

**Critical Area Commission
Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays**

**October 22, 2025
Project Committee Minutes**

Committee Members in Attendance: *Roberson (Co-Chair), Bland, Bradford, Gost, Grant, R. Hance, Morgan, Palma, Roche*

Guests: Christi Bishop, Paul Sun, Philip Rhodes, Kyle Mundy, Bethann Laughman, Bharath Kortagere, Abdul Saadu, Bryan A., Stacy Clements, Amanda Wagoner, Neil Murphy, Marc Juba, Claire Fishman

1. Call to Order and Quorum Verification

- Commissioner Roberson read the standard statement for virtual meetings, noting that the meeting was being streamed live to the public and that captioned minutes would be made available on the Commission's website.
- Jennifer Esposito opened the meeting with a roll call and noted there was a quorum. She also noted that the meeting was being recorded.

2. Approval of September 17, 2025 Minutes

- Motion to Approve: Commissioner Palma
- Second: Commissioner Bradford
- Vote: All voted in favor of approving. The minutes were approved.

3. VOTE – APPROVAL REQUESTED: Maryland Department of General Services – Maryland State Police Barrack J Communication Room and Garage Redevelopment
Presenter: Kathryn Durant. Recommend approval with conditions.

Ms. Durant presented for vote in accordance with the staff report, the contents of which are incorporated into and made part of the minutes. Maryland Department of General Services is seeking approval for the redevelopment of a communication room and garage located at a Maryland State Police Barrack in Annapolis.

Discussion:

Commissioner Roberson noted that the announcement was posted in the Baltimore Sun, not the Capital Gazette (an Annapolis publication). Bethann Laughman (DGS) stated it was posted in the Baltimore Sun group, but was published in the Capital Gazette.

Chair Fisher commented on the stormwater management plans, noting the trees that are slated for removal are very large and well-established, and probably provide a lot of stormwater management. He wanted to know if any other plans had been considered that would have eliminated the need to remove the trees such as a green roof or bioswales? Ms. Laughmann explained that underground utilities limited options for bioswales, and that a green roof would not work due to the use of the roof for HVAC and antennas. Chair Fisher asked whether there was ever credit given for use of existing sheet flow through forest or trees. Commissioner Roberson indicated she would follow-up with someone from MDE on that question,

Commissioner R. Hance referred to the staff report which listed planting plans, with several non-native invasive species listed, and asked why there were not native trees being suggested. Ms. Durant replied that she had the same concerns and had talked to DGS about it. They came back with a new list of native plantings. She stated that the staff

report had been amended to reflect native tree plantings, and that she would send it to the Commission.

VOTE:

- Motion to approve: Commissioner Grant
- Second: Commissioner Gost
- **Motion passed unanimously.**

4. VOTE – APPROVAL REQUESTED: Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) – National Harbor Public Safety Building and Parking Lot Development

Presenter: Jonathan Coplin

Mr. Coplin presented for vote in accordance with the staff report, the contents of which are incorporated into and made part of the minutes. The Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) is seeking conditional approval for the development of a two-story public safety building and associated parking lot in Oxon Hill.

Discussion:

Chair Fisher asked about public access, noting its proximity to a public trail along the shoreline, and was wondering if they considered further public walkways. He also asked if there was any discussion of potential sharing the existing parking to reduce the impervious surface on the site. Bryan A. (consultant) responded that they did, but noted the 8–10-foot grade difference between the path and the parking lot that would have made it difficult. In addition, the county police do not want people walking through their facility into a road in front of the building. Paul Sun (Land Action specialist with MNCPPC) added some details about the project. He mentioned that there is access in the back of the lot, but to extend it they would be required to meet ADA requirements, which would not be feasible. He mentioned also that the program was developed by the County police department based on their needs, and conceded that the project could have been presented to CAC at an earlier time to address some of these concerns. Chair Fisher said that early conversation is always welcome.

Commissioner Roberson commented it's worth mentioning and highlighting the equity considerations associated with the project. Will be taking notes to put on Maryland Department of Environment's radar.

VOTE:

Motion to approve with condition: Commissioner Grant

Second: Commissioner Bradford

Motion passed unanimously.

5. VOTE – St. Mary's County Recreation and Parks – Shannon Farm Public Trail

Presenter: Kathryn Hayden

Ms. Hayden presented for vote in accordance with the staff report, the contents of which are incorporated into and made part of the minutes. St. Mary's County is seeking

conditional approval to construct a new public trail and Shannon Farm Park in Lexington Park.

Discussion:

Commissioner R. Hance thanked Ms. Hayden and guests for the presentation and thanked them for taking into consideration many of the suggestions that were raised when the project was initially introduced for comments. She mentioned she had a couple of follow-up questions. In the staff report there is an overall plan that includes a living shoreline and breakwaters. Is that being considered for approval? Ms. Christi Bishop responded that she's referring to the concept plan based on the master plan for the entire project. The current phase is only the parking lot and the route to the beach.

Commissioner Roberson asked for details about the number of parking spaces proposed and how that number was determined. Ms. Bishop replied that just south of that park is another very popular park, Elms Beach, and that park fills up on a regular basis. This park is going to end up being next in the lineup. As Elm's beaches overflow for Point Lookout, it kind of just steadily goes up. Phil Rhodes added that the proposed number of spaces for the new lot is 84, of which 4 are ADA accessible.

Chair Fisher asked for clarification on the proposed trail to the beach, noting that a 10-foot trail with 8-foot shoulders on each side would amount to a 26-foot wide trail, and wondering if that was what was needed. Ms. Kyle Mundy (AMT) clarified that calling the shoulders 8-feet was a bit misleading. The actual design is for a standard two-foot shoulder, which is common for trail design. And especially since there will be occasional, vehicular use for maintenance and emergency access, they wanted to provide people a place to be able to step off the trail if a car was coming. The remainder of the land is just tying into the existing landscape. They're using a 3:1 slope which is steep. Towards the parking lot especially there are a lot of steep grades, and to make it ADA accessible there were some intensive grading studies to get there. This was the minimum impact necessary to keep the trail ADA compliant and minimize impact. Chair Fisher asked what the maximum grade was. Mr. Mundy responded the grade is 4.85 for ADA. Chair Fisher asked if it was possible to reduce the LOD and Mr. Mundy responded they made the LOD as narrow as possible. He added that the trail had to meet the elevation of the boardwalk so there will be no excavating. Mr. Phil Rhodes said there are three places for stormwater management. In the Critical Area there are nonroof top disconnects.

Commissioner Hance asked for more details about the maintenance needs of the project. Ms. Mundy stated the shoulders would be planted with a native seed mix and will not require mowing or maintenance. Larger picture is when access is needed for the future, for example a pickup truck that would be able to do trash removal from picnic areas. Commissioner Hance said it seemed the non-Critical Area portions of the trail that will be planted with grass seems like they could benefit from the seed mixes instead of grass.

Commissioner Rosa Hance asked whether a portion of the trail in the Critical Area will not have grass along the trail, but a native seed mix, and if the portion of the trail that is not in the Critical Area will have bioswales. Phil Rhodes clarified that the project is not using bioswales, but there will be grass swales outside the Critical Area. Commissioner Rosa Hance said the

project may benefit and the FIDS may benefit with a native seed mix. Kathryn Hayden said because the buffer is already forested, that is why they need to plant offsite. The FIDS impacts are for the interior lost, and there will be a 30 foot or greater gap in the canopy, so the project needs to create FIDS habitat. She said they cannot count the replanting for some of the areas along the trail, but can count it as understory mitigation by replanting some areas with more FIDS conducive species outside the Critical Area.

Commissioner Rosa Hance again stressed the importance of avoiding the introduction of grass species in forest areas. Especially for small scale raptors. She wanted to confirm that this project is not double counting for the Snow Hill project that was already approved by the Commission. Christi Bishop stated that this project planting is not double counting on the Snow Hill, but in addition to that planting.

VOTE:

Commissioner Roberson asked for a motion to approve, and after a motion from Commissioner Bradford, Commissioner Grant seconded the motion.

Commissioner R. Hance asked if the condition for approval could be amended to include planting dates as well as the recommendation to include native plants to the maximum extent possible.

Motion to amend condition of approval: Commissioner Gost

Second: Commissioner Grant

Amendment: Condition 2 was amended to read "Prior to the start of construction, St. Mary's County shall submit to Commission staff the signed planting agreement that includes the planting dates and supports native plantings on site to the maximum extent practicable." **Motion to amend passed.**

Motion to Approve with amended conditions: Commissioner Gost

Second: Commissioner Grant

Motion passed unanimously.

Next Project Committee meeting on December 3, 2025.