



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

COUNCILMEMBERS

Christiana Rigby, Chair
District 3
Deb Jung, Vice Chair
District 4
Opel Jones
District 2
Liz Walsh
District 1
David Yungmann
District 5

Association of Community Services Conversation with Howard County Council Meeting Minutes - Approved

In-Person - NonProfit Collaborative Training Room
9770 Patuxent Woods Drive, Columbia, MD 21046
Zoom - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86278106641>
Wednesday, June 14, 2023
9:00 a.m.

Bruce Fulton opened the meeting at 9:10 am

Councilmembers present: Christiana Rigby, Chairperson; Deb Jung, Vice Chairperson; Opel Jones; Liz Walsh; and David Yungmann.

Staff Present: China Williams, District 4 Chief of Staff; Collette Gelwicks, District 3 Chief of Staff; Paige Goldscher, District 3 District Staff; and Jeff Meyers, Legislative Analyst.

Agenda:

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks

Bruce Fulton, the Executive Director of Neighbor Ride, opened the session with a few remarks.

2. New Attendee Introductions

Mr. Fulton invited the audience of about 30 people to introduce themselves if they were new to the ACS Conversations series. A couple of people did so.

3. Member & ACS Announcements

Val Traore, ACS's Executive Director introduced herself, indicated that the ACS has extensive plans after the summer hiatus.

4. Introduction of County Council Members

Val Traore asked Mr. Fulton to introduce the County Council Members, which he did.

5. County Council Panel Conversation

Mr. Fulton indicated that questions had been provided to Council Members in advance and proceeded to read out the first one.

A. What are your personal priorities as they relate to the Nonprofit Community?

Each of the Council Members responded in turn. Mr. Yungmann highlighted his unique support of the agricultural community and his priority of increasing home ownership. Ms. Jung indicated that she has a long and distinguished career of working with and for nonprofits and that her priorities are aging-in-place, improving academic achievement among the impoverished, avoiding concentration of low-income housing, protecting the environment, and addressing hunger. Ms. Rigby indicated a desire to address the root causes of social woes, expanding housing, improving wages, and addressing equity. Ms. Walsh noted the worsening of certain trends during the COVID epidemic, the increasing need for food and rental assistance, the failure of government to meet basic needs, the spread of isolation and disenfranchisement, and the need for community building. Dr. Jones indicated that the government should meet people where they are and that things are fluid and dynamic.

B. It would be helpful for all of us involved with providing opportunities for housing in Howard County to understand why you individually voted to place the proposed \$10 million Housing Trust Fund into contingency reserve as you approved the FY24 Budget?

Mr. Yungmann noted that the money was not from the General Fund but was already in a fund that could be used for housing purposes. Moving the appropriation allowed for Council oversight, which could not happen under the Housing Trust Fund. Ms. Walsh indicated a general dissatisfaction with the Council's lack of oversight authority and that housing money had not been used appropriately in the past. Ms. Jung noted that she wants guardrails on how housing money could be used. She shared a map that showed a concentration of low-income housing in just a few neighborhoods and that concentration of poverty leads to inadequate educational outcomes. Ms. Rigby noted that the vote

to move the Trust Fund allocation was not unanimous. The process for creating low- and moderate-income housing is complicated and stymied by the restrictions on multi-family housing in the Zoning Regulations and because there is little land available in the County for that purpose. Dr. Jones noted that he is confident that the County is moving in the right direction and that “affordable housing” is not the same thing as poverty.

- C. Are you concerned about the successive 10% increases in water/sewer bills and that now renters who already struggle with rent now have this as an added unaffordable expense?

Ms. Walsh was very unhappy that water fees, sewerage fees, and trash fees were raised and that watershed fees were proposed to be raised. She was concerned that there has been insufficient discussion of the effect of those increases on the poor and elderly. Ms. Rigby noted that the fee increases were overdue and that recent reliance on the General Fund to avoid fee increases was not good policy. She explained how the County obtains water and disposes of trash out-of-county. Ms. Jung said that she represents older communities with an increasing need to replace water mains. She disagrees with how the County has been using watershed money to “restore” streams by deepening them with bulldozers. She, instead, wants the County to address watershed problems at the source. Mr. Yungmann indicated that the fee rates are complicated and deserve in-depth conversations.

- D. Relative to rent increases, what are your ideas on legislation to mitigate these increases?

Mr. Yungmann noted that this is a difficult problem and that the Council should take its time, think it through, and avoid making bad decisions. He has no legislation on this topic in the works. Ms. Jung noted that Council Members had talked about the issue. She wants to address the issue and is studying the recent approach taken by Montgomery County. Ms. Rigby added that Prince George’s County has also legislated on this topic. She believes that a cap is not a good idea because it leads some landlords to raise rents to the limit of the cap when they might have imposed a smaller increase otherwise. Also, a cap might lead to deferred and disregarded maintenance. She noted that some landlords are worse than others. Ms. Walsh was pleased that the Council adopted a right of first refusal bill and praised the limits imposed on landlords by emergency legislation passed during COVID. She noted that the eviction process is an atrocity and that tenants are inadequately involved in the process of advocating for new legislation

and in the development of the General Plan and similar activities. She added that most of these issues need to be addressed at the State level. She suggested that the County might consider requiring landlords to participate in a registry to document their rates and fees and to expose bad actors.

E. HoCo By Design, what are your policy priorities relative to this report?

Ms. Rigby noted that the General Plan is important and needs to address climate resiliency, reduction of motor vehicle use, economic health and freedom, the need to live close to work, connections within and between communities, expanding bicycle use, and the need to incentive smaller housing and workforce housing. The focus should be on redevelopment not greenfield development. Ms. Walsh finds the General Plan documents to be fuzzy and vague. This may be due to the documents being developed by outsiders who neither live nor work in the County. She pointed out the issues with the Plan's single activity center in Elkridge and describe a better approach. Ms. Jung emphasized the need for infrastructure and environmental protection. She finds the plans for Gateway to be alarming due to insufficient resources are devoted to schools and transportation. Mr. Yungmann noted that it is not possible for the County to grow its way to affordability. The new General Plan should address the rate of growth, the need for a variety of housing types, and the preservation of agriculture. Ms. Jung suggested that the County should involve Liz Bobo, who had developed an award-winning General Plan when she was County Executive. Ms. Bobo, who was in the audience, cited the contributions of Grace Kubofcik, who was also in the audience. Ms. Bobo also celebrated the contributions made by James Rouse.

F. Federal stimulus fund, are we still keeping it?

Question not asked of Council.

6. Audience Q & A

There was not time for additional questions.

7. Closing Remarks

The meeting, having run over the allotted time, then ended at 10:48 a.m.