Reservation of Development Rights Agreement on certain properties in the county. He stated that it would give the Council the authority to release land from a Reserved Land Agreement or a Reservation of Development Rights Agreement in those circumstances when the property owner desires to participate in the MALPF program. Mr. Tarleton outlined the reason behind the request, stating that neither the County nor the applicant was aware of the existing reserved land area on the subject parcel at the time the applicant had received an option contract offer from MALPF. Mr. Tarleton stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the request at its meetings on Wednesday, February 4, 2026 and Wednesday, March 4, 2026, and recommended at their March 4, 2026 meeting by a vote of 4 – 0 that Council approve the text amendment, with additional language stating that the parcel would need to have been subject to an option contract with MALPF that was entered into between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2026. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Tarleton. Citing the need for more information, no action was taken by the Council
- X. Council Consideration of Recommendation from Planning Commission for Removal of Reservation of Development Rights Restriction on 9705 Leeds Landing Road (Tax Map 24, Parcel 134) – Brennan Tarleton, Planning Officer, stated that the owner of the property located at 9705 Leeds Landing Road is requesting release of the Reserved Land Agreement on a portion of the approximately six-acre parcel due to a change in the zoning of the property from the time when the Reserve Land Agreement was placed on the property. Mr. Tarleton outlined the current zoning designation, Village Hamlet (VH) and the previous zoning classification, Resource Conservation Area (RCA) and stated that there is no longer a need for the Reserved Land area as it no longer is in the RCA and the provisions for the release are currently outlined in the County Code. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Tarleton. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the recommendation by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- XI. Council Discussion of Proposed Text Amendment to § 190-61 and § 190-62 Concerning Developer Agreements and Waivers – Mr. Thomas stated that the zoning text amendment before Council was requested by Ms. Haythe for referral to the Planning Commission. He stated that under § 190-61 of the zoning code, developer agreements are required when a developer is required to install public or private improvements or plantings and the developer is required to post a Surety in a form and amount acceptable to the County. He stated that § 190-62. provides for a waiver process under certain criteria; however, the developer’s agreement provision does not provide language for waivers. He stated that the proposed text amendment would permit a waiver from the Surety requirements for a nonprofit entity when the entity could show the need for same and the waiver would be in the interest of the public as determined by the Planning Officer following recommendation of the Planning Commission under certain criteria. Ms. Haythe stated that she had been approached by a constituent regarding the matter. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Thomas. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved forwarding the proposed text amendment to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

XII. County Manager’s Report:

- A. Request to Transfer Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Housing Bond Allocation – Requested Council approval to transfer Talbot County’s 2026 tax-exempt housing bond allocation in the sum of \$1,807,029.00 to DHCD and have them administer on Talbot County’s behalf; said bonds will be used by the State to fund various housing programs for eligible recipients. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the request by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- B. Bid No. 25-10, CHILD & ADULT WELFARE AND CHILD SUPPORT LEGAL SERVICES – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND – Requested Council approval of a request from the Talbot County Department of Social Services to extend the contract for Bid No. 25-10 for the next fiscal year. Linda Webb, Director, Talbot County Department of Social Services, stated that the contract, awarded in 2025, includes an option for renewal each year for several years for child and adult welfare legal services and child support legal services in the sums of \$99,555 and \$75,000, respectively; no County funds are required. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved the contract extension as outlined by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- C. Letter to Town of Easton – Requested Council approval to forward a letter to the Town of Easton confirming that the County does not wish to have its Poplar Hill Farm property rezoned. The Clerk read the draft letter into the record stating that the County wishes to have the zoning and current use of its Poplar Hill property remain as when originally acquired in 2024. Council discussion ensued as to the language of the letter. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the wording of the letter, as revised, by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- D. Request from Roads Department – Requested Council approval to have the Roads Roads Department issue a blanket purchase order to David A. Bramble, Inc. in a sum not to exceed \$1,700,000 by utilizing a Maryland State Highway Administration contract for the paving of approximately 15 miles of county roads. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved the request by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- E. Request from Facilities Maintenance – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Departments of Public Works and Facilities Maintenance to award the contract for installation of additional HVAC equipment in the server room at the Public Safety Complex on Marys Court to Gannon Refrigeration Services in the sum of \$94,000. Mr. Stamp stated that there are sufficient funds in the FY26 Budget for the project. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the award by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- F. Request from County Manager – Requested Council approval for the appointment of Ms. Morgan Haller as the new Talbot County Alcoholic Beverages Inspector. Jimmy Mullikin, Chief Code Compliance Officer, stated that Ms. Haller will be working under

