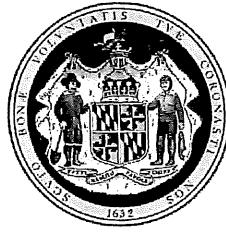


CMBRs, JF, ms



BYRON E. MACFARLANE
REGISTER OF WILLS FOR HOWARD COUNTY

8360 COURT AVENUE
ELLICOTT CITY, MARYLAND 21043

410-313-2133
Toll Free Number: 1-888-848-0136

FAX 410-313-3409
www.registers.maryland.gov

2018 JUL -9 PM 1:18
HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL
RECEIVED

July 5, 2018

Hon. Mary Kay Sigaty
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 2143

Re: Council Bill 54-2018

Dear Chair Sigaty,

I write to express my strong support for Council Bill 54-2018, which authorizes the design, construction, financing, operation and maintenance of the new Howard County Circuit Courthouse.

As you know, the office of the Register of Wills provides vital services to Howard County families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. It is extremely important that these families have a welcoming and comfortable experience when they come to us for assistance. As I have previously stated to this Council, I have diligently maximized the usefulness of the space we currently occupy. While we have archived hundreds of boxes of files, disposed of antiquated equipment, and reduced our permanent paper records by over 90%, we lack many amenities that would allow us to better serve the public. Given our limited space, our guests cannot be afforded the privacy many would prefer when discussing personal family matters. We have no conference room or meeting rooms for attorneys to meet with their clients or families to have private discussions among themselves. Our storage room is separate from the main office suite, which is far from ideal for me and my staff to access and safeguard our estate files and wills filed for safekeeping. Also, my office's location adjacent to the orphans' court hearing room turns what should be a peaceful and professional workspace for us to counsel grieving families into a makeshift lobby. Because there is no direct access to the courtroom from public hallways, the foot traffic through my office on days the court is in session is extremely disruptive. Lastly, I want to note that many of the individuals who come to my office have limited mobility. For those individuals, simply getting to the office from the parking lot, down a heavily-trafficked street, through a long basement entryway is anywhere from unpleasant to daunting. Members of the public should be able to park and access their courthouse easily and safely.

In closing, when our fellow Howard Countians are dealing with the loss of a loved one and must come to the Register of Wills for help, they deserve to receive that help in an environment that is welcoming, private, and safe. I have done everything possible to provide that in our current facility, but for the reasons I have cited, it is clearly time for a long-overdue upgrade. Just as Howard Countians deserve public schools, libraries, senior centers, and social services that are second to none, so too do they deserve a modern courthouse that serves their needs now and for many years to come.

I urge you to approve this measure. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Byron E. Macfarlane". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Byron E. Macfarlane