



## HOWARD COUNTY OFFICE OF COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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August 22, 2018

The Honorable Mary Kay Sigaty, Chairperson  
Howard County Council  
3430 Courthouse Drive  
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Chairperson Sigaty:

I am submitting this reorganization plan to the County Council in accordance with Section 403 of the Howard County Charter.

### Charter Requirement

Section 403 of the Howard County Charter requires the County Executive to submit to the County Council, "a detailed explanation of the reasons for reorganization and an evaluation of the financial impacts. For purposes of this Section, 'reorganization' shall mean any change which prescribes, alters or defines functions and responsibilities and advocates, reallocates, expands or deletes powers of various departments, agencies, boards and other bodies of the Executive Branch."

The Executive Reorganization Plan must be submitted to the Council at least 120 days prior to submission of the next current expense budget, and the legislation implementing the Plan must be introduced within 60 days of submission of the Plan to the Council.

The following reorganization plan ("Plan") reallocates staffing responsibilities for the Agricultural Land Preservation Board ("ALPB"). The Plan reallocates certain duties currently performed by the Department of Planning and Zoning ("DPZ") to the Office of Community Sustainability ("OCS") in the Department of County Administration ("DCA"). The reallocation of staffing duties for the ALPB will be part of a broader legislative proposal to update the policy focus of the Agricultural Land Preservation Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. For context, the background of the broader legislative proposal, which is not subject to Section 403, is discussed below.

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## Background

In 2016, the County Executive appointed an Agricultural Coordinator in OCS to be the County's liaison to the agricultural community and oversee the Roving Radish program. Prior to the Agricultural Coordinator position, the County did not have a centralized agricultural function; rather individual departments engaged in independent efforts and DPZ administered the Agricultural Land Preservation Program (ALPP) that primarily focused on acquiring and stewarding easements. The Agricultural Coordinator was initiated to better coordinate these efforts and in response, started an agricultural sub-cabinet, comprised of internal county departments as well as the Economic Development Authority, University of Maryland, and Soil Conservation District. The Agricultural Coordinator chairs regular sub-cabinet meetings, where the group collaborates on initiatives to increase profitability and productivity of local farms and to advance agricultural education. Examples of sub-cabinet programs and initiatives include: right to farm and nuisance legislation; review of zoning issues related to mulch, composting and agricultural trucking; forums on countywide agricultural initiatives; HoCo Fresh certification; and the Farm Academy.

In February 2018, the ALPB began discussing expanding their duties under Title 15, Subtitle 5 of the County Code, the Agricultural Land Preservation ("the Act"). Specifically, the ALPB sought to expand their roles and responsibilities as set forth in current Section 15.518. An expanded role would allow the ALPB to engage in broader discussions about sustaining the industry of agriculture, in support of their current focus on preserving agricultural land through easement acquisition and stewardship. As discussions about an expanded role for the ALPB evolved, it became evident that their new duties more closely aligned with the programs and activities in OCS and that the ALPB could serve as a resource to the sub-cabinet.

Additionally, based on the existing easement acquisition criteria, the amount of land available for easement purchase is less than 4,000 acres. Accordingly, the ALPB has already started to focus on the long-term sustainability of agriculture as a viable sector of the County's economy. The Administration expects this trend to continue and views the ALPB as a valuable resource to provide guidance on a sustainable agricultural economy.

Considering the circumstances described above, the Administration is proposing changes to the Act to: broaden the scope of the Act; change the name of the Act; expand the roles and responsibilities of the ALPB; change the name of the ALPB to the Agricultural Preservation Board; and update the Act to be consistent with current practices. The Plan to reallocate the staffing responsibilities for the ALPB is part of these changes.

## Reorganization Synopsis

The proposed Plan transfers the staffing responsibilities and the Executive Secretary function for the Agricultural Preservation Board from DPZ to OCS in DCA. DPZ will continue to administer duties related to the acquisition and stewardship of Agricultural Land Preservation. The reallocation of the staffing

responsibilities for the ALPB will further centralize agricultural functions and facilitate coordination among internal and external stakeholder on agricultural issues affecting the county.

Fiscal Impact

DPZ currently has a vacant administrative support position budgeted and funded by the Agricultural Land Preservation Fund. This support position is budgeted at \$57,332 for FY19 (available budget \$43,382). The ALPP Administrator in DPZ, in conjunction with the support position, staffs the Agricultural Land Preservation Board and implements the Agricultural Land Preservation Program, consisting of acquiring and managing agricultural preservation easements. Board related duties handled by both positions will be transferred from DPZ to OCS in DCA. Reallocating these Board responsibilities will allow DPZ's Administrator to focus on acquiring new easement properties and managing the County's existing easements and should not impact the basic functioning of the easement program.

OCS anticipates partially funding two positions to support the current and expanded board related duties. The estimated total cost of \$37,787 consists of:

- Agricultural Coordinator salary and fringe: \$21,372
- Administrative Support salary and fringe: \$15,415
- Incidental Expenses (printing, supplies, equipment, etc.): \$1,000

Based on the reallocation of staffing responsibilities for the ALPB outlined above, the financial impact of the Plan is a \$5,595 savings to the Agricultural Land Preservation Fund.

I appreciate your consideration of this reorganization plan and look forward to working with you and your colleagues on this important matter for our farming community.

Sincerely,



Allan H. Kittleman  
County Executive

cc: County Councilmembers  
Jessica Feldmark