

MINUTES
BEL AIR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 10, 2026

The Board of Commissioners Work Session Meeting was held on February 10, 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: 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 said he had no items to report.

V. TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR TOWN MEETING (February 17, 2026, at 7:00 pm, Bel Air Town Hall)

A. New Business

1. Ordinance 852-26 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 37 Elections

Mr. Krantz provided background on municipal elections directives from Annapolis. He said that in 2024 legislation was introduced in response to the state board of elections’ declaration that local boards do not have the authority to enter into agreements with municipalities to provide support during local

elections. He noted that the town has relied heavily on its partnership with the Harford County Board of Elections. Mr. Krantz said this proposed legislation brought into question the possibility of not continuing that partnership, meaning municipalities would have to be independent, a costly endeavor. He said that House Bill 322 allowed the partnership with local boards of elections to continue. Mr. Krantz expressed his gratitude to the state and the Harford County Board of Elections for their assistance during the town's most recent election and he was hopeful that the town could continue to work with them. In light of the recent legislation, he recommended that town code Chapter 37 Elections be amended to remove references to both the state and the county boards of elections. He said these references were codified in an "assumptive manner" based upon a long-standing partnership. Mr. Krantz said the changes should now state "a local election authority."

Mr. Krantz said the ordinance also reflects an amended deadline. He said that currently the code states that a person can declare a candidacy at any time. The amendment would be a 90-day window to file a certificate of candidacy. He elaborated that the time frame is no sooner than 135 days before the election and no later than 45 days. Mr. Krantz said this ordinance could be introduced at the town hall meeting on Tuesday with a public hearing at the second meeting in March.

Commissioner Taylor agreed with the amendments, noting that the recent actions of the state board of elections only generated and accomplished consternation. He said these amendments are necessary and it is prudent to "tighten up" the declaration window. Chair Etting agreed with Commissioner Taylor, noting that filing anytime could cause practical problems.

Commissioner Chizmar asked about section 37-6. Commissioners and Mr. Krantz agreed to change the wording of the last sentence, as follows: "If the filing date falls on a Saturday or Sunday, *the next regular business day* shall be recognized," since there are no holidays later in September. Mr. Krantz said the purpose of the 45-day window is to give the town clerk's office time to have the ballots ordered and printed and to provide a sample ballot. Mr. Krantz also changed the filing hours to 8 am to 4 pm (normal business hours) as opposed to 9 am to 7 pm.

Ms. Thompson confirmed for Commissioner Chizmar that she recommended the change in section 37-8. She said the Board of Election Judges do not have the authority to initiate lawsuits on behalf of the town so she changed this authority to the Board of Town Commissioners. Mr. Krantz also agreed to check the numbering in the ordinance.

2. Town Boundary Survey Contract

Mr. Small provided background on this contract. He said that recently the town hired a local surveyor to review the town boundaries. The surveyor identified 9 areas of concern. These areas were reviewed with the commissioners, and he noted that some of the areas are enclaves, which are not legal, while others are "accidents" of surveys. Mr. Small discussed each of the areas.

1. South Tollgate Road. Mr. Small said the town annexed three lots on Tollgate Road but the portion of the road in front of these lots also needs to be annexed into the town.

2. Tollgate Road Strip. Mr. Small said there is a 25-foot-wide strip on Tollgate Road in front of Tollgate Marketplace that was not annexed into the town.

3. North Tollgate Road. Mr. Small said half of this road belongs to the county and half belongs to the town. He said this area is about 300 ft and it is adjacent to the mall and vacant commercial properties.

4. Boulton Street. Mr. Small said this is a “complicated” area with portions of Kelly Field in the county and other portions in the town and the same goes for Boulton Street.

5. South Kelly Avenue. Mr. Small said this address is an enclave. He said the homeowner is not connected to the town’s water or sewer and this situation needs to be corrected.

6. Shamrock Road Pumping Station. Mr. Small said the pumping station is owned by the town while portions of the land “may or may not” be owned by the town.

7. Four Residential Lots on Lee Way. Mr. Small said this is a leftover parcel that was not annexed correctly. He said staff must contact the property owners to get their permission to annex portions of their property.

8. Route 24, Enclave Portion of Plumtree Run. Mr. Small said he believes this area was excluded initially to provide State Highway right-of-way, which ultimately did not happen.

9. South Atwood Road Between the Apartments and the Medical Building. Mr. Small said half of the road is in the town and half is in the county and this discrepancy should be corrected.

Mr. Small advised that the work be split into two phases, with the easier corrections done first. He said he has gotten a proposal from Frederick Ward Associates for \$36,650 to do the exhibits and descriptions of the parcels. This cost exceeds the budgeted amount of \$25,000. He noted that this proposal is a piggyback on a contract with Harford County. Mr. Small hoped to have an itemized accounting of each of the tasks by next week to share with the commissioners. Ms. Moody added that the extra \$11,000 would be a budget amendment and she advised doing the project this year rather than over two fiscal years. Mr. Small said this money would involve surveying and titling research and then the town could proceed with annexation.

Commissioner Chizmar asked about property owner permission. Ms. Thompson explained that under the law it does not matter if the property owner does not consent. She said that consent is preferable. She said it would be up to the board on how to proceed and the land could remain as-is. Mr. Small added that once the town is made aware of these properties, these annexations should proceed because of the illegality of enclaves. Mr. Small clarified for Commissioner Chizmar that the survey work will be beneficial because even if the property owner does not want to be annexed, the information is on file showing the town made the effort. Ms. Thompson added that annexation is preferable for the property owners should they want to do work on their properties and need permits. Commissioner Taylor said that it is usually easier to motivate commercial property owners as compared to residential property owners. Mr. Small informed Chair Etting that there are four residential owners for one task and four for another task. Chair Etting said it will be important to explain the benefits to the residential owners of annexation. Ms. Thompson told Commissioner Chizmar that any costs to the property owners like titles will be absorbed by the town.

Commissioner Hanley asked about using another vendor besides Frederick Ward since the cost is over budget. Mr. Small replied that the piggyback contract is a savings so going with another vendor will

probably not be less expensive. He said he also has confidence in their survey department. Mr. Small said he will inform the board of progress by the end of the week.

VI. COMMISSIONER LIAISON REPORTS

Chair Etting said the Tree Committee will hold a meeting tomorrow to discuss the tree giveaway on the opening day of the farmer's market, April 11.

Commissioner Taylor reported that the Appearance and Beautification Committee met last night to discuss the garden mart, which will take place, rain or shine, on May 8 in the armory. Commissioner Taylor said the Economic and Community Development Commission will meet this Thursday.

Commissioner Foss said the Rockfield Foundation will meet next month. She said the Downtown Alliance will meet on February 17 and the Cultural Arts Commission will meet on February 18. She added that the Cultural Arts Commission is working on maintenance of the Hearts of Harford. Ms. Robertson confirmed that the Public Works Department will install the sculpture for Alice Anne Park after improvements to the park are completed.

Commissioner Chizmar said the Planning Commission met and reviewed the Brookside Market project. Commissioners and Mr. Hopkins discussed the Scott Oldfields historic marker at that location. Mr. Small said he provided the board with the Planning Commission's annual report.

Commissioner Hanley said both the Committee for Seniors and Citizens in Need and the Historic Preservation Commission will meet on February 26.

VII. STAFFING UPDATE

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

Mr. Krantz said there are two critical positions posted on the website—the Director of Planning was posted on January 15 and the Director of Finance was posted on February 6. He reported that staff continues to interview for the Director of Planning position and has begun to receive applications for the Director of Finance position. Mr. Krantz also reported that a police officer resigned today on good terms, so staff will soon begin recruiting for another police officer.

Chief Moore discussed the records clerk position that recently opened. He said it is an important position and a records coordinator from the Aberdeen Police Department will be assisting the Bel Air Police Department part-time while recruitment takes place. He said this person will also assist in the recruitment process. Chief Moore said that he will ask for two records coordinator positions in the FY27 budget. He said he would like to promote internally for the position(s). He also noted that this assistance from the Aberdeen Police Department is a sign of the town's good relationship with other municipalities.

