



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Howard County Council & County Executive Reach Agreement on FY21 Capital & Operating Budgets**

*Ellicott City, MD (May 27, 2020)* – Howard County Council Members passed an amended version of Howard County Executive Calvin Ball’s proposed FY21 Capital and Operating Budget. The final vote represents passage of approximately 98% of the County Executive’s FY21 proposed Operating Budget and an approximate 1.2% spending increase from FY20. This amended budget allows for continuity of County services and fiscally responsible borrowing during economically uncertain times associated with the COVID-19 health crisis.

On May 20, 2020, Councilmembers Jung, Walsh, and Yungmann pre-filed amendments to the County Executive’s proposed FY21 budget that reduced growth spending and allowed for future fiscal flexibility. These amendments prioritized funding for the County’s essential services with a focus on health and safety and investments in school construction and renovations. These efforts recognize not only priority projects but also contingencies for major County projects moving forward and are indicative of a show of good faith between the County Council and County Executive.

“It has been a challenging few months but in the end the Council came together and passed a balanced budget as required by law. Our FY21 budget is fiscally responsible but at the same time will allow our government to continue to provide the services Howard Countians appreciate. We will continue to do all that we can to make sure that our County remains on strong economic footing,” said Council Chair Jung.

Leading up to the vote, the Councilmembers who sponsored the amendment and the County Executive agreed to several additional budget adjustments that provided increased allocations for road resurfacing, pedestrian and multi-modal transportation initiatives (including development of the Complete Streets Manual and ADA ramps), as well as traffic-improvement installations. Additional adjustments included retention of currently vacant government positions deemed by the County Executive as operationally critical.

During the vote, increased funds were added to Capital projects overseen by the Department of Public Works, FY22 bonding for the New Cultural Center in Downtown Columbia, and improvements for the Tiber and Plumtree Watersheds. On the revenue side, Councilmembers Jung, Rigby, and

Jones voted to increase the transfer tax by a quarter point. The proposed increase to the recordation tax did not pass.

These final budget adjustments resulted in \$75 million in General Obligation bonds for Capital funding. The Operating Budget was reduced by \$21 million, which was achieved by freezing vacant positions and shifting fund balances recommended by the County Executive and recouping savings from refinancing certain County debt.

“Today’s approval of the Capital and Operating Budget follows weeks of our careful and detailed analysis as best as we were permitted and could not have been possible without the County Executive’s willingness to work through a final solution in these last few days,” said Councilmember Walsh.

Councilmember Yungmann added, “Government needs to balance the wants and needs of the diverse population that funds its operations, which is uniquely challenging in uncertain economic times. I believe the remarkable work of my colleagues, county auditor’s office, budget office, our staff and many others throughout county government have created such a budget.”

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