



Howard County Council

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

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

Minutes - Approved

Operating Budget Work Session #2

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In-Person Meeting)

Video Streamed at cc.howardcountymd.gov/watch-us

Banneker Room

10:00 am

Vice Chair Rigby opened the meeting at 10:06 am.

Council Members Present: Vice-Chair Christiana Rigby, Deb Jung, Liz Walsh, and David Yungmann.

Staff Present: Michelle Harrod, Administrator to the County Council; Gary Kuc, County Solicitor; Amanda Mihill, Assistant County Solicitor; Theo Wimberly, Administrative Manager; Yusef Ibrahim, Deputy Council Administrator; Jim Almon, Legislative Analyst; Nick Rinehart, Legislative Analyst; Owen Kahn, Fiscal Manager; Melinda Massey, Fiscal Manager; and Isaiah Anderson, Executive Assistant.

Administration Staff: Noted below

Agenda

Circuit Court

Judge William Tucker and Jennifer Keiser from the Circuit Court appeared before the Council and provided an overview of the Circuit Court Operating Budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. Judge Tucker indicated the request is generally a maintenance of effort budget, with slight increases for new personnel requests and to cover increased jury trials. There was general discussion between the Council and the representatives from the Circuit Court on the increase in juvenile court cases, the overall increased complexity of cases and the effect on the Court's operations. The Council asked questions about chargebacks for health insurance and Information Technology (IT) resources, and about where juveniles are held if they are detained.

Police

Deputy Chief Terrence Benn, Budget Director Sean Hollywood, and members of the command staff of the Howard County Police Department appeared before the Council and provided opening remarks and an overview of the Police Department's Operating Budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. Deputy Chief Benn discussed that the majority of the increase of the requested budget is due to fixed costs and chargebacks; he also highlighted the re-structuring efforts of the Police Department to consolidate various functions into the Homeland Security Bureau and the Information & Forensics Bureau.

There was general discussion between Councilmembers and the members of the Police Department on the process and procedures for police response to behavioral health crises, speed camera and school bus camera enforcement, and police vehicle collisions. Councilmembers asked questions about vehicle insurance chargebacks, the referral process to the Police for someone experiencing a mental health crisis, whether enough police officers have access to non-lethal means for dealing with emergency crises, and Council request to rename the newly Homeland Security Bureau.

Fire and Rescue Services

Chief Louis Winston and members of Fire and Rescue Services leadership appeared before the County Council to provide opening remarks and a brief overview of the Fire and Rescue Operating Budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. Chief Winston highlighted that the department is fully staffed in authorized personnel and that has resulted in a drop in overtime costs for the upcoming Fiscal Year. There was discussion between Councilmembers and Fire and Rescue leadership about chargebacks for health insurance, IT resources, and vehicles; and the number of buildings that are leased vs. owned that Fire and Rescue occupies.

Council members asked questions about the timeline for getting 7 new ambulances into operation, whether there is any backlog on other vehicles for Fire and Rescue, and the Mobile Integrated Community Health program.

Corrections

Gregory Smith, Deputy Director, Rory Wise, Security Chief, and Scott Tilton, Budget Director, appeared before the County Council to give an overview of the Department of Corrections proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027. Mr. Smith highlighted that the Department had implemented a new payroll system, received new weapons and upgraded ballistic vests, and are requesting a Maintenance of Effort Budget.

There was general discussion among Councilmembers and members of the Department of Corrections regarding the higher number of recidivism rates, overtime costs for Corrections Officers, and whether the County is paying enough to attract and retain staff.

Planning & Zoning

Lynda Eisenberg, Director of Planning & Zoning, Mary Kendall, Deputy Director, and Laura Boone, Administrative Analyst, appeared before the County Council to provide opening remarks and an overview of the Department of Planning & Zoning's (DPZ) Operating Budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. In the opening remarks, Ms. Eisenberg gave an overview of DPZ's work program efforts they will continue in upcoming fiscal year, including evaluating HoCo By Design zoning recommendations for future Comprehensive Zoning efforts, updating the Route 1 and Route 40 Design manual updates for compliance with HoCo by Design and Complete Streets, and incorporating new FEMA floodplain regulations into County Code.

There was general discussion among Councilmembers and the members of DPZ present regarding the Department's Code Enforcement staffing and procedures, recent decisions by the Howard County Hearing Examiner, and the type of technology systems that DPZ uses. Councilmembers asked questions about funding the salaries for certain DPZ positions through the Agricultural Preservation Fund and how DPZ is planning internally to prepare for Comprehensive Zoning efforts.

Public Works

Yosef Kebede, Director of the Department of Public Works (DPW), and members of DPW leadership appeared before the County Council to give an overview and answer questions on DPW's Operating Budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. There was general discussion among Councilmembers and the members of DPW present about water and sewer capacity in planned development areas, vacancies and compensation rates for DPW staff, and the fund balances of various funds in DPW.

Councilmembers asked questions on how DPW is planning to maintain institutional knowledge in response to staff retirements, and whether there needs to be more conversations about additional incentives and compensation packages to attract and retain more operational staff in DPW.

General Services

Samantha Cobb, Director of General Services, and other staff members of the Department of General Services (DGS) appeared before the County Council to give an overview and answer questions on their proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

There was general discussion and questions from Councilmembers on the Facilities Master Plan, how much money was saved during the County Energy Savings Days for the previous fiscal year, contractual services in the Fleet division, and DGS's database of deferred maintenance costs for County buildings.

Inspections Licenses and Permits

Bob Frances, Director of the Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits (DILP), appeared before the County Council along with Don Mock, Chief of Plan Review, and Faith Matranga, Chief of Operations, to provide an overview and answer questions on the Department's proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027. There was general discussion amongst Councilmembers and the DILP staff on the reasons for decreased permit revenue, ways to track the number of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) being built, and updates on improvements to the permitting process.

Soil Conservation District

David Plummer, Director of the Howard County Soil Conservation District, appeared before the Council to answer questions on the proposed Operating Budget for the Soil Conservation District for Fiscal Year 2027.

There was general discussion amongst Councilmembers regarding the Agricultural Preservation Cost Share program offered through the Soil Conservation District, the breakdown of the District's funding sources, and the projected number of Fiscal Year 2027 applicants for projects.

Recreation and Parks

Nick Mooneyhan, Director of the Department of Recreation and Parks (DRP), and various leadership staff from the Department appeared before the Council to answer questions about the Recreation and Parks proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

There was general discussion among Council members and the representatives from Recreation and Parks on childcare and after-school care services and staffing, the proposed rental fee increases for athletic fields, alternative compliance requests, and chargebacks.

Transportation

Clarence "Trey" Dickerson, Administrator for the Office of Transportation, and David Cookson, Planning Manager, appeared before the County Council to answer questions on the proposed Operating Budget for the Office of Transportation for Fiscal Year 2027. There was general discussion among Council members and representatives from Office of Transportation on increasing the hours and expanding the Rapid Rides program, the timeline for updates to the Bike Howard Plan and Walk Howard Plan, and the Downtown Circulator timeline.

Health Department

Dr. Maura Rossman, Director of the Health Department, joined by Antigone Vickery, Moenik Blue, and Dan Triplett, appeared before the County Council to give an overview and answer questions on the proposed Health Department Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2027. Dr. Rossman shared that the Health Department will see a 6% increase in their proposed budget, an

elimination of 13 state-funded positions, and the one-time use of Pay as You Go (PAYGO) funds to help with funding the Maternal Infant program and Community Health Worker program.

There was general discussion among Councilmembers and the representatives from the Health Department on the changing Medicaid regulations and the challenges that the County will face, and the changes to the state-funded portion of the Health Department's budget.

Social Services

Geneva Rieu, Director of the Department of Social Services, and Kim McCreary appeared before the County Council to give an overview of the Department of Social Services' Operating Budget request for Fiscal Year 2027. Ms. Rieu highlighted that the biggest challenges the Department is facing is the changes in SNAP funding and eligibility requirements, noting that over 100 asylees and refugees in Howard County lost access to their SNAP benefits, while surrounding counties saw roughly 1,000 refugees and asylees lost benefits.

There was general discussion among Councilmembers and representatives from Social Services about the SNAP error rate in Maryland and the associated penalties, referrals that the Department makes for residents who lost their SNAP benefits, and the Department's Workforce Development initiatives.

Vice-Chair Rigby adjourned the meeting at 3:35pm.

Council requested follow-up:

Circuit Court

- *Can you provide a breakdown of the data behind the reported 38% increase in juvenile cases? What was the total number of juvenile cases in FY2026 compared to the projections in FY2027?*
- *Please provide a detailed breakdown of the percentage of the total Circuit Court budget that comes from the State of Maryland.*

Police

- *Please provide any data collected or analyses performed on the number of police vehicle collisions in surrounding counties (Anne Arundel, Baltimore Co, Frederick, Montgomery).*
- *As a follow up to the response to Portal Question #11870, what is the cost (in terms of dollar amounts) of providing event security/detail at Merriweather events?*
- *Please provide the current ratio of police officers per population in Howard County. How does Howard County's ratio of police officers per population compare with national trends?*

- *Regarding speed cameras, how many hours were the cameras actively recording in the top 5 locations referenced in the attached document entitled “Top Issuance Areas FY23-Current”?*

Public Works/Human Resources

- *What is the status of the Human Resources Compensation Study?*

General Services

- *Please provide a breakdown of the \$409,488 in deferred maintenance costs for the Ellicott City Circuit Courthouse*

DILP

- *Please provide a multi-year comparison of the number of permit types issued on an annual basis for the past 5 years.*

Transportation

- *Please provide information on when the Walk Howard Plan is anticipated to be updated.*
- *What is the resident/population threshold needed for Office of Transportation to make the case for studying/implementing a Downtown Columbia Circulator system?*

5/5/2026 Operating Work Session Attendee List:

Budget Office

Holly Sun
Brook Mamo
Paul McIntyre
Lori Buchman

Circuit Court

Judge William Tucker
Jennifer R. Keiser

Police

Terrance Benn
Sarah Kayser
Gary McLhinney
Jayson Janowich
Sean Hollywood

Fire and Rescue

Louis Winston
Gordon Wallace
Robert Smeltzer
Bruce Bennett
Meaghan Kordusky

Corrections

Greg Smith
Scott Tilton
Rory Wise

Planning and Zoning

Lynda Eisenberg
Mary Kendall
Laura Boone

Public Works

Yosef Kebede
John Seefried
Allison Ford

Mark DeLuca
Kris Jagarapu

General Services

Samantha Cobb
Zach Hollenbeck
Robert Phillips
Emily Iacchei
David John

Inspection, Licenses and Permits

Bob Frances
Don Mock
Faith Matranga

Soil Conservation

David Plummer

Recreation and Parks

Nick Mooneyhan
Nicola Morgal
Mike Milani
Owen Clark
Bryan Moody

Transportation

Clarence Dickerson
David Cookson

Health Department

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