

MINUTES
BEL AIR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TOWN HALL MEETING
FEBRUARY 2, 2026

The Board of Commissioners Town Hall Meeting was held on February 2, 2026, at 7:00 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: 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 7:00 pm and read the roll call of commissioners.

II. INVOCATION

Commissioner Taylor invited Deacon Russ Sullivan to deliver the invocation. Deacon Russ prayed that town citizens, employees, and the Police Department be blessed in their service and at this meeting. He asked that they be guided to serve this community as it seeks to be a shining star of the state of Maryland and the country. He prayed for peace and prosperity.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. 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: Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Taylor motioned that the minutes of the Board of Commissioners meetings held on January 13, 2026, open and closed sessions; and January 20, 2026, be approved as submitted. Commissioner Chizmar seconded the motion. Commissioner Chizmar motioned to amend the open session minutes of January 13, page 6, first full paragraph, second sentence. The sentence should read,

“He noted the draft ordinance that removed the fifteen-year lease requirement.” Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. Mr. Krantz asked for a motion to approve the amendment to the January 13, 2026, open session minutes. Ayes: Commissioners Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5–0. Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the approval of the minutes for January 13, 2026, and January 20, 2026, as amended. Ayes: Commissioners Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5–0.

VI. PRESENTATION

A. Promotion of Nicholas Rhodes to Senior Officer

Chair Etting read aloud the exemplary background and education of Senior Officer Rhodes. In particular, she highlighted his eight years as a School Resource Officer where he mentored and was a role model for numerous students. She listed his many ongoing collateral duties such as firearms instructor and Explorer Program instructor. Chair Etting noted that Senior Office Rhodes returned to patrol duty in 2024 where he led the department in traffic and criminal enforcement. She listed his numerous awards, such as Life Saving Awards and Critical Incident Awards and said that he has continued to serve in the US Marine Corps since 2014. Chair Etting concluded that Senior Officer Rhodes serves his community and country with pride, patriotism, and dedication. She added that he has also effectively recruited officers from the Marine Corps to work in Bel Air and she thanked him for his service.

Chief Moore spoke highly of Senior Officer Rhodes’s career and his life-saving skills. He noted that Senior Officer Rhodes’s career is “completely home-grown” from police explorer to officer, marine, and firearms instructor. Chief Moore said he is very proud of Senior Officer Rhodes’s career and emphasized his patriotism and leadership. He noted that Senior Officer Zachary Miller would be proud of him.

B. Winter Wonderland Certificate of Appreciation

Chair Etting detailed how the town is fortunate to have the Winter Wonderland organizers who transform the town at Christmas. She said over 7,200 people visited the train garden alone. She read the certificate of appreciation aloud wherein the board extended its sincere appreciation for the organizers’ effort over three Saturdays in December. Chair Etting said that over 10,000 people attended Winter Wonderland, and she listed the many events. She said Winter Wonderland has been a fixture of the holiday season since 2019. She also thanked the government agencies, community organizations, local businesses, volunteers, the Department of Public Works, the Police Department, and the Fire Police volunteers.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution 1262-26 Declaring the Real Property Located at 401 S. Atwood Road, Bel Air, Maryland to Be a Public Park

Commissioner Chizmar motioned to approve Resolution No. 1262-26 declaring the real property located at 401. S. Atwood Road to be a public park for the benefit of the community. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion.

Mr. Krantz provided background on this resolution. He said the town owns real property at this location and is authorized under the charter to acquire, hold, manage, and designate said property for

public purposes. He added that this property is well-situated to serve as a park and is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Commissioner Taylor discussed the naming of the park. He said he considered that this year is the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, as well as the importance of Bel Air and Harford County in revolutionary America. Commissioner Taylor said that Aquila Scott and Aquila Hall were notable men in Harford County and Bel Air histories. He asked that these men be honored by naming the park Eagle Park. "Aquila" is "eagle" in Latin. Commissioner Taylor motioned that for each instance of "Atwood Park" in Resolution 1262-26, the words be replaced with "Eagle Park." Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion. Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the amendment to Resolution 1262-26, changing references from "Atwood Park" to "Eagle Park." Ayes: Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the approval of Resolution 1262-26 as amended. Ayes: Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0.

B. Reappointment to the Bel Air Economic and Community Development Commission

1. Christopher Streett

Commissioner Taylor motioned that the reappointment of Christopher Streett to the Bel Air Economic and Community Development Commission for a term of three years, effective immediately, be approved by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Chizmar seconded the motion.

Ms. Robertson confirmed that Mr. Streett has been on the commission since 2011 and served as chair for six to seven years. She said that staff is thrilled that he is willing to continue to serve.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the reappointment of Christopher Streett to the Economic and Community Development Commission. Ayes: Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0.

C. Appointment to the Cultural Arts Commission

1. Annie Kovach

Commissioner Foss motioned that the appointment of Annie Kovach to the Cultural Arts Commission for a term of three years, effective immediately, be approved by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion.

Ms. Robertson said she is pleased to have received an application from such an outstanding person in the community who has already worked with the Cultural Arts Commission in her professional capacity at the library. Ms. Robertson added that Ms. Kovach will fill a vacancy created by Commissioner Foss's resignation and she thanked Commissioner Foss for her many years of service on the commission.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the appointment of Annie Kovach to the Cultural Arts Commission. Ayes: Foss, Chizmar, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 5-0.

VIII. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

All Town of Bel Air offices will be closed on February 16 in observance of President's Day. Family Fun at the Armory begins on February 7 with the Susquehanna Symphony Orchestra and their Instrument Petting Zoo. Circus Science with Gregory May follows on February 21, and Jazz for People Who Are Shorter than Me with Seth Kibel and fellow musicians will be on February 28. The next Red Cross Blood Drive at the armory will be on February 12. Harford's Harvest Winter Market continues on February 14 and February 28 in the Mary E.W. Risteau building parking lot at 2 S. Bond Street. The Planning Commission will meet on February 5. The Appearance and Beautification Committee will meet on February 9. The Tree Committee will meet on February 11. The Economic and Community Development Commission will meet on February 12. The Board of Town Commissioners will meet on February 10 and 17.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Julia Ernest, 325 Fulford Avenue, said she moved to town last September and paid county and town taxes at closing. She said she was unaware that town taxes are billed once a year and that she must pay the taxes as a new resident. She suggested for the future that new residents be informed of these taxes and receive a bill accordingly so that they do not become behind in payments. In addition, Ms. Ernest said the third-party vendor that sends the sewer receipt via email provides a great deal of personal information in that email. She was concerned about the security risk and asked the board and town staff to consider this vendor more closely.

John Stump 523 E. Broadway, spoke about the upcoming 2027 budget and what it means for public safety in Bel Air. He described an article published on July 22, 2025, that commended the Police Department for solving a series of burglaries. He said that strong leadership, professional experience, and dedication of the officers can only happen if there are enough officers to keep the community safe. Mr. Stump said that the town continues to attract businesses and residents, and criminals are aware of such growth. He said more police means less crime. He said the Police Department must keep pace with increased calls for service and safety. Mr. Stump said criminals notice how a community prioritizes funds allocated for public safety. He said the true measure is not what did happen, but what did not happen. Mr. Stump said a highly visible police presence is a proven deterrent. He asked the commissioners to act decisively and approve FY27 funding for two more police officers. He stated that such decisions send a message to residents, businesses, and "those bad actors who want to test us."

X. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Taylor described his own recent experience as a first-time homebuyer in Bel Air and how his town taxes were paid. He said he would look into whether there is an option to not receive an email receipt when the sewer bill is processed by the third party. He welcomed Ms. Ernest to the town and said he appreciated that she came out to speak to the board as a new resident. Commissioner Taylor described Senior Officer Rhodes as a "hometown hero."

Commissioner Foss said Senior Officer Rhodes is a "hometown boy" and elaborated on his childhood in town and the impact he has had on the community. She welcomed Ms. Ernest to the town and thanked her for speaking tonight. She also welcomed Ms. Kovach to the Cultural Arts Commission.

Commissioner Hanley congratulated Senior Officer Rhodes on his promotion. He commended the Police Department on filing charges and arrest warrants for the car break-ins at Orangetheory Fitness.

Chair Etting congratulated the Police Department and the Department of Public Works for their continued good work during the cold weather.

Commissioners discussed pending legislation in Annapolis. They unanimously agreed to oppose Senate Bill 325, the Housing Certainty Act. Ms. Thompson elaborated that this bill would make Maryland an early-vesting state. She said vesting would occur when the developer receives Planning Commission approval and it would be retroactive to the time the application was submitted. She said this bill upends decades of Maryland law as a late-vesting state.

Commissioners also agreed unanimously that they would take an unfavorable position on Senate Bill 36, which they consider an “assault” on single-family neighborhoods. Chair Etting said this bill would allow developers to take down houses in single-family neighborhoods and build townhouses. She was particularly concerned about the Howard Park neighborhood. Commissioner Taylor suspected that the law is too far-reaching to pass. Chair Etting was concerned about the desire to confine higher density growth in the water-sewer envelope, which she felt would make the area less attractive to homebuyers and would push people out of the area. Commissioners discussed how people are moving out of Maryland to other states because of the high costs in Maryland. Commissioner Taylor quoted, “No man or his property is safe when the General Assembly is in session.”

XI. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hanley motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:45 pm.

APPROVED: February 17, 2026

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

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk