



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

Joint Meeting of the Howard County Council
and the Howard County Board of Education
December 9, 2024
Hybrid Meeting (Virtual and In-Person Meeting)
Video Streamed on <https://cc.howardcountymd.gov/watch-us>
10:00 a.m.

The Vice Chair opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Councilmembers present: Liz Walsh, Opel Jones, Deb Jung, Christiana Rigby, and David Yungmann.

Board of Education Members Present: Jolene Mosley, Dr. Linfeng Chen, Andrea Chamblee Jacky McCoy, Meg Ricks, Antonia Watts.

Staff Present

HCPSS: Bill Barnes, Superintendent; Cornell Brown, Chief Operating Officer; Michael Carson, Human Resources Executive Officer, Daniel Lubeley, Executive Director, Capital Planning & Construction; Jennifer Robinson, Chief Schools Officer; and Dr. Terri Savage, Chief Academic Officer.

County Council: Michelle Harrod, Lisa Geerman, Acting County Auditor; Council Administrator; Theo Wimberly Senior Administrative Analyst; Jim Almon, Legislative Analyst; Nick Rinehart, Legislative Analyst; Isaiah Anderson, Executive Assistant I; and Virginia Gambrell, Administrative Aid.

Agenda

FY26 Capital and Operating Budget Update

Superintendent Barnes and Chief Operating Officer Brown discussed the factors the Howard County Public School System (“HCPSS”) would consider for prioritizing capital projects. Mr. Brown discussed the School Board’s efforts on establishing the criteria for prioritizing school projects, focusing on building conditions and facility utilization. Mr. Brown stated it is the intention of the Board to hire a consultant to evaluate building performance and align with HCPSS academic Programs. The estimated cost of the consultant is \$2.5 million dollars with \$500,000 allocated for private-public partnerships.

Council members and Board of Education members asked what type of consultant would be hired, and why the cost would be \$2.5 million dollars and if there was anyway such work could be done in house.

Mr. Brown responded that a comprehensive study of current buildings is necessary and HCPSS needs to collaborate with others to develop a strategy for financing renovations of existing facilities.

Both Council members and Board members stated their interest in seeing the criteria for prioritization capital projects codified into law.

Update on Policies for Reportable Offenses

Jennifer Robinson the Chief of Schools and Superintendent Bill Barnes spoke about an event at Howard High School that occurred on October 15, 2024, which involved a student bringing a weapon to school. Ms. Robinson discussed measures HCPSS is taking for safety and security measures, including professional learning and emergency operations plans. She also discussed efforts to improve information sharing and placement processes for students involved in criminal activity. Ms. Robinson pointed to improved collaboration with other school systems and law enforcement agencies to address gaps in student information in order to identify students who may have reportable offenses. Ms. Robinson explained that a “reportable offense” is provided in COMAR Regulation 9280.

Discussion followed regarding what communications and policies HCPSS uses when dealing with transfer students or students with a reportable offense. Councilmembers asked if there was a statewide database for students with reportable offenses. Ms. Robinson responded there is no statewide database, but that HCPSS keeps its own database for such information.

Councilwoman Walsh asked Ms. Robinson about middle school violence. Ms. Robinson responded that there has been an increase in violence among middle school students prompting HCPSS to implement various measures including improving supervision, monitoring student discipline and promoting social emotional learning to reduce impulse behaviors.

Special Education Vacancies and Retention

Michael Carson the Human Resources Executive Officer for HCPSS and Dr. Terri Savage, Chief Academic officer provided the vacancies for special education teachers and stated that recruitment of special education teachers is a year-round effort. Dr. Savage stated that HCPSS is implanting strategies to support the retention of special education staff including exploring partnerships with approved agencies to hire certified special education teachers as contractors. Superintendent Barnes addressed the workload concerns for special educators and the effect that workload has on morale.

Discussion followed with Councilmembers asking what percentage of Howard County students are in special education programs and the cost. Superintendent Barnes responded that 12.5% of Howard County public school students are in special education programs which costs \$182 million dollars.

Adjournment – Meeting concluded at 11:45 am

Following the open session, the Council convened an Administrative Meeting on December 9, 2024, at 11:45 am in the Council's Large Conference Room to finalize discussion on the Council's FY2026 budget formulation and review the revised 2025 calendar of meetings.

Council present included: Chair Walsh; Dr. Jones; Ms. Jung; Ms. Rigby; and Mr. Yungmann.

Staff present included: Michelle Harrod, Council Administrator; Gary Kuc, County Solicitor; Lisa German, Acting Auditor; and Theo Wimberly, Administrative Manager.