

MINUTES
BEL AIR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TOWN HALL MEETING
FEBRUARY 17, 2026

The Board of Commissioners Town Hall Meeting was held on February 17, 2026, at 7:00 pm.

PRESENT: Commissioner Paula S. Etting, Chair
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
Charles Moore, Chief of Police
Angela Robertson, Director of Economic Development
Kevin Small, Director of Planning
Elizabeth Thompson, Town Counsel
Pamela Wockenfuss, Deputy Director of Finance
Jane Sudbrink, Recording Secretary

ABSENT: Commissioner Steven T. Chizmar

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 offered a prayer of thanks during the transformative season of Shrove Tuesday. He described the occasion as a time for celebration and community joy where people around the world will begin a season of fasting, reflection, and self-discipline. Commissioner Taylor proposed that the board, as elected officials, also consider this spirit of self-discipline in order to provide a well-balanced, well-considered, and most representative form of government to its constituents.

III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Taylor motioned to approve the agenda. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion. Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the agenda. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4-0.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Foss motioned that the minutes of the Board of Commissioners meetings held on January 27, 2026, open and closed sessions; February 2, 2026; and February 4, 2026, be approved as

submitted. Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion. Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the approval of the minutes for January 27, 2026; February 2, 2026; and February 4, 2026. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

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

Commissioner Hanley motioned that Ordinance No. 852-26, amending Bel Air Town Code, Chapter 37 Elections, be received by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

Mr. Krantz provided background on this ordinance. He said that in the fall of 2024 the State Board of Elections declared that it does not have the legal authority to enter into agreement with municipalities to lease voting equipment or provide elections support. Mr. Krantz said that emergency legislation, House Bill 322, negated this declaration. He noted that the town has enjoyed a longstanding partnership with the Harford County Board of Elections during election season and staff extends its gratitude, particularly during the most recent election in November 2025. He added that the cost of leasing voting equipment is quite expensive. In light of these circumstances, Mr. Krantz said the ordinance proposes to remove references to the State and/or the Harford County Board(s) of Elections in Chapter 37 of the town code. He said these references were codified in an assumptive manner and these changes will reflect the new partnership with the state and local boards of elections.

In addition, Mr. Krantz said the ordinance also adopts a new time frame for the deadline for filing a certificate of candidacy. It would be a 90-day window, no sooner than 135 days before and no later than 45 days before the election. Mr. Krantz said there will be a public hearing on the ordinance on Monday, March 16.

Chair Etting reflected that these changes are to codify the town’s current relationship with the local board of elections. In addition, the revised timeline allows for the necessary time to have elections materials prepared. Mr. Krantz noted that other municipalities have a shorter time frame than 90 days. He said a longer time frame is also difficult for materials preparation. Mr. Krantz confirmed for Commissioner Hanley that no later than 45 days before the election is already part of the time frame. Commissioner Taylor said this time frame is a “wise window” and makes the town competitive with surrounding municipalities.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the receipt of Ordinance 852-26. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

B. Ordinance 853-26 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 82 Personnel Section 82-3(B)(5)

Commissioner Taylor motioned that Ordinance No. 853-26, amending Bel Air Town Code, Chapter 82 Personnel Section 82-3(B)(5) be received by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion.

Commissioner Taylor said this is a procedural change. He said this ordinance will widen the pool of town officials who receive commissioner consideration before appointment to now include deputy directors. He noted that the only change to the code would be the words “and deputy directors.” He also

clarified that this change is prospective and would only apply to deputy director openings after the ordinance is adopted.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the receipt of Ordinance 853-26. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

C. Ordinance 854-26 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 165. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Part 3. Signs Article XV. Sign Regulations Section 165-106B(2)(b)[3][c] Regarding Freestanding Signs

Commissioner Foss motioned that Ordinance No. 854-26, amending Article XV (Sign Regulations) be received by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion.

Mr. Small provided background on this ordinance and the following three ordinances. He said that the Department of Planning keeps records of discrepancies in code text and conflicting provisions. He said these records are periodically reviewed and amendments are drafted to “clean up the code” and make it less confusing for the public.

Mr. Small explained that Ordinance 854-26 allows for free-standing signs in shopping centers that have several parcels. Specifically, these signs can be on any of these parcels and will not violate the billboard prohibition. Mr. Small said this ordinance aligns shopping centers and mixed-use centers.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the receipt of Ordinance 854-26. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

D. Ordinance 855-26 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 165. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Part 2. Zoning Article III. Establishment and Regulation of Zoning Districts Section 165-35. Permitted Use Tables

Commissioner Hanley motioned that Ordinance No. 855-26, amending Attachment 1 (Permitted Use Tables) be received by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion.

Mr. Small said this ordinance makes corrections regarding the location of cannabis businesses in the permitted use chart. The changes now correspond to the type of use in Article VII of the code. In addition, Mr. Small said that under performance standards, cannabis businesses are moved from service to retail. He said another change is that mixed-use centers are now located in both residential service and retail in the permitted use charts as already detailed in town code. He confirmed for Commissioner Taylor that cannabis businesses were not in the code prior to the legalization of marijuana in Maryland.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the receipt of Ordinance 855-26. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

E. Ordinance 856-26 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 165. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Part 2. Zoning Article VII. Development and Performance Standards Section 165-53. Performance Standards and Development Guidelines by Use, Amending Guidelines in Section 165-53B(2)(b) and Adding Guidelines in Section 165-53H(2)(d)

Commissioner Taylor motioned that Ordinance No. 856-26, amending Article VII (Performance Standards and Development Guidelines) be received by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion.

Mr. Small said this ordinance expands the prohibition of jersey barriers and barbed wire to all zones. He said that exceptions to this prohibition will be managed by the director of public works who will decide if the exception lasts for six months or is permanent. Ms. Thompson confirmed for Commissioner Taylor that if the director denies the use of jersey barriers or barbed wire this decision can be appealed through the Board of Appeals process. Mr. Small said criteria have been added to the ordinance for the director to make a determination on the exception.

Mr. Small added that allowances have also been included to enable the Planning Commission to waive lot line setbacks, landscape buffers, and building restrictions with shopping centers. These allowances are already in place for mixed-use centers.

Commissioner Hanley mentioned the barbed wire on fencing around Chavis Septic Services and Corbin Fuel on Ellendale Street. Mr. Small explained that if these businesses want to add or change the barbed wire fencing, the permit process would not be complicated. Commissioner Taylor said these are now nonconforming uses, but he still supported the ordinance. Commissioners and Mr. Small discussed how these nonconforming uses could be ended and how they could also be continued with permission from the director of public works.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the receipt of Ordinance 856-26. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

F. Ordinance 857-26 Amending Bel Air Town Code Chapter 165. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations Part 2. Zoning Article II. Administration and Enforcement § 165-11. Board of Town Commissioners to Add a Reference to Maryland Code, Alcoholic Beverages and Cannabis § 22-1602 Regarding Waivers and Related Procedures and Notices

Commissioner Foss motioned that Ordinance No. 857-26, amending Article II (Administration and Enforcement) be received by the Board of Town Commissioners. Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion.

Mr. Small said this change allows for provision of authority and defines the process for the Board of Town Commissioners to make a recommendation to the liquor board regarding setback waivers. He said the liquor board is required to seek a recommendation from the Board of Town Commissioners when a waiver is requested of the liquor board. Ms. Thompson added that a resident intends to seek just such a setback waiver in the near future.

Mr. Krantz asked for a vote on the receipt of Ordinance 857-26. Ayes: Foss, Taylor, Hanley, Etting. Nays: None. Motion carried 4–0.

VII. PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Historical Society of Harford County will host a lecture on the Ma & Pa Railroad on February 21 titled The Ma & Pa Comes to Harford at its headquarters on 143 N. Main Street. Volunteer, Walt Holloway, will lead the lecture. The Record Riot! will be on February 22 at the armory. The record-buying event is hosted by Record Riot in association with REB Records. The next Red Cross Blood Drive will be on February 26 at the armory. The Cultural Arts Commission will meet on February 18. The Committee for Seniors and Citizens in Need will meet on February 26. The Historic Preservation Commission will meet on February 26. The Board of Town Commissioners will meet on February 23 and March 2.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There was no public comment.

IX. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Hanley discussed House Bill 235/Senate Bill 47, the Neighborhood Business Development Program. He said the hearings revealed that the removal of local jurisdictions having approval authority is in response to the lack of feedback from local authorities during the 45-day window. Commissioner Hanley said there was tremendous pushback to this removal of authority, so now discussion has moved to a two-week time period. Chair Etting said she waited an hour and forty-five minutes to testify before she was "kicked out." She suspected there were too many people who wanted to testify. Chair Etting said she will send her comments in writing to the Economic Matters Committee, the Senate group, MML, and the county's delegation. She noted that county executive, Bob Cassilly, also spoke against the bill.

Chair Etting said she attended a listening session sponsored by the Army Alliance regarding the importance of the continued funding and growth of Aberdeen Proving Ground. She said that Senator Alsobrooks and County Executive Cassilly were in attendance as well.

Chair Etting said the board received a petition. She noted that at least seven out of the ten petitioners were not town residents and the petition was not signed. She said the petition represents a national movement to cut back on quality-of-life policing methods. Chair Etting said the board is not in favor of this movement and will not be joining the cause.

Commissioner Foss expressed her condolences for the death of Jeffrey Close's brother, Tommy. She also said that Emmanuel Episcopal Church opens its doors monthly on certain Sundays to serve breakfast to the public. In addition, Commissioner Foss said that they serve fellowship dinners to the public.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hanley motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:38 pm.

APPROVED: March 2, 2026

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

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk