



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
Deb Jung
District 4
Liz Walsh
District 1
David Yungmann
District 5

Minutes - Approved

Legislative Work Session
Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In-Person Meeting)
Video Streamed on <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/watch-us>
September 28, 2026
10:00 a.m.

Councilmembers present: Chair Opel Jones, Vice Chair Christiana Rigby, Councilmembers: Deb Jung, and David Yungmann

Staff Present: Michelle Harrod, Administrator to the County Council; Gary Kuc, County Solicitor; Amanda Mihill, Assistant County Solicitor; Jennifer Sager, Legislative Coordinator; Isaiah Anderson, Executive Assistant I; Theo Wimberly, Administrative Manager, and Nick Rinehart, Legislative Analyst.

Chair Jones opened the meeting at 10:03 am.

Agenda

CB59-2026 - Introduced by David Yungmann
Solar Collector Facilities - Temporary Hold

Councilmember Yungmann gave opening remarks on Council Bill No. 59, outlining his reasons for introducing the legislation, including confusion around the guidelines established by Renewable Energy Certainty Act (RECA); concerns about commercial solar being built without County regulation; and the assumption of pre-emption for these commercial solar projects.

Discussion ensued among Council members regarding the legislation. Topics discussed included concerns of State pre-emption, siting solar projects on agricultural preservation properties, and lack of organization among State agencies responsible for review of solar projects.

Councilmember Yungmann invited Maryland State Senator Katie Fry Hester to appear before the Council to weigh in on the discussion. Senator Hester concurred that the guidance regarding siting of solar facilities on agriculturally preserved properties, and the County's authority, needs to be re-examined. She also mentioned that her office is in discussion with the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) about potential changes to RECA that will be introduced during the 2027 legislative session.

Discussion among Council members and Senator Hester continued, including the Howard County not having a designate agricultural land as Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs), the total number of existing solar projects on Agricultural Preservation properties, amounts of taxpayer dollars used to preserve agricultural land, and whether agricultural properties have to continue being used as agricultural purposes if a solar facility is built there.

Tim Lattimer, Deputy Chief of Staff to Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, and Shannon Singleton, attorney and District 5 resident, then appeared before the Council to participate in the discussion and answer questions. Mr. Lattimer gave an overview of potential impacts of CB59, including the County's compliance with RECA, potential impacts of federal requirements for expedited construction of solar facilities, losing the ability to get federal solar tax credits, the broader context of the impacts of high gas prices, and the uncertain economic environment on farmers in Howard County.

Councilmember Yungmann informed the Council that the proposed legislation does not have legal sufficiency and offered to amend the legislation to shorten the proposed timeline to have the mandatory meeting on the impacts of RECA. Further discussion topics included re-instating the Conditional Use process for solar facilities. As part of the continued discussion, Ms. Singleton gave responses to points made by other participants and her own perspective on the RECA legislation and the community impacts of solar projects built in Western Howard County.

Lynda Eisenberg, Director of the Department of Planning & Zoning (DPZ) also appeared before the Council to point out that Howard County does not have a PPA, therefore certain aspects of RECA do not apply to DPZ's review. Mr. Lattimer pointed out that DPZ's Policy Memo issued on RECA covers many of the discussion topics today. Ms. Eisenberg explained that solar facility projects are still subject to a pre-submission meeting and the Agricultural Preservation Board allowing for community input. Further discussion continued about the details and utility of the pre-submission meeting, and the nature of the recommendations from the Agricultural Preservation Board.

Council requested follow-ups:

- *Information on the percentage of constructed and planned solar facilities that are located/proposed to be located on land designated for agricultural preservation.*

Chair Jones adjourned the meeting at 11:33 am.

Legislative Work Session
September 28, 2026
10:00 am

Participants:

CB59-2026

Katie Fry Hester, Maryland State Senator
Bridget O'Toole, Chief of Staff to Senator Hester

Tim Lattimer, Deputy Chief of Staff, County Administration
Lynda Eisenberg, Director, Department of Planning & Zoning (DPZ)
James Zoller, Administrator, Office of Agriculture

Shannon Singleton