

**Howard County Citizens' Election Fund Commission
3430 Courthouse Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043**

OPEN MEETING MINUTES

A duly advertised public meeting of the Howard County Citizens' Election Fund Commission was held virtually via WebEx on December 3, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Commission Members ("Commission") Present:

- Suzanne Geckle
- Douglas Miller
- Ralph Frith
- Keith Ohlinger
- Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Staff Members Present:

- **Angela Moore**, Deputy Director, Department of Finance, assigned to assist the Commission pursuant to Code Section 10.310 (h).
- **Brenna Punte-Pinos**, Assistant Director, Department of Finance
- **Amanda Mihill**, Senior Assistant County Solicitor, Howard County Office of Law
- **Rafiu Ighile**, Director, Department of Finance
- **Andrew Galarza**, Budget Analyst, Office of Budget

Special Guests:

- Jonathan Griffin, Assurance Manager, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP (CLA)
- Sean Walker, Principal, CLA

As the Chair of the Commission, Ms. Geckle called the open meeting to order at approximately 6:03 p.m.

1. Administrative Items

- o Ms. Geckle stated that the minutes from June 18, 2024, had previously been approved by the Commission via email.
- o Commission members agreed that their next meeting will be held on June 3, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the George Howard Building.

2. Budget Recommendation

- o The Commission discussed the budget needed for the 2026 election cycle and estimated funds would be necessary for eight County Council candidates and three County Executive candidates, for a total of approximately \$3,400,000.
- o Ms. Geckle mentioned the current balance in the fund is \$2,155,059.95.
- o After further discussion with the Commission and Mr. Galazra from the Howard County Office of Budget, the Commission decided to request \$680,000.00 for the

FY26 Budget year and the remainder of the estimated amount will be requested in FY27.

- Mr. Ohlinger moved to approve the request of \$680,000 for the FY26 Budget. Mr. Frith seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote to approve the budget request.

3. Citizens' Election Fund ("CEF") Audit

- The Department of Finance engaged with their external auditors, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP (CLA), to perform the audit of the Citizens' Election Fund for the 2022 Election Cycle.
- Mr. Griffin from CLA explained that there was no established standards by the State Board of Elections (SBE) for the required audit.
- Mr. Griffin explained the steps performed to complete the audit and that at the time of this meeting there were no findings. The audit completion is currently dependent on documentation from one of the campaigns.
- Mr. Walker stated that once the final documentation is received, the audit can be finalized shortly after. He also mentioned that the process CLA used to complete the audit had been reviewed and approved by the SBE with the caveat that they may request additional efforts with the next cycle.

4. CB46-2024 and Updating Summary Guide and FAQs

- The Commission discussed the revisions to the CEF law enacted in CB46-2024.
- Ms. Moore reviewed the draft changes made to the Summary Guide based on the revisions to the law.
- After additional review and draft changes were made, the Commission decided they would take one final review. Ms. Moore will send the updated draft to the Commission; Commission members should send any proposed changes to Ms. Moore by 12/13/24.
- Ms. Bevan-Dangel suggested the County add language to the website notifying the public that changes to the Summary Guide & FAQs are in the process of being updated based on CB46-2024 and to include a link to the legislation.
- The Commission agreed they would first complete the updates to the Summary Guide and work on the FAQs once the Summary Guide changes are finalized.
- Ms. Moore stated she would request review of the finalized Summary Guide by the SBE before publishing to the website.

5. Adjournment:

Upon motion by Mr. Miller and seconded by Mr. Frith, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at approximately 7:20 p.m.