

**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 6, 2022 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**, Chief – Bureau of Tax & Specialty Services, 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
- **Kristen Perry**, Deputy County Solicitor, Howard County Office of Law
- **Amanda Mihill**, Senior Assistant County Solicitor, Howard County Office of Law
- **Rafiu Ighile**, Director, Department of Finance
- **Angela Price**, Deputy Director, Department of Finance
- **Brook Mamo**, Deputy Administrator, Office of Budget
- **Andrew Galarza**, Budget Analyst, Office of Budget

As the Chair of the Commission, Ms. Geckle called the open meeting to order at approximately 6:02 p.m.

1. Administrative Items

- o Mr. Frith motioned to approve the minutes from September 6, 2022 meeting. Mr. Miller seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote to approve the minutes.
- o Ms. Geckle confirmed date of the next meeting will be scheduled for June 21, 2023 at 6:00p.m.
- o The Commission decided to move the meeting back to in person at the George Howard Building, conference room TBD.
- o Term limit for Commission members needs to be clarified.

2. Feedback from CEF Candidates

- o Candidates that used the Citizens' Election Fund for the 2022 election cycle were invited to the meeting to share their feedback of the program. The Commission

received feedback from all 5 campaign committees that used the fund for this election including Committee to Re-Elect Deb Jung, Neighbors for Christiana Rigby, Friends of Allan Kittleman, Friends of Joan Pontius and Liz Walsh for Howard County.

- The feedback from the committees had comparable sentiments:
 - The Citizens’ Election Fund is an important and valuable program, which they were thankful to be available.
 - The Summary Guide was a useful resource. One item that would be good to add is providing instruction on answering the last question during the certification process in MDCRIS.
 - Procedural changes for the way the information is entered/uploaded into MDCRIS would make it easier for the campaigns to file reports and requests for funds. MDCRIS not user friendly, could some processes such as the certification process be done outside of MDCRIS?
- Candidates suggested that it would be helpful for the program to offer the following:
 - Information about the amount of funds being distributed, i.e. the date and amount of distribution and calculation of distribution (did not match what campaign was requesting).
 - More information about what “coordination” entails; what you can and cannot do.
 - Review requirements of receiving funds of contested and uncontested races especially as relates to primary and general elections.
 - Provide more direction on how to determine unspent funds that need to be returned, return date should be extended and should be allowed to retain funds for ongoing expenses between cycles, i.e. website hosting fees, storage costs, etc.
 - Jared DeMarinis from the State Board of Elections is very talented, he should have support staff for his specific roles in order to avoid delays.
- Commission members pointed out that some items would require change to be made at the State level and suggests that a work session be held to better define areas of opportunity.

3. CEF Balance

- As of 11/30/22 the CEF Balance is \$1,093,936.71.

CITIZENS' ELECTION FUND: ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Fund Balance	\$ 2,000,000.00
Contributions	\$ 970.96
Interest Earned	\$ 8,079.34
Disbursements	\$ (914,713.79)
Expenditures	\$ (399.80)
	\$ 1,093,936.71

4. Budget

- The Commission discussed the upcoming election seats.
- The Commission determined that the fund should have at least enough funding to support 2 candidates for County Executive and 5 candidates for County Council for a total of \$2,000,000.
- Since the fund already has a balance of \$1,000,000, they intend on requesting \$250,000 for each of the next Fiscal Years to bring the total balance to \$2,000,000. This amount is subject to change based on unknown factors at this time.
- Mr. Ohlinger moved to approve the request and Mr. Frith seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote to approve the budget request of \$250,000 for FY24.
- Ms. Geckle will prepare a letter to the Office of Budget for the FY24 request.

5. CPI Adjustment

- The CPI Adjustment rate is not available at this time.
- The \$250 donation limit will increase for the next election cycle based on the CPI Adjustment.

6. Adjournment:

- Upon motion by Mr. Miller and seconded by Mr. Frith, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at approximately 7:26 pm.