CAR ADVOCACY WATCH **Protecting Property Rights • Supporting Homeownership • Strengthening Our Communities**

Tuesday Newsletter Edition | November 3, 2026

Submitted by: Bernie Flax, CEO

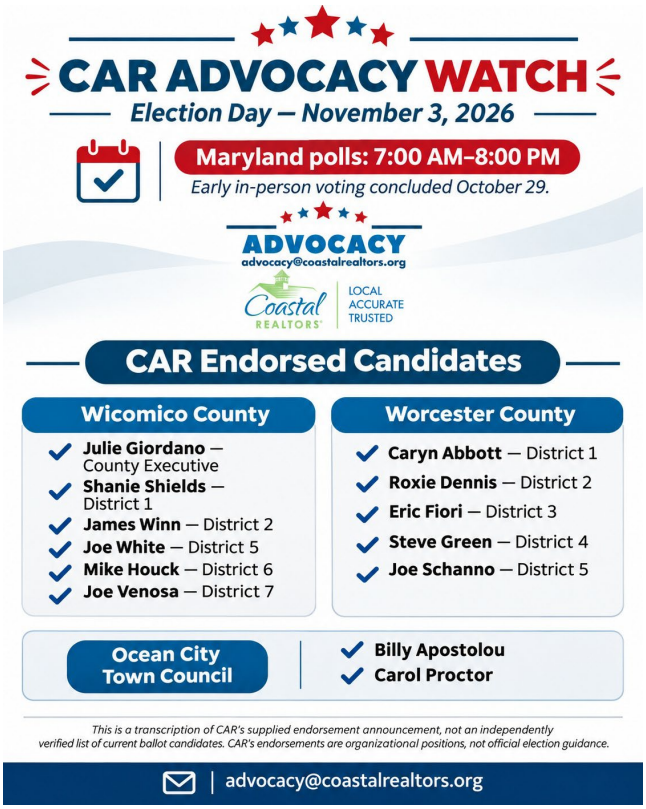
CAR Local Government Meeting Portal: https://www.coastalrealtors.org/local-government-meeting-portal/

Election and Local Leadership Update

Maryland's early in-person voting concluded October 29. The Maryland State Board of Elections reported unofficial totals of 1,983 early votes in Somerset County, 9,635 in Wicomico County and 5,102 in Worcester County.

These figures reflect early in-person voting, not mail-in ballots, Election Day votes or certified overall turnout. The statewide general election and Ocean City's separate municipal election are scheduled for November 3. Official results and subsequent municipal leadership changes will be reported after verification.

CAR continues to monitor local, state and federal decisions involving private property rights, housing affordability, land use and responsible development throughout Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore.



Coastal Association of REALTORS® is tracking proposed and adopted policies affecting property ownership, housing, infrastructure, and real estate throughout the Lower Eastern Shore. Below are the latest developments and items being monitored.

WICOMICO COUNTY

Wicomico County Council notices: https://www.wicomicocounty.org/676/County-Council-Public-Notices

WICOMICO COUNTY — Solar Energy Zoning

Wicomico County Council is scheduled to hold a public hearing today, November 3, at 6:00 PM concerning Legislative Bill 2026-13.

The proposed legislation would update local zoning requirements for solar-energy facilities to align with Maryland's Renewable Energy Certainty Act. The changes address development standards, landscaping, maintenance, and financial guarantees.

CAR continues to monitor the proposed regulations and their implications for agricultural land, private property rights, and neighboring properties.

Status: Proposed legislation; final adoption not confirmed.

SALISBURY — Infrastructure and Data Centers

At its October 26 meeting, Salisbury City Council reportedly approved approximately $244,633 in pipe and fitting purchases for the Canal Woods pump station and Scenic Drive water-main projects.

Council also approved a $950,000 budget appropriation associated with proposed acquisition of property on Pemberton Drive for future water and sewer facilities. The related property acquisition still requires additional procedural steps and due diligence.

Separately, the Council continued discussions concerning data-center development. The City is considering a task force to examine potential impacts, including zoning, infrastructure, utilities, and neighboring properties.

CAR will continue monitoring these developments and their potential implications for housing and responsible growth.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RECEIVES $500,000

On October 28, Secretary Jake Day announced a $500,000 award to Habitat for Humanity of Wicomico County through Maryland's Community Schools Rental Assistance Program.

The funding will assist eligible families with children attending designated community schools who are experiencing or at risk of housing instability. Assistance may include overdue rent, utility bills, security deposits, and other qualifying housing-related expenses.

During the previous funding cycle, the program assisted 98 households and 350 individuals across 19 community schools in Wicomico County.

Wicomico County — $288,500: Salisbury Neighborhood Housing Services will receive funding to continue providing down payment and closing-cost assistance to eligible homebuyers from the state of MD.

WORCESTER COUNTY

https://www.co.worcester.md.us/

WORCESTER COUNTY — Upcoming Commissioners Meeting

The Worcester County Commissioners will meet Wednesday, November 4, rather than Tuesday because of Election Day.

CAR will continue following infrastructure, land-use, housing, and development matters before the Commissioners.