VIII. CALENDAR

A. Fiscal Year 2027 Tentative Budget Work Session Meetings

Commissioners agreed with the proposed dates of the budget work sessions. Chair Etting said the hearing for House Bill 239 will be on February 12 and she has registered to speak remotely on her

opposition to the bill. She added that MML supports the bill with amendments. Ms. Robertson said that the Maryland Chamber of Commerce supports the bill and MACO supports it with amendments. Commissioner Taylor said the governor's administration and MACO are working on this bill together, and he predicted that some portion of this bill will pass as opposed to last year when MACO's efforts defeated the bill. Chair Etting agreed to email her speech to the commissioners and to the house committee.

Ms. Robertson said the vesting legislation, Senate Bill 325, will have a hearing on February 17. Ms. Thompson added that the Maryland Municipal Attorneys Association is in favor of Senate Bill 325/House Bill 548 with amendments. MACO is also in support with amendments. Ms. Thompson listed MACO's proposed changes. Commissioner Taylor was alarmed that retroactive vesting was not addressed in the proposed changes. Mr. Hopkins said that Havre de Grace passed a resolution opposing the bills.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

A. Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) Review and Discussion

Mr. Hopkins said the most recent iteration of the booklet was emailed to commissioners for review. He said that once they approve it and decide on codification, the NTMP can proceed with its "backlog of complaints." After discussion, commissioners all agreed that they had not gotten this email, and Mr. Small said he would resend it.

Chair Etting proceeded with the codification deliberation. She said she preferred a more informal process where the NTMP can get direct input from people with concerns. Commissioner Taylor said he is in favor of codification. Commissioner Hanley said he had supported codifying but since then he has had two experiences with the NTMP process and now prefers the open discussion. He said the codification process would slow down communication. Commissioner Hanley asked if the Open Meetings Act process would have affected the issues with 500 E. Broadway. Commissioners and Mr. Hopkins all agreed that it would not have affected the process.

Commissioner Chizmar said he would like the NTMP to remain as a work group with a commissioner liaison in place. After discussion with Commissioner Chizmar and Chair Etting, Mr. Small agreed to ask for email addresses and phone numbers on the petition so that everyone who is for or against a proposed traffic change will be informed.

Commissioner Hanley asked about levels 2 and 3. Specifically, he read, "...unique existing condition that poses a threat to motorists or pedestrians..." He asked if this phrasing will allow the NTMP to have discretion in its decision making. Mr. Small said this section is a "catchall" for situations that the NTMP cannot anticipate and are not in the manual. Mr. Hopkins explained that this section allows for a situation where the data do not match what is apparent in an area. He used the example of the intersection of Main and Lee Streets where the visual perception is clearly dangerous but the data do not suggest improvement.

Chair Etting concluded that the board agreed to not codify the NTMP and will review the latest version of the booklet.

B. Discuss Amending Town Code Chapter 165. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations

1. Part 2. Zoning Article II. Administration and Enforcement § 165-11. Board of Town Commissioners

Mr. Small said this discussion is for sections of the code that need to be revised due to oversight or incorrect submission. He noted that the board can decide to make his suggested changes now, can set them aside for later discussion, or decide not to make the changes at all.

Ms. Thompson said this first revision is a result of the recent alcohol beverage/cannabis article. She said the liquor board attorney informed her that the town lacks the necessary code procedures to review and make recommendations concerning setback waivers. Ms. Thompson said that the setback for alcohol establishments is 300 ft from schools and places of worship. She said the revisions include the following steps. If an applicant wants to reduce that setback, the liquor board would refer the applicant to the town for a recommendation from the Board of Town Commissioners. Ms. Thompson advised that this is only a recommendation with no standards to consider. She said the request must be filed with the town clerk and then a public hearing would follow. The request would also go to the Planning Department who would notify adjacent property owners. Ms. Thompson said the board's recommendation would then be sent to the liquor board and that board would make the final determination under the liquor licensing statute. She explained that this amendment is to document that the commissioners have the power to make this recommendation.

