



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 - Unapproved

Legislative Work Session
Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In-Person Meeting)
Video Streamed on <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/watch-us>
Tuesday, September 24, 2024
9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Chair Jung opened the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

Council Members present: Chair Deb Jung, Vice Chair Liz Walsh, Opel Jones, Christiana Rigby, and David Yungmann.

Staff present: Michelle Harrod, Administrator to the County Council; Lisa Geerman, Acting County Auditor; Gary Kuc, County Solicitor; Amanda Mihill, Assistant County Solicitor; Isaiah Anderson, Executive Assistant I; Theo Wimberly, Administrative Manager; Ervens Jean-Pierre, Legislative Analyst; and Virginia Gambrell, Administrative Aide.

Agenda:

CB47-2024 - Introduced by Liz Walsh

Short Title: Inspector General – Establishment

Title: AN ACT establishing the Office of the Inspector General; specifying the selection, term, qualifications, and responsibilities of the Inspector General; providing for the referral of certain matters; specifying the funding and powers of the Office of the Inspector General; requiring certain reports; establishing the Inspector General Advisory Board; specifying the composition, powers, and duties of the Inspector General Advisory Board; specifying the selection, term, and responsibilities of the Inspector General Advisory Board; and generally relating to the Office of the Inspector General.
expires – 09/09/2024; extended – 10/15/2024; extended twice – 11/18/2024

CB48-2024 - Introduced by Liz Walsh

Short Title: Inspector General – Companion Legislation and Code Revisions

Title: AN ACT supporting the creation of the Office of the Inspector General; amending the process for whistleblower complaints; repealing certain duties of the County Auditor; amending the composition of the Howard County Ethics Commission; and relating to

supporting the Office of the Inspector General.

expires – 09/09/2024; extended – 10/15/2024; extended twice – 11/18/2024

Chair Jung opened the session and initiated the discussions on establishing an Inspector General (IG), emphasizing the need for operational independence from Council management to ensure accountability and transparency. Vice Chair Walsh discussed the need for a robust hiring process with legislative oversight and citizen input. Council Member Yungmann suggested that it may be helpful to consider a supermajority vote for the IG's removal to prevent arbitrary dismissals. David McClintock noted that both legislative and citizen board models could be effective, expressing the need for a diverse skill set in candidates, among them auditing, government operations, management, etc. Council Member Jones raised concerns about the IG's authority affecting departmental efficiency. Chair Jung stated that the IG would focus on oversight without disrupting operations.

The Council discussed details of establishing an Office of Inspector General, including the structure of the Office; duties and function; establishing a citizen's board; appointing or removal of the IG; qualifications; oversight; term of office; and budget appropriations. Chair Jung suggested allocating a small percentage of the County's budget for IG operations and creating a floating fund for specialized support. Discussions on citizens board's qualifications emphasized preventing conflicts of interest, with proposals to disqualify candidates involved in donating to political campaigns or lobbying activities. Council members also stressed the protections for whistleblowers to encourage reporting misconduct. A timeline for moving forward with legislation was discussed, targeting Council action in December or January following anticipated approval of the Charter Amendment. .

CB49-2024 - Introduced by The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Emergency Appropriations- Economic Development Authority – Farmer Grants

Title: AN ACT making emergency appropriations pursuant to Section 610(b) of the Howard County Charter and amending the Annual Budget and Appropriation for Fiscal Year 2025 to provide additional spending authority in the Economic Development Authority for farmer grants; and declaring that this Act is an Emergency Bill necessary to meet a public emergency affecting life, health or property.

expires – 11/12/2024; extended – 12/17/2024; extended twice – 01/21/2025

Jennifer Jones, Kathy Johnson, and James Zoller responded to questions from the Council about the grant program proposed in CB49-2024, specifically grant eligibility criteria; documentation required from farmers; a stronger application process; and proof of the losses by farmers. There was additional discussion regarding various grant programs; education and outreach to farmers; long-term resilience; effects of climate change on farming; and sustainable financial assistance options.

CR134-2024 - Introduced by The Chairperson at the request of the County Executive

Short Title: Supporting an Application – Eastern Howard County Enterprise Zone designation

Title: A RESOLUTION supporting an application to the State of Maryland for the designation of the Eastern Howard County Enterprise Zone as part of the Maryland Enterprise Zone Program.

Participants for CR134-2024 responded to questions from the Council about the use and effectiveness of an enterprise zones; the designation of Route One and Gateway; incentivizing industrial development in areas already undergoing extensive planning initiatives; community needs; and development goals. Additional topics included the economic benefit; effect on local economy; long-term impact of tax credits; need for detailed data analysis; and the need for ongoing community engagement.

Chair Jung adjourned the meeting at 2:11 p.m.

Persons needing accommodations to fully participate in the meeting, please contact the Council Office, 410-313-2001 or email CouncilADA@howardcountymd.gov

Legislative Work Session - Participants
Tuesday, September 24, 2024

CB47-2024 & CB48-2024

David McClintock, Government Relations for National Association of Inspectors General:
Jean Xu, Chair Howard County Ethics Commission

CB49-2024

Jennifer Jones, EDA
James Zoller, Ag Bureau
Kathy Johnson, EDA

CR134-2024

Economic Development Authority

Jennifer Jones
Jason Janati
Kathy Johnson

Community Sustainability Office & Agricultural Preservation Board.

James Zoller

Department of Planning and Zoning

Mary Kendall

County Executive

Brian Shepter

State Department of Assessment and Taxation

Braxton McNeill