

**MINUTES**  
**BEL AIR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MEETING**  
**JANUARY 27, 2026**

The Board of Commissioners Work Session Meeting was held on January 27, 2026, at 5:15 pm.

**PRESENT:** Commissioner Paula S. Etting, Chair  
Commissioner Steven T. Chizmar  
Commissioner Kristien S. Foss  
Commissioner Gavin O. Hanley  
Commissioner Jakob D. Taylor

**IN ATTENDANCE:** 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 Chizmar motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Foss 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 discussed the following items:

1. Mr. Hopkins referred to the Lions’ Club handout about the derby scheduled in May. He said there will be 32 cars racing, as well as two super racers for children with disabilities.

2. Mr. Hopkins discussed positive developments with SHA. He said that SHA has agreed to install “rectangular rapid-flashing beacons” at the intersection of Rt. 924 and Idlewild Road, despite the lack of relevant data after a study. He said SHA has agreed to this installation to promote pedestrian safety and encourage driver awareness. In addition, regarding pedestrian safety at Main and Lee Streets, Will Pines, the SHA Director, visited the area on December 19. He agreed, despite the lack of data, that improvements can be made at this intersection. Mr. Hopkins said he and Mr. Kline will review SHA’s suggestions for this intersection.

3. Mr. Hopkins reviewed the agenda priority list. He said the commissioners have already discussed the parking legislation and parking fund on January 13. He said he is waiting on the board for further guidance. Mr. Hopkins said the windsails discussion is on tonight's agenda. Commissioner Taylor's request about the charter change is scheduled for February 10. Mr. Hopkins said the remaining items—DRRAs, APF, historic preservation, and affordable housing—are waiting on the Maryland legislature and county direction. He said ADUs are on the agenda for the spring.

## **V. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR TOWN MEETING (February 2, 2026, at 7:00 pm, Bel Air Town Hall)**

### **A. Presentation**

#### **1. Promotion of Nicholas Rhodes to Senior Officer**

Chief Moore said this will be a presentation to recognize Officer Rhodes's promotion to the senior officer rank. He said that Officer Rhodes is an exemplary officer with ten years of service to the town and is also a member of the Marine Corps.

#### **2. Winter Wonderland Certificate of Recognition**

Commissioner Hanley said Winter Wonderland was a great success. The event made the town look beautiful and brought thousands of people to the town's businesses and restaurants. He said it is completely volunteer driven and he would like to recognize the people who made the event successful.

### **B. New Business**

#### **1. Reappointment to the Economic & Community Development Commission**

#### **2. Appointment to the Cultural Arts Commission**

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

## **VI. COMMISSIONER LIAISON REPORTS**

Chair Etting said the Tree Committee met this month and discussed Arbor Day, the trees on order for the opening of the Farmers' Market, and maintenance of the Majors Choice oak. Commissioner Foss said the Cultural Arts Commission met this month and discussed the RFP for a sculpture at the intersection of Marketplace Drive and Atwood Road. Commissioner Hanley said the Committee for Seniors and Citizens in Need will work with Stephanie Zahn to apply for an AARP challenge grant for a fall prevention class. He said the Historic Preservation Commission met last week. He reported that the Historical Society will be getting lettering on the front of the building as well as a seal on the sign.

## **VII. STAFFING UPDATE**

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

Mr. Krantz reported that the two police officer positions and the laborer position are no longer posted and applications are now under review. He said the Director of Planning position will be posted for another week.

## **VIII. CALENDAR**

Chair Etting said the February 24 work session meeting conflicts with the Harford Night in Annapolis. The board and department heads agreed to change the work session to February 23.

## **XI. MISCELLANEOUS**

### **A. Discuss Windsail/Sign Regulations**

Chair Etting said that numerous businesses on Route 1 have requested windsail signs as an economical way to get their businesses noticed. She said that some of the businesses had the signs out but removed them because the signs are not permitted in town. She said the law was changed in 2023 to specifically say “windsails” are not permitted because they are a distraction to drivers.

Mr. Small said that during his tenure with the town, windsails have been prohibited but the code did not specifically say “windsails” or “feather signs” until recently. Mr. Small read the specific section of the code that discusses prohibition of specific signs that are distracting to motorists. He said the county prohibits windsail signs but they are evident throughout the county. He said that Aberdeen permits the signs with a permit while Havre de Grace prohibits them.

Commissioner Taylor said the board could request that these signs are only allowed in the B3 and B3A districts with a permit. Mr. Small agreed but explained that the permitting time period would be difficult to track. He said his preference would be to not allow these signs and if the board does choose to allow them, to not have a time period on the permit. Mr. Small told Chair Etting that Aberdeen allows the signs to be up for an unlimited time period. He noted that some businesses in town could put the signs up on weekends and take them down on Monday. Chair Etting said this would be unfair to the businesses who are complying with the rules.

Commissioner Taylor said the windsails seem to be appropriate along Baltimore Pike (B3A), but the B3A district includes Bond Street where the windsails would not be appropriate. He said that if the board chooses to limit the signs to just B3 then this would be unfair to the businesses in B3A. Commissioner Chizmar added that some of the businesses are concentrated in one area so there could conceivably be twenty signs up at one time, which are distracting and an eyesore. Ms. Robertson agreed with Commissioner Chizmar and cited 331 Baltimore Pike, which has seven uses. She said the signs are distracting, which is a safety issue in an already busy area. She questioned whether the content on these signs is enough of an advantage for the board to change legislation.

Commissioner Hanley said he is not in favor of windsail signs, saying they are unattractive and he did not like the complications with the zones. Chief Moore agreed with Ms. Robertson and said Baltimore Pike is already very congested and the flags would be a distraction. Commissioner Foss agreed and said the signs are not an aesthetic improvement to the town.

### **B. Discuss Neighborhood Traffic Management Program**

Mr. Hopkins said the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) has met several times recently. He said the changes to the booklet and the scoring sheet have been test-driven and are satisfactory both to the staff and concerned residents. Mr. Small addressed the need for transparency to the public. He told the board that they could require that meetings be advertised, that there be a

commissioner liaison, and that the minutes be posted. He noted that if the NTMP were to be codified, there is less flexibility and there are more rules that must be adhered to.

Mr. Small addressed further edits to the booklet. He said the booklet now has the application and an evaluation worksheet. He said the worksheet is clearer and less vague than the previous one. Mr. Small said the booklet also includes a petition for a traffic calming device. He noted that the point system is the same as the county's NTMP point system, which was updated recently. He said that the booklet's examples of traffic calming devices has not changed and comes from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) or other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Chizmar addressed edits to the booklet. He asked that on page 1, last paragraph, "...and if the required approval from the neighborhood residents has been obtained, the town will install physical calming measures based upon the availability of funding" be reviewed. Mr. Small said he would change the word "will" to "may." Commissioner Taylor asked that if the petitioners reach that level of community input, should there be mention of putting the request in front of the board. Mr. Small said he will add, "...the town will then seek permission of the commissioners to review the request." He confirmed for Commissioner Hanley that the board has not historically approved level 2 devices in the past. Chair Etting explained for Commissioner Hanley the reasoning behind these changes and the need for the commissioners to now review and approve level 2 requests. Mr. Small noted that level 2 and 3 requests may be costly so they must go through the budgetary process. He said the town administrator approves pavement graphics and signs (level 1), and the board is only informed of these decisions.

Mr. Kline explained for Commissioner Taylor that requests for speed humps are rare and the most recent one beyond the Broadway speed hump was the pedestrian speed hump by Harford Mutual.

Commissioner Chizmar debated the use of local traffic versus nonlocal traffic. He argued that "traffic is traffic" and that such designations do not affect whether vehicles exceed the speed limit or there is congestion. He also said those calculations are difficult to determine. Mr. Small agreed that "it is not a science." Chief Moore stated that it depends on the neighborhood whether the violators are local or nonlocal drivers. Mr. Small said that knowing the percentage of nonlocal traffic will affect the remediation. He said that if nonlocal access to the neighborhood is cut off, it will markedly change how traffic flows. Commissioner Chizmar noted that some remediation measures are for speed reduction while others are for traffic reduction. Mr. Small said the points for nonlocal traffic could be reduced or eliminated but he would still like to review them. Commissioner Chizmar said those points could go to volume or speed. Mr. Small said the most important categories that affect the safety of a neighborhood, in his opinion, are speed and crashes.

Mr. Small said that vertical control (speed humps) should only be for local roads, not collector roads. Commissioner Chizmar said that when looking at speed mitigation, he did not think that a nonlocal distinction has value. He said nonlocal does apply when trying to shift traffic in another direction. Commissioner Chizmar further discussed how to determine what is "local" for a neighborhood. He questioned how to define the parameters of a neighborhood. Mr. Small said the Howard Park study will measure the local versus nonlocal traffic because there are cameras that will look at car tags. He told Commissioner Hanley that the study should be done by mid-February.

Commissioner Chizmar moved on to step 4, page 4, where it stated that an applicant must get "75% approval of all homeowners that must cross over a new speed hump to get to their homes, including residents from other communities if applicable." He questioned how this percentage would be

determined. Commissioners and Mr. Small discussed the significant differences between the density and layout of the town versus the county. Mr. Small said that this section could be deleted. Commissioner Taylor suggested “geographic closeness to the intended installation.” Commissioner Chizmar said his main concern is that citizens are clear on the regulations, while cognizant that there may be some give and take. He preferred “geographical orientation” to “neighborhood.” Mr. Small said the parameters are measured based on “where we think people will go but it’s a guess.”

Commissioner Chizmar asked about page 6, paragraph 4, “elementary school or town community playground.” Mr. Small said he would remove “town” so that it indicates all playgrounds not just the town’s playgrounds. Commissioner Chizmar asked for an explanation of the last sentence on page 6, that refers to “areas of 4 ft of unobstructed walking areas.” Mr. Small agreed to rewrite the sentence to say, “areas of 4 ft of unobstructed all-weather sidewalk” so as not to include walking paths. Commissioner Chizmar asked about page 8, first paragraph that indicates level 2 requires two-thirds signatures. Mr. Small said he would change this section to “three-fourths signatures.” Mr. Small, at Commissioner Chizmar’s behest, changed the level 3 point system to 80 plus points rather 80–110 points because there is no limit to points for car crashes.

Commissioner Hanley reiterated that it is very important that citizens have an understanding of the NTMP process and that higher level requests need board approval and will be subject to the budget process. To ensure transparency, Mr. Small said he will write in the manual that there will be a commissioner liaison and the minutes will be on the town website. Commissioner Hanley agreed to be the NTMP liaison.

Commissioner Taylor said he is still in favor of codifying the NTMP but felt he was in the minority. He said putting this information in the manual is the closest approximation. He also asked that there is advance notice of meetings. Chair Etting said the agenda should also be posted.

Commissioners and Mr. Small discussed an HOA making a request versus an individual. Commissioners agreed that level 1 decisions remain with the town administrator and levels 2 and 3 are subject to the board. Mr. Small said signage is enforced by the MUTCD.

Commissioner Hanley said codification seems logical but that would mean the meetings have to adhere to the Open Meetings Act. Ms. Thompson confirmed that this would also mean that staff could not discuss any subjects except NTMP-related issues at the meetings. Chair Etting said non-codification would help decisions made by the NTMP move more quickly through the process. Commissioner Taylor said it is helpful that final decisions are not made at the NTMP meetings and that the meetings are open.

Commissioners discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the three-minute time limit for speakers. Ms. Thompson pointed out that the speaking limit is up to the discretion of the NTMP. Commissioner Taylor added that the board, too, can question people for an unlimited amount of time to have more dialogue.

