

**MINUTES
BEL AIR BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION MEETING
FEBRUARY 23, 2026**

The Board of Commissioners Work Session Meeting was held on February 23, 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
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 business items to report.

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

A. Presentation

1. Recognition of Lt. Robert Pfarr on his Retirement from the Bel Air Police Department

Chief Moore said there will be a proclamation to recognize Lieutenant Pfarr’s twenty-eight years of service with the Police Department.

B. New Business

1. Town Boundary Annexation Contract

Mr. Small said he has an updated quote from Frederick Ward Associates, with the cost now at \$42,500. He said this is an increase from the budgeted amount of \$25,000. Ms. Moody confirmed there is money in the budget to cover the increase. Mr. Small detailed what the contract would cover, including property surveys, research into the history of these properties, plats, and descriptions. He said that all of these details are required by the state for annexation. Mr. Small explained that some of the properties will require more work than others. He said this contract was not bid out, but is a piggyback on a contract with Harford County. He then explained for Commissioner Hanley that the four less-complicated properties will be the first phase to be done this summer while the four more complicated properties will be completed in the fall.

Ms. Moody and Mr. Small explained for Commissioner Chizmar that it is prudent to encumber the cost this fiscal year rather than wait a year when the budget is less certain.

2. Alice Anne Park Improvement Contract

Mr. Small said this contract will be with GameTime/Omnia. He reported that the contract will cover the cost for fitness stations at the park, including a rubberized surface and edging, for a total of \$117,891.95. Mr. Small said that a separate contract will cover the asphalt for the basketball court, a trail pathway from the park to Lester Way, an AED unit, and landscaping. Mr. Small said the landscaping costs will be covered by fee in lieu for forest conservation while the final costs for the asphalt and the pathway should be the difference between the above contract and the budgeted amount for this project of \$156,000. Mr. Small and Mr. Kline confirmed for Chair Etting that the rubberized surfaces in the other town parks have not shown any wear. Mr. Small explained for Commissioner Chizmar how the Omnia contract has increased since the initial quote last summer. He added that Upper Chesapeake owes the town \$10,000 in public amenity funds and is interested in contributing to the park's improvements. He said the Drescher Foundation and the Greater Bel Air Community Foundation have also contributed financially to the park.

3. Verizon Wireless Contract

Mr. Krantz said the town issues cellular devices to town employees. He noted how these cell phones are essential to the Police Department and are critical to day-to-day communication and emergencies. He said the town has obtained competitively bid pricing using a general services, federal supply service contract for cellular service awarded to Verizon. Mr. Krantz said the contract would cover 130 units at a cost of \$75,382. He said that staff will request that the board authorize that it is an "amount not exceed..." He explained that the town has 103 active lines of service in use by every department. The inclusion of this clause in the contract allows the town to add more lines of service if needed. He noted that this contract is very similar to the 2024 contract. Mr. Krantz explained for Chair Etting that the previous contract was for \$72,483. Ms. Moody said the cost is still \$39.99 per line but the maximum number of lines has changed from 125 to 130.

4. Reappointment to the Cultural Arts Commission

Chair Etting said this reappointment would be discussed in closed session.

C. Unfinished Business

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

Mr. Krantz said this ordinance and the following ones were thoroughly discussed at the last town hall meeting but he listed them on tonight's agenda for transparency. He said they are also posted on the town's legislation page on the website.

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

Commissioner Foss expressed her reservations about this ordinance. She said that the board is in charge of policy administration and this ordinance shifts the board to operational management. Commissioner Foss said it is the town administrator's duty to oversee the hiring of deputy directors who are accountable to the directors not the board. She said this ordinance is another layer of approval that is not necessary. She added that the board does not need to be involved in direct hiring. Commissioner Foss said she does not want to give the impression of overreach by the board, and accountability becomes diluted when the board is involved in the hiring of deputy directors. Commissioner Foss said the board's job is to govern not manage.

Commissioner Taylor said he appreciated Commissioner Foss's views. He said he believes that it is wise to expand the board's current process in personnel selection. He noted that he is not attempting to change the actual process, rather the number of officials will be changed by adding the deputy directors. He said it is not his goal to "micromanage the HR process."

3. 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

There was no discussion on this ordinance.

4. 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

There was no discussion on this ordinance.

5. 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 Hanley asked if people would be penalized if they unknowingly installed barbed wire. Mr. Small said the Planning Department responds to complaints. He said the department would review the situation and the director of public works would make a final determination. Mr. Small said a fence permit would then be issued that would account for the barbed wire. Commissioner Hanley favored allowing barbed wire in industrial zones. Commissioner Taylor noted that there are some nonindustrial uses in M-1 that would be adverse to barbed wire and it is not a major hindrance to get a permit.

Commissioners, Mr. Small, and Mr. Kline discussed the importance of barbed wire around sensitive uses, including the town's own vehicle fleet and Maryland American Water systems.

6. 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

There was no discussion on this ordinance.

VI. COMMISSIONER LIAISON REPORTS

Chair Etting said the Tree Committee discussed the tree giveaway for Arbor Day. She noted that this year members will be giving out flyers with QR codes on how to properly plant and care for the new trees. She said the Majors Choice Oak was recently evaluated and one of its branches may have to be cabled. The tree will also be fertilized. Mr. Small added that the town achieved Tree City USA status once again.

Commissioner Taylor said the Economic and Community Development Commission met and elected Gilbert Kennedy as chair and Todd Boyle as vice chair.

Commissioner Hanley said the Historic Preservation Commission did not meet this month. The Committee for Seniors and Citizens in Need will meet this Thursday.

Commissioner Foss said the Downtown Alliance met and have 400 people signed up for the Chocolate, Brew, & Wine Tour. She said that Jennie Erhard is serving as a mentor for a person in her role in a town on the Eastern Shore. The BBQ Bash will have the MABA State Cup championship this year. Commissioner Foss said the Cultural Arts Commission reviewed its rules and regulations. Members would like to change the rules for a quorum. They would like the rules to dictate that the majority of commission attendees is a quorum. She also mentioned the student art show at the library in May.

Commissioner Chizmar said there are no Board of Appeals meetings in February or March. Mr. Small said the Planning Commission will meet next week to discuss MacPhail Crossing and three submissions from the Harford Mall project.

VII. STAFFING UPDATE

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

Mr. Krantz said that he has recently posted a position for a full-time police recruit, which would be a lateral position or for someone interested in pursuing a career in policing. He said he has also posted a position for a full-time police dispatcher.

VIII. CALENDAR

Chair Etting said that the May 26 work session conflicts with a candidates forum and asked the board and staff to consider a reschedule.

IX. MISCELLANEOUS

No business items were discussed.

X. STAFF COMMENTS

Ms. Robertson said the theme for the Cultural Arts Commission's student art show at the library is America 250. She said the commission will hold a meet-and-greet on May 13 and she invited the commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Foss said the historical society applied for a grant to install eight panels along Gordon Street. She said the panels will be illustrated with renderings of the Declaration of Independence through a student art contest. The reading of the panels would be on July 9.

XI. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Chair Etting thanked the Public Works Department for their work during the recent snowstorm. Mr. Kline expressed his pride and appreciation for the refuse department, which is also responsible for shoveling the sidewalks.

Commissioner Hanley said that on Saturday morning he met with Gunpowder United Mountain Bikers Organization (GUMBO) regarding installation of a progressive jump line/pump track near the Ma & Pa Trail. He said it is a county project that would greatly benefit the town. Mr. Kline recommended that he speak with Waqar Shah who also has great interest in a pump park.

Commissioner Hanley said he is working on a draft resolution to retain the courthouse in its current location. He said the Downtown Alliance will also submit a letter of opposition to the relocation of the courthouse. He said that he will speak on the subject at Harford Night in Annapolis. Commissioner Hanley noted that delegate Steve Johnson also supports keeping the courthouse at its current location with a satellite office on Route 40. Chair Etting said she would like to keep the courthouse at its current location and said a satellite office on Route 40 would help grow businesses in that area as well as serve the local residents. She noted that the proposed location for the new courthouse resulted in a \$76,000 loss in tax revenue for the town. She also questioned the walkability of the location and its parking.

Commissioner Taylor said the current plan does not benefit Route 40 residents and businesses and is harmful to the town. Mr. Hopkins explained to Commissioner Chizmar how he is working with Commissioner Hanley to draft this resolution with support from local businesses and nonprofits in town as well as along the Route 40 corridor. Mr. Hopkins described his tour through the current courthouse and said the district court portion of the building suffers from a lack of safety and security as well as HVAC concerns.

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 6:10 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)(1).

B. Topics of Discussion:

- 1. To Discuss the Appointment of Officials to the Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees**
- 2. To Discuss the Appointment of the Director of Planning and Zoning**

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 personnel matters could compromise applicants' privacy rights**

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Chizmar motioned to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hanley seconded the motion. All in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:22 pm.

APPROVED: March 17, 2026

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

Signature on file
Michael L. Krantz, Town Clerk