

To: Howard County Council

From: Barbara K. Lawson

Re: Howard County Flag

Date: April 20, 2025

Over a year ago the county began the process of considering a new flag, which would represent our history, convey who are now, and speak to the future we envision. It is and was a bold undertaking with over one-hundred and eighty-four (184) eligible submissions, which were narrowed to ten (10) by the Howard County Flag Commission - no small task. Of the ten finalists a particularly colorful and optimistic representation submitted by Esen Paradiso of Columbia Creative Services emerged as the winner of a very competitive process.

I first met Esen Paradiso in 1990 when I was President and CEO of the Columbia Foundation (now the Community Foundation of Howard County). Over my nearly twenty-year tenure with the Foundation, I worked with Esen on marketing strategies, but none more important than branding and securing the identity of the Foundation with a recognizable image, which reflected our mission of serving the community. The bright red logo survives to this day, and through a name change, and still speaks to the important connection between the non-profit, business and governmental community, as well as the essential work of human service, arts, and educational organizations of Howard County.

When I look at the work of the three finalists, I find a value in each one, but I am struck by Esen's representation because it does depart from traditional colors and mold. It uniquely and boldly communicates what is essential to our county's past, present and future. It is not an easy task to capture what defines Howard County, but we are grounded in our agricultural past, our progressive development, our optimism, and certainly our "can-do" identity. We tackle challenges head on, we welcome new folks and businesses, we honor our land and those that continue to put food on our table. We are a bold people, and an optimistic people, which is needed more today than ever. Esen's vision for the Howard County flag greets our future, which stands on the foundation of the current moment and our notable history. Therefore, I urge you to support the legislation making this winning flag a reality for Howard County.

Howard County Council

April 21, 2025

Testimony

Submitted by: Howard County Flag Commission Chair, Coleen West

Good evening, Chair Walsh and members of the County Council. I am Coleen West.

It has been an honor serving as Chair of the Flag Commission and working with an exceptional and thoughtful group of community leaders on this initiative.

As you know, the Commission was created by County Executive Order 20-24-01. Our charge was to design and implement a process to solicit and collect flag designs from the public -- encourage public input and engagement -- recommend 3 options for a new flag design to County Executive Calvin Ball -- and submit a final report.

The Commission took its work very seriously. We considered other flag design competitions -- consulted flag design experts -- developed a workplan and guidelines for an inclusive process -- and incorporated public participation into every aspect of our work. Commissioners were also asked to promote the initiative through their own social media and other outlets.

A Flag Commission webpage was created to keep the public engaged and to conduct our work in a transparent manner. Our meetings were open to the public, recorded, and made available on the website for public viewing. We employed a collaborative, consensus-building approach to determine the final 10 designs that we presented to the public for comment and ranking. And, the Commission's final report is posted on the website and provides a detailed account of our work along with images of the final 10 flag designs along with descriptions of their symbols and elements and the public's voting results.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out two recommendations in the report for the Council to consider:

- The experts at the North American Vexillological Association suggest enlisting a professional flag designer and using pantone colors from the standard set of colors available at flag textile mills to produce the final rendition of the flag design.
- And, after receiving public comments at almost every Commission meeting about when to announce the new flag design, we suggest that a special day – such as Flag Day or an anniversary or other significant milestone – be considered for the presentation of the new flag to the community.

I would like to take this opportunity to give a shout out to my colleagues on the Commission and thank them for our lively discussions, for being considerate and open-minded, and for showing up and doing the work. I can't fully express how much I have appreciated their support and guidance throughout this process.

On behalf of the Commission, I would like to recognize Deputy Chief of Staff , Brian Shepter, and Administrative Aide, Monica Perez, for keeping us on track and organized and the County's marketing and IT teams for getting the word out, developing the on-line submission and voting platform, and making our hybrid meetings run smoothly. The Commission couldn't have done our work as efficiently or effectively without their assistance.

The Commission also ***gratefully*** acknowledges the people of Howard County who submitted flag designs and who participated in the process by voting and sharing their comments. The final 3 designs presented to County Executive Ball were the public's top 3 choices.

In closing, I respectfully ask the County Council to move forward with the adoption of Flag Entry # 115 designed by Ellicott City resident *Esen Paradiso* as the new Howard County flag.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening and for all that you do for citizens of Howard County.

Flag Commission Comments to Councilperson Rigby

From Pearline Atkinson-Stewart

March 27, 2024

I appreciate the opportunity you gave me to represent the District.

Calvin Ball has selected his favorite Top Howard County Flag Design.

Now the Council will make the final decision.

Many in the community have expressed disappointment on social media of his selection. I want to be clear that the Commissioners did not unanimously vote for the final three designs, especially this selected design, due to a controversy regarding the winners under the cumulative calculation method instead of the universally accepted Ranking Method. The different methods bring different results. Please review the calculation Public Poll Results Charts in the Flag Commission Report. The method used altered the final top winners. Ironically, the controversy was about the design that Calvin selected as his favorite. You should be aware that the majority and highest Public Poll vote was for the design created by a 22-year-old female from Owen Brown, as determined by both calculation methods.

There was no doubt that this design received the highest number of Public Poll Votes.

The design selected by Calvin received the least number of Public Poll Votes, and some COMMISSIONERS HAD QUESTIONED THE STAFF FOR CALCULATING A QUESTIONABLE WINNER. I regret that it caused questionable processing by staff who were the only people that knew the names of the designers. The design selected by Ball belongs to a person who has been politically connected due to her affiliations with the well-known Columbia Flyer. Perhaps this is just a coincidence, but the visual impact caused many negative reactions on social media. This is not a negative reflection upon the designer, who is known to be an honorable person in our community. THIS IS ABOUT NOT FOLLOWING THE PROCESS.

I am concerned about the process and stated it at our last meeting along with others, as a recorded record of my dissatisfaction.

I suggest that you especially review the last two recorded meetings and the entire Report of the Flag Commission to be informed of our discussions.

There were several things that I felt were not fully followed. Called scheduled meetings did not meet the Public Information Meeting Act because no public notice was given. This is also recorded and is public information.

There are other questionable process incidents and if you would like to meet and discuss this further, please let me know. It is my duty as your representative to provide you with as much information as possible to make an informed decision at the Council hearings in the future.

The Commission terminates in June. Again, I appreciated the opportunity and enjoyed participating, until the last questionable processes at the end.

Written Testimony for Esen Paradiso

Esen Paradiso and I started working together at the Columbia Flier in 1976, just a couple of months apart. We immediately became close. Very close. Literally. We shared a closet together while we were waiting for the new Flier Building to be completed. Our friendship grew over the years, even after we moved to separate offices.

Esen and I were co-managers of the Design and Production Department. She supervised the Design Services: Photography, Page Design and Advertising Design.

For the two decades that Esen was Art Director, Patuxent Publishing Company's community newspapers consistently won awards for their design excellence in numerous media competitions, among them the Maryland, Delaware, D.C. Newspapers Association and the National Society of Newspaper Designers. Esen was recognized nationally as a ground-breaking newspaper designer whose work was distinguished for its beauty and its clarity of purpose.

These are the same qualities that distinguish Esen's design for Howard County's new flag. It is representational without being cliché. It is colorful without being garish and in-your-face, and it captures the history and diversity of our community... its physical attributes and its values.

Respectfully submitted,

Phyllis Greenbaum

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