

MINUTES
BEL AIR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2026

The Board of Commissioners Work Session Meeting was held on January 13, 2026, at 5:15 pm.

PRESENT: Commissioner Paula S. Etting, Chair
Commissioner Mary F. Chance
Commissioner Steven T. Chizmar
Commissioner Kristien S. Foss
Commissioner Jakob D. Taylor

IN ATTENDANCE: David Anderson, Media & Public Relations Specialist
Edward Hopkins, Town Administrator
Stephen Kline, Director of Public Works
Michael Krantz, Director of HR & Administration
Lisa Moody, Director of Finance
Charles Moore, Chief of Police
Angela Robertson, Director of Economic Development
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
Elizabeth Thompson, Town Counsel
Jane Sudbrink, Recording Secretary

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Etting called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm and read the roll call of commissioners.

II. ROLL CALL

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Hanley motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the agenda. Ayes: Commissioners Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5–0.

IV. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT

Mr. Hopkins reported on the following items:

1. He thanked staff for their work during the power outage on New Year’s Eve. He reported that the outage lasted for thirty-six hours but staff worked diligently to mitigate the situation. In particular, Mr. Hopkins said the IT Department’s backup plans and redundancies worked but some gaps and vulnerabilities were identified that will need to be fixed. He said there will be a staff after-action meeting on January 16 to discuss technology changes. These changes may result in a mid-year budget amendment or will be planned for FY27. Mr. Hopkins reported that both the town and the county are waiting on an investigative report and a meeting arranged by BG&E that will identify causes and address issues.

2. Mr. Hopkins discussed the Banner City “If I Were Mayor” essay contest for fourth graders. He said this is a Banner City requirement and is sponsored by the Maryland Municipal League.

3. Mr. Hopkins referred to an email he sent to the board that contained the Local Health Improvement Coalition Committee report. He said the report is comprehensive and discusses health issues related to the county. He said it is an important resource for supporting the healthcare of the community.

Mr. Hopkins confirmed for Commissioner Chizmar that BG&E is conducting an internal investigation. Mr. Hopkins could not confirm whether the county is conducting its own investigation regarding the outage, but he was hopeful that the county would include the town in its research and findings.

V. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR TOWN MEETING (Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 7:00 pm, Bel Air Town Hall)

A. Presentation

1. Certificate of Appreciation Presentation to Fire Police

Chief Moore said he will be presenting a certificate of appreciation to the Fire Police for their volunteer work during Winter Wonderland and other events over the past year. He commended their work and skilled efforts with traffic assistance and other public safety matters.

B. Public Hearing

1. Ordinance 851-25 Revising Town Code, Chapter 165, Article VII, Related to Setbacks from Cannabis Businesses, Liquor Stores, and Taverns

C. Unfinished Business

1. Ordinance 851-25 Revising Town Code, Chapter 165, Article VII, Related to Setbacks from Cannabis Businesses, Liquor Stores, and Taverns

Chair Etting said this ordinance will be discussed in closed session. She said the board also released a public statement declaring that the ordinance is not directed at alcohol retailers but is following mandates from the state.

D. New Business

1. Policy I.E.6 Signing of Checks Amendment

Ms. Moody said this amendment is a “housekeeping change” that will add Commissioner Foss to the list of signers for the operating account.

2. Appointment to the Board of Appeals

3. Reappointment to Historic Preservation Commission

Chair Etting said both appointments will be discussed in closed session.

VI. COMMISSIONER LIAISON REPORTS

Chair Etting reported that the Tree Committee will meet this Wednesday. Commissioner Taylor said that the Economic and Community Development Commission met last Thursday but there was not a quorum. He said he did provide the three attending members with an update on the cannabis legislation, and he addressed misinformation on social media. Commissioner Taylor reported that the Appearance and Beautification Committee met last night and discussed holiday decorations for next year.

Commissioner Hanley said that the Historic Preservation Committee is scheduled to meet on January 22, and this will be his first meeting as liaison. He also reported that he will be the liaison for the Committee for Seniors and Citizens in Need. Commissioner Foss said she will be liaison for the Downtown Alliance, the Cultural Arts Commission, and Rockfield Manor. She said the Cultural Arts Commission will meet next Wednesday and is accepting applications to fill her vacancy.

Commissioner Chizmar said the Planning Commission met last Thursday. He said they discussed and approved Phase 4 of the Harford Mall, buildings 400 and 600. He said the commission also discussed and approved an addition to a medical building facility on Moores Mill Road.

VII. STAFFING UPDATE

A. Review Term Expiration Dates of Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Mr. Krantz reported that the town has two open positions: a laborer and a police officer. He said the police officer position may be for new recruits as well as officers who are seeking a lateral move.

VIII. CALENDAR

Chair Etting reported that there will be a Chamber of Commerce legislative luncheon on January 22. Ms. Robertson said she will attend this luncheon. Mr. Small said that the Board of Appeals meeting on February 25 is tentative. The meeting scheduled for January 28 will take place.

XI. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Parking Legislation and Parking Fund Budget Analysis

Ms. Moody first discussed the parking fund analysis that compared Bel Air to other Maryland municipalities. She said the analysis reviewed garage and street hours of enforcement, garage meter and street meter fees, garage permit and street/lot permit fees, self-management or third-party management, enterprise fund or general fund, and mechanisms of payment. Ms. Moody reported that the town's hourly rate of 50 cents in the parking garage is lower than any other municipality except for Westminster. She concluded that this is an area for further discussion. In addition, the town's monthly garage parking permit fee of \$35 is also lower than any other municipality except for Westminster. She said this is also another area for discussion. Ms. Moody said that lot permit fees are another area for review. She noted that four municipalities had a higher fee than the town's \$35 while two others had a tiered system. She said that all municipalities except for Annapolis are self-managed and eight municipalities including the town have an enterprise fund.

Ms. Moody discussed the town's parking meters. She said they are very old and there should be discussion on their replacement. She advised using ParkMobile. She told Commissioner Chizmar that she will determine ParkMobile fees. Commissioner Hanley asked about the costs of the mechanical meters. Mr. Kline said the costs are maintenance and replacement batteries, but noted that the company that supplies the mechanical meters is no longer in business. He also advised Commissioner Chizmar that staff can change the rates on the mechanical meters.

Commissioner Taylor asked if it would be possible to find out which of the municipalities' parking funds are solvent. Ms. Moody replied that she will get the financial statements from these municipalities' enterprise funds. Mr. Kline noted that infrastructure must be in place for some of these payment systems, like electricity for meters that have credit card transactions.

Ms. Moody next discussed the parking fund main revenue source history from FY15 to FY25. Ms. Moody explained that the table shows how meter revenue, parking fines, and lease fees have changed over time. Mr. Small explained for Commissioner Chizmar how the lease fee structure was changed to a flat fee to simplify the system. Ms. Moody agreed that she would provide more information on what the lease fees were over these fiscal years in question. She noted that FY25 is still unaudited, but the final numbers will not change significantly. She pointed out that the pandemic had the most impact on the parking fund. Ms. Moody said the lease fees for FY25 are \$10,000 less than FY15. She noted that lease fees and parking fines can be adjusted, and meter revenues can be adjusted by increasing the cost of the meters.

Commissioner Taylor asked about expenditures. Ms. Moody confirmed that she will add these amounts to the spreadsheet. In addition, Ms. Moody said the county's two-thirds payment for expenses is another revenue source but this amount is not in the town's control to manage. Mr. Kline told Commissioner Hanley that staff has worked very hard to decrease expenses in the parking garage, like installing LED lighting, so expenses have not increased significantly over the past ten years. He added there have also been no major repair projects. Ms. Moody said that, in comparison, no work has been done to the lots. She said she will enhance the spreadsheet by adding expenses and the county as line items. She will also separate out the garage and lots for further study. Commissioner Taylor said the parking fund situation cannot only be solved via the revenue side, but must also be addressed via expenditures.

Ms. Moody pointed out that the balance in the parking fund continues to decline yearly while the parking fund capital improvement PG equity account has only grown by about \$15,000 per year. She said that capital improvement projects on the garage must be approved by the county. Ms. Moody explained that when expenses exceed revenue the equity account is reduced. She told Commissioner Taylor that the cash in the general fund is used to pay for the shortfall. Consequently, Ms. Moody said the parking fund continues to owe more and more to the general fund. She confirmed for Commissioner Taylor that before the equity is reduced to zero, the parking fund would be moved to the general fund.

Ms. Moody discussed an analysis of meter revenue in the parking garage versus street meter revenue for FY23, FY24, and FY25. She reported that the parking garage generates 24% of the meter revenue while street meters generate 76%. For parking permits, the revenue from the garage was 41% while for streets and lots it was 59%.

Ms. Moody moved on to the Pennsylvania Avenue lot. She said that staff recommends installing ParkMobile in that lot. She noted that the lot is regularly abused. She calculated that with the installation

of forty-six ParkMobile meters, the town could earn \$38,000 per year at 75% capacity. Ms. Moody added that six fifteen-minute spaces would remain. Mr. Small confirmed for Commissioner Foss that ParkMobile does not provide a free 15-minute service. She noted that this would be a good test area for transitioning the town to all ParkMobile. Ms. Moody relayed to Commissioner Chizmar that revenue from ParkMobile in the garage in FY25 was 53% while on the streets it was 27%. She added that the current parking garage agreement with Hickory Flats, should it come to fruition, would generate \$29,000 per year for the town. For the garage, Ms. Moody said the town is leasing out 70 of 193 spaces.

Commissioners, Ms. Moody, and Mr. Kline discussed the underutilized Hickory lot. Ms. Moody said the Board of Education has an allotment of 40 free spaces. She said the town currently also leases 13 spaces in that lot. She said the town is overbooked (permit spaces) at the Lee Street and Bond Street lots.

Ms. Moody summarized the four questions from the board. She will determine the fees from ParkMobile; the finances from municipalities that have an enterprise fund for their parking; when and how much lease fees, fines, and meter rates changed in the town; and will add to the spreadsheet expenses for the parking garage and the streets/lots, including the revenue from the county.

Chair Etting asked Ms. Moody how she would “fix” the parking fund. Ms. Moody described the history of the underused Hickory lot. She said she is aware that it needs to be resurfaced for safety but is concerned about spending money on an underused area. Ms. Moody said that from a revenue standpoint, and based on the municipality comparison analysis, she would advise increasing fees. With expenses, Ms. Moody pointed out that staff is very conservative and strives to keep costs down. She was unsure what more could be reduced. Mr. Kline agreed and advised raising rates on Main Street, a popular area for parking. Mr. Small added that the recent traffic study said the town does not have a “parking problem,” rather it has a walking problem. He said the “premium parking” on Main Street and the Pennsylvania Avenue lot could have a rate increase that is higher than the rates in the garage. He added that he has received feedback that the town’s parking fines are too low. Mr. Small also added that the parking next to Das Bierhalle is on county property. Mr. Kline said the new development in town, like Standard on Bond, will create a demand for more parking.

Ms. Moody explained the composition of an enterprise fund and expense depreciation. She said the accounting for an enterprise fund is like a business. She explained that when an asset is purchased, it is not expensed the year it is acquired, but it depreciates over the years and one-seventh of that amount is expensed every year for seven years. Ms. Moody relayed that the depreciation for the garage is \$80,000 a year and this amount is not covered through revenue. It remains an expense on the income statement. She added that there is also the pro rata calculation for the percentage of staff whose work is part of the parking fund, which goes back into the general fund. Commissioner Taylor asked about the advantages of having the parking fund as an enterprise fund. Ms. Moody explained that such a fund is “supposed to pay for itself” while the general fund is composed of revenue from taxes, which should not be directed to the parking. Ms. Moody advised an analysis report if the board is considering abolishing the parking fund and moving it to the general fund. She noted that the general fund would lose the pro rata revenue from the parking garage.

Commissioner Taylor said he considers parking a public good. He said the parking fund does not support itself as it should. He felt it would be better to cut expenses in the general fund to make up the difference. He noted that consumers would be more aware of fee increases than they would be in a cut to the general fund. Chair Etting agreed that other municipalities use the general fund for parking. She

added that parking supports the downtown businesses and it is a benefit to the entire community. She discussed her dissatisfaction with the underused, misplaced lot between The Tower Restaurant and the sheriff's office. Ms. Moody clarified that the parking fund as an enterprise fund is how it was originally set up. She said she is not opposed to changing this model.

Mr. Small added that usage of town property for offsite parking was examined by the board a few months ago. He noted the draft ordinance removed the fifteen-year lease requirement. Commissioner Chizmar said the board still needs to consider fee in lieu and its cost. Mr. Small said the cost is currently \$4,000 a space. Mr. Small said this number does not take into account the cost of property nor the infrastructure of the lot. He said he recommends around \$10,000 a space. Ms. Thompson added that the discussion also covered expanding the fee in lieu requirements. She said that currently the fee in lieu is limited under the statute for how it can be used; it can only be used to buy land for additional parking. She said she is working with Ms. Moody to modify this section to allow the fee to go into the parking fund for maintenance and expenses. Mr. Small agreed to review which zones permit fee in lieu for parking and the percentage limits.

B. Amendment to 2024 Harford County Growth Report

Mr. Small said he sent the board this report via email. He reported that Bel Air Elementary School is now slightly over capacity projected out for the next three years, thus putting a moratorium on development in the area it serves. He told Commissioner Chizmar that there is no time limit on this moratorium. Mr. Small added for Commissioner Hanley that the state establishes the capacity rate and the Board of Education calculates the capacity.

C. Harford Transit Link – Letter of Support

Mr. Hopkins explained that Harford Transit Link is pursuing grant opportunities at the state and federal level to fund operational and capital needs. He noted that the some of their projects support the town and they asked for a letter of support. Mr. Hopkins said the letter is only in draft form and can be adjusted. He said that commissioners' names can be added to the letter of support. Mr. Hopkins said Harford Transit will hold two public hearings on January 28 and 29. He noted that the January 29 meeting is more applicable to the town and will highlight the products and services Harford Transit provides, as well as grant opportunities. The board determined to conduct a vote on the letter of support on January 20.

X. STAFF COMMENTS

Chief Moore said he attended the funeral of Detective Paul Hoke, a sibling of one of the town's dispatchers, and it was a solemn, well-attended service.

XI. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Chair Etting expressed her condolences to the Hoke family. She expressed her appreciation for everyone who worked on the fire event on New Year's Eve. She commended Ms. Robertson for explaining the proposed cannabis legislation at the recent government affairs meeting.

Commissioner Taylor was relieved that nothing catastrophic occurred during the New Year's Eve fire event. He requested that the next legislative session include an invocation line item.

Commissioner Hanley expressed his condolences to the Hoke family, the family of Brian Neff, and the family of Nancy Cassilly. He said he attended the recent Bel Air Community Band concert and the Hank and Arlene Allen going-away party at Legion Post 55. Commissioner Hanley congratulated Lieutenant Pfarr on his retirement.

Commissioner Foss expressed her condolences to the Hoke family. She said it was an honor to be at Legion Post 55 for the going-away party. She commented how the veterans all emphasize serving the community and others. Commissioner Foss said the Rockfield Christmas party was amazing. She also thanked Ms. Robertson, Mr. Small, and Mr. Kline for their excellent orientations and said she was excited to meet with the other department heads.

Commissioner Chizmar expressed his condolences and thanked the staff, Public Works Department, and Police Department for their work during the New Year's Eve fire event.

XII. CLOSED SESSION

Commissioner Taylor motioned to move the meeting into closed session. Commissioner Taylor read the reasons for the closed session as listed below. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion. Mr. Krantz asked for roll call: Ayes: Commissioners Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0. Chair Etting said the meeting would not return to open session. The meeting closed at 7:07 pm.

A. This portion of the meeting will be closed under the provisions of the Maryland Open Meetings Act General Provisions Art. §3-305(b)(1)(7) and (8).

B. Topics of Discussion:

- 1. To Discuss the Appointment of Officials to the Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees**
- 2. To consult with Counsel to Obtain Legal Advice Regarding Ordinance No. 851-25 Revising Town Code, Chapter 165, Article VII, Related to Setbacks from Cannabis Businesses, Liquor Stores, and Taverns**
- 3. To Consult with Counsel to Obtain Legal Advice Regarding Third Party Contracts**
- 4. To Consult with Counsel to Obtain Legal Advice and to Consult with Staff, Consultants, or Other Individuals about Pending Litigation Regarding the Harford Circuit Court Case No. C-12-CV-25-001030 Harford County, Maryland vs. Town of Bel Air, Maryland et al.**

C. Reasons for Closed-Session Discussion of Above Topics

- 1. Because public discussion of candidates' names, qualifications, experience, and background could discourage people from volunteering for public service or compromise their privacy rights.**
- 2. Because public discussion of confidential information and legal strategies can compromise the attorney-client privilege and inhibit the ability of the public body to receive candid and uninhibited legal guidance.**

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Chizmar motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 9:02 pm.

APPROVED AS AMENDED: February 2, 2026

Signature on file
Paula S. Etting, Chair
Board of Town Commissioners

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk