



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Courthouse Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

COUNCILMEMBERS

Courtney Watson, Chairperson
District 1
Mary Kay Sigaty, Vice Chairperson
District 4
Calvin Ball
District 2
Greg Fox
District 5
Jennifer Terrasa
District 3

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes (approved, 4/22/08)
Monthly Meeting
April 14, 2008

Chairperson Courtney Watson called the monthly meeting to order at 8:36 a.m. on April 14, 2008, in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room.

Members present on call to order: Calvin Ball, Mary Kay Sigaty, and Courtney Watson. Jennifer Terrasa arrived at 8:45 a.m.

Council member Mary Kay Sigaty reported that the Patuxent River Commission is developing a new Patuxent River Policy Plan, which will need to be approved by all counties in which the River runs.

Council Administrator Sheila Tolliver updated the members on the various task forces that are staffed by Council staff. She also reminded them about the new performance evaluation system for which written materials were provided on March 7. She also reminded them that the move from GroupWise to Outlook Exchange is scheduled to begin next week and that all staff and members need to reduce their saved messages to less than 300 MB before the change. Council member Calvin Ball expressed a preference to wait until later to change to Outlook Exchange because of the volume of e-mail that needs to be reduced. Courtney Watson agreed that the Council should wait if the assistants are unable to make the reductions in volume by the end of the week.

County Auditor Haskell Arnold updated the Council on the status of audits in progress and said that the audit staff are working on budget analyses. He reported that expenditures will exceed budget for the Audit office for the fiscal year; however, there should be adequate surplus in other areas of the Council's budget to cover this shortage. He reported that they are working on a project to establish a hotline. The audit office also is looking at take-home county cars from a policy and usage perspective.

The Chair outlined the budget process that was agreed to by the Administration and the Council. She distributed memos from and to the Administration on this subject. The Council's single point of contact for budget questions will be Sheila Tolliver, Council Administrator, and the Administration's single point of contact will be Ray Wacks, Budget Director. Members should direct all questions to Sheila, who will work with Ray to get answers back to the member.

Ms. Watson also reported that the Governor will be moving the State capital to Ellicott City on December 5, 2008, and that she will be named "honorary mayor" for the day. Members are invited to participate in the events of the day.

Council member Jennifer Terrasa reported that the bills on "standing" for zoning issues and permitting speed cameras did not pass. She previously provided members with a link to information on other bills of interest to the counties.

Ray Wacks, Budget Director, introduced the following members of the Spending Affordability: Haskell Arnold, Arnold Holz, Ray Brown, Frank Aquino, Surender Dhawar, Mary Jane Grauso, and Jonathan Weinstein. He then reviewed the spending recommendations, noting that the County's fiscal outlook is good, but that it is impossible to predict when the County may begin to feel the effect of the recession.

Frank Aquino reminded members that the OPEB (other post-employment benefits) funding requirements have a significant impact on ability to fund debt in future years.

Arnold Holz said that inflation will impact the cost of projects. The County needs to be concerned about the scope of projects.

Responding to a question from Council member Calvin Ball, Ray Wacks said that the assumptions about out-year spending growth may be optimistic. School spending has outpaced the Committee's assumption in the past several years.

Mr. Dhawar noted that, although the Committee intended to be conservative in its estimates, the economy actually is worse now than when they were meeting two months ago. He does not feel that the estimates are conservative, given the decline in the economy.

Council chair Courtney Watson thanked the Committee for its work. Mary Kay Sigaty invited the members to comment on the budgets that will soon be before the Council.

Ron Robeson, Vice President at Howard Community College, and Aaron Greenfield, Chief of Staff to the County Executive, reported that the Administration and the College have an agreement in principle on transitioning from the Government Television programming (GTV) to service by the College (HCC). They expect to finalize the MOU this week. It will provide coverage of legislative sessions, hearings, work sessions, budget hearings and work sessions, and certain special events. Although the College does not have the capacity to be mobile, it was agreed that live broadcasts of legislative activities are important. The Administration will work with the Council to find locations for meetings that can accommodate live broadcasts. The Council also reaffirmed their interest in streaming video for future broadcasts.

In response to a question from Ms. Terrasa, Mr. Robeson said that the College would handle additional hearings, within reason. There will be a GTV oversight committee composed of a representative from each of the following parties: Administration, County Council, and HCC. Margaret Kohlor is the studio director, who will be the contact for technical issues.

In a related discussion, Aaron Greenfield reported that the Administration will meet with Council members this week about the move necessitated by the renovation of the Howard Building. He forecasts the move to occur during September or October.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 a.m.