



TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

County Council

MINUTES

April 28, 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 28, 2026.
- II. Disbursements – Mr. Callahan requested and received unanimous consent for approval of the Disbursements of Tuesday, April 21, 2026, and Tuesday, April 28, 2026.
- III. Presentation of Proclamation to Shauna Beulah, Retiring St. Michaels Branch Manager – Talbot County Free Library – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record which spoke of Ms. Beulah’s love of books since early childhood and the four and one-half decades of her passionate devotion to the Talbot County Free Library, first as a volunteer and part-time employee, and then as Branch Manager of the St. Michaels Branch, where she has served the people of the St. Michaels and Bay Hundred areas of the county since 1986. The proclamation spoke of Ms. Beulah’s oversight of the facility itself and its collection through several relocations and renovations, including input on the most recent expansion and renovation, and emergencies, including Hurricane Isabel in 2003, when her efforts helped save the Branch’s collection from rising floodwaters. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshner, 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

Council members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Beulah for her many years of service to the Library in St. Michaels and Easton, and for bringing people together in the community. Ms. Beulah will retire on May 1, 2026, from the Talbot County Free Library system as a beloved community icon. Mr. Stepp presented the Proclamation to Ms. Beulah, who was joined by Library staff and members of the Library’s Board of Trustees.

- IV. Proclamation: Sexual Assault Awareness Month – April 2026 – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record in recognition of April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The proclamation spoke of the prevalence of, and violence often associated with, sexual assault, which affects all ages, genders, races and backgrounds, and the campaign by For All Seasons, Inc. to help residents get and stay informed, be vigilant and become equipped to safeguard themselves and their communities against sexual violence. The proclamation also spoke of the need for communities to work to provide support services for sexual assault victims. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Ms. Mielke, 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

Susan Ahlstrom, MS, Human Trafficking Regional Navigator, For All Seasons, Inc., stated that For All Seasons, Inc. is the only rape crisis center in the Mid-Shore region, serving the nearly 200,000 people in Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s and Talbot counties. She stated that the Rape Crisis Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, offering a confidential hotline, crisis counseling, accompaniment to the hospital during forensic exams, support through law enforcement and court processes, and ongoing therapy. Ms. Ahlstrom stated that For All Seasons, Inc. provides an “open access program” which can provide individuals with same day mental health appointments versus having to wait days or weeks for an appointment. Lauren Weber, MBA, ACNP, Chief Strategy Officer, For All Seasons, Inc., reiterated that sexual assault happens here, it happens frequently to both children and adults of all backgrounds, and asked that the community become aware of what’s happening, take steps to become informed, and be supportive of individuals who may be experiencing sexual violence. Ms. Ahlstrom and Ms. Weber expressed their appreciation to the Council for recognizing the issue. They provided information on various ways by which the public can obtain information on recognizing sexual assault. Council members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Ahlstrom and Ms. Weber for their efforts to bring awareness to the community on the issue of sexual assault and their support of the victims affected by sexual violence.

Ms. Haythe presented the Proclamation to Ms. Ahlstrom and Ms. Weber, who accepted on behalf of For All Seasons, Inc.

- V. Proclamation Honoring Kelley Callaghan – The Clerk read a proclamation into the record which spoke of the contributions of Kelley Callaghan to various organizations in Talbot County, including *Talbot Goes Purple*, an organization which empowers youth and families to make healthy choices in order to help prevent substance abuse; Teen Court, a peer-led organization supporting restorative justice practices for non-violent offenses that help guide youth toward accountability, growth and positive futures; and Grace Street, a peer-led addiction recovery organization providing compassionate care, support, mentorship, connection to treatment resources, and refuge to individuals suffering from addiction and/or homelessness, which at times which can be life-saving. The proclamation also spoke of Ms. Callaghan’s example of community leadership, and the changes that service, empathy, and dedication can bring to a community. 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

Joe Gamble, Talbot County Sheriff, briefed the Council on his collaboration with Ms. Callaghan for the past 12 years during his tenure as Sheriff and presented her with a Sheriff’s Salute in recognition of her devotion to, and work with, various organizations in the Talbot County community. Council commended Ms. Callaghan for her partnership with various organizations in Talbot County.

Ms. Mielke presented the Proclamation to Ms. Callaghan; Sheriff Joe Gamble and Major Steve Elliott, Talbot County Sheriff's Office, were in attendance.

- VI. Presentation by Waterfowl Festival, Inc. on Economic Impact Study – Deena Kilmon, Executive Director, Waterfowl Festival, Inc., stated that the mission of Waterfowl Festival, Inc. is to support Chesapeake Waterfowl and wildlife conservation. She utilized a PowerPoint presentation to outline the priorities of the organization for the next three to five years which include: (1) to establish a clear year-round organizational identity; (2) to transform Easton's Historic Armory into a vibrant center for learning, wildlife conservation, cultural heritage and community engagement; and (3) to celebrate the Waterfowl Festival as a premier wildlife and sporting heritage event in support of conservation. Ms. Kilmon outlined the organizational structure of Waterfowl Festival, Inc. which includes three employees, a Board of Directors of 15 members, and over 1,000 volunteers, including 300 student volunteers for the Waterfowl Festival event. Ms. Kilmon then provided statistical information on the impact of the Waterfowl Festival on the economy of Talbot County and the state of Maryland, stating that according to the Institute for Service Research in Virginia, the 2025 Waterfowl Festival had a \$5 to \$6 million positive financial impact on Talbot County and a \$9 million statewide impact; and the sale of 13,500 tickets (32,400 attendees) purchased represented individuals from 45 states and Mexico; funding from the ticket sales helps to pay for infrastructure supporting organization's mission. Statistical information provided by Ms. Kilmon also included the percentages of individuals who attended from out of Talbot County, out of state, the number of overnight stays, and monies spent for lodging and shopping. She outlined funding sources for Waterfowl Festival, Inc. and stated that since its origination in 1971, over \$6 million has been donated to various local, regional and national organizations; \$337,035 in scholarship funding has been provided to Talbot County students and many local nonprofits have benefited. Ms. Kilmon provided information on free and non-ticketed events provided for over 10,000 individuals, several thousand of whom were children, at the 2025 Waterfowl Festival, including, among others, the Chesapeake Mermaid Story Hour, drawing with Tim Young, a raptor exhibition, and the Ward Museum children's art activities. Ms. Kilmon concluded her presentation by noting the location of various events planned for the 2026 Waterfowl Festival, the names of the various community organizations and partners which use the Historic Easton Armory for numerous events throughout the year, and the encouraged community support for maintaining the historic structure for the next 100 years. The Waterfowl Festival will celebrate its 55th year in 2026. Council expressed their appreciation to Ms. Kilmon for the information provided and for work with the Waterfowl Festival, known as a premier event in Talbot County.
- VII. Update on Talbot County Police Accountability Board and Annual Report – Mitchell "Mitch" Ettinger, Chairman, Talbot County Police Accountability Board and Administrative Charging Committee – Mr. Ettinger stated that he had recently attended a meeting of all Police Accountability Board (PAB) and Administrative Charging Committee (ACC) Chairs in Baltimore, where each representative provided a briefing on their respective programs and challenges. He stated that, in his opinion, the Talbot County PAB and ACC are operating in a constructive and efficient manner, thanks to the support of the law enforcement agencies in the county and the administrative support received from the County Attorney and the Talbot County Office of Law. Mr. Ettinger stated that one area of improvement would be to engage with the public more to ensure citizens understand the roles of the PAB and the ACC, noting that members of the public seldom attend the PAB meetings which are open to the public. He utilized a PowerPoint presentation to apprise Council of several current and upcoming vacancies on the PAB and the ACC and stated that he would be tendering his resignation at the end of 2026. He stated that, in his opinion, the makeup of the PAB and the ACC are important to the decisions it makes and offered his assistance to Mr. Stamp in identifying individuals who would be well suited for the role. Mr. Ettinger outlined various actions taken by the ACC for complaints filed in 2025, and in 2026 to date. Council

members expressed their appreciation to Mr. Ettinger for the information included in the Annual Report for the Police Accountability Board and Council discussion ensued with Mr. Ettinger. The 2025 Annual Report may be found at: <https://talbotcountymd.gov/pabreports>.

VIII. Eligible for Vote:

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 vote. Prior to the vote, Mr. Leshner introduced Amendment No. 1 to reflect the recommendations of the Public Works Advisory Board which would limit the change in classification of the 91.46± acre parcel located at 25608 Bushey Heath/Solitude Road to include only the 10-acre portion immediately surrounding the existing single-family dwelling. The Council approved Amendment No. 1 by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

Resolution No. 392, as amended, was then brought forward for vote. The Council approved Resolution No. 392, as amended, by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

Resolution No. 392, as amended, is effective immediately.

- IX. Presentation of Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan (2026-2030) – Cassandra Vanhooser, Director, Department of Economic Development & Tourism – Ms. Vanhooser stated that over the past approximately 18 months, County staff, the Economic Development Commission, and the Tourism Board have worked to develop the Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan (2026-2030), now before Council for consideration of approval. She stated that the draft Plan was presented to the Council by the consultant at a work session on February 24, 2026, after much input from the public, interviews with the Council, and meetings with the municipalities. She stated that the Plan before the Council for approval incorporates the changes requested by the Council at the work session. She stated that the Plan sets direction, establishes priorities, and provides a framework for decision-making but emphasized that the Plan does not authorize specific projects or expenditures. Ms. Vanhooser then outlined the five areas of priority for the Plan: (1) building on our regional innovation anchors, (2) strengthening business services, (3) cultivating a strong small business ecosystem, (4) growing and sustaining a tourism economy

built on excellence, and (5) supporting a more resilient workforce. She stated that, at Council's request, the Plan provides more clarity and balance, more fully reflects the role that the Waterfowl Festival and other similar traditions play in shaping the county's identity, sharpens a focus on business attraction, clearly identifies sectors in which Talbot County is well-positioned to compete, and reinforces support for industries currently defining the county's economy – allowing the County to move forward with greater coordination and purpose in a manner which is scaled to Talbot County's capacity. Ms. Vanhooser concluded her presentation by expressing her appreciation to the Council for their support throughout the process. Ted Bautz, Member, Talbot County Economic Development Commission, on behalf of the Economic Development Commission, expressed his appreciation to the Council for their support of what, in his opinion, is a sound Strategic Plan for setting policies related to economic development and tourism and requested Council's approval of the Plan. Council members expressed their appreciation to Ms. Vanhooser and all those involved in developing the Plan. Upon motion by Mr. Leshner, seconded by Ms. Mielke, the Council approved the Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan (2026-2030) by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- X. Presentation on Home Start Housing Fair – Saturday, May 2, 2026 – Brennan Tarleton, Planning Officer; Bryce Yelton, Assistant Planning Officer; Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager – Mr. Tarleton, Mr. Yelton and Ms. Kilmon briefed the Council on the upcoming free Home Start Housing Fair. Mr. Tarleton stated that the housing fair will be held on Saturday, May 2, 2026, from Noon to 3:00 p.m. at the Talbot County Health Department, located at 510 Cadmus Lane in Easton. The housing fair will provide individuals interested in becoming homeowners in Talbot County with the information needed and the resources available to help make homeownership a reality. Mr. Tarleton stated that from a planning perspective, homeownership is important to the resilience of a community. Mr. Yelton stated that the housing fair will include short presentations by representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) on the various loan programs they provide, and the Mid-Shore Board of Realtors will provide information about their local housing initiatives. He stated that local Realtors, banks, other lenders, and home improvement contractors will also be in attendance. Ms. Kilmon stated that having recently gone through the homebuying process herself, in her opinion, the housing fair is an opportunity to speak with experts to learn about the homebuying process. More information about the housing fair is available at <https://talbotcountymd.gov/housingfair>.
- XI. Council Consideration of Recommendations from Planning Commission for Proposed Text Amendment to § 190.42.3, Table V8. Exempt Signs – Elisa Deflaux, Senior Planner, Department of Planning and Zoning, stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the request for a text amendment to add corporate flags to the County's sign ordinance at its April 1, 2026 meeting and made a recommendation that a corporate flag be permitted to fly, but must be flown with at least one (1) government flag. Mr. Leshner requested that the County Attorney draft legislation to include the amendment as recommended by the Planning Commission.
- XII. Council Discussion and Reconsideration of the 2026 Priority Listing to Maryland Department of Transportation – Ray Clarke, County Engineer; Josh Elliott, Assistant County Engineer – The 2026 Priority Listing, as approved by the Council at its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, was brought forward for discussion. Ray Clarke, County Engineer, stated that the Priority Listing presented to Council on March 24, 2026, had been previously reviewed and

approved by the Public Works Advisory Board (March 19, 2026). Mr. Clarke stated that the 2024 Priority Listing forwarded to the State (April 2024) included the *Frederick Douglass Recreational Trail from the Town of Easton to the Town of Queen Anne* as one of the County's priorities; however, it was not included on the 2025 Priority Listing forwarded to the State (May 2025). He stated that the State Highway Administration (SHA) held a public meeting at the Talbot County Free Library (July 2024) and there were concerns raised by the farming community about the project and it was his understanding that the item was not included in the 2025 Priority Listing, possibly due to the concerns expressed by the farming community. Council discussion ensued with Mr. Clarke. Mr. Stepp stated that he and several of his colleagues had attended a public meeting held at the Queen Anne Hillsboro Fire Department (hosted by SHA) and the Council heard loud and clear that the residents who live along MD Rt. 309 between Easton and Queen Anne are not in favor of the rail trail for a number of reasons, including, among others, possible incidents with farming operations and general safety concerns; he made a motion that the item be removed from the 2026 Priority Listing; Council discussion again ensued with Mr. Clarke and County Manager, Clay Stamp. Mr. Leshar stated that he had attended the public meeting and asked for Council's consideration to keep the item on the Listing but to include language requesting that as the project moves forward, adjacent property owners must be engaged in order to address concerns and the compatibility of the trail to agriculture and agriculture-related activities; Council discussion again ensued. Mr. Callahan seconded Mr. Stepp's motion and the Council approved removing the item entitled *Frederick Douglass Recreational Trail from the Town of Easton to the Town of Queen Anne* by voting 3 – 2 as follows:

Mr. Callahan – Aye

Mr. Stepp – Aye

Mr. Leshar – Nay

Ms. Mielke – Aye

Ms. Haythe – Nay

The County will forward a revised 2026 Priority Listing to the State.

- XIII. Council Discussion of Letter to Town of Easton Regarding Poplar Hill Farm – County Manager, Clay Stamp, stated that Ms. Mielke had requested that the matter before them be added to the agenda for discussion, specifically as it relates to the Town of Easton's Comprehensive Plan. He stated that Council had directed staff at the Tuesday, April 14, 2026 Council meeting to forward a letter to the Town of Easton requesting that the current use and zoning designation for the County owned property known as the Poplar Hill Farm remain as it was when acquired by the County in 2024, until such a time the Council holds a meeting with the public on its possible use, if any. Mr. Stamp stated that the letter to the Town of Easton also requested that any wording related to the property proposed for use in the Town's Comprehensive Plan be forwarded to the County Council for review. Mr. Stamp then outlined Ms. Mielke's concern that the current draft of the Town's Comprehensive Plan refers to Tristan Drive going through the property with an egress on Oxford Road (MD Rt. 333) across from Clubhouse Drive at Easton Club. Ms. Mielke outlined her concerns with the Town's Comprehensive Plan as it relates to the County owned property, including possible facilities to be located on the property, possible residential development, and Tristan Drive going all the way across the property (from Easton Bypass to Oxford Road). She stated that, in her opinion, the language in the Comprehensive Plan needs to be addressed and considered, and that the language in the letter to the Town of Easton needs more clarification. Council discussion ensued with the point made and reiterated that the County owns the property, and until such a time that the County decides if and when it wishes to use the property for another purpose, it will remain as is, farmland.

XIV. County Manager’s Report:

- A. Talbot County Board of Electrical Examiners – Requested Council approval for the reappointment of Tim Fluharty to a four-year term on the Board of Electrical Examiners as a representative of the Talbot County Fire & Rescue Association; said term will expire on April 1, 2030. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council approved the reappointment by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- B. Talbot County Public Works Advisory Board – Requested Council approval for the reappointment of Charles “Chuck” Powers to a four-year term on the Public Works Advisory Board as the representative of the 5th Election District; said term will expire on May 1, 2030. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved the reappointment by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- C. Bid No. 25-18, REROOFING SECTIONS OF THE TALBOT COUNTY CIRCUIT COURTHOUSE & STATE’S ATTORNEY BUILDING, 11 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET, EASTON – TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Superintendent of County Roads and Facilities to award Bid No. 25-18 to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, D Project, Inc., in the total sum of \$231,260.00 (\$224,300.00 for the Base bid and \$6,960.00 for Add Alternate No. 1). Mr. Stamp stated that there is sufficient funding in the FY26 Budget for the project; seven (7) bids were received. 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

- D. Request from Department of Corrections – Requested Council approval of the recommendation of the Director of the Department of Corrections to award the contract for purchase and installation of air handling units 1 through 4 at the Department of Corrections to Johnson Controls in the sum of \$348,980.00 for all four (4) units; said purchase will be made utilizing a Sourcewell contract; sufficient funding for the project is available through the CIP (Capital Improvement Project) budget. Council discussion ensued with Joe Hughes, Director, Talbot County Department of Corrections. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, 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

- E. Request from Finance Office to Approve 4th Quarter Budget Transfers for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 – Martha Sparks, Finance Director, stated that § 615 of the Talbot County Charter provides for transfers between agencies of the County government and within the same fund only during the last quarter of the fiscal year, upon the recommendation of the County Manager and the approval of the County Council. Ms. Sparks stated that the list of requested transfers totaling \$486,800 focuses on Capital Outlay items which were requested as part of the FY27 budget deliberations, but which were later determined could be purchased with funding appropriated in FY26. She stated that other requested 4th quarter transfers totaling \$102,815 relate to operating expenses and capital outlay expenses previously approved by Council for payment through use of Contingency Funds; items requested for transfer total \$589,615. Upon motion by Ms. Haythe, seconded by Mr. Stepp, the Council approved the 4th Quarter Budget Transfers as outlined 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 to have the County enter into a Contract for Transfer and Acquisition of Real Property By and Between 500 Beaver Road, LLC and Talbot County, Maryland. Mr. Stamp stated that the property which is the subject of the Contract is approximately 3,870 square feet on Cedar Point Road is currently used as a park-and-ride but is privately owned property. He stated that the owner of the property would like to convey the cut-through road to the County for \$0; the County would then repair the road and add fencing, provide safe ingress and egress from Cedar Point Road, and seed the former parking area. Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Mr. Leshner, the Council approved entering into the Contract by voting 5 – 0 as follows:

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

- XV. Public Comments: Members of the public were afforded an opportunity to comment on matters of interest to them.
- XIV. Council Comments:

Mr. Stepp - Mr. Stepp stated that he concurred with statements made by Ms. Cindy Orban, Member, Talbot250 Commission, who had expressed her appreciation to all those involved in planning and participating in Talbot

Day 2026, including County Council members, staff and departments, Town of Easton elected officials and staff, various community organizations and staff of the Talbot County Free Library. Ms. Orban had then recognized Sarah Kilmon, Talbot County Communications Manager, for organizing and coordinating the event. Mr. Stepp stated that, in his opinion, it was a wonderful event, both indoors and outdoors, and expressed his appreciation to all those who had attended to help celebrate the 365th birthday of Talbot County.

- Mr. Leshler - Mr. Leshler stated that once again, we have had an incident which calls us to condemn political violence as un-American, unpatriotic, and unacceptable, and that whether the intended victim is Vice President Mike Pence, Representative Gabby Giffords, Representative Steve Scalise, Governor Josh Shapiro, State Senator John Hoffman, Governor Gretchen Whitmer, or President Trump, this is not the way we resolve our differences. He stated that the incident must be properly investigated, the perpetrator and anyone who aided and abetted it brought to justice, and that this kind of political violence needs to be condemned at every level.
- Ms. Mielke - Ms. Mielke stated that she would like to revisit the Council's position on the Town of Easton's Comprehensive Plan (as approved by the Council on April 14, 2026) and its potential effect on County owned property (Poplar Hill Farm), quoting from the plan: *.. "The transportation map illustrates key proposed enhancements to Easton's multimodal transportation network." And that includes Tristan (Drive) that goes through our property. "These improvements, summarized below, are conceptual at this stage— exact designs, funding mechanisms, and construction timelines are largely undefined. Most projects are expected to be completed in conjunction with adjacent property development or funded through the Town's impact fees... . These proposals are also subject to revision as the Complete Streets Study is finalized."* Ms. Mielke stated that, in her opinion, the Council should make the letter a statement that we did not approve of that aspect of the Town's Comprehensive Plan, we wanted input and we didn't want it assumed that we agreed to it but wanted to discuss it and have it subject to our decision.
- Ms. Haythe - Ms. Haythe expressed her appreciation to Sarah Kilmon, other County staff and everyone for a great Talbot Day. She stated that, in her opinion, it is the best one yet. She encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming Housing Fair on Saturday, May 2 from 12 Noon to 3:00 p.m.
- Mr. Callahan - Mr. Callahan apologized for not being in attendance at Talbot Day 2026, but had heard everyone did a phenomenal job. He expressed his appreciation to Sarah Kilmon for her work with the event, despite the weather.
- Ms. Mielke - Following Mr. Callahan's comments, Ms. Mielke reminded everyone that the Cordova Fire Department will celebrate its 100th anniversary on Saturday, May 2nd.

Upon motion by Mr. Stepp, seconded by Ms. Haythe, the Council voted to adjourn and to reconvene on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. in Open Session, then adjourn into Closed Session as listed on the statement for closing that meeting, and for the regularly scheduled meeting at 1:30 p.m.; the Council will hold two public hearings on Bill No. 1625, the proposed FY27 Budget, the first public hearing will be held at 2:00 p.m. in the Bradley Meeting Room and the second public hearing at 7:00 p.m. in the Easton Elementary School Cafeteria 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 28, 2026, County Council meeting is available for review in the Office of the Talbot County Manager during regular office hours.

XVII. Summary of Closed Session Held on April 28, 2026:

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

Time of closed session: 3:30 p.m. End 5:00 p.m.
 Place of closed session: County Council Office
 Purpose of the closed session: To consider various matters as set forth in the statement for closing the meeting

2. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:

Names of members voting aye: Callahan, Leshner, Haythe, Mielke, Stepp
 Members opposed: None
 Abstaining: None
 Absent: None

3. Statutory authority to close session and listing of each topic actually discussed, persons present, and each action taken in the session:

Topic Description	Statutory Authority	Reason for Closed Session Discussion	Persons Present	Action Taken
To discuss appointments to various County boards and committees	GP § 3-305(b)(1)(i)	Public discussion would discourage individuals from volunteering to serve	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Jessica Morris, Patrick Thomas	No action
To consider the acquisition of real	GP § 3-305(b)(3)	To protect the County’s	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner,	No action

property in Easton for a public purpose		bargaining position regarding the possible acquisition of real property for a public purpose	Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Susan Moran, Patrick Thomas	
For legal advice on consent agreement with Maryland Department of the Environment regarding Preserve at Wye Mills Wastewater Treatment Plant	GP § 3-305(b)(7)	Attorney-client privilege regarding legal advice	Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp, Clay Stamp, Susan Moran, Patrick Thomas, Ray Clarke, Josh Elliott	No action

XVIII. Work Session with Public Works Advisory Board and County Engineer, Ray Clarke on Proposed Changes to the Talbot County Sewer Service Policy (Resolution No. 175) – The Council held a work session with County Engineer, Ray Clarke and members of the Public Works Advisory Board. All Council members were present and Public Works Advisory Board members in attendance were: Thomas “Tom” Lane, Chair; Cory Buxton, Vice-Chair; Charles “Chuck” Powers, Member, and Edward “Ed” Schlichter, Member. County Staff in attendance were Ray Clarke, County Engineer, Josh Elliott, Assistant County Engineer, County Manager, Clay Stamp, and Patrick Thomas, County Attorney. Rachel Leahy, Acting Director, Talbot County Department of Environmental Health was also in attendance. The purpose of the work session was to review the recommendations of the Public Works Advisory Board with regard to proposed amendments to *Resolution No. 175, A RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH SEWER SERVICE CONNECTION POLICIES FROM THE UNIONVILLE, TUNIS MILLS AND COPPERVILLE SEWER SERVICE AREA LOW-PRESSURE FORCE MAIN COLLECTION SYSTEM TO THE ROYAL OAK PUMP STATION*. The amendments recommended by the Public Works Advisory Board, if approved, would update Resolution No. 175, which outlines the criteria for new sewer connections to the infrastructure being constructed for the properties listed in Resolution No. 250, to address the growing interest by citizens in connecting their properties to public sewer and to resolve the conflict between the current verbiage of Resolution No. 175 and Resolution Nos. 387 through 391 which are outside the sewer service set by Resolution No. 175. Council discussion ensued with members of the Public Works Advisory Board and Ms. Leahy regarding Best Available Technology (BAT) systems, penetration of groundwater, and the meaning of the “feasibility” of connecting some properties. Council reviewed the wording of the proposed amendments and discussion ensued with members of the Public Works Advisory Board and Ms. Leahy. At Council’s request, the County Attorney will draft legislation reflecting the recommendations of the Public Works Advisory Board and introduction will be scheduled at future date.

XIX. Meeting with Talbot County Board of Education and Talbot County Council was held on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 – 5:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Talbot County Free Library, 100 West Dover Street, Easton

In attendance:

Board of Education members: Emily Jackson, Amy Dodson, Dyshekia Strawberry, Ann O’Connor, Cynthia Jurrius, Deborah Bridges, Karla Wieland-Cherry

Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) staff: Dr. Sharon Pepukayi, Superintendent, Debbie Gardner, Director of Communications

Talbot County Council members: Chuck Callahan, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp

Talbot County staff: Clay Stamp, County Manager, Martha Sparks, Finance Director, Kaitlin Foster-Clark, Assistant Finance Director, Jessica Morris, Assistant County Manager, Sarah Kilmon, Communications Manager

Introductions were made.

Martha Sparks, Finance Director, provided an overview on Bill No. 1625, AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE 2026-2027 ANNUAL BUDGET AND APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE, which totals \$159,100,000.

She 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 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 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) to the Property Tax rate for Public Safety 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%).

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 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 which at 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.

Following Ms. Sparks' presentation, Board members questioned whether the County derives additional revenue from new housing developments. Ms. Sparks explained that as a result of the County's Charter mandated 2% revenue tax cap, the County does not derive additional revenue. Discussion also ensued about revenues from the State of Maryland's legalized cannabis sales and gambling. Ms. Jackson stated that the proposed appropriation represents a net reduction in funding to the schools due to the increase in the fixed charges category, which the school district cannot control. She added that the Board of Education understands the limitations imposed by the tax revenue cap, noting that school rankings have stayed relatively flat, and questioned the correlation between school funding and rankings.

Mr. Stamp commented on the recent presentations with Mark Perna coordinated through the Talbot County Department of Economic Development & Tourism. Mr. Perna, a nationally recognized leader on education and workforce trends spoke to over 1,000 students, educators and families at both Easton High School and St. Michaels Middle and High School. Discussion followed about business attraction and development in the county as well as the state of Maryland. Ms. Haythe noted that the work of economic development is approximately 80% retention and 20% attraction. The new Regional Medical Center project will lead to new job opportunities as will the expansion of biotech companies in the region such as the F3 Tech program. Career exploration through the TCPS Career and Technical Education (CTE) Program is an important piece of educating and training the next generation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

- XX. Meeting with Talbot County Board of Education and Talbot County Council - Monday, February 23, 2026 – 5:30 p.m.

Via Zoom

In attendance:

Board of Education members: Emily Jackson, Amy Dodson, Dyshekia Strawberry, Ann O'Connor, Cynthia Jurrius, Esq., Deborah Bridges, Karla Wieland-Cherry

Talbot County Public Schools (TCPS) staff: Dr. Sharon Pepukayi, Dr. Helga Einhorn, Dr. Christine Davis, Debbie Gardner, Zuleika Horsey, Steve Wilson

Talbot County Council members: Chuck Callahan, Pete Leshner, Keasha Haythe, Lynn Mielke, Dave Stepp

Talbot County staff: Clay Stamp, Martha Sparks, Kaitlin Foster-Clark, Jessica Morris

Update on Maryland's Blueprint for Success

Dr. Christine Davis, TCPS Blueprint Implementation Coordinator, provided a progress update on the Blueprint's priority areas as well as an overview of the newly available information that can be found on the Maryland Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) website. Dr. Davis highlighted some of the implementation efforts for 2025-2026 with a focus on each of the Blueprint priority areas which included:

- Fully meeting the four-year old pre-kindergarten enrollment due to universal pre-K
- First mixed-delivery private partner with Critchlow Adkins Childcare Centers (CACC) for three-year old pre-K
- Four Judy Centers serving youngest learners and their families
- Five community schools connecting students and families with a range of support and services
- A new cohort of Nationally Board Certified (NBC) teacher candidates working towards certification
- TCPS Career Fair in its second year
- Flex-block implementation providing targeted Math and ELA support to secondary schools
- Apprenticeship partnership offering an expansion of apprenticeship opportunities
- On track to meet FY27 requirement of \$60,000 minimum starting salary for teachers

Dr. Davis noted that the AIB launched a new website (<https://aib.maryland.gov>) this year which contains useful information concerning the Blueprint and demonstrated where the information can be found on the dashboard. She stated that Dr. Pepukayi met with representatives of the AIB and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in October 2025 to discuss the County's Blueprint implementation progress and reported that Talbot County Public Schools is meeting target goals. A copy of the Talbot County Blueprint implementation progress report can be found on the dashboard. Robin Werner, Director of Teaching and Learning, was recognized for her service on the AIB.

Update on TCPS Grading Committee Work

Dr. Einhorn provided an overview of the work on the TCPS Grading Committee which includes the following phases:

Phase 1: Formation, Scope & Structure (August 2025 – September 2025)

Phase 2: Research, Input & Drafting (September 2025 – January 2026)

Phase 3: Review & Refinement (February 2026 – March 2026)

Phase 4: Board Review & Planning (April 2026 – May 2026)


The Board of Education will be holding a work session, which is open to the public, on March 16 at 5:30 p.m. to discuss the work of the TCPS Grading Committee. There will be an opportunity for public comment and feedback. The Board of Education will be responsible for implementing any proposed changes to the grading policy for the 2026-2027 school year which includes the development of guidance documents to ensure there is consistency in application and implementation. Discussion ensued about the current grading policy of 50%, how and when it came into effect and the ramifications of the grading

policy. Dr. Pepukayi noted that she leans on data when making decisions and stressed that she wants students to be college, career and life ready. She encouraged the Council and public to attend the Board of Education's work session on March 16th.

In closing, Dr. Pepukayi stated she meets monthly with Emily Jackson, President, Board of Education, Chuck Callahan, President, Talbot County Council and Clay Stamp, County Manager. Mr. Callahan apologized for the cancellation of the last joint meeting of the Board of Education and County Council.

Ms. Haythe asked if the nine positions which were funded in the FY26 budget have been filled, and if so, what the impact has been. Dr. Pepukayi stated the information will be shared as part of their FY27 budget presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

	TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT 4/21/2026		
	OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK		
	OPERATING FUNDS AT	4/14/2026	\$ 26,557,440.22
	Total ADP Payroll PPE 4/10/2026		(1,016,156.69)
Returned Check #1435		(164.25)	
Deposits		2,178,732.16	
Checks		(259,775.01)	
ACH Disbursements		(1,655,606.76)	
EFT's		(117,921.03)	
Wire Transfers		(6,531,227.38)	
OPERATING FUNDS AT	4/21/2026	\$ 19,155,321.26	
PETTY CASH FUNDS		\$ 17,855.00	
INVESTMENT FUNDS			
		<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	3.69%	\$ 24,126,563.18	
Bayvanguard Bank	3.89%	\$ 11,594,536.68	
Shore United Money Market Account	3.64%	\$ 64,892,182.61	
INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL		\$ 100,631,137.47	
<u>TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS</u>		<u>\$ 119,786,458.73</u>	



**TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND
WEEKLY CASH STATEMENT
4/28/2026**

OPERATING FUNDS - SHORE UNITED BANK

OPERATING FUNDS AT 4/21/2026 \$ 19,155,321.26

Total ADP Monthly Payroll PPE 4/30/2026	(18,581.73)
Total ADP Payroll Correction PPE 4/10/2026	(454.90)
Community Center Sales & Use Tax Due 4/20/2026	(153.97)
Golf Course Sales & Use Tax Due 4/20/2026	(1,131.08)
Roads Sales & Use Tax Due 4/20/2026	(871.49)
Airport Merchant Portal Hosting 4/2026	(11.00)
Repurposing Merchant Portal Hosting 4/2026	(15.00)
Roads Merchant Portal Hosting 4/2026	(15.00)
RES235 Loan Balance Reduction	(2,320.00)
Bank Charges 3/2026	(9,133.06)
Interest on Accounts 3/2026	166,574.77

Deposits	941,266.30
Checks	(109,799.33)
ACH Disbursements	(718,649.75)
EFT's	(441,925.61)
Wire Transfers	(420,971.79)
Voided Checks	31,651.68

OPERATING FUNDS AT 4/28/2026 \$ 18,570,780.30

PETTY CASH FUNDS \$ 17,855.00

INVESTMENT FUNDS

	<u>Yield</u>	
Maryland Local Government Investment Pool (MLGIP)	3.70%	\$ 24,126,563.18
Bayvanguard Bank	3.89%	\$ 11,594,536.68
Shore United Money Market Account	3.64%	\$ 64,892,182.61

INVESTMENT FUNDS TOTAL \$ 100,631,137.47

TOTAL ALL CASH AND INVESTMENTS \$ 119,201,917.77