

BOARD OF GARRETT COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

PUBLIC MEETING

Monday, February 3, 2025

Meeting was also Live Streamed at <https://www.facebook.com/garrettcountygovernment/>

IN ATTENDANCE

Chairman Paul C. Edwards

Commissioner Ryan S. Savage

Commissioner S. Larry Tichnell

County Administrator Kevin G. Null

ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION

1. **GARRETT COUNTY AIRPORT** – Introduction of new Garrett County Airport Manager Adison Wyer.
2. **PROCLAMATION REQUEST** - Christopher Mullett, President, Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc., requested that the Board of County Commissioners issue a proclamation in support of Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc. programs. Mr. Mullett provided background information including recent budgetary freezes at the federal level that could impact their Head Start program and necessitate the layoff of staff. The Board of County Commissioners agreed to issue a proclamation and added it to the public agenda.
3. Businesses in Friendsville have formed a Friendsville Business Association. The Board of County Commissioners agreed to fund the Friendsville Business Association as they do for the Grantsville and Oakland Business Associations.
4. Southern Garrett Rescue Squad submitted a request for staffing to add a second ambulance. The Garrett County Emergency Management Services Chief is preparing a recommendation and cost estimate.
5. Chairman Edwards stated that he would respond to some of the questions/comments raised during the last Board of County Commissioners Public Meeting that was held on January 21, 2025.
 - Transfer Tax - Is anyone in favor of raising the Transfer Tax at this time. Commissioner Tichnell and Savage stated they were not in favor of increasing the Transfer Tax.
 - Election of Commissioners - Chairman Edwards read the Garrett County Code pertaining to the election of County Commissioners. Chairman Edwards stated the County is following the law.
 - Gaming-will restate the Commissioners stance that there will be no gaming tax on non-profits.
 - Senate Bill 399 - Wildland Areas-Overhead Transmission Lines. Chairman Edwards reported that he spoke with Senator Michael McKay, representatives from Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and also reached out to NextEra for additional information on Senate Bill 399. Chairman Edwards recommended that the Board of County Commissioners take no stance on Senator McKay's bill at this time citing a lack of sufficient information. Commissioner Tichnell and Savage agreed.
5. Mr. Null reviewed a number of administrative and managerial matters under his authority and jurisdiction with the Board of County Commissioners.

CALL TO ORDER OF PUBLIC SESSION at 4:00 PM

PRAYER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Invocation by Commissioner Tichnell

PUBLIC SESSION

1. Mr. Null indicated there was one addition to the Public Meeting Agenda. A proclamation in support of the Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc. will be added to the Public Meeting Agenda. The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Savage, which was seconded by Commissioner Tichnell, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, approved the Public Meeting Agenda for February 3, 2025.
2. The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Tichnell, which was seconded by Commissioner Savage, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, approved the Public Meeting Minutes of January 21, 2024.
3. **INTRODUCTION:** Newly-Elected Mayor of Loch Lynn Heights – Larry Friend and Garrett County Airport Manager Adison Wyer. Mayor Friend thanked the Board of County Commissioners for their help and support of Loch Lynn Heights.
4. **PROCLAMATION:** Support for Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc. Programs. Christopher Mullett, President, Garrett County Community Action Committee, Inc. thanked the Board of County Commissioners for its support of this proclamation. The Federal Budget freeze may significantly impact on Community Action Committee programs, potentially leading to staff layoffs.
5. Chairman Edwards stated that he would like to respond to questions/comments raised during the last Public Meeting.

- Election of County Commissioners. Chairman Edwards read the Garrett County Code pertaining to the election of County Commissioners. Chairman Edwards stated the County is following the law.
- Transfer Tax – Board of County Commissioners will not request authorization to change the Transfer Tax at this time. At some point in the future, the County may need funds for specific projects and could look to increase the Transfer Tax then.
- Gaming – A law was passed in 2006 providing gaming in three counties - Washington, Allegany and Garrett. Garrett County received a request from a for-profit business to offer gaming in its establishment. Upon review of the legislation, the County determined the County had not issued permits for gaming in accordance with provisions of the of Section 14-201 et seq of the Criminal Law Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

Mr. Null held an informal meeting on January 29, 2025 to discuss this issue. This was not a Public Hearing. The Board of County Commissioners have no intent and will not tax non-profits. The Board of County Commissioners spoke with the Delegation and will request legislation next year to remove the ability to tax non-profits.

The request for a gaming permit from the for-profit business has been withdrawn. At this time, the Board of County Commissioners has no intent to issue gaming permits to for-profit businesses.

- Senate Bill 399 - Wildland Areas - Overhead Transmission Lines. Data Centers in Virginia need more power and there is a proposal to extend power lines from Pennsylvania/Ohio through sections of Garrett and Allegany County to Virginia.

The Board of County Commissioners met individually with representatives from NextEra , the company providing the power, several months ago and were given a high-level overview of the project.

Senator McKay' Bill (SB 399) will provide a right-of-way for power transmission lines in State Forest. This Bill does not permit the project, the permitting is through the regulatory process with the Public Service Commission. The Bill does not involve eminent domain; the Board of County Commissioners is against any Bill or permit that would allow a private company to use eminent domain to obtain property.

Chairman Edwards reported that he had spoken with Senator McKay, representatives from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Chairman Edwards also reached out to NextEra for additional information and requested that NextEra hold informational meetings in the county. Chairman Edwards recommended that the Board of County Commissioners take no stance on Senator McKay's Bill at this time citing a lack of sufficient information. Commissioners Tichnell and Savage agreed.

6. The Garrett County Department of Community Development & Planning Updates – Stephen Kelley, Director, Garrett County Department of Community Development & Planning, provided the Board of County Commissioners with a departmental update.
7. The Garrett County Department of Community Development & Planning – Planning & Land Management Division - Bruce Michael, Watershed Coordinator, provided the Board of County Commissioners with an update on the Arrowhead Dredging Project and Final Report.
8. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**
 - Discussion on Transfer Tax. An individual asked if these funds could be used for first time home buyers, Garrett Transit, and childcare in the County - suggested a public meeting be held at college to discuss revenue increases. Chairman Edwards stated the Board is not going to raise the Transfer Tax at this time.
 - Senator McKay's Bill affects wild lands, not just natural lands and could impact farmlands. The Board of County Commissioners were requested to ask Senator McKay to remove Senate Bill 399 until more information is available.
 - Discussion on public input on policy decisions. How are policy decisions made?

9. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- ❖ The Board of Garrett County Commissioners announced that the next Public Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. at the Garrett County Courthouse.

ADJOURNMENT: The Board of County Commissioners, on a motion by Commissioner Tichnell, which was seconded by Commissioner Savage, and made unanimous by Chairman Edwards, adjourned the Public Meeting at 6:22 P.M.

Attest:

By Order of the Board,

KEVIN G. NULL
County Administrator

PAUL C. EDWARDS, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners