
From: Ryan Powers <rpowerz115@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, January 2, 2026 5:26 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: HCCA Virtual Discussion for CB7 and CR24: soliciting council comments

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Dear Council Members,

The Howard County Citizens Association is hosting a virtual discussion of CB7 and CR24 with the invitation titled " Discussion of free-speech restrictions of Council members and Board of Appeals alterations" on Jan. 5th @ 7:30. I didn't intentionally schedule this discussion during the Council session, and am inviting you to comment on the intention of CB7-2026 and CR24-2026 or any other statement you would like me to pass on/read. If you intend to make remarks at your Jan 5th meeting, I can also direct people to watch after it is posted.

While I have personal viewpoints on these bills and will be the main facilitator, HCCA's intention is to listen to all community members and formulate community action to offer improvements (if any) to CB7/CR24, which hopefully you will hear during the public hearing Jan 20th.

I look forward to your responses. For full context, below is the message I have sent out with the invitation to the discussion.

Thank you,

Ryan Powers, HCCA board member

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Ryan Powers <rpowerz115@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 1, 2026 at 12:33 PM
Subject: Invite: Discussion of free-speech restrictions of Council members and Board of Appeals alternations
To: <howard-citizen@googlegroups.com>

Hi HoCo,

(A flyer for a Howard County Citizens Association Virtual Discussion)

CB7 restricts the free speech of Council members responding to constituents.

CR24 alters the Board of Appeals at the county-charter level.

- Take Collective Action.
- Get the attention of news media.
- Spread the word. Virtually, Jan 5th @ 7:30



I don't need to tell you there are issues at the Board of Appeals that need to be resolved. However, unless we act together, nothing will be done. The Howard County Citizens Association is sponsoring a virtual discussion meeting on CB7 and CR24. While CR24 expands the number of Board of Appeals members to seven, it does nothing to substantially change the issues many of you have. HCCA is hosting this meeting in order for residents to discuss their issues and concerns and propose amendments. Hopefully, we can agree on one or two that everyone can get behind and testify for.

CB7 limits free speech of Council members. While the intention is to protect various boards (like the Board of Appeals) from political interference, the bill's language could result in a situation in which council members are barred from responding to resident concerns and acting on behalf of their constituents. Ultimately, this bill is anti-democratic in practice since this would result in no representation at all in matters crucial to the county.

Please RSVP here for a **Monday, January 5th virtual meeting @ 7:30**. <https://forms.gle/eVsDbeTCwgN1zuKXA> The deadline is Sat, January 3rd, when the Google Meet invitation/link will be sent out. There is also space to put your thoughts and what you want addressed at the meeting. I've also attached the flyer if you know any neighbor or resident who might be interested.

Happy New Year!,

Ryan Powers, HCCA board member

CR24-2026 A RESOLUTION to amend the Howard County Charter to increase the number of members of the Howard County Board of Appeals

From joel hurewitz <joelhurewitz@gmail.com>

Date Wed 1/21/2026 5:00 PM

To CouncilMail <CouncilMail@howardcountymd.gov>

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Dear Councilmembers,

The apparent intent of CR24 is to solve just one issue with the Board of Appeals: not having a quorum in attendance. However, it leaves unaddressed the many problems that have caused the conflict in recent years and creates other issues.

At the outset, it needs to be noted that somehow the Council has gotten into the policy of each councilmember appointing one Board of Appeals member from their councilmanic district. At the recent joint meeting with the Board of Appeals, the councilmembers spoke of "my appointee," or spoke about how their appointee sent a resignation letter to just them and not to the full Council. The Charter does not specify councilmanic appointments and by adding two more members, it must be recognized that this procedure will no longer be possible.

In this regard, while the Charter amendment updates the political party affiliation, it fails to address how to keep the members distributed across all five councilmanic districts. It could say "at least one from each councilmanic district" or "no more than two from each councilmanic district." Nor does the amendment explain how to stagger seven, five-year terms. One method would be to have five-year terms from the date of appointment rather than all beginning on the first day in January with appointees filing unexpired terms.

The amendment also fails to address the concern of the public regarding the experience and education requirements for the members of the Board.

Other concerns are more structural in nature:

1. the de novo review of the hearing examiner by the Board;
2. a system that has variances and conditional uses approved by the Hearing Examiner and Board except in New Town and PGCC where such approvals are before the Planning Board with subsequent appeal to the Hearing Examiner and Board;
3. increases in fees for Board of Appeals cases which appear to make the many non-land use matters prohibitively expensive;
4. that the DPZ Director is legally the clerk and is "the custodian of the records of proceedings, shall accept petitions, motions and correspondence to the Board, and shall maintain the docket in each case." (Passing amendments to the Rules of Procedure would correct this);
5. these administrative responsibilities are being performed by the Board Administrator, a position which does not legally exist, and the Board is the appointing authority (Section 501(e)) for the Secretary and Administrative Assistant, not the Council Administrator; and
6. a Hearing Examiner who has not been lawfully appointed as mandated in the Charter by County Council resolution.

Please let me know if you need clarification of these issues.

Thank you,

Joel Hurewitz