DIAKONIA RECEIVES $800,000

Announced November 2, Worcester County will receive an $800,000 Community Development Block Grant award to support site preparation and infrastructure improvements at Diakonia's campus in the Ocean City area.

The funding will support infrastructure for expanded veterans counseling services and a food pantry, strengthening resources available to individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity.

Snow Hill — $697,531: Funding will support improvements to ADA-accessible sidewalks and replacement of aging water and sewer infrastructure.

BERLIN — $1.2 MILLION HERON PARK REDEVELOPMENT

The Town of Berlin announced October 27 that the sale of Parcel 57 at Heron Park has officially closed for $1.2 million.

Palmer and Sandy Gillis, through Heron Park Development, LLC, purchased the former processing-plant property. The first phase of redevelopment is planned to include a professional office building and retail space, potentially a restaurant, along Ocean City Boulevard.



https://baysideoc.net/berlin Photo

Construction of the first phase must begin by the end of April 2027 and be completed by the end of October 2028 under the development agreement.

This project represents a significant step toward returning a long-underutilized commercial property to productive use and supporting continued investment in the Berlin community. As a Berlin resident I am excited to see what Palmer and Sandy create…The plans looked amazing.

SOMERSET COUNTY

https://www.somersetmd.us/

Land-use and development monitoring

CAR continues monitoring planning, zoning, infrastructure, housing affordability, and private property rights throughout Somerset County, Crisfield, and Princess Anne.

No additional material property-rights ordinance adopted since Friday's report has been independently verified.

MARYLAND STATEWIDE

Governor Wes Moore's administration and Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Secretary Jake Day have announced four funding awards totaling $2,286,031 for housing assistance, homeownership opportunities, and community infrastructure improvements in Worcester and Wicomico Counties, they are included in the county reports….Budget will be interesting in 2027.

Maryland REALTORS® continues tracking housing supply and affordability, permitting reform, private property protections, consumer protection, and brokerage-related legislation.

Maryland REALTORS advocacy: https://www.mdrealtor.org/AdvocacyPriorities

Accessory dwelling units — local implementation

Maryland legislation requires counties and municipalities with applicable planning and zoning authority to adopt local laws authorizing qualifying ADUs by October 1, 2026. CAR is following how that requirement has been implemented in its three-county service area. Local ordinances, permit procedures and applicable restrictions remain important for property-specific guidance.

National — NAR Advocacy

At the federal level, CAR continues following National Association of REALTORS® advocacy concerning housing affordability and the National Flood Insurance Program. Its current authorization extends through December 11, 2026.

This week CAR leadership will be attending NXT in New Orleans, there will be a live taping of the NAR ADVOCACY SCOOP

NAR Advocacy Scoop: https://www.coastalrealtors.org/advocacy-scoop-podcast-nar/

LETTER TO MEMBERSHIP

Dear CAR Members and Advocacy Committee Volunteers,

After serving CAR as our Government Affairs Director since September 2024, **Hunter Isaac has accepted a new position with Maryland REALTORS® in its RPAC Division.** We congratulate Hunter on this next chapter in his career and wish him continued success. We look forward to continuing our work with him in his new role.

For 69 years, the Coastal Association of REALTORS® has remained steadfast in its commitment to protecting private property rights, promoting housing affordability, supporting responsible growth, and advocating for the interests of REALTORS® and property owners throughout Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester Counties. **These principles have been at the heart of our Association's advocacy efforts for nearly seven decades, and that commitment remains unchanged.**

During this transition, I will personally oversee CAR's government affairs activities and serve as the primary point of contact. We will continue monitoring county and municipal government meetings, following local, state, and national legislative and regulatory developments, and maintaining the relationships we have built with elected officials and community leaders. All have received similar letters of the change and will now receive correspondence from CAR monthly in writing.

Our advocacy efforts will continue without interruption. We are also strengthening our communications to keep members informed about developments that may affect private property rights, housing opportunities, and the real estate industry. Through our **CAR Advocacy Watch**, we will provide regular updates on issues throughout our three counties, including important state and national developments.

Please continue to use CAR's established Government Affairs email address, **advocacy@coastalrealtors.org**, for all advocacy-related questions, concerns, and communications. All correspondence sent to this address is currently being forwarded directly to me, ensuring continuity during this transition. This address will remain unchanged when our next Government Affairs Director is appointed. You may also contact me directly at **bernie@coastalrealtors.org**.

To our Advocacy Committee members, chairs, and volunteers, **thank you for the time, knowledge, and dedication you bring to our Association.** Your participation, local insight, and willingness to engage on issues affecting our communities are essential to CAR's advocacy efforts. I look forward to continuing our work together and encourage you to share issues or concerns that deserve the Association's attention.

Advocacy has never been the responsibility of one individual. It is a longstanding commitment of our Association, supported by our leadership, committees, staff, and members. Together, we will continue protecting the interests of REALTORS® and property owners while helping strengthen the communities we serve.

Thank you for your continued support, involvement, and commitment to our profession.

Bernie Flax, CEO