WICOMICO COUNTY
STATE OF THE COUNTY REPORT
December 2, 2022
Acting County Executive John D. Psota

As I conclude over two years of service as your Acting County Executive and Director of Administration, we look back upon one of the most remarkable and unforeseen periods in modern world history that we encountered due to the global pandemic. Having experienced the pandemic, we continue to lament its impact on our family, friends, neighbors and coworkers. Sadly, to date, COVID-19 has been responsible for the passing of 347 souls who called Wicomico County home.

In addition to the pandemic's effect on lives in our communities, a tragic reminder as to the cost of protecting the safety of our citizens came suddenly on June 12, 2022, when Deputy First Class, Glenn Hilliard, a 16-year veteran with the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office was murdered while attempting to apprehend a fugitive. Glenn Raymond Hilliard, posthumously promoted to Corporal, was a son, a husband, and a father of three children, and his tragic death is a solemn reminder of the risks and sacrifices our law enforcement officers are willing to accept in order to keep us safe and to preserve our way of life. It is because of Cpl. Glenn Hilliard's service and sacrifice, and that of those who have fallen before and after him, and to the thin and thinning blue line, that we will forever be in his debt.

As we emerge and begin to recover from the continued impact of the pandemic, this review of our numerous accomplishments stand as a testament to the tireless work performed by our dedicated and driven County employees and civil servants
on a daily basis. It has been my honor to lead Wicomico County and our team of selfless public servants and to report the results of their daily efforts in fulfilling the mission of providing the best possible government to the citizens of Wicomico County by maximizing resources, responding to citizen concerns, investing in our future and keeping them and their property safe.

I am proud of all that my Administration has accomplished, and I continue to be inspired by the work of each of our Departments, which continues unabated as they continue to go above and beyond in delivering core services to all county residents. While this State Of The County report will summarize our work over the past couple of years, I want to draw particular attention to the strong financial footing that our team has established with a current unassigned fund balance in excess of fifty-two million dollars and a strong AA+ bond rating from S&P and a solid Aa2 rating from Moody's; these accomplishments, along with other notable successes, will be discussed in greater detail through the Financial Strength section included within this report.

WICOMICO COUNTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2021-2022

The following are highlights of the County’s priorities:

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Partnering with the Health Department, the Department of Emergency Services, our Human Resource Department, Department Heads and our employees, Wicomico County Government remained open during the pandemic and services to citizens continued uninterrupted
- The Department of Emergency Services coordinated with various essential agencies in order to mitigate the impact and financial impact on our municipalities
- Coordinated with the State to provide a regional vaccination site, including mass vaccinations at Wicomico Youth and Civic Center (WYCC)
- A successfully negotiated and signed 3- year agreement with the Fraternal Order of Police-111 went into effect on July 1, 2021. Among numerous items negotiated in this agreement were increases in annual salaries and benefits for our Deputies of approximately $1 million; which included 8% cost of living adjustments
- Recruitment and Retention Premium Pay was budgeted for the Department of Corrections and 911 Communication Specialists
- A New $36 million Public Safety Building Complex was funded and has broken ground, with construction quickly moving forward
- County Volunteer Fire Companies each received $80,000 in the FY22 budget to replace lost fundraising revenue due to COVID-19
- Overall Fire/EMS Budget was increased by over 24% in FY23 vs. FY22
- FY23 Volunteer Fire Company budget increased over 11% to $150,000 for each Company from FY22. The budget also includes $400,000 for the initiation of a Length Of Service Award (LOSA) program. The LOSA program outlines awards for volunteer years of service at year 3, 5, 10, 15, and every five years following. The proposal awaits concurrence by the Presidents of the Fire and Chief’s Associations,
after which a Resolution would be submitted to the Wicomico County Council for their approval

- FY23 Volunteer EMS budget increased by 11% to $150,000 for each Company's EMS operations, and EMS payroll was increased from $150,000 to $200,000 per Company.

- The Heroes Act (Legislative Bill 2022-07) became effective on August 8, 2022, after it was passed by the Wicomico County Council and signed by the Acting County Executive. Conditionally, the bill, as proposed by Council, offers a property tax credit of up to $1,500 a year, upon application, for permanently disabled first responders and surviving spouses of those who have fallen while working in Wicomico County.

- The Wicomico County Circuit Court Jury pool selection process was temporarily relocated to the WYCC during the pandemic to ensure the continuity of the court system.

**FINANCIAL STRENGTH**

Global financial conditions and uncertainty have demanded that we continue responsible financial management across all Departments. As a result of our fiscal management strategy, our audited net position is strong. For Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), the County's General Fund budget is $173 Million and focuses on the County's core services and priorities; public health and safety, education, and infrastructure. The FY23 budget projects $63 Million in local income tax receipts. This amount is an increase of 11.7% over budgeted FY22 and reflects the County's continued economic vitality. The County's real property assessable base increased by 4.43% year over year. In accordance with the County revenue cap, the FY23 property tax mil rate was lowered to $0.9070 vs. $0.9195 in FY22 and will yield approximately $695,000 in additional real property tax receipts.

This year's budget funds pay increases for County employees, which was based on a comprehensive market study conducted by a professional consulting firm. The new pay scales will render Wicomico County more competitive with neighboring jurisdictions and will help ensure recruitment and retention. The budget also funds the next round of pay increases for Sheriff's Deputies as negotiated in the most recent three-year collective bargaining agreement.

$325,000 is appropriated to allow for the continuance of our administrative efforts to provide County sewer service in areas experiencing septic failures. Additionally, $70,000 was appropriated to assist the Health Department with septic inspections and permitting, and $500,000 was placed in the "Proposed FY23 budget" to aid in mitigating the cost of failing septic systems.

Funding for the Board of Education's Maintenance of Effort was increased by $260,000 in FY23.
Following GFOA guidelines, the County continues its practice of adequate and responsible fund balance maintenance relative to state and national peers. Audited results for FY21 reflect a G.F. (General Fund) unassigned fund balance of $52,065,135, which, at 41.7% (fund balance as a % of revenues), places Wicomico County 2\textsuperscript{nd} highest among our peers in the State of Maryland.

Note, unaudited preliminary results for FY22 projected income tax revenue to exceed the budget by over $9 million. Furthermore, overall projected recurring revenue is expected to exceed the amended budget. Preliminary results also show unaudited FY22 expenditures to be less than originally budgeted. As a result, we are potentially in a very positive position in our fund balance account. However, given uncertain national and global financial conditions, inflation, increasing interest rates, supply chain issues, national and local workforce challenges, increased recessionary indicators, increased State restrictions on development, State required increases in Board of Education funding and our revenue cap tax structure, we must be extremely cautious and deliberative in our budgeting and long-term borrowing specifically regarding the use of the County's fund balance.

**2021/22 COUNTY SELLS BONDS TO FINANCE SEVERAL MAJOR PROJECTS:**

In December 2021, the County sold $58.235 million in general obligation and tax-exempt bonds to finance several major projects in the County, including: the Public Safety Building, the Mardela High/Middle School renovation/addition project, Landfill Cell Construction, and the Wor-Wic Community College's Applied Technology Building, among other capital project needs. The bonds carry a true interest cost of 1.625342%. The County also sold $16.950 million in taxable bonds to refund existing debt at a lower rate and to fund Salisbury-Wicomico Regional Airport projects. The taxable bonds carry a true interest cost of 1.849233%. This refunding will result in debt service savings of over $900,000.

