




Howard County

Internal Memorandum

Subject: Testimony – CR 54-2016 – Housing Commission Personnel Procedures

To: Lonnie R. Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer

From: Thomas P. Carbo, Director 
Housing and Community Development

Date: May 5, 2016

Council Resolution 54-2016 approves personnel policies and procedures for the Howard County Housing Commission. The proposed policies and procedures were adopted by the Commissioners on April 19, 2016. Section 13.1317 of the Howard County Code requires approval of the County Council and County Executive.

Background

Although the Howard County Housing Commission, the County's public housing authority, has always retained the authority to hire its own staff, it has historically used County employees to perform its functions and has reimbursed the County for those services. As the Commission's portfolio and programs have grown in both size and complexity, however, the Commissioners have determined that, for several reasons, it is in its best interest to hire staff directly. Among those reasons, the Commission believes that separate staffing will:

- (a) Avoid the potential for conflict of interest that may arise when the County and Commission are involved in the same transaction;
- (b) Alleviate public confusion and misperceptions about the nature and role of the Commission *vis a vis* the County; and
- (c) Provide greater flexibility in hiring, compensation, and separation of employees, thereby allowing it to better compete with the private sector to recruit and retain specialized personnel.

The Commission's proposed Personnel Policies and Procedures are modeled after a combination of the Economic Development Authority's personnel procedures and the County's Employee Manual. Key provisions include:

- All current employees of the Department of Housing and Community Development whose positions with the County will be eliminated will be offered comparable positions with the Commission beginning July 1, 2016 at the same or greater salary.
- Pursuant to CB 12-2016, all employees will be eligible to participate in the Howard County Retirement System.

- Subject to an agreement with the County, all full-time employees will be able to participate in the County's health care coverage and other benefits, including life insurance and long-term disability.
- Employees will receive paid leave for County holidays plus the days between Christmas and New Year's Day.
- Current employees may carry over annual and sick leave. All employees earn annual and sick leave at the current County rate.
- With approval of the Executive Director, employees may work flexible work schedules and telecommute.
- The Board of Commissioners will establish a pay plan as part of the Commission's annual budget process. The budget may include bonuses based on performance evaluations.
- Employees will be considered "at-will," i.e., they may be terminated with or without cause.
- Employees may appeal decisions of the Executive Director to the Chair of the Board of Commissioners.

In sum, the proposed Personnel Policies and Procedures will provide Commission employees many of the same benefits as they currently enjoy, while allowing for a more efficient personnel system. As a developer and property management business, the Commission needs to be nimble enough to recruit and retain specialized staff to enable it to compete in the real estate market. These policies and procedures will allow it to fill positions quicker with greater flexibility to promote and reward strong performance.

Fiscal Impact

The resolution will have no fiscal impact.

The Howard County Department of Housing and Community Development recommends approval of the Resolution.

cc: Allan H. Kittleman, County Executive
B. Diane Wilson, Chief of Staff
Jennifer Sager, Legislative Coordinator