



Howard County Council

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

COUNCILMEMBERS

Deb Jung, Chair
District 4
Liz Walsh, Vice Chair
District 1
Opel Jones
District 2
Christiana Rigby
District 3
David Yungmann
District 5

Minutes – Approved

Legislative Work Session

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In-Person Meeting)

Video Streamed on <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/watch-us>
9:30 a.m.

Councilmembers present: Liz Walsh, Christina Rigby, and Deb Jung.

Members absent: Opel Jones and David Yungmann.

Staff Present: Michelle Harrod, Council Administrator; Theo Wimberly, Administrative Manager; Isaiah Anderson, Executive Assistant; Owen Kahn, Legislative Analyst; Owen Clark, Acting County Auditor; Rebecca Gold, Office of the County Auditor; Gary Kuc, County Solicitor; and Amanda Mihill, Office of Law.

Chair Jung opened the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Agenda

CB3-2024 - Introduced by The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive
AN ACT imposing a cap on the amount of damages that can be awarded to a person aggrieved by a prohibited employment action; and generally relating causes of action and the award of civil remedies

Ms. Sonnier gave an overview of the intent of CB3-2024. She described the process for an employee to report unlawful employment practices, including going to the Office of Human Rights (OHR). Chair Jung and Ms. Sonnier discussed the current process and the cap on damages at the State and federal levels. Ms. Sonnier responded to questions from the Council regarding: the number of businesses in Howard County that fit into each damages cap; the number of complaints with the OHR; how many cases are typically found in favor of the employer; authority of the OHR to investigate cases brought against the County; how many County employees have brought claims to the OHR; claims awarded more than \$300,000; if the bill is only prospective; details surrounding the County law being out of sync with State and federal law; impact of not adopting the damages caps; what cases would be covered by the bill; and “forum shopping” by those who file claims in an attempt to maximize damages.

Council Member Liz Walsh moved that the meeting be closed in accordance with Section 3-305(b)(7) of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland to consult with legal counsel to obtain

legal advice on a legal matter namely the topic of Council Bill 3-2024. Council Member Rigby seconded the motion.

The roll call vote called by the Administrator on the motion was: Yea: Council Members Christiana Rigby, Deb Jung, and Liz Walsh. Council Members Opel Jones, and David Yungmann were absent.

The motion to close the meeting in accordance with Section 3-305(b)(7) of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland passed.

The Council recessed the open session and moved to the Council's Large Conference Room to convene into closed session at 10:06 a.m.

No action was taken by Council in the closed session. The Council ended the closed session at 10:16 a.m. and reconvened in open session in the C. Vernon Grey Room.

There was a general discussion about the policy goal surrounding the establishment of damages caps, and how the County's self- insurance is used to pay damages.

Council requested follow up:

- *The percentage of unlawful employment cases that are found in favor of the employer.*
- *The number of County employees who have brought cases to the Office of Human Rights.*

CB6-2024 - Introduced by The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

AN ACT pursuant to Section 612 of the Howard County Charter, approving Lease Agreement between Howard County, Maryland and AAK II, LLC, a Maryland Limited Liability Company, for approximately 13,057 square feet of rentable space in a building located at 7095 Samuel Morse Drive, Columbia, Maryland, under the terms of which the County agrees to pay certain costs associated with the premises; authorizing the County Executive to enter into the Lease Agreement and to make changes to the Lease Agreement before executing it, under certain conditions; and generally relating to a multi-year Lease.

The Department of Public Works responded to questions from the Council regarding the details of the lease as specified in CR71-2023. Topics included: timing of lease; the uses of the leased space; staff implications; a comparison with other Howard County leases; the County's master plan for leased space; consideration for consolidating lease spaces; zoning requirements when reviewing leased space; staffing and salary effects on the Department; how future growth in the County can be used to predict office space needs; other locations used by the Department; the costs and benefits of leasing versus owning office space; and future use of the Montgomery Road location.

During the discussion, Chair Jung pointed out the need to evaluate the space allocated to the Council Office. By comparison, the Council has a little over 5,000 square foot for the same number of staff members CB6-2024 is proposing to require 13,000 square foot of leased space.

Chair Jung closed the meeting at 11:26 a.m.

Attendees:

CB3-2024

Yolanda Sonnier

CB6-2024

DPW

Administration – Yosef Kebede

Real Estate Services - Emily Iacchei

Facilities – Sharon Walsh

Utilities – Ross Beschner