

COMMISSIONERS OF RIDGELY
SEPTEMBER 8, 2026
TOWN MEETING



The Commissioners of Ridgely met on the above date at 6:00 pm in the town hall for the September 2026 town meeting. The following were in attendance: President John Hurley, Commissioner Chad Leister, Commissioner Brad Sears, Clerk-Treasurer Stephanie Berkey, Zoning Administrator Melissa Leonard, CCSO Corporal Tracey Ferguson, Financial Assistant Gerald Sutton, David F. Tribbett, Jr., Nancy Sears, Cara Avery, Donna Eveland, Pastor Terrence Nichols.

The meeting of the Town Commissioners of Ridgely was called to order at 6:00 p.m. Pastor Terry Nichols gave the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Commissioners reviewed the August 3, 2026, Town Meeting minutes. A correction was requested under New Business to revise the wastewater design capacity figure on two lines near the end of that section to read "approximately 39,100." The minutes were approved as corrected.

STAFF REPORTS

CLERK-TREASURER

The Clerk-Treasurer presented the request for approval to pay bills, which was approved. The Commissioners were also advised that Jennifer Riley had circulated information seeking local requests for consideration during the upcoming General Assembly session. Members were asked to submit any suggestions directly to Jennifer Riley by Friday, October 2, 2026. The Treasurer then reported reconciled balances of \$410,597 in the General Fund, \$3,594 in Sewer Funds, \$12,777 in Water Funds, and \$9,574 in ARPA funds.

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

The Clerk-Treasurer presented David Crist's report. The report stated that a site visit has been scheduled for the sewer line replacement grant and that engineers and the Maryland Department of the Environment will be in town to review the site and scope of work. DPW vehicle lettering decals have been ordered with an estimated turnaround of eight to ten weeks. David is also finalizing the annual tree removal list so pricing can be obtained.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

The Zoning report advised that staff had been informed of chickens in town that may not be registered. Staff will begin reviewing compliance this month and notifying owners of the requirement to complete the Town application and provide the required State license. Rental inspections are still ongoing. The pending vehicle ordinance

amendment, including the previously discussed fines approach, still needs to be typed for review; Chad reported he had been waiting on the laptop.

CAROLINE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Corporal Ferguson presented activity statistics for August 1 through August 31. It was clarified that the 54 animal patrol entries largely reflected officer callouts to the Humane Society in town rather than 54 separate animal-control incidents. The report also reflected continued patrol and enforcement activity throughout Ridgely. In response to a question from the Commissioners, property checks were explained as routine checks of businesses and other designated locations.

- 54 animal patrol callouts were reported, with the Humane Society accounting for most of those entries.
- The Sheriff's Office reported 111 property checks, 61 traffic stops, and 85 traffic violations.
- Other activity included 3 alarms, 1 assault, 1 burglary, 3 welfare checks, 16 civil process matters, 4 disturbances, 1 theft, 1 traffic accident, 1 trespass, and assistance to other agencies including Greensboro.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANT

Jerry reported that the town auditors began preliminary audit work in June and are returning in early October.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Dave Tribbett reported that the EDC continues to explore possible grant opportunities connected with a potential purchase of the property next door, but that the work is more time-consuming than originally expected and no action item was ready. The committee will shift its immediate focus to Winter Fest planning for December and indicated that help with sponsorships would be welcome. The committee also announced a vacant seat reserved for a resident of the Town of Ridgely and stated that its next meeting will be held September 17, 2026, at 3:30 p.m.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Jerry, reporting for the Historical Society, stated that the new sign at the apartments on Maryland Avenue has been installed. The sign includes photographs and a QR code linking to the history of the building and the people who worked there. Jerry also reported that the train station's final open house drew visitors from outside the area, including Salisbury, reflecting growing public interest in Ridgely history. He noted that Cathy and Rick continue to support tours, and Rick recently led a caboose tour during the open house.

OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Sears provided a status update on the data center ordinance process following adoption of Resolution 2026-03, which pauses data center applications for 12 months and directs the Planning Commission to recommend zoning amendments by April 3, 2027. A project management plan has been prepared, and preliminary modeling

using the Tech Park site examined facilities ranging from 0.5 megawatts to 400 megawatts of IT load. Based on the site assessment, it was reported that a facility above approximately 50 megawatts, or about 150,000 square feet, would be too large for the property. Key topics identified for ordinance development included electrical capacity, water use, fire flow, noise, diesel generator and fuel storage, and long-term decommissioning requirements. The discussion noted that Commissioner Hurley's fire service experience was relevant to the fire-flow considerations.

- Choptank Electric was reported to have about 1 megawatt available to the entire Tech Park at present; expansion to 2 to 3 megawatts would be at the developer's expense.
- Fire suppression demand was discussed at approximately 1,500 to 3,000 gallons per minute for 2 to 4 hours, making on-site stored fire-flow water necessary rather than reliance on the Town system.
- Noise standards under the Code of Maryland Regulations, acoustic testing, and a decommissioning bond or plan updated at least every five years were identified as important ordinance provisions.

Commissioner Sears gave an update on the sale status of the Tech Park, which is annexed into Ridgely but owned by Caroline County. It was reported that the property was developed with federal and state funding and that, while the federal claim expired last November, the Department of Commerce still holds an approximately \$3 million lien. Two commercial appraisals reportedly came in at about \$1.13 million. The County has signed with a real estate broker, and at least one firm offer has been received, with at least one additional interested party. The Town's principal concern remains the unused water and wastewater infrastructure serving the site. RKNK of Salisbury was engaged by the County to perform an assessment, but the review could not be completed because the pumping station was not fully operable and a full flow check could not be performed. During discussion, John raised the question of whether the County remains responsible for the pumping station until transfer, and the Commissioners reiterated their position that the County or purchaser should bear the cost of bringing the systems up to code before any turnover to the Town.

- The County reportedly paid approximately \$30,000 for the initial utility assessment, which remains incomplete.
- County Economic Development has identified \$5,000 that could be applied toward additional study costs, and the Maryland Economic Development Commission (MEDCO) was mentioned as another possible funding source.
- Commissioners also noted that the County has held Tech Park utility allocations for many years without paying the reservation fees otherwise charged for reserved allocations.

Commissioner Sears gave an update that the Hanover Foods plant went to auction in June and that a successful bidder is reportedly under contract. The prospective purchaser was described as a company that manufactures miniaturized data centers in ruggedized containers for the Department of Defense, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and FEMA. The reported contract includes a 30-day due diligence period that began the previous Friday, with settlement to occur within 15 days thereafter if the transaction

proceeds, making mid-October a possible closing date. During discussion, the buyer's stated interest in installing solar and large lithium-ion battery storage highlighted that the Town Code does not presently address battery installations. Chad recommended involving the State Fire Marshal to address fire prevention, suppression, equipment, and training issues related to lithium-ion battery systems, and the Commissioners agreed that ordinance language should be prepared.

NEW BUSINESS

The Commissioners reviewed the packet material related to National POW/MIA Recognition Day and discussed the suggestion to establish a Missing Man Table. After discussion, the Commissioners concluded that available space made a table display impractical. In its place, the Commissioners supported obtaining and displaying a POW/MIA flag at Town Hall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stephanie Berkey, CMC
Clerk-Treasurer