### **C. Discuss Maryland Senate Bill 47 – Housing and Community Development – Neighborhood Business Development Program – Local Approval Requirement**

Ms. Robertson said she received correspondence through the Finance Department to report back the town’s fiscal impact for this proposed Senate bill. She said the purpose of this bill is to repeal the requirement that applications for the Neighborhood Business Development Program would need a

resolution from the local municipality for their projects. She said this program is a loan program for nonprofits or small businesses of up to \$5 million in a priority funding area. Ms. Robertson said the town is considered a priority funding area through its designation as a Maryland Main Street and Sustainable Community. She said the two programs that the town works with are the Neighborhood Revitalization and Neighborhood Business Works Programs. Ms. Robertson outlined the current process for these programs with notification and a response time of 45 days. She determined through discussions with Ms. Moody and Mr. Hopkins that there would be no fiscal impact on the town. However, it will remove notification of projects. Ms. Robertson said she would like to submit the fiscal impact notification and also wanted to make the board aware of this proposed bill. She noted it would not apply to grant programs like the Community Legacy Grant, but it is specific to neighborhood works and revitalization. She said the Senate hearing is scheduled for February 4 so there is still time to provide feedback for this bill.

Chair Etting told Ms. Robertson to submit the notification and said she surmised that the program will still provide written notice, but a resolution supporting it is no longer needed. Commissioner Taylor said she is correct and it is taking away the board's authority. Ms. Robertson confirmed that this bill does not affect the town's programs and the town has not done one of the affected programs in a long time.

Commissioner Taylor said this bill was proposed at the request of Governor Moore's Department of Housing and Community Development. Commissioner Taylor said he opposes this bill because it "whittles away local control," and felt that local municipalities should be granted more control not less. He said he was curious why the administration had the Senate introduce this bill. Chair Etting added that she could not discern "what problem is it fixing." She agreed that she is also opposed to the bill. Commissioner Taylor suggested that the board adopt a negative position on the bill. Chair Etting concluded that the board will review the bill and Ms. Robertson can proceed with the fiscal impact submittal.

#### **D. Discuss Proposal to Declare Town Property a Public Park – 401 S. Atwood Road, Bel Air, MD**

Mr. Small reported that this is a property off of Atwood Road that was purchased by the town in 2003. He said it has the potential to be a park. He also added that the Bike and Pedestrian Plan shows a connection running from the high school to Atwood Road. Mr. Small said the Cultural Arts Commission is working to install a sculpture at the intersection of Marketplace Drive and Atwood Road. He explained that the walking path was delayed because of the stream remediation that was done four to five years ago and is now stabilized. Mr. Small said the intention this evening is to 1) designate the area as a park, and 2) implement a walking path. For this budgetary year, the request would be signage and benches. He said he will also seek easements from adjacent properties to continue the walking path to Rt. 24. Mr. Kline said he would confirm if a pathway can be installed in a stream restoration area.

Ms. Thompson reported that this parcel is a "leftover" 1.52 acres from the Parkview at Bel Air subdivision. She said the subdivision was completed in 2002 and the developer conveyed the land to the town free of charge. She said the plat indicates that this is a restricted area for use as conservation. The parcel is not suitable for any major development. Ms. Thompson noted that the town already owns the land so there is no need for a public hearing or a survey. She said the installation of a park is consistent with the Bike and Pedestrian Plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Taylor said this is a wonderful way to further the town's goal of preserving green space and what is already in the land record. Ms. Thompson said it is a means of providing the public

with another resource. She noted that just because the town owns property, it does not mean the public is entitled to use it. She said designating the property as a park only requires a resolution. Ms. Thompson said the commissioners must decide on a name for the park. Commissioner Foss added that the Cultural Arts Commission would support this park because the commission has envisioned that area as a space for residents who live in that area. Ms. Robertson said it is a highly visible area with pedestrian traffic from Parkview. Mr. Hopkins also added that it is conveniently located near the high school, so he suggested a potential partnership with the school to make it a watershed study area. Commissioners unanimously agreed to the park and researching a name designation.

