



Government Update



ADVOCACY

advocacy@coastalrealtors.org



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Wicomico County: Health Department Update

Wicomico County has been without a wet season since FY24, which has stalled many land sight evaluations. The Health Department monitors the county water levels regularly, but without reaching the threshold for a wet season, land sight evaluations are limited.

On April 17th, the County was granted permission from MDE to begin an “Alternative Testing Pilot”.

- Homeowners who have the oldest land sight evaluation permit applications will receive a letter in the mail to opt into this program.
- This alternative testing allows for soil and land evaluations outside the traditional wet season.
- Thus far, 24 homeowners have been contacted, with four land evaluations being completed.
- Homeowners are being reached out to by the Health Department, if you or someone you know has had a land evaluation application open for a prolonged period of time, they may be receiving notice from the Health Department about this program.

There are 177 open applications for septic replacements since FY23.



Links and Maps

[Most recent Health Department Permitting Data](#)

[Wicomico GIS Map Room](#)

Key Take Aways:

- Older applications may be eligible for the new Health Department testing program.
- Without a true wet season, land evaluations have stalled.
- With full staffing at the Health Department, the Department is confident in its ability to complete all open land evaluations during a regular wet season.
- The deadline for land evaluation applications is in early November.
- Only two holding tanks have been required in FY26.
- Most of the County's holding tanks are in the south west region of the County, where additional environmental regulations and higher water tables exist.

Landfill

The County is looking at changing the fee structure for the landfill to better fund it. Below are some of the proposed changes.

- \$65 household permit
- \$88 commercial hauler permit
- Commercial haulers must go across weight scales
- Household brush pile usage is no longer free unless with a household permit
- \$2 increase for commercial haulers in January, with a mid year analysis, and a potential increase again the following January.

Wicomico County

Maryland has approved a state-wide Contained Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) permit as of this Friday.

With the prior CAFO permit expiring last year, new commercial feeding operations, chicken farms, dairy farms, etc. were unable to be constructed. With this new permit, effective May 8th, these agricultural operations may again begin.

[CAFO Information Sheet](#)



Wicomico County

Salisbury is in the budget work sessions.

[The draft can be found here.](#)

Last week's Salisbury City Council Session finalized the end of collective bargaining between the City and City employees.

There is presently a referendum being circulated in the city to let voters decide on City employee's right to collectively bargain. Petitioners have 40 days to collect the signatures to have this issue appear on the November Ballot.



Worcester County Legislative Issues

OCDC presented their update to the County Commissioners this past week, including their private and grant investments and list of projects funded.

Highlights include the OCPD Downtown Station, which had its opening in 2025 after four years of work between OCDC, Ocean City, and the County.

102 Worcester Street, a lifeguard housing project, is only a month away from completion; another multi-use project with investment from OCDC.



Worcester County Legislative Issues

Congratulations to Coastal Association of REALTORS member Peter Buas for his election to the Ocean City Council. Mr. Buas is joined by Jeff Heiser as the two newest members to the Council.

The Council has also moved forward an ordinance to permit an additional two occupants in short term rentals. The new chart to determine occupancy is on the following slide.



Worcester County Legislative Issues



Ocean City has advanced an ordinance to allow an additional occupancy of two people in rental units.





The following slide has a chart which details how occupancy is calculated under this new ordinance. Second reading and final passage could appear on May 31.

Additionally, direction was given to the planning department to **not enforce** certain furniture requirements (for instance, removing a queen bed in a den room and replacing it with a queen-sized sleeper-sofa).




Worcester County Legislative Issues

OCCUPANCY REQUIREMENT – NEW ORDINANCE

	LIVING ROOM & DINING ROOM COMBINED: Not less than 120 square feet (11.2 m ²).
	BEDROOM (SINGLE OCCUPANT): Not less than 70 square feet (6.5 m ²).
	BEDROOM (MULTIPLE OCCUPANTS): At least 40 square feet (4.6 m ²) of floor area for each occupant.
	CLOSET ADJUSTMENT: Any bedroom that contains a closet with a minimum size of two feet by five feet or larger will be given a ten-square-foot maximum allowance towards the total calculation of bedroom area.
	ADDITIONAL OCCUPANTS ALLOWANCE: Notwithstanding the above, a dwelling unit, except efficiency units which are governed by Section 404.6, shall be allowed an additional TWO (2) occupants.
	MAXIMUM OCCUPANCY LIMIT: No dwelling unit shall be occupied by more occupants than permitted in this chapter.

