



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

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District 1 Council Member Liz Walsh Files Legislation to Extend Effective Period of 2018 Watershed Safety Act

Ellicott City, MD (April 25, 2019) – Joined by Howard County Executive Calvin Ball and three members of the County Council, District 1 Council Member Liz Walsh has pre-filed legislation (CB20-2019) to extend the effective period of the 2018 Watershed Safety Act by an additional three months. The original effective period is set to expire July 27, 2019 and the new legislation would extend it to October 27, 2019.

Enacted after the second catastrophic flooding in twenty-two months, the Watershed Safety Act (CB56-2018) aimed to protect historic Ellicott City and the residential neighborhoods of West End, Nob Hill, Chatham, Valley Mede and Dunloggin from further harm by temporarily halting further development in the Tiber Branch and Plumtree Branch watersheds. Council Bill 56-2018 passed with unanimous support of the previous five-member Council.

The term of the temporary halt was intended to enable the County's Department of Planning and Zoning, the Department of Public Works, and other appropriate agencies within County government to study—"as expeditiously as practicable without compromising quality"—the extent to which existing, planned and future development or redevelopment of property in the watersheds contribute to flooding.

The 2018 Watershed Safety Act specified eight inquiries to be made by the Departments:

- Modeling analysis of the May 27, 2018 flood
- Designs and plans for construction of flood mitigation infrastructure, including both stormwater storage and conveyance
- Analysis of how existing and proposed development and redevelopment in the watersheds contributes to flooding
- Changes to the County's stormwater management regulations
- Analysis of public and private options for retrofitting existing public and private property stormwater infrastructure
- Changes to the County's general plan, density, and open space zoning regulations
- Creation of a special benefits district or districts, or other funding mechanisms to finance stormwater and flood mitigation infrastructure improvements
- Establishing a comprehensive plan for managing and controlling the various complex factors contributing to flooding to the maximum extent practicable

By the terms of the original legislation, the Departments are to share findings as they become available with the public. A report of all analyses and recommendations as to changes in law and procedures that may help

to protect the watersheds from the effects of future flooding is to be submitted to the Council no later than May 31, 2019.

“By extending the original one-year effective period of the Watershed Safety Act, this bill ensures that the temporary halt in development does not lapse before the general public and members of the Council have sufficient time to consider and act upon the Departments’ forthcoming analyses and recommendations,” remarked Walsh. “I thank County Executive Ball and my colleagues on the Council for taking this step to give effect to the original intent of the Watershed Safety Act.”

“My administration remains dedicated to improving public safety and protecting our community from flooding,” said Howard County Executive Calvin Ball. “I support extending the 2018 Watershed Safety Act to provide sufficient time to review recommendations as we work to build a future that is smarter, safer, and environmentally sound.”

“As we await the Administration’s full report on CB56-2018 in May, we must continue to safeguard Ellicott City from any potential increases to its flood risk,” stated Council Chair Christiana Mercer Rigby. “As a co-sponsor of this bill, I look forward to working with my colleagues on the Council and County Executive Ball to ensure we have a comprehensive flood mitigation plan moving forward.”

Councilman Opel Jones stated, “I am happy to join my colleagues as a co-sponsor for CB-20, extending temporary prohibition on approvals of development plans and zoning changes. The three-month extension will allow the County Council to review recommendations from county agencies to protect public health and safety in the watersheds of our county.”

“I am pleased to be a co-sponsor of this bill because it will allow the County to review the past year’s history with regard to the mitigation measures that have been put into place thus far, and to determine what needs to take place on a more permanent basis,” said Council Member Deb Jung.

The Council’s public hearing for the extension of the Watershed Safety Act will take place Monday, May 20th at 7 pm. To sign-up to testify at the public hearing, please visit: <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. Written testimony can be emailed to councilmail@howardcountymd.gov.

To view the full text of the extension legislation (CB20-2019), please visit: <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/Legislation>

To view the 2018 legislation (CB56-2018) please visit: <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/olis/LegislationDetail.aspx?LegislationID=3118>

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