

**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 in the 1st Floor, Columbia-Ellicott City Conference Room, George Howard Building, 3430 Courthouse Drive, Ellicott City, Maryland, 21043 on August 20, 2019, at 6:00 p.m.

**Commission Members Present:**

David Loeffler  
Wendy Slaughter  
Suzanne Geckle  
Mary Marker  
Lillian Norris-Holmes  
Ginna Rodriguez-Panqueva  
Douglas Miller

**Staff Members Present:**

- Charmaine Wilson, Chief - Bureau of Revenue Tax and Specialty Services, Howard County Department of Finance, assigned to assist the Commission pursuant to Code Section 10.310 (h).
- Brenna Punte-Pinos, Chief - Bureau of Water & Sewer & Miscellaneous Revenues, Howard County Department of Finance.
- Kristen Bowen Perry, Senior Assistant County Solicitor, Attorney for Finance

**Special Guest:**

Jared DeMarinis, Director – Division of Candidacy & Campaign Finance, Maryland State Board of Elections

As the Chair of the Commission, Ms. Geckle called the open meeting to order at approximately 6:02 p.m., Ms. Geckle provided each attendee a packet, which included the meeting agenda, a copy of the meetings from June 4, 2019, information from Common Cause on calculating the cost of the program including prior years donation totals for Howard County candidates. The following items of business were discussed in open session:

1. Approval of June 4, 2019 meeting minutes:
  - Ms. Geckle requests that the minutes are corrected to indicate Mr. Miller as the Vice Chair instead of Ms. Geckle as the Chair in the last sentence of the introductions section.
  - Ms. Slaughter motions to approve the minutes with the correction, Ms. Marker seconded the motion. There was a unanimous vote to approve the minutes.

2. Training volunteers:

- Attorney Perry suggests again that two members of the Commission attend Open Meetings Close Session Training.
- Mr. Miller and Ms. Norris-Holmes volunteer to complete the training.

3. Rules for Commission:

- Mr. Miller provided samples for three other commissions.
- Ms. Slaughter suggests using the sample from 2019 as it was shorter and newer.
- Ms. Marker asks about standards and Attorney Perry provides examples of items that could be included and states that there are no requirements.
- Ms. Geckle suggests that this item is tabled until the next meeting and all Commission members agreed.

4. Schedule next meeting:

- Decision was made to coordinate over email via google poll.
- Ms. Geckle and Ms. Wilson will put together poll and send to all parties.

5. Information from Maryland State Board of Elections:

- Jared DeMarinis provided the Commission with information on the law and from his experience working with Montgomery County to establish their fund.
- State law passed to allow counties to hire a staff person to oversee the program.
- Commission should create a summary guide or manual for certification requests.
- Create clear policy upfront for appeals process for certification requests. (ex. missing receipts, additional funds after original request is made – should this be a new request, amending reports, incorrect amount submitted, etc.).
- Commission members did not realize the extent of what is required by the legislation. Attorney Perry provided an explanation and Mr. DeMarinis pointed out that the legislation states that the Commission administers the fund.
- Commission's role is to provide funding amount to Howard County, administration of the fund and make policy decisions.
- Board of Election's role is to oversee that the system is in compliance with state law, review and certify contribution reports and notify Director of Finance once a candidate is certified and eligible for funding.
- Howard County staff will work with the State Board of Elections to administer the system and provide information about the system to candidates and the public.
- In Montgomery County, it took 6-8 months for candidates to become certified.
- Candidates have to make a notice of intent to participate in the program and do not have to request certification until they are ready for public financing.
- There are a maximum number of candidates that can participate each election cycle.
- Ms. Norris-Holmes asks Mr. DeMarinis what are the next steps for the commission? (2019) charge of funding, create summary guide, FAQ's and policy statements. (2020) supply documents in public domain for comments and approval.
- Ms. Maker asks if looking at Montgomery County's documents would be helpful or not? Yes, but they must be updated with Howard County information as there are differences.
- Some things to include in documents: candidates should search donators before entering to avoid duplicates and skewing of ratios, instructions and rules for uploading receipts to

avoid invalid donations (i.e. no receipt = no match, credit card donations must be in contributor's name, check donations: check signature will be considered donator, etc., residency confirmation will be the donator affirming that they are a resident, rules on prepaid expenses, old account freezes at the time intent is made.

- Board of Elections website has helpful information: videos and links to Montgomery County site.
- Mr. DeMarinis will try to attend all meetings and could call in if unable to make it in person.

6. Additional information and next steps:

- Dollar amount for funding is due to Howard County Budget Office by 12/15/19 for FY21. Note: funding will be for 1 month in FY21 and all of FY22.
- Items to research: candidacy and funding information from 2014 and 2018 (Ms. Wilson will get from Board of Elections website and send to Commission), information from Montgomery County and any other states or counties that have this program.
- Ms. Geckle had a brief conversation with the Montgomery County Chair who recommended to request full funding. If there is not enough funding than it goes to the Council to request additional funding, this could be uneasy because whether they confirm or deny the public may assume the decision is based on their own personal objectives.
- Commission members will review Montgomery County's manual and send their comments to Ms. Wilson by 9/30/19. Ms. Geckle will request updated recommendation from Common Cause and send to Ms. Wilson to forward to all Commission members.
- Upon motion by Mr. Miller and seconded by Mr. Loeffler, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the open meeting at approximately 7:29 p.m.