In October 2022, Wicomico County sold $14.56 million in general obligation and tax-exempt bonds to continue financing several major projects, including: Mardela High/Middle School project, Wor-Wic Community College Applied Technology Building, and Old Court House renovations, among other capital project needs. The bonds carry a true interest cost of 3.929831%.

The County also sold $8.265 million in taxable bonds to finance certain projects at the Salisbury-Wicomico Regional Airport. The taxable bonds carry a true interest cost is 5.312076%. Earlier in October, S&P Global Ratings affirmed the County's strong AA+, and Moody's Investors Service affirmed the County's rating of Aa2.

Wicomico County's bonding reinforces our commitment to public safety, education, infrastructure and economic development needs. And, even with the variability in the current bond market, the rates received by the County reinforce that management in Wicomico County continues to be strong.
**EDUCATIONAL FUNDING:**

Since FY21, the County has provided funding for new construction and renovation projects for the Board of Education. Educational funding also includes funding for Wor-Wic Community College and the Library. In addition to our funds for operating, our capital funding to support our commitment to education includes the following:

- Approximately $11.8 million to complete the construction of the new Beaver Run School
- $22.6 million in funding for the renovation/addition at Mardela Middle/High School
- $3.5 million in funding to renovate the roof structures at Westside Intermediate and Wicomico High Schools
- FY23 budget includes approximately $1 million available to the Board of Education to provide capital security upgrades
- Approximately $6.8 million for the Wor-Wic Community College Applied Technology Building
- $395,000 to purchase a building for a new Library on the east side of the County

**ARPA:**

The Federally funded American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) established a fund for state and local governments. Wicomico County received a total of $20,124,834. The County has until December 31, 2024 to obligate the funding and until December 31, 2026 to spend those funds. With these federal funds, there are specific restrictions and auditing requirements that are attached to their use.

To date, Wicomico County has approved utilizing the funds as follows (all amounts rounded):

- $3,857,500 for the Public Safety Building construction.
- $1,500,000 in premium pay to employees in both increased salaries and bonuses.
- $880,000 distributed to volunteer fire/ambulance companies
- In addition, smaller projects related to broadband, tourism and other allowable funding have been expended

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

This past year, our economy has continued to recover from the pandemic, and we maintained our strong partnership with Salisbury-Wicomico Economic Development (SWED). Our unemployment rate continued to fall throughout the year, and challenges within the labor market are often voiced by area businesses. Through our many partnerships, the County is focused on a variety of workforce development initiatives.

Collectively, we've experienced much investment in workforce development programs including training for welding, offshore wind, electronics, soldering, sheet metal fabrication and more. We applaud Junior Achievement's initiative to
create Achievement Park, a place where thousands of students will visit annually to learn about financial literacy, careers here on the Shore and pathways to those careers. Devoted to the trades, Wor-Wic Community College’s Applied Technology Building is under construction and is set to open in the spring of 2023, and Tidal Health is instituting a residency program in 2023. These programs create a pipeline of talent for area employers and provide meaningful career opportunities for area residents.

Through SWED, we continued our business assistance programs this past year, and in total, we’ve deployed over $13.85 million to more than 1,200 small businesses throughout all corners of Wicomico County to help mitigate the impact and lingering effects of the pandemic. We’ve been proud to partner with the Salisbury Area Chamber of Commerce as they have taken the lead with the State in advocating for all businesses in general and restaurants specifically, which were especially hard-hit during the pandemic.

Other examples of economic success include:

- Identified and secured funding from the Lower Shore Workforce Alliance' American Rescue Plan Funds for Vehicles for Change (VFC), a nonprofit that empowers families with financial challenges to achieve economic and personal independence through learning new skills within the auto industry and through car ownership. VFC acquired a building in Winterplace Park and is already training people for new careers.
- Wicomico, in conjunction with SWED, Maryland Commerce, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and the Tri-County Council of the Lower Eastern Shore, has proposed new growth opportunities at the Salisbury-Ocean City: Wicomico Regional Airport to include the establishment of an Aviation Maintenance Technician program, the creation of a strategic plan for SBY and the development of shovel-ready sites on airport grounds. Through SWED, we have applied for funding for these initiatives through the Maryland Rural Economic Development Fund. The proposed project provides a comprehensive approach to retain and enhance scheduled airline service for our region, grow the aviation and aeronautical sector for a more diverse and sustainable economy, create a pipeline of talent for area employers in general and Piedmont Airlines (dba American Eagle) in particular, offer a pathway to meaningful job opportunities for area residents, retain and increase jobs and plan for future development at SBY.
- We supported Chesapeake Shipbuilding’s application to the U.S. Department of Transportation’s small shipyard grant program. The company recently announced that they will be constructing twelve new vessels in Salisbury and anticipate the need for 100 new employees in the coming years.

In the coming year, we’ll continue our strong partnership with SWED and other community organizations, invest in workforce development initiatives, capitalize on our existing assets and infrastructure, identify and grow new economic sectors and work collaboratively with our many partners for a brighter economic future.
BROADBAND

Acknowledging that this utility is critical to education, telehealth, and economic development, effectively addressing broadband internet service to those in this County who are unserved has been a top priority for the County Executive's Office. We have been committed to all viable and economically feasible options, noting that no additional Wicomico County taxpayer funds have been used in the very robust expansion of broadband internet service availability currently taking place throughout the County. The following is an update relating to this effort:

- Initiated in the summer of 2020, the County began working with multiple entities to collect broadband internet mapping data and then utilized its GIS resources to identify unserved areas of the County. This effort saved county taxpayers more than $60,000 in potential consulting fees.
- Following an RFP (request for proposal), in the fall of 2021, the County utilized this mapping data to support Talkie Communications in their successful application to obtain $9.8 million in grant funding from the MD FY22 – Infrastructure Grant Program. These grant funds were awarded to Talkie Communications by the State in June 2022 and are now subsidizing the currently active construction of fiber-optic broadband Internet service and making it available FOR purchase by businesses and residents in many of the unserved areas on the east side of the County. Construction on this project has begun in the Old Eden Road area. The total project cost in the east side of the County is estimated to be more than $13 million.
- Furthermore, Talkie Communications, in conjunction with MD Broadband Cooperative, recently began offering and providing broadband internet service to residents on the east of the County on Morris Rd. and in the Deer Creek neighborhood.
- To date, the County continues to utilize its resources to support Talkie Communications in its application to obtain additional grant funding from the MD FY23 – Infrastructure Grant Program. If awarded by the State in 2023, this funding would subsidize the construction of fiber-optic broadband Internet service and make it available FOR purchase by businesses and residents in many of the unserved areas on the west side of the County.
- Additionally, in August 2022, the County approved a cable franchise agreement with Shenandoah Communications (Shentel), which will be making TV, phone, and fiber-optic broadband internet service available FOR purchase to businesses and residents once construction of their network begins in the metro-core of the County.

Our strategy has seen the results of significant progress in delivering this utility by internet service providers (ISPs), and we stand committed to working with all of our partners, including the Office of Statewide Broadband (OSB), MD Broadband Cooperative and ISPs to achieve this priority as speedily and economically feasible as possible.
WATER AND SEWER MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Water and Sewer Master Plan (WSMP), in a study conducted by the engineering firm of GMB as initiated by the County Executive’s Office, was accepted by County Council per Resolution 120-2021 in November 2021, and represents a long-range strategic vision and action plan for the County to provide public water and sewer utility services to promote public health, quality of life, environmental protection, and economic enhancement for its citizens residing outside municipalities in accordance with the County’s Comprehensive Plan. This is a critical infrastructure utility, and the plan's implementation remains a priority.

