

**Public Business Meeting
Minutes**

Thursday, May 1, 2025 - 5:00 PM

*Allegany County Office Building, 701 Kelly Road, Allegany Room 100
Cumberland, Maryland 21502*

WE ASK THOSE CITIZENS WISHING TO ADDRESS THE BOARD TO REGISTER ON THE SIGN-UP SHEET AND CONDENSE THEIR COMMENTS TO FIVE MINUTES OR LESS. THIS WILL ALLOW AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EVERYONE WISHING TO COME FORWARD TO HAVE A CHANCE TO SPEAK. WE WILL CONDUCT OUR MEETING IN AN ORDERLY FASHION AND ASK THAT EVERYONE WISHING TO SPEAK FIRST BE RECOGNIZED BY THE PRESIDENT, COME TO THE MICROPHONE, AND GIVE HIS OR HER NAME AND ADDRESS PRIOR TO THEIR COMMENTS.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those in attendance.

2. Call to Order & Roll Call

The regular meeting of the County Commissioners of Allegany County was held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room, Allegany Room 100, 701 Kelly Road, Cumberland, at 05:00 PM on 5/1/2025. Present: County Commissioner Creade V. Brodie, Jr., County Commissioner William R. Atkinson, County Commission President David J. Caporale, County Administrator Jason Bennett, County Attorney Lee Beeman.

3. Approval of Agenda

Upon Motion made by County Commissioner Creade V. Brodie, Jr., seconded by County Commissioner William R. Atkinson, and duly carried, the Agenda for this public business meeting was approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

4. Statement of Closed Meeting

A. Statement Regarding the Closed Session Held on Thursday, April 17, 2025 at 3:30PM

Attorney Beeman read a statement regarding the closed session. A copy of this statement is attached to the agenda packet.

5. Approval of Previous Meetings Minutes

Upon Motion made by County Commissioner William R. Atkinson, seconded by County Commissioner Creade V. Brodie, Jr., and duly carried, the Minutes from the previous public business meeting were approved by the Board of County Commissioners.

6. Presentations

A. FY 2026 Preliminary Budget - Jason Bennett, CPA, County Administrator

Mr. Bennett presented the preliminary budget to the public and the Commissioners, which was made part of the agenda packet. The preliminary budget includes a 3.2% income tax rate, and a \$.02 property tax increase. In two weeks there will be a public hearing on tonight's presentation where the public can comment. The budget adoption is scheduled for May 29th. Mr. Bennett thanked Pam Diaz and the Finance department for all their work on the budget. He also thanked Kati Kenney for putting together the presentation.

- B. FY 2026 Allegany County Utility Rate Presentation - **Adam Patterson, P.E., Director of Public Works**
The Allegany County Public Works Utility Division met with the Allegany County Sanitary Commission on April 14, 2025 to discuss the FY 2026 rates for the Allegany County water and sanitary districts. The Sanitary Commission approved the recommended rates at this meeting. Mr. Patterson presented the recommendations, which can be found attached to the agenda packet, to the Commissioners for their review and consideration. He will be back next meeting to present a final version and request for approval. Mr. Patterson also thanked Brynn Laird for all of her hard work and efforts on this.

7. Public Hearing

- A. Road Opening Petition for an Unnamed Alley Adjacent to Gramlich Road in LaVale - **T. Lee Beeman, Jr., County Attorney**

This petition was filed by Attorney Jayci Duncan on behalf of her clients James and Stephanie Maddy. They are looking to open for the purpose of closing a portion of an unnamed alley between Gramlich Rd and Henry Dr. Public Works reviewed the petition and has identified a number of easements that will be necessary if the Commissioners approve the closing of this alley. The information was forwarded to Attorney Duncan, and at this point they are working to obtain utility easements from the utility companies, but have not done so as of present time. Public Works recommendation is for the Commissioners to hold off on approving this road opening.

Attorney Beeman opened the public hearing and asked if there were any members of the public that wish to discuss or comment on this road opening. Seeing none, the public hearing was closed. Attorney Beeman advised the Commissioners that no action is needed for the public hearing, and recommended not taking action until more information is brought forward.

- B. Proposed Real Property Tax Rate Increase for FY 2026 - **Jason Bennett, CPA, County Administrator**
Before Mr. Bennett could open the public hearing, Commissioner Caporale proposed removing the item, and using further fund balance to make up the lost proposed revenue. He recommended pulling the potential property tax increase. The Commissioners decided at a previous work session to build the preliminary budget using a +\$.02 property tax rate for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Bennett said this is an advertised public hearing for the proposed tax rate increase, and therefore, asked if there was anyone in attendance who would like to speak on the matter. There was none.

Mr. Bennett then advised the Commissioners that without the proposed increase, the County would lose \$1,080,000. The fund balance mentioned during the preliminary budget hearing will now go from \$1.8 million to about \$2.9 million. Mr. Bennett cautioned the Commissioners that this amount may be able to be paid back next year, if the State makes no changes to the disparity grant formula. However, there is always a chance the State takes the disparity grant away, and if that happens, the Commissioners will have to make some additional changes next year.

President Caporale said that he felt strongly about having no increase in the property tax rate, and therefore, would like to amend the proposed increase to the property tax rate from \$0.02 to zero.

Motion: Amend, By: Creade V. Brodie, Jr., Seconded: William R. Atkinson. Yes: Creade V. Brodie, Jr., William R. Atkinson, David J. Caporale. No: None. Abstain: None.

8. Action Agenda & Public Comment

A. Acceptance of Priorities for ARC Funding of FY 2026 Projects - **David Nedved, Community Development Representative**

Each year the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) provides funding for Area Development projects. These are investments in the Appalachian Region, in areas such as business development, education and job training, telecommunications, infrastructure, community development, housing, and transportation. These projects create new jobs; improve local water and sewer systems; increase school readiness; and expand access to health care. Area Development Projects have to be consistent with ARC Goals and Objectives and Strategies. The project should be able to demonstrate measurable outcomes and/or economic impact.

For Federal Fiscal Year 2026, 1.7 million dollars is available for these projects in Allegany County, MD. ARC currently classifies Allegany County as At-Risk. This means, in Allegany County, ARC is currently providing a 70% match for Area Development projects. Matching Funds for projects must be in place and committed at the time of application to ARC.

Allegany County has to have the projects ranked, approved, and submitted to Tri-County Council for Western Maryland by May 16th, 2025. Sixteen Area Development projects have been proposed, asking for \$3.7 million dollars in total. They can't all be funded, which is one of the reasons why these projects are ranked in priority. The Commissioners can change priorities from the staff's recommendations. The staff's proposed ranking and the project's requested amounts are attached to the agenda packet.

Mr. Bennett asked if this could be discussed at the next work session where the Commissioners can discuss and change rankings if they wish, then present it at the following public meeting for approval. Mr. Bennett asked Mr. Nedved to confirm that the old Allegany High School project is funded through a different pot of ARC funding. It is.

No one signed up to speak on this agenda item.

Motion: Table, By: William R. Atkinson, Seconded: David J. Caporale. Yes: Creade V. Brodie, Jr., William R. Atkinson, David J. Caporale. No: None. Abstain: None.

9. Consent Agenda & Public Comment

Motion: Approve, By: Creade V. Brodie, Jr., Seconded: William R. Atkinson. Yes: Creade V. Brodie, Jr., William R. Atkinson, David J. Caporale. No: None. Abstain: None.

A. Community Event Promotion Request from the Western Maryland Jaycees for the Wing Off and Music Festival in the amount of \$1,500

This event will be held Saturday, June 21, 2025 at the Fairgrounds. No one signed up to speak on this agenda item.

B. Community Event Promotion Request from the Frostburg Elks for the Annual Derby Day Coaster Race in the amount of \$1,500

This event will be held Friday, July 4, 2025, with a rain date of July 5th, on Main St. in Frostburg. No one signed up to speak on this agenda item.

C. Fairgrounds Use Agreement with Rock the Mountains

This is a music and camping event which will take place July 25-27, 2025. The rental fee is \$3,500, with additional revenue based on the number of campers. No one signed up to speak on this agenda item.

D. Reappointment of Jay George to the LaVale Sanitary Commission

This will give Mr. George another term that will end May 1, 2031. No one signed up to speak on this agenda item.

10. General Public Comment

Constituents – In order of sign-up sheet:

- Ed Taylor, Jr. of 400 S Allegany St in Cumberland - Acting in the capacity as President of the Cumberland Historic Cemetery Organization, Mr. Taylor presented concerns about his organization not being included in the Allegany County Destination Guide and in the pamphlet area within the Allegany County Library System.
- Jeremiah Mudge of 203 Fairfax St in Cumberland - Representing the Allegany County Republican Alliance, spoke about the upcoming 250th anniversary of America. Asked the Commissioners to support their efforts and form a county-wide America 250 commission, and volunteered himself to serve on said commission.
- Michael Mudge of 101 Oak St in Cumberland - Talked about the county's celebration of the nation's bicentennial in 1975 and the commission they formed back then, and gave examples of some of the events and activities put on by the commission.
- Peggy Keene of 309 Skyview Dr in LaVale - Has concerns with a building contractor who is building houses on Skyview Dr.

11. Reports

A. County Administrator

Had no further comments to add at this evening's meeting.

B. County Attorney

Had no further comments to add at this evening's meeting.

12. Commissioner Comments

- Commissioner Atkinson - Talked about the luncheon we had for the 2nd Annual Positive People Awards. Thanked the staff who helped put the lunch together.
- Commissioner Brodie - Thanked everyone who worked on the budget, and said it has been a very trying time. Also, wished Trooper Wilson, who was hit on I68 a few days prior, a speedy recovery.
- Commissioner Caporale - Wished WCBC a Happy 50th Anniversary.

13. Reminders/Upcoming Meetings

A. NEXT MEETING - Thursday, May 15, 2025, 5:00 PM

14. Adjournment

There being no further business to come to the attention of the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 06:25 PM.