## **X. STAFF COMMENTS**

Mr. Hopkins extended his thanks to staff for their work during the pole fire and the snowstorm, both considered critical incidents. He thanked department heads, the Police Department, and the Public Works Department.

Ms. Thompson said that Friday will be a continuation of the zoning violation trial and she hoped it would conclude on that day. Mr. Kline said he has been subpoenaed by the defendant for that trial.

Mr. Kline said that the Public Works Department performed exceptionally well during the snow storm and he was extremely proud of their efforts. He said they worked nonstop from midnight Saturday to Monday afternoon at 3:30 pm. He added there were no injuries or vehicular incidents during operations. Mr. Kline detailed that 100 tons of salt were applied to roadways and he is in the process of replenishing the town's supply. He noted that the department engaged private contractors to plow the snow along the town's tighter roads. Mr. Kline said the department received positive feedback from the community and morale remained high. He declared that the most gratifying aspects of the operation was the teamwork, cooperation, and the shared commitment to serve the town.

Chief Moore said his staff performed exceptionally well during the snowstorm by maintaining business as usual. He noted that extra staff came in to work and there were no complaints. Chief Moore then described how his team worked diligently during the storm to find the 15-year-old autistic child who left home unnoticed. He said the team effort included the state police and a bloodhound to find the child.

## **XI. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS**

Commissioner Foss thanked Mr. Kline and his crew. She said she greatly appreciated her second round of orientation and encouraged town citizens to attend the Municipal Citizens Academy.

Commissioner Chizmar noted that the town did a great job keeping people informed during the storm, and residents were happy with the town's actions and response.

Commissioner Taylor praised the town's emergency responders and their high level of dedicated service. He then discussed the proposed House Bill 488 that would redraw Maryland's congressional districts. He said the proposed legislation would split the county in two, which is contrary to the current congressional map that made the county whole ten years ago. He said the county has tried to mend the north and south county split. Commissioner Taylor felt this would be an unfortunate move that would strongly impact Harford County. He said the decision-making process for the county under this new map would be outsourced to far-flung areas. As such, the town would represent a small fraction of the new

district making it very difficult for the town to exercise its voice. Commissioner Taylor testified against it (not as a commissioner). He said that when it comes to running municipal government, the town's constituents should have a fair voice and fair maps. He said the hearing is ongoing and it appears the House will pass this bill, while the Senate will not take up the bill although there is pressure to do so.

Commissioner Hanley praised town staff for their work during the snowstorm. He noted that Towson Hot Bagel will have its grand opening on Thursday. He said that the Lions' Club will hold its Bingo Night on Friday. Commissioner Hanley said that he will attend Chair Etting's campaign kickoff for District C on Friday.

Chair Etting expressed her appreciation to the Public Works Department. She said that Amazon Fresh is closing all its stores and she was unsure what will go in its empty space. Chair Etting also highlighted the email from the public information research group regarding its opposition to natural gas. She said she does not support their hostility towards natural gas and said it is an important part of Maryland's energy. Commissioner Taylor added that the heavily subsidized energy sources cannot support the grid in its current state. Chair Etting said she will call the author of the email and share her views on the matter.

## **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 Chizmar 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 7:05 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)(10) and (15).**

### **B. Topics of Discussion:**

- 1. To Discuss the Appointment of Officials to the Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees**
- 2. To Discuss Topics Related to Public Security and Cybersecurity Following the December 31, 2025, Utility Pole Fire on Pennsylvania Avenue**

### **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 sensitive operational details and security information that, if disclosed publicly, could present risks to the Town's infrastructure and the safety of its residents.**

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Hanley motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

**APPROVED:** February 17, 2026

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

Signature on file  
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk