



October 09, 2026

VIA E-MAIL

Dr. Opel Jones, Chair
Howard County Council
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
ojones@howardcountymd.gov

Re: Columbia Community Concepts, Inc.

Dear Chairman Jones:

I write on behalf of Columbia Community Concepts, Inc. (“CCC”) in response to County Council Administrator Michelle Harrod’s September 28 email on behalf of the Council, asking members of CCC’s development team to participate in the Council’s October 13 Monthly Meeting to discuss The Source project. This invitation is, respectfully, declined.

I want to be clear that our decision is not based on any unwillingness to provide information about the project. To the contrary, CCC has repeatedly advised the Council that, under appropriate circumstances, it is more than willing to meet with the members and provide an update on progress. Indeed, as the Council knows, CCC will be presenting its second Annual Report in compliance with the terms of its grant agreement for delivery to the County and Council by December 1.

But the stated reason for requesting participation in the October meeting is, in our view, pretextual. The record reflects a persistent course of governmental activity directed at CCC and the individuals and entities associated with The Source that cannot fairly be viewed as ordinary oversight. It has been driven principally by Councilmember Deb Jung who, although publicly voting in favor of the project and the grant awards on two separate occasions, started this scrutiny after individuals associated with The Source chose to support her opponent during the recent County Executive election. The timing of her switch from unequivocal support to false attacks makes clear that her desire to bring representatives from The Source before the Council are not based on a genuine and legitimate desire for information, but instead, are designed to embarrass and denigrate CCC’s representatives. To that end, she has advanced a narrative that CCC has refused to appear before the Council, which is simply not true. The record is quite clear that CCC has consistently stated its willingness to appear before the Council.

Councilmember Jung's personal animosity toward individuals associated with The Source construction is further explained by the fact that she was the subject of an ethics complaint filed by a representative of the developer who alleged that she had used her public office and official County authority for private political gain in connection with her campaign for Howard County Executive. While the Complaint was dismissed on jurisdictional grounds before these allegations could be fully investigated, it did not stop the councilmember from publicly accusing the individuals who had contributed to her opponent's campaign of receiving unexplained preferences from the County. The effort to subject CCC to additional scrutiny ultimately culminated in a purported special audit that was initiated, in part, by Councilmember Jung under highly questionable circumstances and authority. In a June 2, 2026 email from the County Council's Administrator, the County Auditor was advised that three members of the Council [including Councilmember Jung] had "requested the examination or audit of the accounts pertaining to Columbia Concepts project in accordance with Section 213 of the Charter." The email, however, does not establish that the Council actually ordered an audit of CCC as required by Section 213; it identifies no Council meeting, vote, motion, or other action reflecting a decision by the Council. And when CCC sought clarification about the authority of the Auditor's examination, it was told that CCC is an "agency" as that term is used in Section 213, which provides that the Council "may at any time order the examination or audit of the accounts of any department, office or agency receiving funds from the County government, relying on a selected Dictionary.com definition—a determination without operational and legal significance. CCC has raised these jurisdictional issues with the County Auditor and the Council in numerous correspondence but has yet to receive any explanation for the authority to conduct this special audit.

In a further effort to cast CCC in a negative light before the public, at the Council's September 14 meeting, there was an open discussion of the special audit, notwithstanding the clear mandate in Howard County Code § 5.400(d) that requires communications between the Council and the County Auditor regarding special audits to remain confidential. Even more troubling, there was a reference to a subpoena issued by the Inspector General. That disclosure raises questions that remain unanswered: how the Auditor obtained information concerning another office's independent and confidential investigation; why she believed it appropriate to disclose that information publicly; and whether information or strategy concerning CCC has been shared or coordinated among the Auditor, Councilmember Jung, or others.

The September 28 invitation continues the same pattern. CCC will not devote additional resources to another public proceeding driven by Councilmember Jung's personal agenda. The continuing cycle of meetings, audit demands, legal responses, press inquiries, public accusations, and reputational harm has a tangible cost. It diverts management and professional resources from construction and increases the cost of delivering the very project the County funded. Indeed, the responses to many of the requests for information in the Council's September 28 email can be obtained from County employees who are supervising the project. For example, the County

Solicitor's office is well aware of the identities of the individuals who negotiated the grants at issue. And as for oversight, CCC meets weekly with the County Executive's Deputy Chief of Staff and has frequent interaction with the Department of Inspections, Licenses, and Permits (DILP) for permit review and approval; the Department of Planning and Zoning for review and approval of the Site Development Plan; and also coordinates with the County's Planning Board, the Food Health Services Division, Division of Land Development, Department of Public Works, Office of the Fire Marshal, the Health Department, the Bureau of Environmental Services, and the Development Engineering Division.

The Council's September 28 email also asks for a status report on design and construction. The Source has advanced from design into construction administration, with initial site work underway and final site-development approvals in progress. Following the 2024 RFP award, the architectural and engineering (A/E) team completed schematic design and design development, culminating in a community presentation in the summer of 2025. Permit drawings were approved in late summer 2026, and "Issued for Construction" (IFC) drawings were released in September. The A/E team continues to coordinate with the facade supplier, DILP, and ownership to maintain the project's design intent and support safe, responsible delivery for the building's users and the County. The general contractor is currently finalizing the guaranteed maximum price (GMP) based on IFC drawings.

On the entitlement side, the project's Site Development Plan has been submitted for review. Final approval remains contingent on recordation of the plats for AYA Montessori School and Wild Lake Middle School associated with expansion of the existing surface parking lot, along with the access easements being processed with the middle school.

Once recordation is complete, the "black line" Site Development Plan for AYA Montessori School (SDP-71-072) and the "black line" Final Development Plan for Wild Lake Middle School (FDP-45-A-4) can be submitted for approval. Completion of these steps will allow the project's Site Development Plan (SDP-26-001) to proceed to final approval. Once the SDP is approved, actual site work can begin outside of what already has been accomplished with the grading permit.

Construction activities completed to date include demolition of all existing improvements, rough grading across the entire site, and construction of the bicycle and pedestrian pathway connecting Wild Lake Middle School through the property. Upcoming work includes installation of the water line along the access road from Little Patuxent Parkway, construction of the west retaining wall, and associated sheeting and shoring.

With regard to your request for information regarding "revenues, sources and uses for operation of the building," this information is contained in the Annual Report submitted last year and will be updated in this year's report. Your request for information about potential tenants is

proprietary as CCC is in negotiations with prospective tenants, and therefore, this information cannot be provided at this time. Finally, CCC fully recognizes its commitment to youth-related programs and services and is currently negotiating with the County to establish these programs.

Councilmember Jung is nearing the end of her term. Given her documented bias, CCC believes the more constructive course is to provide the requested written information as detailed in the summary above, complete its required December 1 reporting, and allow the incoming Council to determine whether further public discussion serves a legitimate governmental purpose.

We would request that this correspondence be made a part of the public record at the October 13 Council meeting.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregg Bernstein', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gregg Bernstein

cc: Michelle Harrod, County Administrator