



# Howard County Council

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

## COUNCILMEMBERS

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

### **Minutes - Approved**

Monthly Meeting  
Monday, January 12, 2026  
Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In-Person Meeting)  
Video Streamed on <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/watch-us>  
10:00 a.m.

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

**Staff present:** Michelle Harrod, Council Administrator; Theo Wimberly, Administrative Manager; Isiah Anderson, Executive Assistant I; Jim Almon, Legislative Analyst; Nick Rheinhart Legislative Analyst, Owen Kahn, Fiscal Manager; Melinda Massey, Fiscal Manager; and Brenda Smith, Administrative Assistant.

Chair Jones opened the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

### **Monthly Meeting Agenda**

1. Banneker Room Renovation / Facilities Master Plan Update

#### **Banneker Room Renovation**

Samantha Cobb the Director of Howard County Department of General Services, and Robert Hollenback Engineer for the Howard County Department of General Services presented the Council with a presentation regarding the proposed Banneker Room renovation project. Mr. Hollenback discussed the proposed concepts for the renovation including the shape of the dais and technology upgrades including directional microphones to improve audio, digital nameplates, tablet solutions for presentations, and an electronic queuing system for Council Member questions and comments.

Director Cobb, Mr. Hollenback, and Emily Iacchei Chief of the Bureau of Real Estate Management then responded to questions and comments from the Council on the proposed technological improvements; the importance of ADA access; tracking and queuing of Councilmembers' questions and comments during meetings; how the queuing

system will work for Councilmembers who are remote; concerns with the proposed horseshoe design of the dais wherein Councilmembers could have their backs to the audience; questions about the cost of the renovations, and confirmation that the funding for the proposed renovation comes from prior authorized funds and will not be in competition for funds in the County's Fiscal year 2027 budget.

The Council then took a poll among the members on which dais concept they preferred. The Council approved the proposed horseshoe design.

### **Space Utilization Study**

Samantha Cobb the Director of Howard County Department of General Services, and Robert Hollenback Engineer for the Howard County Department of General Services presented the Council with a presentation on the current utilization County buildings; the space the County uses relative to other similar jurisdictions; the finding that the County has a higher square footage footprint than the industry average; pointing to efforts by the Administration in evaluating needs to determine if there should be consolidation or piloting of small work stations. Actionable next steps were also presented to the Councilmembers.

Participants responded to Councilmember questions and comments on the cost of leases per year; how many County buildings are owned and leased (there are 15 total County buildings, 7 are owned and 8 are leased, and there is a 97% work space utilization in County owned buildings); how many County staff work in each County owned and leased buildings; what leased properties are being looked at by the Administration for possible purchase; the number of County employees who work remotely; the feasibility of moving the Central Police Station to the Columbia Mall and keeping the Police Administrative Services at the current location, and lease options for County buildings at the Columbia Mall.

*The Council requested:*

- *What does the County pay for leased buildings per year?*
- *How many County staff work outside buildings and do not require a workspace?*
- *How many employees work remotely two days a week?*
- *That the Administration forward to the Council the documentation that the County and consultant Michael Graves used to produce the Space Utilization Study*
- *A breakdown of County owned and leased buildings containing the following information:*
  - *If the building is owned by the County*

- *If the building is leased by the County*
- *The cost of the lease*
- *The square footage of the building*
- *The percentage of the building that is utilized for workspace*
- *The number of County employees in each building*
- *The number of State employees in each building*
- *The annual maintenance costs of the County spends on the buildings it owns or leases*

## 2. Reports

### a. MACo/NACo

Councilmember Rigby spoke on the key dates of the 2026 Maryland General Assembly Session and MACO's priorities for the upcoming session. There was then general discussions about highway user revenue, state cost shifts to the county, and school construction financing. Councilwoman Rigby also discussed the date for the National NACO Legislative Conference.

### b. Chairperson

The Chair informed members that he will be reaching out to them to schedule a closed meeting of the Council regarding the Board of Appeals and Inspector General.

### c. Council Administrator

Council Administrator Michelle Harrod summarized her report to the Council

### d. County Auditor

County Auditor Christopher Ashman summarized the status of audit work.

The Vice Chair closed the meeting at 11:17 am

Persons needing accommodations to fully participate in the meeting, please contact the Council Office, 410-313-2001 or email [CouncilADA@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:CouncilADA@howardcountymd.gov)