- Multiple parallel tracks are underway to address three (3) focus areas of financial, management and technology implementation steps for the implementation of the County W&S Master Plan. There are two clear paths to address failing septic systems, and the solution is dependent on the location of the septic system. In locations where a septic system can be served by a nearby municipal system, the recommendation is for the municipality to expand its infrastructure to serve the septic system area. For rural areas of the County, the Master Plan recommends that the County provide the utility infrastructure to serve those areas.

- Wicomico County and GMB have had over four (4) meetings with MDE and MDP officials over the past year to determine the next steps for the County to implement the WSMP.

- **Municipal Areas:** GMB, on behalf of the County, has reached out and contacted all local municipalities to discuss the WSMP goals and failing septic areas that surround that municipality. The County is working to meet with each municipality to determine the best steps to work cooperatively with each municipality to connect surrounding failing septic system areas.

- **Rural Areas:** Per direction by MDE, the County Planning and Zoning Department is working with the Maryland Department of Planning on refining the Rural County services areas. The County has identified five (5) areas that should be prioritized to be served by County sewer and/or water infrastructure. They are: Mardela Springs, Nanticoke-Bivalve-Tyaskin Village, Whitehaven, Parsonsburg, and the Coulbourn Mill Community. The service areas need to be consistent with State Laws for PFA and W&S Plan Amendment requirements. Amending the 2010 County W&S Plan and approval/amendments to the PFA areas is one of the first steps required by MDE to provide further determination on State and Federal funding options.

- Direction from MDE has been requested regarding Discharge permit alternatives for the rural service areas. Technical investigations and analysis of the proposed nutrient load reductions will need to be further discussed with MDE to determine discharge load capacities feasible within the County.
HUMAN RESOURCES

Mission:
The Wicomico County Human Resources Department is committed to serving the citizens by focusing efforts on one of the County's most valuable assets, the employees. The Human Resources staff takes a leadership role in supporting our associates in employment, compensation, benefits, training and employee relations. We strive to provide the highest quality services in a fiscally responsible manner while assisting the County departments and leaders in: planning and analyzing to create an efficient and effective workforce; equal opportunity employment and retention; and upholding County policies and procedures and Federal and State regulations relevant to personnel issues.

Salaries, Staffing & Benefits:
Recruitment and retention continue to be areas of concentration. The County implemented the pay and classification study for full-time County positions in July of the new fiscal year, including a retroactive monetary amount for employees that went back to April 2022.
HR, with a staff of 5, addresses the resource needs of over 1,500 active and part-time employees and retirees. Since the beginning of 2022, HR has processed over 225 hires County-wide. This number includes new hires and rehires in fulltime, part-time and seasonal positions.
With over 430 participants in our 457(b) Plan, employees are taking advantage of a deferred compensation program to lower their taxable income and save for the future. Additionally, an annual employee leave "buy back" policy was initiated.

Senior Management Positions:
During my tenure, I have nominated and received confirmation of critical senior department leaders including:
Finance Director, Deputy Finance Director, County Attorney, Airport Manager, Assistant Airport Manager, Nursing Home Director, and Local Management Board Director. Positions elevated to "Acting" positions to ensure continuity of operations include the positions of Director of the Department of Emergency Services and the County Purchasing Agent. Additionally, the current Director of Social Services was nominated to, and successfully appointed by, the State. My Office is currently leading the search for a Wicomico Health Officer replacement to be nominated to the State for appointment.

Healthcare:
The County continues to be committed to providing the best benefits package to its employees and retirees while mitigating extraneous costs. Currently, the County provides for 85% of an active employee's monthly health care premium. A premium increase of 3% was implemented in the most recent plan year, while co-pays and prescriptions remained the same. Preventative care and screening measures for an early diagnosis of the employee, as well as their spouse and/or dependent(s) on the plan, can play a key role in helping to curb claims history and costs long term.
**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:**
Wicomico County boasts a multitude of selfless citizens who are rich in diversity and possess a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Wicomico County simply could not achieve its full potential without these civic-minded members who volunteer their time and talent in giving back to our local community. With nearly 30 Boards and Commissions, it has been an honor to have appointed or reappointed over 250 constituents to serve on Wicomico County's Boards and Commissions. Nominations to County Boards and Commissions also include the re-established Commission on Women, and the newly established Police Accountability Board.

**SALISBURY-OCEAN CITY: WICOMICO REGIONAL AIRPORT (SBY)**
Planning efforts for vital projects that will improve and expand airport infrastructure were the main focus of the airport over the past year. As infrastructure ages, it is more important than ever to utilize available funding to update existing facilities while developing new infrastructure that is essential for the operational needs of the airport. These improvements, many of which are long overdue, will ensure that crucial infrastructure is built or maintained to the standards necessary for the ongoing success and future growth of the airport.

As one of only two airports in the State of Maryland with scheduled daily passenger service, SBY airport continues to maintain a safe operating environment and explore opportunities to attract new industry to broaden our revenue streams and create new jobs for the region. It still faces some challenges, however, pilot shortages throughout the country have disrupted air travel over the last year. Piedmont Airlines has not been immune to this, but has taken steps to ensure they are the most competitive regional airline when it comes to attracting and hiring new pilots. Piedmont has also struggled with maintaining and hiring mechanics that are vital to their operation. The airport is proud to have partnered with SWED, UMES, and Piedmont to work towards establishing an Aircraft Maintenance Technician (AMT) school that, if successful, will create a new pool of skilled mechanics for Piedmont and the region.

**Runway Extension**
Design work is well underway for the 1200' main runway extension project. Delta Airport Consultants continues engineering design work, along with necessary coordination with FAA, MDE, and the Army Corps of Engineers, for navigational aid relocation and for environmental permitting for wetland mitigation. The airport has completed negotiations to purchase necessary wetland credits and will do so in 2023 once all permitting requirements have been satisfied and funding is secured.
**Airport Water Line Project:**

As of October, 2022, the airport and all of its current and future tenants, including those in the technology park, are now able to drink straight from the tap rather than rely on bottled water for consumption. Eliminating existing wells will also eliminate the need for testing and treatment of well water on the airport. The water line will also help alleviate fire suppression challenges as new development progresses.

**New Revenue Sources, Energy Savings, and Public Use Infrastructure:**

Over the last year, two new long-term agreements were made with service providers for a new cell phone tower and a solar energy farm on airport property. The cell tower will greatly enhance cell coverage in and around the airport. This will not only aid airport employees and tenants, but the general public that visit or live around the airport. The lease agreement also provides a new revenue stream for the airport which can provide a minimum aggregate annual rent of $30,000 along with one-time payment bonuses of $5000 for the sublease by a major carrier and $20,000 upon receipt of all permitting and approvals.

A new solar farm will consist of two facilities on twenty acres of land, which total 3.5 MWac of power. The airport will save over $600,000 in energy costs and collect over $1.6 million in rent over the life of the project. In addition, Wicomico County will benefit by saving nearly $8.5 million in electricity costs while collecting $612,500 in payments.
Multi-purpose Snow Removal and Airfield Maintenance Tractor Purchase

Through the use of over $400,000 in CARES grant funds, the airport has ordered a new large 4-wheel drive tractor with a 16' snow broom, 18' snow pusher box, loading bucket, fork attachment, and 20' mowing deck. The tractor's main focus in the winter months will be to clear snow from aircraft parking apron areas, totaling over 11 acres of pavement, and provide a back-up snow sweeper to help keep runways and taxiways clear. In the summer, it assists with mowing approximately 700 acres of grass areas. Delivery is expected in the summer of 2023.

ARFF/SRE/Maintenance Facility Design

Artist Rendition of the new ARFF/SRE/Maintenance Facility

After receiving extremely high construction bids for a stand-alone Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) facility in March, 2022, the airport decided to combine this project with a planned Snow Removal Equipment (SRE) and Maintenance facility. Combining the two buildings will significantly reduce overall costs, and by utilizing dedicated CARES grant funding, we will ensure completion of these two very important projects.

Technology Park Development –

Cleared land ready for construction

Work continues in the Airport Technology Park to enable site-ready building lots and to plan for future airport cargo and aircraft maintenance facility development. City water main and broadband fiber optic lines were recently extended
throughout the technology park and 5 acres of tree clearing has been accomplished to allow for immediate development. Design work for extending the sewer to the remainder of the technology park has also begun and extending a natural gas line to the area is pending.

**Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act (CRRSAA) Grant**

In May, 2022, the airport received its final reimbursement under the CRRSAA grant award, closing out $1,023,818 of funding used to support operational and maintenance expenses at the airport.

**Additional achievements**

The airport is pleased to announce two airport employees who have successfully completed the American Association of Airport Executives/North East Chapter Snow Academy. The Snow Academy course educates airport employees, equipment operators, airport supervisors, and managers, on how to utilize best practices while performing snow and ice control measures on airports during winter operations.

Congratulations to Edward Jackson, Operations Maintenance Supervisor, and Christine King, Assistant Operations Maintenance Supervisor for this accomplishment and their dedication and level of commitment to safety and professionalism in serving the traveling public!

**In memoriam**

On a more somber note, airport staff have mourned the passing of yet another friend and part-time coworker Ernest "Jim" Malone, who passed away on August 3rd, 2022. At 78 years old, Jim was a committed and valued snow removal equipment and tractor operator and an integral part in helping maintain a safe operating environment for all airport customers. He will be dearly missed by us all.

**Wicomico County Department of Planning and Zoning and Community Development Update**

Planning, Zoning, and Community Development continues to carry out its mission to provide creative, objective, professional planning services and technical expertise to elected officials, appointed boards and commissions, departments and citizens of Wicomico County, in a fair and reasonable manner; and to assist in understanding and addressing key community issues and priorities.

**Permits and Inspections (P&I):**

The Permits and Inspections (P&I) Division continued its mission to modernize and streamline the permitting process for contractors, citizens, and businesses of Wicomico County. Within the process the department has applied automated technology mixed with efficient real time customer support from County personnel. This allows for an expedited permit response while retaining the human
touch giving customers a personalized efficient process meeting their individual project needs. The Permits and Inspections Division has recruited top talent from across the County, adding four new fulltime employees to manage various aspects of the work program, implementing a fresh perspective and innovative ideas. To date the division has issued 411 building permits and 344 permits estimating $28 million in value.

**Land Development**

Land Development has been assisting the State Assessments office with identifying tax map corrections that will be pivotal in the Wicomico County tax map update. Land development sector continues an enhanced community presence to promote learning and understanding of Chesapeake Bay Critical Areas (CBCA), floodplain, and other state programs. The department has hosted three presentations to real estate groups providing information regarding available resources and regulatory considerations. During 2021, the housing market continued to be strong and that demand was seen in the number of subdivision and resubdivision plats reviewed by the Planning and Zoning staff. Resubdivision plats represent changes to the common property lines between two or more parcels of land, or changes to lots, such as for the establishment of a new septic area or other easement. During 2021, the staff reviewed 53 resubdivision plats, as well as 22 minor subdivision plats which proposed the establishment of 28 new residential lots and 4 commercial lots within the County. To date in 2022, staff have reviewed 25 resubdivision plats and 7 minor subdivision plats, with the latter proposing a total of 13 new residential lots.

The Planning and Zoning staff has also been working with two developers on two major residential subdivisions. An ongoing new phase of Nutters Crossing, to be known as The Ponds at Nutters Crossing, with 17 new residential lots, has reached the final stages of the review process. Earlier this year, a new phase of the residential development known as Steeplechase was introduced with a proposed 27 new residential lots.

Permits and Inspections Division has actively participated in the hazard mitigation plan update. Reaching out to repetitive loss properties with information regarding FEMA grants as well as serving on the hazard mitigation plan committee and continued learning opportunities with local contractors. The department has two active FEMA grants, Nanticoke Drive repetitive loss improvement has begun construction and is ongoing. The County has also gone to settlement on the purchase on the Cove Road property. The department has also been working closely with the airport to sustain their compliance with forest conservation regulations for the runway extension project, as well as establishing a new forest mitigation bank to meet the needs of county-owned development project.

Wicomico County participates in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which allows its citizens to purchase government-sponsored insurance at normally
lower premiums. In order to maintain its participation in the NFIP, the Planning and Zoning staff must enforce Chapter 149 – Floodplain Management of the County Code. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regulates floodplain practices throughout the United States, and the County’s Code must follow FEMA guidelines.

As part of its oversight, representatives from FEMA visited Wicomico County in 2021 and 2022 to perform the first audit of floodplain management since 2011. Typically, audits are performed every five years; however, due to the number of natural disasters which have occurred and staffing shortages, FEMA has not visited the County in ten years. Overall, the audit was successful, and the Planning and Zoning team is addressing the auditors' comments. No substantive changes to the County’s floodplain management practices are required.

The FEMA audit initiates the need for the County to revise Chapter 149 of the County Code to address changes to FEMA’s policy on agricultural and accessory buildings. A new regulatory classification for agricultural buildings was created in 2016, and communities participating in the NFIP are required to revise their floodplain regulations to include the new guidelines following an audit. The Planning and Zoning staff will be working on this provision, as well as other potential updates, in the coming months, and they plan to make recommendations to the County Executive and County Council in early 2023.

As an NFIP community, the County and its citizens are able to participate in the FEMA grant program to reduce flood risks. The Planning and Zoning staff is currently managing a FEMA grant to elevate a residence in Nanticoke. Another FEMA grant which the Planning and Zoning staff helped to secure has resulted in the purchase of property adjoining the County’s Cove Road Park. The approximately 32-ac surrounding marshlands. The Cove Road property acquisition was completed earlier this year, and the Department of Public Works is coordinating efforts with the Department of Parks and Recreation to transform the property.
The property will become an addition to Cove Road Park, and we will continue to educate the community about the FEMA grant program in an effort to help homeowners reduce the risk of flooding to their homes.

The P&I Division continues to work with FEMA and is continuing to educate contractors and homeowners with regards to FEMA regulations pertaining to floodplains.

Our agricultural and preservation sector has assisted the State in the preservation of nearly 400 acres of farmlands worth roughly $1.3 million dollars across Maryland over the past year. There are four MALF easements in settlement.

**Nuisance**

The Nuisance division responded to 342 violation notices and 17 housing notices in 2021 and 266 violation notices and 24 housing notices in 2022. Wicomico County code enforcement has appeared in district court as a plaintiff or expert witness five times in 2021 and three times in 2022. The code enforcement department continues to directly serve members of the community ensuring Wicomico County is an enjoyable and safe place to live for all residents.

**Fire Inspections**

Fire inspections continue to serve all of Wicomico County excluding the City of Salisbury ensuring homeowners, businesses, and recreational facilities meet all life safety codes pertaining to fire safety and promoting mitigation of substantial loss due to fire related instances. The department also assisted Wor-Wic in the fire safety and sprinkler layouts for their new technological building.

**Geographic Information System (GIS):**

The GIS Division continues to work closely with the Department of Emergency Services to prepare for the rollout of NextGen 9-1-1. NextGen 9-1-1 is a nation-wide initiative that will move legacy emergency response technology to a more accurate and reliable system based on computerized mapping data such as street addresses, roads and emergency response territories. Primary responsibilities include data maintenance, validation and updated workflows conforming to the NextGen 9-1-1 standards. Once fully implemented, the NextGen system will permit for faster response times and more accurate incident locations to first responders; therefore, reducing loss of life and property.

Staff provided GIS analysis for the 2020 Councilmanic Redistricting. Staff provided analysis in support of the Wicomico Board of Elections in establishing new voting
precincts for Councilmanic and Legislative Districts and interactive websites that assisted the public in the voting process.

Other major GIS projects included analysis and mapping support for the

- Sewer & Water Plan update
- Failing Septic System analysis
- DAF tanks (agricultural related Storage tanks)
- Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan update
- Public Drainage Association interactive map website
- Emergency Rental Assistance Program
- Delmarva Peninsula Hurricane Evacuation Plan. (Maryland, Delaware & Virginia)
- Broadband needs for Wicomico County
- Delmarva Peninsula Hurricane Evacuation Plan. (Maryland, Delaware & Virginia)
The Delmarva Peninsula Hurricane Evacuation Study is performed every 10 years to identify areas, populations and facilities that are potentially vulnerable to hurricane induced storm surge. The Wicomico County GIS Division was selected to perform GIS analysis and mapping support on behalf of all of jurisdictions on the peninsula.

Support to Municipalities:

The Department continued providing program and planning support to numerous municipalities. These services included: reviewed and issuance of building permits; code enforcement inspections, administered state-mandated programs such as Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, Forest Conservation, Floodplain review; Fire Safety; etc.; and maintained an enterprise GIS system inclusive of municipal data. Planning support consisted of assisting with development and / or review of comprehensive plan updates, conducted regional transportation planning activities, implemented stormwater management activities designed to meet the County's Phase II water quality goals, and responded to inquiries about State planning laws.

Salisbury-Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization ("MPO"): 

The Salisbury-Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization is a federally required multi-jurisdictional regional transportation agency for urban areas with a population greater than 50,000 persons. The Maryland portion of the urban area for this agency includes unincorporated portions of Wicomico County and Somerset counties, cities of Fruitland and Salisbury, and towns of Hebron and Delmar. In addition, the Delaware portion consists of unincorporated portions of Sussex County, City of Seaford, and the towns of Laurel, Blades and Delmar.
Established in 2004, the primary mission of the Organization is to conduct transportation planning studies designed to motorized and non-motorized safety, as well as studies analyzing the operations and performance of all modes of freight movements, and assisting locally operated transit agencies. These studies provide member jurisdictions and agencies with policy and capital improvement recommendations for consideration in the development of regulatory program changes and capital programming.

Over the past year, the agency conducted numerous work program activities including the adoption of a four-year planning-level capital improvements budget of approximately $127 million. These federal and state monies will be used to implement roadway, bridge and dam maintenance and improvements, as well as pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure. Additionally, the Glen Avenue Road Diet Study was completed. The purpose of this study was to analyze existing and future traffic conditions to determine the feasibility of implementing a road diet along a segment of Glen Avenue extending from Long Avenue to Beaglin Park Drive. Also, the Study contained numerous pedestrian and cyclist improvements designed to enhance safety and connectivity, as well as roadway improvements and planning-level cost estimates for implementation.

The Glen Avenue Project-Study

The MPO continues to partner with numerous entities in support of advancing regional transportation planning and needs assessments for all modes of travel. Partnerships and initiatives include, but are not limited to Delmarva Water Transport Committee, WalkWicomico Committee, Shore Transit and Delaware Transit Corporation, as well as Delaware and Maryland Departments of Transportation. In addition, MPO Staff serves on a myriad of national, state, and local committees focused on transportation. The funding mechanism for the MPO budget is Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Delaware and Maryland Departments of Transportation, and Wicomico County.
Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area:
Since its inception in 2002, the Wicomico County Rural Legacy Program has been awarded $10,682,851 in grant funds from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for the acquisition of protective easements in the Quantico Creek Rural Legacy Area. This area is located at the headwaters of Quantico Creek and the historic rural village of Quantico, and lands above the Paleochannel. Our Rural Legacy area, recognized for its prime agricultural and forest lands, is also known for its rural character, open lands, cultural significance, wildlife habitat and water quality impact on the Nanticoke River.

Housing and Community Investment:
The Department, in cooperation with Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc., continues to provide funds to assist with down payment assistance for homebuyers.

The County was awarded $8,862,646 from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development ("DHCD") for the second round of the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). This $8.8 million, when combined with the $12,880,680 from the first round of the ERAP program totals $21.7 million in assistance to renters impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ERAP program continued the partnership with Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services (SNHS), Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County, Shore Up! and Maryland Legal Aid.

Following the launch of the ERAP Program, Wicomico County adjusted the scope of two Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) COVID-19 Awards to County agencies offering services for low-income citizens impacted by COVID-19. These agencies include: MAC, Wicomico County Local Management Board, Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County, Diakonia, Christian Shelter, Dove Pointe, Shore Up!, Tri-Community Mediation, and Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services.
Wicomico County continues to provide homeowner rehabilitation assistance through a CDBG Grant and the Maryland Special Loan Programs. This assistance allows homeowners to make critical repairs to their homes and stay in place. In an effort to assist those aging in place with handicap issues, Wicomico County partnered with Chesapeake Housing Mission to provide $30,000 for accessibility ramps to be constructed for low-income citizens in need.

**Chesapeake Housing Mission Partners**

**Committees and Community Support:**

The Department of Planning, Zoning, and Community Development provides support to numerous boards and commissions, as well as administers a local housing resource board ("SHRB") and a regional transportation planning agency ("MPO"). These functions provide an opportunity to partner and/or provide technical planning assistance with incorporated jurisdictions, state, and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, private entities, and the general public.
RECREATION, PARKS, TOURISM AND CIVIC CENTER

The mission of the Recreation, Parks & Tourism Department is to enhance quality of life for Wicomico County residents through public recreation, safe and attractive parks, tourism-driven initiatives that increase economic activity in the County, and a multi-purpose Civic Center.

In 2022, the Department advanced a number of key projects and provided programs, events and activities to enhance quality of life in the County. Highlights include:

Recreation

Recreation hosted several new and returning events throughout the year, with a combined attendance of nearly 25,000.
New events include: The County’s first adaptive Easter egg hunt was held in April. Hoops on the Ave., a 3-on-3 basketball tournament, was held in partnership with community organizations.

The Just Try It event series launched in August. Children ages 3-12 were able to test out various sports before committing to a full season.

A series of nature sensory hikes and story time events were introduced at County parks. These free events are geared towards children.
The Music and Arts at Pemberton Park series was held each Friday in May. The free event featured live music, local artisans and food trucks.

Paws on Pemberton welcomed local animal rescues to Pemberton Park for a one-day event in August.
- Beer Festival, Turkey Trek, Halloween Havoc softball tournament and three pickleball tournaments
- The Challenger baseball program, designed for those with physical or intellectual disabilities, saw a 51% growth in participation in its second season
- Sports and childcare programs received 2,000+ registrations over the Returning events include the Pemberton 24, Good Sports Awards, Fishing Derby, Wicomico County Fair, Good course of the year
- New programs include drop-in pickleball and the Pickleball Freedom League
- Returning youth programs include summer camps covering a wide range of activities, the Summerfest series, Kids Klub After School, karate, softball, soccer and basketball
- Returning adult programs include men’s and coed softball, kickball, coed volleyball, sand volleyball, Wiffle ball and tennis
**Parks**

- The County completed updates to its Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). The plan is updated every five years and helps guide the Department in its initiatives to better meet public needs.

- Shoreline restoration projects were completed at Cove Road Beach and Roaring Point Park. The projects were initiated by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and aim to resolve erosion problems, preserving the parks for future generations.

- The County purchased adjacent property at Cove Road, which will nearly double public beach access at the park.

- "FIELD 7 ½" was completed in the fall of 2020. Located between fields 7 and 8, at the Henry Parker Complex, "FIELD 7 ½" is designed to provide those with special needs, from all over our region, the opportunity to play and enjoy the great sport of baseball.

- The "Donnie Williams Inclusive Playground" opened in the spring of 2021. This regionally popular asset is the 27th playground in the County park system yet it is our first "Inclusive playground." It is a playground designed with 7 core principles as its guide:
  - a universally designed play environment for people of diverse abilities, age, race, gender, ethnicity, culture and socioeconomic status

- Recently, a groundbreaking was held for the Harmon Field revitalization project, which will convert the softball field into a 12-court pickleball complex and add a basketball court and playground.

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**Harmon Field Revitalization Groundbreaking**

- The County received $700,000 in State grants for improvement projects at Billy Gene Jackson Sr. Park. Upgrades are slated to begin in 2023, including new lighting systems and the installation of a well and irrigation system to improve field conditions.
• Master planning processes were initiated for the West Metro Core property located in West Salisbury and the Mason Dixon Complex located in Delmar.

• The Pirate’s Wharf project continues to move forward. This 350-acre park will offer a variety of recreational opportunities through trails, playgrounds, a pier, an observation deck, an event pavilion and water accessible recreation. The County recently completed several required archaeological studies and opened bids for the construction of the restroom and pavilion.

• Master planning processes were initiated for the West Metro Core property located in West Salisbury and the Mason Dixon Complex located in Delmar.

The Parks division completed a number of projects, including:

• Siding replacement on the Welcome Center at Pemberton Park.

• Construction of a native plant/animal display at Pemberton Park.

• Replacement of play equipment at Cedar Hill Park, Winterplace Park and Nick Meyer Park.

• Electrical upgrades for outdoor festivals and events.

Educational Building Remodel at Pemberton

Tourism

• The Tourism division supported 55 events, which attracted over 230,000 attendees, required 47,000 hotel room nights and generated a direct economic impact of $54.9 million. Six of these events were new to the market.

• The United States Specialty Sports Association (USSSA) Eastern National Championships brought 347 teams to the Shore, generating a direct economic impact of $10.4 million.

• More than 10,000 hotel room nights were booked in Wicomico and Worcester counties and the Town of Ocean City.
- The Maryland Motorcoach Association Group Leader Travel Showcase was held at the Civic Center, allowing the County to diversify its book of business in the group tour market.
- A leisure market study was completed, resulting in the launch of a new brand and advertising campaign in the summer. The campaign is the largest leisure market advertising push that the County has undertaken.

**Civic Center**

- The Civic Center was awarded Best Event Venue as part of Salisbury Independent's Stars of Salisbury, a readers' choice award.
- The Civic Center received $5.5 million in funds through a federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant for an exterior safety project. The project will add security elements to the venue, along with an expanded box office and lobby, aesthetic improvements, improved wayfinding and vehicle/pedestrian safety features. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2024.
- The 25th annual Lone Star Rodeo generated the largest gross revenue for the rodeo in the history of the building. The Civic Center formed a partnership with Salisbury University. MBA students conducted a public perception study and developed a public relations plan for the Civic Center. A new advertising campaign launched, targeting the social, military, education, religious and fraternal (SMERF) market.

*Lone Star Rodeo*
Public Works - Roads Division:

This year, The Roads Division resurfaced 87.5 miles of roads in Wicomico County. Two chip seal roads, Fire Tower Rd and Riggin Rd have been completed in upgrading to Hot Mix Asphalt. County Roads crews also poured/formed 4500 feet of curb and gutter, 11 stormwater inlets, and installed approximately 1100 feet of stormwater pipe. We still continue to work on drainage concerns that were evident during major rain events several years ago. So far this year, County Roads has cleaned out approximately 2 miles of ditches. The Upper Ferry is currently out of service for its biannual rehabilitation. Wicomico County received a grant from the Federal Highway Administration to cover 80% of our costs which amounted to $238,600. Wicomico County used the opportunity to complete some much-needed additional work. The Ferry Operator House and the Winch System that raise and lower the cable is being replaced along with all the standard work the Ferry receives. A Weight Limits study was performed to analyze if our current weight limit could be raised. The Certified Analysis was completed and we are able to increase the Weight Limit from 10,000 lbs. to 20,000 Lbs. This will help greatly in maximizing trips across the river.

In 2021, a Weed Coordinator Program was added to the Public Works Department. This program was established to help manage noxious weed growth along State highways and private lands, with particular attention to privately owned agricultural land.
Solid Waste

Compactor at work on top of landfill

Public Works – Solid Waste Division:

The new Landfill Scale House project has been completed and is in full operation. Additionally, weighing computer software has been updated to improve efficiency and reduce wait time.

The Airport Convenience Center has been recently rehabilitated with completely new ramps, retaining walls, concrete pads and lighting.

Construction on Cell 10 & 8 at the Newland Park Landfill is expected to be completed in late spring. The two new cells are expected to last 4-5 years. Newland Park is permitted to construct one more cell before expanding the existing footprint.

In addition, Phase 2 of the landfill expansion permit was completed and accepted by the Maryland Department of the Environment. Phase 3 of the Newland Park Landfill includes groundwater monitoring wells being monitored on the proposed expansion property followed by a public hearing before being permitted. This expansion will bring the estimated remaining life of the landfill to approximately 28 years.

Engineering Division Update: Water, Sewer, & Stormwater Solutions

The Wicomico County Public Works Engineering Department has reviewed and issued 137 stormwater management plan permits/approvals for residential, agricultural, and commercial projects throughout the large and ever-growing community. County engineers continue to assist in project review, project coordination and regulation, and overseeing the construction of development related stormwater improvement projects. In addition to undertaking the aforementioned responsibilities, the County Engineering Department regulates and outlines all requirements and design criteria for the County's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
(MS4) permit necessary for State Regulation and Approvals. In efforts to maximize a cleaner and healthier County, a volunteer program has been implemented with success. The "Clean Up Wicomico" program works hand in hand with community groups to clean up litter and roadside debris. This teamwork approach allows the volunteers to download an application and the County then provides supplies such as trash bags, pickers, safety vests and necessities. In order to encourage more volunteer work and to accomplish beautification of the community, the County also allows volunteers to leave trash bags along the approved site for pick-up by the Solid Waste Division with no cost to the participants.

In conjunction with the MS4 requirements and "Clean Up Wicomico" Program is a new and promising program called "Clean Up Wicomico – Poultry Building Removal Program". This innovative Program will allow local farmers and Poultry House Owners to collaborate efforts with the County by converting contaminated impervious areas into restored pervious land. Financial relief, through MS4 permit funding, will be given to participants for landfill tipping fees upon the removal of the exterior poultry building demolition debris and materials.

In the upcoming spring of 2023, construction of the Hunter's Mill Pond Rehabilitation Project will commence. Engineering design for Harmon Field has been collaborated on and completed. The reimagined, revitalization project is projected to be finished in the spring of 2023. Engineering design work is approaching approvals on the Pirates Wharf project which will serve a dual purpose to address both MS4 assistance with vast tree plantings and land remediation while also providing stormwater quality treatment in the midst of beautifying the community and surrounding areas. Advancement of work on the County's Water & Sewer Master Plan has continued with the County engineering staff meeting with representatives from MDE, the Wicomico County Health Department, and local towns/cities and authoritative jurisdictions. Continued coordination efforts and dedication for a successful outcome has led to the finalization of the significant Airport Water Main Extension Project.
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Radio Division

A County Replacement Public Safety Radio System project which included a new radio shop commenced on July 11, 2016. There are 14 Fire and EMS departments, seven police agencies and county public works operating on the radio system. The Radio Shop houses the Department of Emergency's Radio Division. The Radio Shop provides a centralized location where division staff can; 1) maintain and service the portable (1,700) and mobile (630) radios on the radio system, 2) monitor the operations of the Public Radio System, and 3) perform installations of radio equipment in various fire department, police department; Board of Education, and Public Works vehicles. There is a large work bay/garage for working on vehicles along with work rooms/areas. The Radio Shop project has been completed.

Opioid Intervention Team

The Department of Emergency Services (DES) continues in the County's efforts to fight the opioid crisis and other drug and alcohol related incidents. This includes active participation and leadership of the Opioid Intervention Team (OIT) with the Wicomico County Health Department. Monthly 911 call and response data is analyzed and the results are reviewed with the OIT leadership. We maintain an active role with our community partners as the fight against substance misuse requires constant collaboration and cooperation in the community. By maintaining the Opioid Intervention Team Education Trailers and Wicomico Goes Purple (WGP) supplies, these entities are able to provide public education as requested by community partners to support the year-round Wicomico Goes Purple (WGP) drug misuse awareness campaign activities. This is an important role to educate and engage the community of the resources that are available and of the impact of drug misuse in our community.

COVID-19 Response

The Department of Emergency Services (DES) continues in its important role as a partner with the Wicomico County Health Department to support the County's COVID-19 response. The DES provides weekly COVID-19 data updates and weekly incident actions plan situation and operations reports. The DES continues to manage a supply of personal protective equipment and other COVID-19 supplies with inventory control and distribution as needed. These supplies are available to first responders, county departments, municipalities, community organizations, etc. to be available for the protection of our community to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Since March 2020, we have managed over 500 requests for resources. A disinfection facility for vehicles has remained in operations and will continue to be maintained for use beyond COVID-19. Logistical, Planning, and Operational support of the health department COVID-19 vaccination and testing efforts continues.
WICOMICO PARTNERSHIP FOR FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Wicomico Local Management Board (LMB) secured $1,456,185 for Wicomico County for FY23 to implement direct service programs for families and children. $933,369 was awarded from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services, that will reduce the impact of trauma on children, reduce the impact of incarceration on children, reduce youth homelessness, reduce child poverty and maltreatment, as well as strengthen families and support economic stability across generations. Local programs receiving funds from the LMB for FY23 include: Fenix Youth Project, Lead4Life, Maple Shade and more.

In addition, $63,403.00 was awarded by the Governor as supplemental funding to support the LMB mission of creating a safe and healthy environment for all children in Wicomico County. A portion of this funding is being used for planning for a Youth Crossover program, essential in the Juvenile Justice Reform initiatives implemented through legislation by the state. This program, working together with Georgetown University, Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Social Services, with support from the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services will bridge the gap for service provision for children that are both involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice. MSDE awarded the LMB with $298,363.00 for the Healthy Families program, which provides home visiting services to food insecure families from birth through school ages. Additionally, the LMB is in the final year of a multiyear grant with MSDE to provide training and development to educators and child care providers in Wicomico County for children ages birth to five. This grant of $31,050.00 is a collaboration with the Judy Center. Also, in the final year of a multiyear grant, is $130,000.00 from MSDE for promoting positive outcomes for infants and toddlers, which provides behavioral services for parents in collaboration with Salisbury University.

The LMB is also home to the Local Care Team (LCT), which is an interagency council designed to provide resources and support to families trying to access services for children with intensive emotional and behavioral needs. These efforts are meant to reduce out of home placements and provide community-based services to families. The council meets monthly with parents to identify strengths in the family and provide direction and resources for families and children to overcome barriers to obtaining services, as well as providing support for all members of the family. Since the inception of the LCT, it has impacted hundreds of families, as well as provided interagency support through near 100% attendance of all mandated members' participation.

Local Care Team at School Outreach event

Beyond bringing funds into the County, the Local Management Board has changed several programs to better meet the needs of the County, as well as implementing
community initiatives to support Wicomico County residents. One such changed program is Trauma Informed Care (TIC) and Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT).

In previous years, this grant was put out for RFP and awarded to one agency. In FY23, this has been changed and the grant is being used to train any interested provider in the County in TF-CBT. This changes the impact from approximately 100 adolescents to approximately 500 adolescents and young adults. Additionally, TIC is being offered bimonthly as free courses to all interested providers as well as community training in TIC and Mental Health First Aid (Youth and Adult). TIC and Mental Health First Aid has the potential to impact thousands in Wicomico County. The first TIC training alone has 50 registered Wicomico County providers, while previously these trainings were only attended by employees of one agency (approximately 5 individuals).

Community initiatives remain a top priority. The highly successful first year of the Dress for Success campaign provides interview appropriate clothing for individuals returning from substance abuse treatment, jail or homelessness. Clothing is distributed to 10 area halfway houses, recovery houses, as well as to supported employment services, the ACT team and area shelters. In fact, so many clothes were collected that all individuals are able to select clothing for 1 full week of work. In the planning stages are law clinics to assist with expungement, family law, credit and landlord/tenant issues. Finally, Wicomico Partnership has collaborated with the City of Salisbury at the Newton Community Center for highly successful back to school events, job/resource fairs and more.

**Dress for Success**

As members of the Wicomico Early Learning Advisory Council, the LMB partners with the Judy Center for several initiatives throughout the year, including providing support to educators.
Ongoing training assists educators with Conscious Discipline, a program proven to address MSDE's priorities of social emotional learning in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. We also are able to provide substitutes for child care providers and training for parents.

Young Child Community Event at the Mall

**Continuum of Care Outreach**

As members of the Continuum of Care (CoC), the LMB has been on the front lines in assisting our area families at risk of or experiencing homelessness. As Chair of the CoC Equity Subcommittee, the Director of the LMB has influenced changes in the Advisory Council's annual survey, adding to the data on equity and inclusion, as well as better identification of gaps and barriers in available services.

As members of the Vulnerable Populations Taskforce, the LMB has been working with other area agencies in several areas, including housing, available resources and gaps and barriers to both. An area identified as a very large gap has been treatment for Reactive Attachment Disorder, which is seeing a rise in diagnosis since the COVID-19 pandemic. The LMB is actively looking at ways that funding can address this significant gap for area children and adolescents.

**One Stop Pop – Up hosted by Vulnerable Populations Taskforce**

Outreach for Vulnerable Population Event
As members of the Wicomico County Health Department Behavioral Health Advisory Council, the LMB Director is part of the team of individuals setting priorities for underserved individuals within the County. Public health initiatives, case management services and all other behavioral health needs of the County that occur through the Health Department are reviewed, addressed and a strategic plan is put in place. Being on the front lines with partner agencies allows the LMB to continue to acquire data relevant to the individuals we serve.

Finally, the LMB will be executing the Community Needs Assessment for Wicomico County in FY23. This assessment provides the data needed to design programs with the most impact for Wicomico County. Through a partnership with Due East, the Community Needs Assessment will provide data from throughout the County on what Wicomico County residents see as needed services and resources, as well as provide the quantitative data needed to design new programs for the coming years, identify gaps and barriers, and assess the impact of current programs.

**WICOMICO COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

**History**
The Wicomico County Department of Corrections is a medium sized correctional facility with the capacity to house male and female inmates, including minimum- and maximum-security prisoners. The Wicomico County Detention Center is the 5th largest Detention Center in the State of Maryland.

The facility was financed by County and State bonds and opened in July 1988 following a two-year construction period at a cost of approximately $13,000,000. Over the years we have expanded and now house the Wicomico County Information Technology Department, Emergency Services/911 and the Maryland District Court Commissioners Office.

**Mission**
The Wicomico County Department of Corrections is responsible for protecting the citizens of Wicomico County by providing a secure, safe, and humane environment for incarcerated offenders, opportunities to prepare for a successful re-entry, and an effective community supervision program.

Corrections is often the least visible branch of public safety but this Department is critically important. The Department ensures that individuals who are accused of committing a crime are safely held awaiting a hearing or trial, and they hold inmates who have been convicted of crimes and those awaiting transfer to other facilities.

Detention Center Officers and staff are, also, on the front lines of the Shore's battle against the opioid epidemic. Over 80 percent of our inmates have behavioral health or addiction issues. In addition to maintaining a safe and secure environment, Corrections is responsible for preparing inmates for transition back to life outside our walls. This includes partnering with public and nonprofit organizations to
ensure incarcerated persons receive addictions treatment, education, training, and other services.

**Budget**
Our budget in 2019 was over $16,000,000. In contrast, FY22’s budget was over $19,500,000. About 75% of that goes towards personnel costs, including overtime, benefits and retirement. Food, utilities, medical, and the increasing cost of treating mental health issues comprise the bulk of the remainder. All jails in Maryland must offer Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder, to include methadone and suboxone. The budget includes many contractual services to provide for the physical, dietary, and mental health of those incarcerated.

**Services**
To accomplish our mission, the Wicomico County Department of Corrections provides services in three functional areas; the Central Booking Unit, Community Corrections and the Detention Center.

**Central Booking Unit**
The Central Booking Unit is a 24/7 operation and is the initial processing facility for all local law enforcement agencies. The Unit processes between 5000 and 6000 male and female arrestees and detainees annually. Central Booking holds both arrested and legally committed adult inmates pending bond review. Approximately 60% of the population has open cases or are awaiting trial. The public benefits because police can drop off the prisoners and then get back out on patrol more quickly. It provides a seamless entry point for all arrestees. Additionally, all inmates that are released must be processed out through Central Booking. If the prisoner is committed, then a bond review is held on the next business day. With the passage of the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA), many are released into the supervision of Community Corrections.

**Community Corrections Unit**
Community Corrections is an integral part of the local criminal justice system. The program functions of this unit provide alternatives to incarcerating hundreds of offenders resulting in taxpayer savings. The functions include Pre-Trial Supervision and Bond Review, Community Service, Home Detention/Electronic Monitoring, and Drug Court participant oversight.

Community Service supervision provides support by assigning and monitoring offenders to organizations within the community, typically public and nonprofit agencies, which is a form of reparation for their criminal convictions. Community Service is also a major component of the Circuit Court and District Court Drug Court programs.

Electronic monitoring services are also provided within the unit. Using GPS technology, we can track an offender no matter where they go, and we are immediately notified if the bracelet is tampered with. It’s a valuable tool for individuals who require strict monitoring that can be
monitored safely in the community. Like Community Service, electronic monitoring is a major component of the Drug Court program and all participants in Drug Court spend an average of 6 to 10 weeks on Electronic Monitoring during their initial placement on the program or when sanctioned by the court due to program violations.

**Detention Center**
The Detention Center provides a secure environment to hold adult men and women awaiting trial and those convicted and ordered to serve sentences up to 18 months under current State law. Charges range from theft to murder. When double celled, the maximum inmate population is 530, not including the Central Booking Unit.

Security, maintenance, and inmate classification services are provided by a trained and certified corps of Correctional Officers, Correctional Maintenance Technicians and Correctional Classification Counselors.

Medical, mental health, pharmacy, and commissary services are provided through contractual services. Educational and legal library services are contractual and funded by the "Inmate Welfare Fund". A variety of treatment, religious and re-entry programs are provided by the Health Department, volunteer service organizations and the local faith-based community.

While the number of offenders incarcerated has dropped due to alternative programs to incarceration, there has been a disproportionate rise in the rate of major mental illness. The declining physical health of inmates is also an issue. One of the side effects of the opioid crisis is a sharp increase in HIV, and HCV diagnoses and that number is likely to continue to rise.

**Vital Inmate Statistics 2022**

![Chart](chart.png)

**GENERAL SERVICES**

General Services strives to provide a safe, clean, efficient and welcoming work environment for county employees. Each of our over 14 buildings and facilities has its challenges, needs and required maintenance.
Several projects were completed this year:
- The Emergency Management Services radio repair shop was recently completed and is now occupied. This state of the art facility maintains the county-wide radio system.
- The University of Maryland Extension Service office restrooms underwent a major renovation to allow handicapped accessibility.
- Contracts have been awarded for replacement of the HVAC systems at the Circuit Courthouse, Fritz Health Department Building and the Government Office Building.
- The new Public Safety Building construction is well underway with an expected completion date in February, 2024. The proposed second phase of this building will incorporate a new 911 Emergency call center.

Our staff works together to accomplish the daily tasks and functions to "keep the county running" from a building operations perspective.

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Department of Information Technology provides computer-related services to Wicomico County departments and other governmental agencies to support the goals and objectives of the County. With over 600 users on the County system alone, the Department of information technology provides consultation, analysis, office automation, computer operation, software development, equipment maintenance, network and internet, web page development and information management services to improve the productivity and effectiveness of user departments and agencies.

Department of Information Technology Updates:
- Initiated the process of upgrading the 911 and Sheriff's Office Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system which also includes the upgrade of the Sheriff's Office Records Management System (RMS).
- Replaced all Sheriff's Office in-vehicle mobile data terminals (MDTs).
- Upgraded the county-wide video surveillance system.
- Designed and installed the network infrastructure in the new Radio Division building.
- Implemented complete refresh of the County website.
- Continue to update and upgrade county network infrastructure and security systems by implementing industry best-practices in relation to cyber security.
Conclusion

Wicomico County has much that we should be proud of and celebrate. From our agricultural sector, which serves as the backbone of our economy, to the world-class education found at both Wor-Wic Community College and Salisbury University, and the lifesaving work of our dedicated healthcare heroes at TidalHealth, our community has laid the foundation upon which we can continue to grow while accomplishing great success.

Wicomico County remains the preeminent destination where Eastern Shore residents have chosen to work, live, and raise a family. The continued prosperity of our County can be seen in 2020 Census data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, showing that Wicomico County experienced the most significant growth in population of any of the nine Eastern Shore Counties over the past decade, from 2010 to 2020.

As I conclude my service to the citizens of Wicomico County as your Acting County Executive and Director of Administration, I am confident that, due to our fiscal responsibility and effective leadership, Wicomico County remains poised to withstand any foreseeable economic headwinds. Our vibrant and resilient economy is continuing to grow as Wicomico County serves as the economic, professional, health and educational hub of the lower Eastern Shore. Thanks to the work of our team over the past few years, we are making significant investments in infrastructure that will generate further economic activity and enhance public safety, health and education.

John D. Psota
Acting County Executive & Director of Administration
Wicomico County