

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 October 11, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Commission Members Present:

- Suzanne Geckle
- Douglas Miller
- Ralph Frith
- Ginna Rodriguez-Panqueva
- Keith Ohlinger
- Nadine Bernard

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**, Chief – Bureau of Water/Sewer & Misc. Revenue, Department of Finance
- **Melanie Bishop**, Chief – Bureau of Tax and Specialty Services, Department of Finance
- **Kristen Perry**, Deputy County Solicitor, Howard County Office of Law
- **Rafiu Ighile**, Director, Department of Finance
- **Andrew Galarza**, Budget Analyst, Office of Budget

As the Chair of the Commission, Ms. Geckle called the open meeting to order at approximately 6:06 p.m.

1. Administrative Items

- o Ms. Geckle announced that the Commission approved the June 21, 2023 meeting minutes previously via email.
- o Ms. Geckle confirmed that the date of the next meeting will be scheduled for December 6, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. and will be held virtually.

2. Budget Recommendation

- o Ms. Geckle revised the previously discussed total for the Citizens' Election Fund for the current election cycle to a total of \$2,185,280 due to the new amounts allowed for each candidate based on the new CPI and the current balance in the fund. This amount assumes there are 2 candidates for County Executive and 5 candidates for County Council that use the fund.
- o Based on the new amount for the election cycle, the FY25, FY26 & FY27 budget request are projected to be \$260,000 per fiscal year.

- Mr. Galarza agreed that the amount should not be an issue for the FY25 budget.
 - Mr. Miller moved to approve the request and Mr. Frith seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote to approve the budget request of \$260,000 for FY25.
 - The memo to the Office of Budget will be sent after the December 6th meeting to ensure nothing significant comes up that could influence the amount of the request.
3. Discussion of recommendations for possible amendments to the CEF
- The Commission reviewed and discussed each recommendation for possible amendments to the CEF and provided their comments and requests.
 - The Office of Law will review their comments and requests and draft language to be submitted for their recommendations.
 - While each item was discussed fully and unofficially agreed on by the Commission members; the drafted recommendations will be sent to the Commission for review and the official vote will take place at the December 6th meeting.
4. CEF Audit
- Mr. Ighile explained to the Commission that in the best interest of the County the Department of Finance was seeking an outside auditor to complete the audit.
 - The Department of Finance and Jared DeMarinis from the State Board of Elections met with the County's external auditor to explain the requirements of the audit. They are currently waiting for the auditor to accept the request and provide the cost associated with the audit.
 - Mr. Ighile agreed to present the quote to the Commission for approval as the audit will be paid for from the fund. The cost of the audit may be a factor that influences a change in the budget request.
5. Adjournment:
- Upon motion by Mr. Ohlinger and seconded by Mr. Frith, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at approximately 7:37 p.m.