



Howard County Council

George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, Maryland 21043-4392

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Minutes Budget Work Session April 30, 2014

The Chair called the work session to order at 8:35 a.m. in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room.

Members Present: Dr. Calvin Ball, Chairperson; Courtney Watson, Vice Chairperson; Mary Kay Sigaty; Jen Terrasa; Greg Fox joined by telephone

Budget Staff Present: Ray Wacks, Brooke Mano, Don Stitely.

Council Staff: Craig Glendenning, Auditor; Audit Staff: Ed Shulder, Steve Peters; Administrator: Sheila Tolliver

Budget Director Ray Wacks reviewed revenues projected for FY 2015 and proposed fee increases. He noted that property tax revenue will rise, although the rate will stay the same, because of increasing assessments. He projected strong growth in income tax revenue, reflecting high incomes, low unemployment, and a strong stock market. He attributed the 9% proposed increase in water and sewer rates primarily to the increases in Baltimore City's rates. Howard County purchases water from Baltimore. He noted that the fee-in-lieu for Stormwater also was proposed to increase. The fee-in-lieu for sidewalks reflects the unit cost for sidewalk construction, which is found in CR 50-2014.

Chief William McMahon summarized increased positions allowed in the budget and the intended uses for those personnel. He also discussed the need for another station in the Columbia area as a future priority.

William Goddard, Chief of the Fire and Rescue Services Department, gave an overview of improvements in services, including as improvement in survival rates of heart attack victims ranking Howard County second in the nation. He gave an extended description of efforts to train contingent personnel in Lisbon and West Frederick so that they could meet current certification standards.

He further described progress in working on a length of service proposal for volunteers, and he noted that he is getting recommendations from volunteers for distribution of 508 funds. Members inquired about fire stations planned in Elkridge, which is on target, and on Route 1, which is part of a larger Route 1 plan and is delayed pending completion of an access road.

Jack Kavanagh, Director of the Department of Corrections, summarized new initiatives, including the expected deployment of new personnel. He mentioned several cost saving initiatives and cooperative efforts, using grant funds and interagency collaboration to deliver services at greater efficiency. He mentioned clean-up initiatives for parks, roads, and bus shelters.

Mr. Kavanagh then described plans for the capital improvements at the detention center, noting that the facility, built in 1983, has become inadequate to meet current standards and requirements. He also explained the plan to provide temporary transitional housing for inmates who have been released and are integrating back into the community.

Ms. Watson noted that the capital expenditures programmed in the proposed capital program are likely to exceed the level of indebtedness the County may undertake, and she urged the Administration to help advocates understand that all needs may not be able to proceed on the schedule in the Capital Program.

The meeting closed at 10:45 a.m.