the Office of Code Compliance. Council welcomed Ms. Haller. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the appointment by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

G. Request from Department of Public Works – Requested Council approval to award the contract for improvements to the U.S. Rt. 50 Hog Neck Golf Course entrance to David A. Bramble, Inc. in a sum not to exceed \$45,000. Josh Elliott, Assistant County Engineer, stated that the improvements to the Hog Neck Golf Course entrance on U.S. Rt. 50 are part of the work being done by David A. Bramble, Inc. on the new intersection for the Regional Medical Center project. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Elliott and County Engineer, Ray Clarke. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the award by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

XIII. Public Comments: There were no public comments.

XIV. Council Comments:

Mr. Stepp - Mr. Stepp expressed his appreciation to Martha Sparks and her team, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris and all staff who had a part in getting us to where we are with the budget. He stated that he concurred with Mr. Leshner's earlier comment that it is nice to see a budget which is \$2 million less than last year, so kudos to everyone.

Mr. Leshner - No comments.

Ms. Mielke - Ms. Mielke stated that with all the discussion tonight and for the past few weeks about preparing for Talbot Day, she'd like to give a pat on the back to Councilman Dave Stepp for coming up with the idea several years ago. She stated that, in her opinion, it has really taken off and has had a great public response. Ms. Mielke concluded her comments by thanking Mr. Stepp for pursuing it.

Mr. Stepp - Following Ms. Mielke's comments, Mr. Stepp expressed his thanks to Ms. Mielke's for her remarks but stated that it was a team effort to get the celebration to where it is and he thanked all those involved in helping to set up, those who have submitted the names for Citizen and Service awards and those who submitted artwork.

Ms. Haythe - Ms. Haythe reminded everyone about the Home Start Housing Fair which will take place on Saturday, May 2 at the Talbot County Health Department from 12 Noon to 3:00 p.m.. She stated that she is excited about the first housing fair and that hopefully it will continue as an annual event. She encouraged everyone to attend and learn how to purchase a home.

Mr. Callahan - Mr. Callahan expressed his appreciation to County staff and the County Attorney for all they do to assist the Council.

Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council voted to adjourn and to reconvene on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, at Chesapeake College in Wye Mills with other supporting counties to discuss the Chesapeake College FY27 budget. The meeting will take place at 5:30 p.m. in the Caroline Center at Chesapeake College; to reconvene on Tuesday, April 21, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. for a joint meeting with the Talbot County Board of Education in the Talbot County Free Library – Easton Branch, located at 100 W. Dover Street in Easton; and to reconvene on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room for a work session with the Public Works Advisory Board and the County Engineer; then adjourn into 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 7:00 p.m.

The transcript of the Tuesday, April 14, 2026, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

XV. Summary of Closed Session Held on April 14, 2026:

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

Time of closed session: 3:35 p.m. End 4:20 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 personnel matter in the Department of Public Works	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Discussion involves specific individual	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Susan Moran, Patrick Thomas	No action