Ms. Thompson noted that the licensee might get the reduction from the liquor board but may not get it from the zoning code. She said one decision does not trump the other, therefore the licensee would have to seek a variance in reduction to the setback. She confirmed that this variance would be decided by the Board of Appeals. She explained that the liquor board and the Board of Appeals are each subject to different criteria and standards: one regards licensing and one regards zoning. Ms. Thompson confirmed for Commissioner Taylor that the Board of Appeals should not consider the decisions of the liquor board when making their decision. Ms. Thompson added that there will be just such a consideration in six to seven months.

2. Part 2. Zoning Article VII. Development and Performance Standards §. 165-53. Performance Standards and Development Guidelines by Use

Mr. Small said this change refers to two items. First, he said that in the code jersey barriers are only prohibited in B-2A, B-3A, and B-2 so they are actually allowed in residential zones. He said this change would make jersey barriers prohibited in any zone unless permitted by the Department of Public Works and only on a temporary basis. Mr. Small said he added barbed wire to this prohibition, but pointed out that there already is barbed wire on fencing outside Self Storage in M-1. Therefore, Mr. Small said the board could decide to make this a nonconforming use or allow barbed wire in M-1. Commissioners, Mr. Small, and Mr. Hopkins discussed the need for barbed wire in town. They noted that some properties in M-1 are tucked away and easily penetrated, while Mr. Hopkins said critical infrastructure in other zones may need barbed wire. Mr. Small agreed to provide the board with more information. Commissioner Foss said barbed wire could qualify under special uses. Mr. Small added that utilities and industrial sites could be excluded from the prohibition. He said "temporary" could also be removed to allow the Public Works Director to make determinations for security. Mr. Small said he would also look into other municipalities' use of barbed wire.

For the second part of this change, Mr. Small said he would like to “marry up” the requirements under mixed-use with the requirements under shopping centers. Mr. Small read the section of code that allows the Planning Commission to waive requirements that separate uses for mixed-use. He said the Planning Commission should have the ability to waive those requirements for shopping centers as well.

3. Part 2. Zoning Article XIV. Definitions § 165-103. Purpose and § 165-104. Terms Defined.

a. Mr. Small detailed definition changes. Under section 165-104, Parking Lot, Satellite, Mr. Small asked that the word “solely” be removed to allow adjacent properties to have two uses in a parking lot.

b. Smoking Lounge. Mr. Small requested that “sale and” be removed from the definition. He said that a smoking lounge is used for smoking while the sale of tobacco products is a retail business. He noted that this definition may create issues with vape shops so he was unsure if he would proceed with this redefinition. He proposed creating two definitions, one for a smoking lounge and one for a smoke shop. Mr. Small told Commissioner Taylor that in the past, the definition has been interpreted as “either or,” which created an issue with a potential vendor who wanted to open a smoke shop only. Commissioners and Mr. Small discussed the merits of having two definitions and how the commissioners must determine what restrictions they would like to enforce. Mr. Small advised narrowing the definitions. He also told Commissioner Chizmar that a convenience store that sells tobacco products is not a tobacco shop if the majority of its income comes from other items.

c. Taverns. Mr. Small read the definition and included the phrase he would like to add: “...the general public, *which includes a physical bar of no less than six seats and where...*” He said this revised definition makes a tavern over and above a restaurant with a bar. For a tavern with entertainment, Mr. Small advised adding the following phrase: “...live entertainment are *reserved in a physical location within the establishment.*” He advised deleting “provided.” He said this change specifically defines an area with a reserved physical location for entertainment that produces crowds.

4. Part 2. Zoning Permitted Use Tables

Mr. Small said that these issues were brought to his attention by Commissioner Chizmar. Specifically, cannabis businesses are listed in performance standards under retail, but are listed in the permitted use chart under service. To match up, he said cannabis businesses will be completely under retail.

