



WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, ZONING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
125 N. DIVISION STREET, ROOM 203
P.O. BOX 870
SALISBURY, MARYLAND 21803-0870
PHONE: 410-548-4860 | FAX: 410-548-4955

Julie M. Giordano
County Executive

Bunky Luffman
Director of Administration

Steven S. Lakin
Assistant Director of Administration

Tracey G. Taylor
Director

MINUTES

The Wicomico County Planning and Zoning Commission ("Commission") met in regular session on January 15, 2026, in Room 301, Council Chambers, Government Office Building, with the following persons participating:

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Charles "Chip" Dashiell, Chairman
Daniel Moreno-Holt, Vice Chairman
Sara Bynum-King
Mandel Copeland (arrived at 4:24 p.m.)
Tanessa Siggers
Jim Thomas

PLANNING STAFF:

Tracey Taylor, Wicomico County Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development ("PZCD")
Kaylee Justice, PZCD
Janae Merchant, Recording Secretary, PZCD
Colin Harrison, PZCD

Andrew Illuminati, Wicomico County, Department of Law

Chairman Dashiell called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES: The County minutes from December 18, 2025, were brought forward for approval. Mr. Daniel Moreno-Holt moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Jim Thomas; the motion carried. Mr. Mandel Copeland did not vote because he had not yet arrived at the meeting. The minutes from the December 18, 2025, meeting were **APPROVED**.

Chairman Dashiell requested that everyone who planned to testify before the Commission stand and be sworn in; Mr. Andrew Illuminati administered the Oath.

PUBLIC HEARING – TEXT AMENDMENT – An Act To Amend Chapter 200 Of The Wicomico County Code, Titled “Subdivision Of Land,” Article I, Titled “General Provisions,” Section 200-4 Titled “Term Defined; General Requirements” To Amend The Subdivision Regulations To Remove The Set-Aside Requirement For Minor Subdivisions In The Agriculture/Rural Zoning District. - (T. Taylor and A. Illuminati)

The Public Hearing began at 4:07 p.m.

Mr. Andrew Illuminati read the Public Hearing notice.

Ms. Tracey Taylor explained that the purpose of this Text Amendment is to strike one sentence from the subdivision regulations: **MINOR SUBDIVISIONS OTHER THAN THOSE EXCLUDED IN SECTION 200-3A SHALL BE SUBJECT TO ALL SET ASIDE REQUIREMENTS.**

Ms. Taylor explained that this sentence was added to the subdivision regulations as a result of the State's passage of The Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. The Act permitted the County to redefine minor subdivisions as up to seven (7) lots, which the County did, but, in the process, created an inconsistency within the subdivision regulations by stating that the set aside requirements apply to minor subdivisions. In fact, the set-aside requirements apply only to major subdivisions in the A-1 District; thus, the inconsistency.

Ms. Taylor then gave a very brief overview of the Sustainable Growth & Agricultural Preservation Act of 2012. This Act applies only to public sewers and only to residential development. It does not impact non-residential development. The Act permits local governments to establish four tiers: Tiers I through IV.

- Tier I, areas served by sewer.
- Tier II, areas that are within a designated growth area and are planned to be served by sewer. You cannot conduct major subdivisions on a septic system in a Tier II because they are within a growth area. The Act's purpose and intent were to annex these areas for service by a public sewer system.
- Tier III, areas designated that are basically Wicomico County's growth areas, which are our R15, R20, R8, those residential areas where you can do major subdivisions on septic. You may perform major and minor subdivisions on a septic system in Tier III.
- Tier IV, areas that are the bulk of our county and are in the A1 Zone predominantly. You may only perform minor subdivisions on septic systems in Tier IV.

Mr. Moreno-Holt requested that Ms. Taylor explain “set aside requirements.” Ms. Taylor explained the set-aside requirements in the A1 Zoning District: all subdivisions must set aside 50% of the gross area of the parcel to be subdivided for an open-space easement in favor of Wicomico County. The remaining 50% is where you should focus lot development.

Staff recommends advancing a favorable recommendation to forward the Planning Director's Report to the Wicomico County Council for their review and action based on the following reasons:

1. This legislation serves as recognition of an unintentional inconsistency that currently exists in the Subdivision Ordinance.
2. This text amendment is the minimum corrective measure necessary to clarify that minor subdivisions were intended to be exempt from the set-aside requirements in the Agriculture/Rural Zoning District.

A gentleman from the public, Mr. Ron Basch, approached the podium. He and his wife, Gayle Basch, reside at 33414 Wango Road, Parsonsburg, MD. They are in favor of amending the subdivision regulations to revise the set aside requirement for minor subdivisions.

Ms. Jessica Cook, a resident of Salisbury at 509 Regency Drive, spoke. Her concerns centered on the Salisbury septic elimination project and the costs imposed on residents. Since Ms. Cook's concerns were outside the scope of the Public Hearing, Ms. Taylor asked her to contact her directly.

With no additional comments, Ms. Sara Bynum-King moved to forward a favorable recommendation of the Planning Director's report to the Wicomico County Council for their review, consideration, and action, based on the two reasons listed in the Planning Director's report. Seconded by Mr. Thomas, which was duly carried. Mr. Copeland abstained from voting due to his late arrival.

Chairman Dashiell stated the motion was **APPROVED**.

The Public Hearing concluded at 4:28 p.m.

CRITICAL AREA BOUNDARY MAP DISCUSSION - (C. Harrison and F. McKenzie)

Mr. Frank McKenzie and Mr. Colin Harrison approached the table. Mr. Harrison presented the Staff Report.

Mr. Harrison provided background on the Critical Area boundaries. The State of Maryland adopted the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Legislation in 1984 to improve water quality and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The Critical Area is measured 1,000 ft from the edge of tidal waters and/or tidal wetlands.

The State Law directs local jurisdictions to update the Critical Area boundary maps every twelve (12) years to ensure they remain accurate. A total of 738 map changes were recorded across the county, excluding the municipalities of Sharptown, Mardela Springs, Fruitland, and Salisbury. Some residents observed a decrease in the land area within the Critical Area, while others observed an increase in their property. The mapping update was contracted by the State of Maryland and is a product of the Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative ("ESRGC"), based at Salisbury University. County GIS staff collaborated with the State of Maryland staff and concur with the State's representation of both the mean high-water line and the proposed thousand-foot boundary.

Staff will return in February for an advertised Public Hearing and then seek a favorable recommendation to forward on to the County Council.

Mr. McKenzie projected the maps onto the monitor to show the Critical Area's new thousand-foot boundary and the revised mean high-water line. He highlighted the distinction between the current Critical Area boundary and the newly proposed boundary. The owners of properties already within the Critical Area will not experience any change. Where the boundary line changed, and additional properties were placed within the Critical Area, the affected owners were contacted and informed that they must now comply with the requirements of the Critical Area Law. Such requirements may include limitations on the property's impervious surface area, the number of trees that may be cleared or must be planted, Buffer setbacks, and the number of dwelling units that may be located on a parcel. The Staff and public did not dispute the maps when presented for public comment.

Chairman Dashiell thanked Mr. Harrison and Mr. McKenzie for their presentation. It helped everyone envision how the residents would be impacted.

Mr. McKenzie introduced Connor Lewandowski, a GIS intern and master's student at Salisbury University, majoring in GIS. He has been with the county for over a year, working on Critical Area tracking, building permits, and forest conservation.

Chairman Dashiell noted that we would again hear from Mr. Harrison and Mr. McKenzie in February at an advertised public hearing regarding the revised Critical Area maps.

PLANNING DIRECTOR UPDATES – (T. Taylor)

Ms. Taylor provided updates on the following:

- The Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan ("WSP") Update: the municipalities are currently preparing their data to submit to the County. The County offered each municipality a \$5,000 stipend to use towards the cost of an engineering firm to update their section of the Plan.
- There is a WSP meeting with Mardela Springs, even though they do not have public water and sewer, which will be part of the conversation. Mr. Harrison and Ms. Taylor will also discuss the update to their Critical Area Ordinance.
- Eastern Shore Regional GIS Cooperative ("ESRGC") is working on the Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plan Update. They are mapping the existing water and sewer service areas. They are taking the County's 2010 plan and adding all areas annexed since 2010, along with the service-area amendments made. The role of the Department of Planning and Zoning will be to review what ESRGC presents, where we want to expand service areas, if anywhere at all, and where we want to take what are now some of the W6/W5 areas (no planned service). These areas may be classified as planned under W4/S4 or S4/S5. Additionally, the County is working with the Health Department to identify failing septic systems and then designate them for future service. The Priority Funding Areas must be updated to ensure the County qualifies for State funding, such as Bay Restoration Funding.
- PZCD received \$50,000 from the Department of Housing and Community Development. The Department will use these funds to update the County's 2006 Housing Study to assess blight and determine the condition of housing in the County.
- An additional item we are working on is numerous text amendments. They will be brought before the Commission incrementally as inconsistent issues are identified. Within the next six to eight months, the Commission will see updates to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations.
- We are working on finalizing the RFP for the Comp Plan and hope to get it uploaded on OpenGov. However, there have been staffing challenges, and the Department did not have a Long Range Planner position until the last budget cycle. Ms. Taylor then introduced Matthew Littlejohn, the County's new Long Range Planner. He was employed by Cecil County for six years and graduated from Salisbury University. He is preparing the Annual Report, which should be presented to the Commission in March or April. He will be the primary point of contact for the Comprehensive Plan and will serve as the lead for the Land Preservation Recreation Plan.
- There are two interesting legislative bills to mention. One is a housing bill passed during the last legislative session that requires the County to comply with accessory dwelling unit requirements by the middle of October 2026. A new housing bill, the Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026 (HB 239/SB 36), has been proposed in Maryland to increase housing affordability and availability. It prohibits local jurisdictions from enforcing minimum lot sizes exceeding 5,000 square feet, thereby enabling more construction of smaller homes and townhomes. Ms. Taylor added that certain provisions of the bill require revision.
- At February's meeting, Ms. Taylor will share a map that shows all of our Tier 3 areas with the septic bill. This is the only area in which major subdivisions on septic systems may be located. There are very few Tier 3 areas, and most are already developed.
- Ms. Taylor said the 2030 Housing Production Targets for the state of Maryland from the Department of Housing and Community Development ("DHCD") came out on January 9th. Ms. Taylor will send this information to the Commissioners. In summary, DHCD used the 2023 unit count for each municipality, which was approximately 23,000 units. They estimated the percentage of our county's total housing stock in each municipality. They then projected what each municipality would need

to produce by 2030. Delmar must now produce 161 additional housing units. Fruitland 175, Hebron 42, Pittsville 81, Salisbury almost 1,200, and Willard's 40 for a total of about 1,866 units. After subtracting 1866 from our target, we still need approximately 3,000 housing units in Wicomico County. Our production target is 3,545. Ms. Taylor believes the County will not meet that target by 2030.

MEETING DATES – February 19, 2026, and March 19, 2026

Chairman Dashiell announced the meeting dates for the next two months.

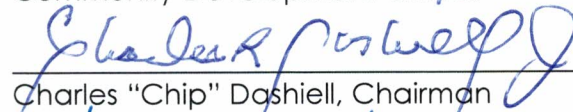
ANNOUNCEMENTS

With no additional comments, Chairman Dashiell requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Thomas made the motion, seconded by Ms. Siggers, and the motion was duly carried.

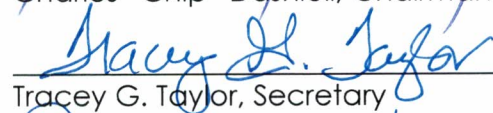
The meeting adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Wicomico County Planning Commission will be held on February 19, 2026.

This is a summary of the meeting's proceedings. Detailed information is in the permanent files for each case, as presented and filed with the Wicomico County Department of Planning and Zoning and Community Development Office.



Charles "Chip" Dashiell, Chairman



Tracey G. Taylor, Secretary



Janae Merchant, Recording Secretary