XVI. 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, March 31, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Talbot County Free Library, Easton Branch, located at 100 W. Dover St., Easton, Maryland. The following were in attendance: Megan Cook, Mayor, Town of Easton; Easton Town Council President, Don Abbatiello, David Montgomery, Maureen Curry, Robert Rankin, Members, Easton Town Council; Andy Kitzrow, Town Manager, Town of Easton; Phil Starkey, Mayor, Town of Queen Anne; Don Richardson, Town Manager, Town of St. Michaels; Jay Hudson, President, Commissioners of the Town of St. Michaels; Holly Wahl, Town Manager, Town of Oxford; Michael Sullivan, Member, Trappe Town Council; Chuck Callahan, President, Talbot County Council; Pete Leshner, Vice President, Talbot County Council; Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, and Dave Stepp, Members, Talbot County Council; Clay Stamp, Talbot County Manager; Martha Sparks, Talbot County Finance Director; Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager; and Cassandra Vanhooser, Director, Department of Economic Development and Tourism.

Talbot County - Prior to her presentation, Ms. Kilmon offered an opportunity for the group to participate in a short trivia game on Talbot County history and stated that part of the mission of the Talbot250 Commission is to explore and celebrate various topics related to Talbot County’s history. She stated that in 2016, Congress created the America250 Commission, in 2023 Governor Moore established the MD TWO FIFTY Commission, and in 2025 the Talbot County Council established the Talbot250 Commission. Ms. Kilmon stated that in addition to 2026 being the 250th anniversary of the founding of the nation, it is also the 365th anniversary of the founding of Talbot County. She stated that the Talbot250 Commission developed four core themes: Freedom & the Pursuit of Liberty; Service & Civic Life; Voices of Talbot; and Rooted on the Water to guide and support storytelling, partnerships and engagement, and that while the Talbot250 Commission will have its own activities, their primary role is to help promote activities and events already taking

place in the community; she provided several examples of same. More information can be found at talbot250.org . Ms. Kilmon then briefed attendees on the upcoming events planned for Talbot Day, which is being celebrated on Sunday, April 26th. She stated that after the presentation of the Citizen and Service Awards from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. there will be live music, lawn games, arts and crafts, free ice cream, Touch-a-Truck and interactive displays; the free event encourages community connection and the celebration of Talbot County history. Ms. Sparks provided a brief history of the establishment of the tax differential for the incorporated towns, the purpose of which is to compensate for double taxation of municipal taxpayers when both municipal and County property taxes fund similar services such as planning and zoning services, police and fire protection, parks and recreation, roads, etc. She stated that the tax differential is based on the County cost of parallel services and that there are no changes planned to the tax differential for FY2026 – 2027; Ms. Sparks noted that some counties in Maryland do not offer a tax differential and encouraged the elected officials to communicate that to their constituents.

Town of Easton – Mayor Megan Cook stated that the public hearing on the Town of Easton’s budget for FY27 is scheduled for Monday, May 4th and that funding for part of the Northeastern Master Plan, which is being completed in partnership with the County, is included in the budget. She stated that the public hearing on the Town’s Comprehensive Plan will take place on April 6th. Mayor Cook stated that the Town will be holding a public charrette beginning April 19th through April 23rd on the future of the hospital site on South Washington Street. She stated that the Town is making a foray into sports tourism through the hosting of a softball tournament during the second week of June and a disc golf “learn to play” clinic in May. She stated that the Town and the County have great facilities and the tournaments are one way for the Town and the County to work together to promote the amenities we have.

Town of Oxford – Town Manager, Holly Wahl, expressed her appreciation to the County Council for the tax differential and stated that the Town of Oxford has been promoting the benefits of the tax differential to its citizens and has incorporated same into their budget presentations. She stated that Oxford has begun its budgeting process and that there are no proposed increases for this year. Ms. Wahl stated that the Town is working with the Talbot County Sheriff’s Office for police coverage; has adopted an update to the Town’s Comprehensive Plan; and is working on challenges related to the Robert Morris Inn, stating that although the structure itself is in peril it cannot be transferred to another entity due to the notice of outstanding bankruptcy/foreclosure.

Town of Queen Anne – Mayor Phil Starkey stated that the Town of Queen Anne will hold elections on Monday, April 6th; the little free library is open and doing well, the Town is working on their budget; made an offer to the property owners of the former Dave’s Riverside Garage on Main Street in Queen Anne two months ago and are awaiting a response, and the Town is in the process of converting railroad tracks to a rail trail.


