

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes (approved 12/17/07)

Monthly Meeting

December 10, 2007

The chair called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on December 10, 2007.

Members present on call to order: Calvin Ball, Greg Fox, Mary Kay Sigaty, Courtney Watson. Jen Terrasa arrived at 8:35 a.m.

Chairperson Courtney Watson reported that she and the Vice Chairperson will be meeting regularly on the 4th Tuesday of the month with the Council Administrator on administrative matters. She invited members to recommend items for the agenda of those meetings.

Council member Mary Kay Sigaty reported on the Patuxent River Commission.

Council member Greg Fox distributed NACo's lobbying priorities for federal legislation and budget. Ms. Sigaty suggested that some members may want to attend the winter NACo meeting to lobby federal legislators on matters of importance to Howard County.

Council Administrator Sheila Tolliver updated the Council on staff activities and progress in making changes in the technologies used for signing-in to speak.

Leo Oken, representing County Auditor Haskell Arnold, summarized audits and activities under way by his office and by the outside auditors.

Ray Wacks, Budget Director, gave a presentation of the status of funds for FY 08 and forecast a budget surplus in this year of \$13.69 million. He expressed concern that volatility, particularly in income tax revenues, remains an economic concern.

Council member Greg Fox asked Mr. Wacks to prepare a forecast of spending for FY 08.

Council Administrator Sheila Tolliver discussed the expected increases and decreases in the Council's budget, and Leo Oken did the same for the Auditor's budget. There followed a discussion of a number of policy issues with budgetary implications. Council members directed the following follow-up activities: 1) survey special assistants and members to determine breadth of interest in securing Blackberries for special assistants; 2) develop a rationale for an allowance for professional services; 3) develop a break-down of past expenditures for meals and lodging and seminar and meetings expenditures; 4) send information previously sent on salaries for Board of Appeals members; 5) get an estimate from the Administration of the cost of video transmission of Council work sessions; 6) Haskell Arnold should send a justification for the requested increase to full-time for a staff member. The Council will review a detailed budget proposal before the January monthly meeting and will be prepared to vote on the budget at the January meeting.

There followed a discussion of possible edits to the Rules of Procedures. Ms. Tolliver was asked to check with other counties to see what the practice is with regard to including a short and long title on legislation. She also was asked to get the legislative history of the portion of the Charter and Rules that provides for petitions from the public. Ms. Terrasa and Ms. Sigaty will meet with Ms. Tolliver to discuss specific suggestions for change. The Council will schedule further discussion at a future monthly meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.