BY NUMBER OF BEDROOM OCCUPANTS (In Bedrooms Only)	MINIMUM BEDROOM FLOOR AREA REQUIRED (Includes 70 sq ft base + 40 sq ft for each additional occupant)	LIVING ROOM & DINING ROOM COMBINED (Minimum for the Unit)	MAXIMUM TOTAL OCCUPANCY ALLOWED (Bedroom Occupants + 2 Additional Occupants)
1 BEDROOM OCCUPANT 	70 sq ft	120 sq ft	3 OCCUPANTS
2 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	80 sq ft	120 sq ft	4 OCCUPANTS
3 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	120 sq ft	120 sq ft	5 OCCUPANTS
4 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	160 sq ft	120 sq ft	6 OCCUPANTS
5 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	200 sq ft	120 sq ft	7 OCCUPANTS
6 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	240 sq ft	120 sq ft	8 OCCUPANTS
7 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	280 sq ft	120 sq ft	9 OCCUPANTS
8 BEDROOM OCCUPANTS 	320 sq ft	120 sq ft	10 OCCUPANTS



CLOSET ADJUSTMENT RULE:
If a bedroom has a closet ≥ 2 ft x 5 ft, you may add up to +10 sq ft toward usable area in that bedroom.

EXAMPLE CALCULATION:
Bedroom with 3 occupants requires 120 sq ft.
If the bedroom has a qualifying closet: 120 sq ft + 10 sq ft = 130 sq ft usable.
→ Allows 3 bedroom occupants.

NOTE: All areas refer to minimum usable floor area. Closet bonus is a maximum allowance of 10 sq ft.



Worcester County Legislative Issues



Following the town hall on May 14th, the Globalinx data center is not a public utility, and likely does not meet the classifications for C-2 zoning, which is the current zoning classification for the parcel it is to go on, and may be subject to further scrutiny from Planning and Zoning.

The generators on site are to be used for emergency backup power and its noise assessment has been graded at 62-67 decibels, lower than that of a vacuum cleaner.

No approvals have been issued by the county.

[Visit the Globalinx website here](#)

[View a brief video of the slideshow presentation here.](#)



Worcester County Legislative Issues

The Worcester County Commissioners are entertaining granting a property tax credit to firefighters.

Presently the proposal is paused, but if approved would grant volunteer firefighters a \$2,500 property tax credit.



Somerset County Legislative Issues



No county or municipal meetings in Somerset on the schedule for next week.



Major Investor & RPAC



Current RPAC Standings:

Contributed	Remaining Pledge	Participation
42880.67	8736.33	39.91

Again, we have exceeded our triple crown goals!

GOLDEN R	CRYSTAL R	STERLING R	STERLING R (con't)	PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE
Grace Masten	Tim Arnett	Veronica Bishop	Joni Martin Williamson	Grace Masten
	Lauren Bunting	Joe Brach	Mia McCarthy	Bernie Flax
	Kevin Decker	Kate Deckenback	Mac McGraw	Austin Whitehead
	Bernie Flax	Bilonna Dilling	Steve Parsons	
	Darron Whitehead	Jay Doaty	Carol Proctor	
	Joe Wilson	Diana Dovel	John Rego	
		Cameron Drew	Jenny Sheppard	
		Bethany Drew	Leslie Smith	
		Greg Erdie	Frances Sterling	
		Kim Heaney	Brigit Taylor	
		Debora Hileman	Mike Weisner	
		Hunter Isaac	Austin Whitehead	
		Chris Jett	Jessica Ziegler	
		Brandon Johnson		



MD REALTOR LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP

[Click here to view the Sine Die report from MR](#)



Session Update

Number & Name	Position	Status
HB 239 (SB 36) Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)	Support 5	In Committee
HB 548 (SB 325) Land Use - Permitting - Development Rights (Maryland Housing Certainty Act)	Support 5	Passed Second Reading with Amendments
HB 774 (SB 462) Landlord and Tenant - Residential Leases and Holdover Tenancies - Local Good Cause Termination (Good Cause Eviction)	Oppose 5	In Committee
HB 778 Land Use - Middle Housing Options - Requirements	Support 5	In Committee
HB 894 (SB 389) Land Use - Transit-Oriented Development - Alterations (Maryland Transit and Housing Opportunity Act)	Support 4	Special Ordered (3/20)
HB 1029 (SB 691) Real Property - Termination of Residential Real Estate Contracts - Contingency Clauses	Support 5	Passed Second Reading
HB 1132 Condominiums and Homeowners Associations - Resale Contracts - Notice Requirements (Keeping Affordable Housing Affordable Act)	Support 5	Passed Second Reading with Amendments
HB 1175 Land Use - Residential Housing - Oversight, Regulation, and Taxation (Building Affordably in My Back Yard Act)	Oppose 5	Hearing Cancelled
HB 1213 State Transfer Tax - Rate - Alterations (Housing Affordability for Buyers and Sellers)	Oppose 5	In Committee
HB 1260 Common Ownership Communities - Online Publication of Resale Disclosures	Support 5	In Committee
HB 1460 Landlord and Tenant - Investor-Owned Single-Family Rental Property - Landlord Requirements	Oppose 5	In Committee
SB 267 Land Use - Residential Housing - Oversight and Approval (Building Affordably in My Back Yard Act)	Oppose 5	In Committee
SB 814 Residential Property - Service Agreement - Defunct Service Providers	Support 5	Passed Second Reading
SB 747 (HB 469) Condominiums - Unit Owner Responsibility for Damage or Destruction and Mandatory Insurance Coverage	Support / Amend 2	Passed Second Reading

Monday is Crossover Day and the General Assembly is beginning to have extended sessions. Monday will be a good indicator of where MR's legislation lies. To read the priority report, [click here](#). To read the full report of all legislation we've reviewed, [click here](#).

Unless special measures are taken, any bill that does not pass third reading by Monday and are not sent to the opposite chamber at Midnight are unable to become law.

Please reach out if you have any questions about what each of these do.



Lower Shore Candidates

[Please use this link to see candidates who have filed for election in State and Local elections.](#)

I have been monitoring this site in preparation for this upcoming election year. This is updated twice a day and more have filed in the past few weeks as we approach the filing deadline in February.





Comptroller and DHCD Housing Update

The Maryland Comptroller, Brooke Lierman, presented her office's Housing portion of the State of the Economy, [linked here](#).

In it are key findings pertaining to Maryland's housing economy, including an acknowledgement of the 100,000 unit shortage in the state, potential reasonings behind that shortage including rising costs of materials and labor (Maryland cost of building exceeds the national average), stagnant permitting (neighbor states and states with high growth outpace Maryland in single-family and multi-family permitting), among other data points.

One analogy the report draws is to the Smith Island Cake, where the process to obtain the necessary permits to development is similar to our Somerset attraction's layers of cake and fudge.

Suggestions include expanded townhome zoning, residential development in commercial zones, ADU implementation, building code reform, among others. Certainly an interesting read and I'll have a summary of it next week!





DHCD Housing Needs Assessment for 2026

[Click here to read the full assessment.](#)

DHCD put their housing needs assessment out this past week – here are a few key takeaways:

- Maryland needs about 590,000 new housing units by 2045 to meet projected demand
- The cost burden for renters has increased from 33% since 2000 to 46% since 2022.
- Homeownership is increasingly out of reach for moderate-income households; only 49% could afford the median home in 2022, down from 75% in 2000.
- For every 1,000 renters earning 0–30% of Area Median Income (AMI), 610 affordable homes are missing.
- The lower shore has an average of 20% - 55%+ of its renters are cost burdened.
- Total annual permitted units has been halved since 2000.

Maryland’s housing shortage is multifaceted, and DHCD will be bringing forth legislation this Session to remedy the worsening inventory shortage for our state. This is a very interesting read and I’m happy to discuss further!