St. Michaels – President, Jay Hudson, stated that the Town’s project to extend the nature trail is progressing with construction plans now 90% complete; right-of-way agreements with property owners, including the County, continue, and work on the Invitation to Bid is being drafted to ensure it complies with the grant requirements. Mr. Hudson stated that the Town has received preliminary grant approval for demolition and to begin partial construction of the San Domingo Creek Park which will include a new parking lot on Boundary Lane and a park trail from the parking lot to the fishing pier. He stated that the water rate study commissioned by the Town recommended a base rate increase of \$11.16 for in-town residents which is anticipated to generate additional revenue of \$90,000; the additional funding will be utilized to maintain and improve the water station. He stated that the Town is currently seeking grant funding and Congressionally

Directed Spending for a third well for the Town. Mr. Hudson stated that the Town's budget will be introduced in early April, with the public hearing scheduled for April 22nd. With regard to Town ordinances, he stated that the Commissioners hope to establish a property tax credit in the near future, noting that there are only two candidates running for Town Commissioner this year; an ordinance establishing a planned redevelopment, including the area at 922 S. Talbot Street, for 24 homes priced in the high 400's to low 500's. Mr. Hudson stated that, like the County, the Town of St. Michaels will be hosting and sponsoring various events through the remainder of the year, including; the Memorial Day parade on Saturday, May 23rd sponsored by the Classic Motor Museum; the Flag Day celebration and the first Flag Day boat parade the week of June 14th; the Annual Children's Parade on July 4th hosted by the St. Michaels Museum; and the July 5th Fireworks co-sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and the Inn at Perry Cabin; the role of the Town of St. Michaels in the War of 1812 during August, and possibly St. Michaels Day in September. Town Manager, Don Richardson stated that the Town is in the process of improving the North Harbour by raising the elevation of the slips in order to address sea level rise. He stated that the project is currently in the design engineering process and that the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is anticipated to fully fund the project in the sum of \$1.5 million. He stated that the project for a living shoreline at Back Creek Park is also planned for late spring and early summer; and the Town is working with the County and Envision the Choptank to improve storm drainage in the Chester Park area of St. Michaels.

Town of Trappe – Michael Sullivan, Member, Trappe Town Council, stated that three of the Town's seven pumping stations (South Main Street, Councell Drive and Lakeview) have been completely refurbished at a cost of \$3.1 million, \$599,500 of which was a USDA grant. He stated that the Town also is in the process of completing a pumping station rehabilitation project; Well No. 4 is complete and was brought online this month; the ENR upgrade design is almost complete and the project should be going out to bid in the next two months. He stated that Lakeside currently has 226 building permits and that the pumps for the fountains at the entrance to the development have been shut off. Mr. Sullivan stated that the Town Council is scheduled to approve the budget on May 26th and tax bills will be issued on July 1st.

Talbot County – Mr. Stamp updated the group on various County projects which were underway, had been completed or were nearing completion. He stated that the North EMS Station is anticipated to be completed by June at the latest; the renovation and expansion of the Chapel District Elementary School will soon be completed; and the project for the renovation and expansion of the St. Michaels Branch of the Talbot County Free Library has been completed. He stated that roads projects include an overlay of the Skipton Cordova Road; the closure of a portion of Chapel Road for replacement of a culvert; a road widening project on the southern end of Black Dog Alley; and the placement of the final layer of pavement on Goldsborough Neck Road just past Villa Road. Mr. Stamp stated that the primary 9-1-1 Center on Port Street will be switching over to the Public Safety Center on Marys Court, but the Port Street location will serve as a back-up for a couple years, after which time, an addition to the North EMS Station will serve as the back-up location. Mr. Stamp stated that the County will be making changes at the Repurposing Center by reducing its current role and having it serve more of a support role for the Roads Department by supplying materials the Roads Department can use for County projects and thereby not compete with the private sector for other projects like mulch. He stated that the Easton Airport Modernization project continues and the County is hoping for a favorable response on a larger grant request from the federal government. Discussion ensued as various topics were brought forward. Ms. Vanhooser stated that Mark Perna, a nationally recognized workforce specialist will be speaking to Easton and St. Michaels High School students, teachers and administrators on Monday, April 13 and Tuesday, April 14, 2026, respectively, about how to engage young people to

find their passion and purpose in life - the event is free and open to the public. She also stated that the Business Appreciation Summit will be held on Thursday, May 14th in the Gold Room at the Tidewater Inn; the speaker will be Dr. Dell Gines, Chief Innovation Officer for the International Economic Development Council who will be speaking on *Artificial Intelligence: Promise, Possibilities, and Potential Problems*. The meeting concluded at 6:10 p.m.

		TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND	
		WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT	
		3/31/2026	
OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK			
OPERATING FUNDS AT		3/24/2026	\$ 30,742,471.84
	Total ADP Monthly Payroll PPE 3/31/2026		(17,780.30)
	Community Center Sales & Use Tax Due 3/20/2026		(531.94)
	Golf Course Sales & Use Tax Due 3/20/2026		(81.50)
	Roads Sales & Use Tax Due 3/20/2026		(64.24)
	Bank Charges 2/2026		(2,955.35)
	Deposits		1,148,736.53
	Checks		(254,667.26)
	ACH Disbursements		(1,706,647.51)
	EFT's		
OPERATING FUNDS AT		3/31/2026	\$ 29,908,480.27
PETTY CASH FUNDS			\$ 17,855.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
		<u>Yield</u>	
	Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	3.70%	\$ 24,051,261.30
	Bayvanguard Bank	3.89%	\$ 11,555,773.08
	Shore United Money Market Account	3.64%	\$ 64,691,889.08
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL			\$ 100,316,778.46
TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS			\$ 130,225,258.73



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
4/7/2026

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK

OPERATING FUNDS AT **3/31/2026** **\$ 29,908,480.27**

Total ADP Payroll PPE 3/27/2026	(1,011,667.17)
Returned Paymentus Payments	(9,270.29)
Airport Merchant Portal Hosting 3/2026	(11.00)
Repurposing Merchant Portal Hosting 3/2026	(15.00)
Roads Merchant Portal Hosting 3/2026	(15.00)

Deposits	1,937,296.86
Checks	(105,028.11)
ACH Disbursements	(1,973,556.52)
EFT's	(845,392.47)
Wire Transfers	(1,555,660.38)
Voided Check	1,225.00

OPERATING FUNDS AT **4/7/2026** **\$ 26,346,386.19**

PETTY CASH FUNDS **\$ 17,855.00**

INVESTMENT FUNDS

	<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	3.68%	\$ 24,051,261.30
Bayvanguard Bank	3.89%	\$ 11,555,773.08
Shore United Money Market Account	3.64%	\$ 64,691,889.08

INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL **\$ 100,316,778.46**

TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS **\$ 126,663,164.65**



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
4/14/2026**

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK			
OPERATING FUNDS AT	4/7/2026		\$ 27,180,377.76
106 S Fremont St./Co. Owned Property Sewer Charge			(231.25)
7419 Back St./Co. Owned Property Sewer Charge			(326.63)
911 Talbot St./Co. Owned Property Sewer Charge			(390.00)
Returned Check #0000005251			(742.51)
Deposits			831,148.64
Checks			(112,329.78)
ACH Disbursements			(1,340,066.01)
OPERATING FUNDS AT	4/14/2026		\$ 26,557,440.22
PETTY CASH FUNDS			\$ 17,855.00
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
		<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)		3.68%	\$ 24,051,261.30
Bayvanguard Bank		3.89%	\$ 11,555,773.08
Shore United Money Market Account		3.64%	\$ 64,691,889.08
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL			\$ 100,316,778.46
<u>TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS</u>			\$ 126,874,218.68