Furthermore, for mixed-use centers, Mr. Small said they were listed in the residential section and also in the retail section. Mr. Small made the change so that now mixed-use centers are shown in the service section of the performance standards. He said the goal is to ensure that mixed-use centers are in the appropriate location on the chart. Mr. Small explained for Commissioner Chizmar why it is beneficial to have mixed-use centers in B-1. He also explained why mixed-use centers are not allowed in M-1. He said that shopping centers are more appropriate in this zone because they are purely retail.

Commissioner Chizmar noted that cannabis businesses are only allowed in B-3 and B-3A, but liquor stores are also allowed in B-2, B-2A, and M-1. He was concerned that the code is not treating the establishments equally. Mr. Small said this measure is to avoid creating multiple nonconforming uses. Ms. Thompson added that the cannabis laws have not been tested and multiple nonconforming uses are not favored by the law. Commissioner Taylor said that liberalizing the cannabis law might be the direction the board will have to take but he did not want to do so until forced by the courts. Ms. Thompson said the goal is to allow nonconforming uses to gradually conform to the new version of the

code. She said wherever cannabis businesses are permitted, they must follow the same requirements as liquor stores and the commissioners can open up those businesses to other zones. Commissioner Hanley said he is not in favor of changing the code for cannabis businesses until the law dictates otherwise.

5. Part 3. Signs Article XV. Sign Regulations § 165-106. Standards by Zoning District

Mr. Small discussed the changes to freestanding signs. He revised the code to allow such signs in mixed-use centers in addition to the already-permitted shopping centers. Mr. Small said the signs are allowed as long as they are in the “project area,” which could even be a different lot.

X. STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Krantz discussed House Bill 1066 and the request for fiscal notes. He said this bill seems to indicate that a qualified electronic transmission system may collect votes in a municipal election. Mr. Krantz said the key word is “may” not “shall.” He said this proposed bill declares that voters may vote using their cell phone or computer with the ballot sent to the municipality to be scanned and counted. He said he will respond to this bill indicating no fiscal impact because the word “may” allows staff to declare that they have no intention of using such systems in an election. Mr. Krantz said the cost would be exorbitant and he prefers paper-based voting. Commissioner Taylor speculated that this bill will likely not pass.

Mr. Hopkins said this is the tenth anniversary of the tragic losses of Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey and Deputy First Class Mark Logsdon. He spoke about how this is a difficult time for him and all those in the public safety sector.

Ms. Robertson discussed the Hearts of Harford maintenance in more detail. She said this was an initiative of the Downtown Alliance with a three-year longevity of the hearts. The alliance has not been able to maintain the hearts and they have been up for much longer than three years. Ms. Robertson said the plan is to improve three hearts per year. Ms. Butrim has already contacted the original artists of the first three hearts and they have agreed to restore their artwork. Ms. Robertson said the hearts are now an important part of the town’s public art so a marine grade finish will be applied to increase their longevity.

Chief Moore described his grief over the tragedy from ten years ago and noted that he had worked with Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey for fifteen years. Chief Moore said it was a horrible loss and he will continue to recognize their sacrifices.

XI. COMMISSIONERS’ COMMENTS

Commissioner Hanley asked about recent work he saw going on at the Gateway Pumping Station. Ms. Moody explained that there is ongoing work at both the Shamrock and Gateway Pumping Stations.

Commissioner Foss said that she and Commissioner Hanley have finished their orientation. She thanked the department heads and staff and she thanked her colleagues for welcoming her.

Chair Etting recognized the anniversary of the tragic losses of Senior Deputy Patrick Dailey and Deputy First Class Mark Logsdon.

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 7:10 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)(7).

B. Topics of Discussion:

1. To Consult with Counsel to Obtain Legal Advice Amending Town Charter Article VI Town Administrator § C-602(b) and (c) and Town Code Chapter 82 Personnel § 82-3B(5).

C. Reasons for Closed-Session Discussion of Above Topics

1. 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 Foss motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:47 pm.

APPROVED: March 2, 2026

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

Signature on file _____
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk