



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

6611 Kenilworth Avenue • Riverdale, Maryland 20737

Commission Meeting
Open Session Minutes
July 16, 2025

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission met in a hybrid format in-person at the Prince George's Parks and Recreation Administration Building in Riverdale, MD and via videoconference. The meeting was broadcast by the Department of Parks and Recreation, Prince George's County.

PRESENT

Prince George's County Commissioners

Darryl Barnes, Chairman
Manuel Geraldo
A. Shuanise Washington

Montgomery County Commissioners

Artie Harris, Vice-Chair
Shawn Bartley
James Hedrick
Mitra Pedoeem

NOT PRESENT

Dorothy Bailey

Josh Linden

Chairman Barnes called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Item 1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- a) Approval of the July 16, 2025 Commission meeting Agenda

Chairman Barnes noted changes posted in the Amended Agenda, transmitted on Monday, July 14, 2025.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve the June 18, 2025 amended meeting agenda

Seconded by Commissioner Vice Chair Harris

7 approved the item

Item 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a) Approval of Commission Minutes – Open Session
Regular Meeting: June 18, 2025

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve the June 18, 2025 minutes

Seconded by Vice Chair Harris

4 approved the item

3 abstained (Barnes, Bartley, Hedrick)

2 absent (Bailey, Linden)

Item 3. GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a) Bereaved Parents' Month
b) August – Commission in Recess – NO MEETING
c) Upcoming Labor Day Holiday (September 1)
d) Upcoming Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15)

Item 4. COMMITTEE/BOARD REPORTS

- a) Employees' Retirement System Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes from June 3, 2025 (for Information Only)

Item 5. CLOSED SESSION

Pursuant to the Maryland General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, section 3-305(b)(9) a closed session is proposed to conduct collective bargaining negotiations or consider matters that relate to the negotiations.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to enter closed session
Seconded by Vice Chair Harris
7 approved the motion

Commissioners entered closed session at 10:15 a.m. Open session resumed at 10:29 a.m. Chairman Barnes said during closed session, Acting Executive Director Spencer briefed Commissioners on the status of negotiations with the Municipal and County Government Employees' Organization collective bargaining unit.

Item 6. ACTION/PRESENTATION ITEMS

- a) Amendments to the M-NCPPC Practice 1-40 Organization and Functions of the Office of the General Counsel and M-NCPPC Practice 2-24, Ethics, Pertaining to Pro Bono Representation (Aniton/Beckham)

Deputy General Counsel Aniton requested approval for the proposed amendments. He shared a presentation included in the packet summarizing the changes, and then shared the specific amendments to the practices, adding duties and functions of a compliance practice team; and modifying provisions, compliance and guidance for attorneys in the Office of the General Counsel to provide pro bono legal services.

Mr. Aniton said changes to the ethics policy are limited to the section defining Non-Commission Employment, to state such employment does not include OGC attorneys providing pro-bono work, essentially making such work pre-approved. The Office of the General Counsel will provide oversight to ensure there are no conflicts of interest. He stressed that this provision only applies to lawyers working for the Office of the General Counsel, and other attorneys employed by the M-NCPPC who work outside the OGC are not covered by these amendments.

Commissioner Bartlett asked if the agency's lawyers would be helping with all areas of law, or would they be precluded from helping citizens in certain areas of law. Mr. Aniton replied the policy defines eight different law practice areas and does specifically exclude certain areas of the law (e.g., criminal law) to minimize the opportunity for conflict. He also said the framework for the pro bono work will be in the form of clinics and referral services, where the attorney would present or assist for a pre-defined and limited time.

Commission Pedoeem asked if pro bono work would be done outside the employee's regular work program. General Counsel Borden replied that the provision will allow OGC attorneys up to 10 hours of administrative leave annually to perform pro bono work during the workday. She added the policy was reviewed and approved by the office of the Inspector General and is an effort also supported by Maryland courts and is not seen as an abuse of

public resources and public service. Commissioner Geraldo agreed, noting the State of Maryland and the American Bar Association support this. This provides a vehicle for our attorneys to meet their pro-bono obligations. It's a win-win for the agency; it presents the M-NCPPC in a positive light to the public and is an opportunity to provide a service to community.

Commissioner Pedoeem said while she supports the provision overall, she asked if other aspects of Commission work or employees would be eligible for administrative leave for volunteer work. Ms. Borden said the Maryland Bar's code of conduct requires pro bono service. Mr. Aniton added, professionally, it is akin to a Planner needing to attend professional conferences or training, for which the M-NCPPC allots administrative leave. Commissioner Pedoeem asked if these hours could then be classified as training/professional development to avoid the appearance that one type of employee is being supported for volunteer work over others.

Vice Chair Harris and Chairman Barnes requested monitoring and the submission of annual reports to the Commission. Mr. Aniton said he will be coordinating and tracking all cases and will bring future reports to the Commission.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve the Amendments
Seconded by Commissioner Washington
7 approved the item

b) Amendments to M-NCPPC Debt Management and Post-Issuance Compliance Policy (Cohen)

Secretary-Treasurer Cohen introduced Deputy Secretary-Treasurer Lawrence to present the policy, as provided in the packet.

Mr. Lawrence summarized minor changes to the policy, last updated in 2019, addressing arbitrage bonds, variable rate debt threshold (changing from 15% to 10%); changes to the debt payout ratio (affirms the rate should remain above 60% in a 10-year period); and a fixed cost burden calculation (debt obligation should not exceed 25% of its General Fund Expenditures) which reflects a conservative approach to financial management. The changes have been reviewed and endorsed by the agency's bond counsel, McGuire Woods, and its financial advisor, Davenport. If approved, the changes would be uploaded to mncppc.org.

Vice Chair Harris asked if these changes would have an adverse effect on us financing future deals. Mr. Lawrence said these changes should place the agency in a better position in the market since it is adopting a more conservative posture and taking fewer risks. Secretary-Treasurer Cohen agreed this should have no negative impact on our future finances.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve the Policy
Seconded by Commissioner Washington
7 approved the item

c) Approval of FY25 Year End Budget Transfers (Charles)

Corporate Budget Director Charles asked the Commission to support the transfer of \$2.424M from existing FY25 year-end savings to the Commission-wide IT initiative Internal Service Fund for the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) replacement project as detailed in the packet. The project will be transformative in improving the agency's operational performance through a unified suite of applications covering finance, human resources,

budgeting, and other analytic functions. The transfer represents 62% of the remaining funds in the five general fund accounts, resulting from revised funding requirements during FY25.

Commissioner Hedrick asked to confirm that the Montgomery County Department directors supported the transfer. Ms. Charles confirmed they did, adding that they suggested it, since the transfer would also reduce what the departments will need to pay in FY26. Ms. Charles will share a department-by-department list of contributions after the fiscal year closeout.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve the proposed budget transfers
Seconded by Commissioner Hedrick
7 approved the item

d) Calendar 2026 Recommended Benefit Plan Rate Changes (McDonald/Allen)

Corporate HR Director Allen requested Commissioners' support for the proposed changes to the agency's benefits plans, effective January 1, 2026, adding these recommendations were agreed to by MCGEO and were supported by Department Heads. He summarized the proposed changes, as reflected in the packet.

He described proposed increases to the various health insurance programs, noting some of the larger increases have been offset by agreeing to a larger co-pay for some services, adding that the M-NCPPC's plan still compares very favorably against the plans of other local jurisdictions and agencies. He added that a proposed added benefit of the Roth IRA is ahead of schedule and should be available before the end of the year.

Mr. Allen said a major increase is in the CVS Caremark prescription drug plan, based on increased use and costs. He added that the proposal is to use some of the excess reserve funds in the self-insured Group Insurance Fund (GIF). Using some of these excess funds will offset the plan increases, while still leaving a healthy reserve balance. Commissioner Geraldo asked, based on increasing costs, if the M-NCPPC has considered looking at a different prescription program besides Caremark. Mr. Allen said staff have been monitoring the issue and discussing it with the agency's benefits consultant, Aon. He will look at the latest update and report back. Commissioner Washington asked to clarify if the effect of using excess GIF money is reflected in the packet information, or if application of the GIF would lower the proposed prescription rate listed in the packet. Mr. Allen confirmed that it will lower the rate for CVS Caremark premium from \$6.56 to \$4.99 per pay period for an individual. He noted that the Kaiser plan has a built-in prescription plan at no extra cost.

Vice Chair Harris asked Mr. Allen to translate the 31.4% increase in prescription drug premiums into dollars. Mr. Allen replied that the percentage increase on the current rate of \$21.7M is \$6.8M, or a new annual total of \$28.5M. He reminded Commissioners that by using excess reserves, the Benefits office would lower the rate increase to 23.9%, or an increase of \$5.2M for a new annual total of \$26.9M. Chairman Barnes asked how long the excess reserves could be used for similar future reductions. Mr. Allen said it could be done again next year, and a smaller reduction could be implemented the following year and maintain a healthy minimum reserve. Mr. Allen noted since each year's claims are different, the agency has seen years that have comparatively lower claims, which add to the fund reserves. Chairman Barnes asked if we looked at alternate providers. Mr. Allen said the Benefits office regularly explores the use of different providers through the bid process. He will return with more information on different plan options with a focus on managing health care costs.

Chairman Barnes asked for more detail on plan comparisons among the M-NCPPC, and Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, which Mr. Allen provided, indicating the M-NCPPC generally pays a greater premium share than Prince George's County across the board, and similar premiums to Montgomery County. He added co-pays for M-NCPPC employees are also different – some are more, some are less.

Chairman Barnes said based on his initial review of the proposed rate increases and the use of the excess GIF reserves to offset prescription prices, he was alarmed on behalf of the M-NCPPC workforce from a sustainability perspective. He said he planned to abstain from the vote and would further review the changes and the history of the program to get a better understanding of them. Vice Chair Harris asked that Mr. Allen return in a future meeting, with some longer-term contingency plans that would address different scenarios.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve the proposed Plan Rate Changes
Seconded by Vice Chair Harris
6 approved the item
1 abstention (Barnes)

- e) Resolution 25-16 Resolution of Support Recognizing the 35th Anniversary of the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (Black)

Prince George's County Planning Board Chief Communications Officer Calista Black presented the resolution to the Commission, recognizing the anniversary of the landmark legislation, as requested by bi-county staff.

Ms. Black noted as early as 1974, 15 years prior to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the M-NCPPC was recognized as a leader in the fields of recreational accessibility and special needs, creating a division for special services with the support of parents, professionals, and community advocates. She praised staff and innovative programs in both counties such as accessible playgrounds and the development of many programs that addressed special needs.

Ms. Black thanked Emily Lawrence, the agency's new Corporate ADA Coordinator and said Ms. Lawrence and others will be hosting a Lunch and Learn program presenting the film "Change, Not Charity," followed by a panel discussion, and added that Montgomery Parks was hosting an outside event on Disability Pride. She said these programs were a true bi-county effort and thanked agency professionals for their work and leadership for their ongoing support.

Chairman Barnes said during his time as an elected official, he worked very closely with the Americans with Disability Act, particularly regarding charity work with the ARC of Prince George's County, adding that this resolution personally means a lot to him.

Commissioner Geraldo agreed, noting the importance of recognizing and supporting the ADA, particularly in light of current events and political developments against public servants engaged in civil rights and disability services. Vice Chair Harris agreed, voicing his pride at the work the M-NCPPC does upholding the ADA.

ACTION: Motion of Commissioner Geraldo to approve Resolution 25-16
Seconded by Vice Chair Harris
7 approved the item

Item 7. OFFICERS' REPORTS

Executive Director's Report

- a) Quarterly Late Evaluation Report (For information only)
- b) CIO's Quarterly Report (For information only)

Secretary-Treasurer's Report


No report scheduled

General Counsel's Report

- a) Litigation Report (For information only)

Vice Chair Harris thanked Chairman Barnes and looks forward to working with him in the coming year in making the agency the very best it can be.

Chairman Barnes adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.



James F. Adams, Senior Technical Writer



William Spencer, Acting Executive Director