



DEB'S DISTRICT UPDATE

Deb Jung • District Four

January 2024

Greetings

Happy 2024! We had a cold and snowy start to the new year, and I know that many of you have enjoyed these slowing-down moments, hanging out in your house, bingeing the latest TV series, and making homemade meals.

I am serving as Chair of the Council this year and enjoying all of the interaction and community spirit at the activities I have attended. We celebrated Korean Day marking the 121st year that Koreans first arrived in the United States and the Howard County Chinese School's 25th anniversary. We announced our new Flag Commission (details to follow in the newsletter) and the winter Restaurant weeks. Don't forget to take advantage of all of the deals offered by our participating local restaurants.

This month, the Council has been busy filing legislation and reviewing bills from the Administration after a month hiatus. This edition of my newsletter also contains a year in review of my legislative activities. There is no doubt that the majority of my time last year was spent reviewing and amending the General Plan (HoCo by Design).

I hope you have a chance to tune into the Ravens/Chiefs game on Sunday afternoon and watch Lamar Jackson work his magic! **GO RAVENS!**



Deb

Council Updates

January-February

CB3 Cap on Damages Awards for Unlawful Employment Practices Sets a tiered cap based on the size of the company for monetary awards in cases of unlawful employment practices. Companies with 15 to 100 employees, awards are capped at \$50,000; 101 to 200, \$100,000; 201-500, \$200,000; more than 501, \$300,000.

CB4 Elimination of MIHU Alternative Compliance & Market Conversion The County's moderate income housing unit (MIHU) program contains many options for getting out of the requirements. This bill deletes the loopholes that allows developers to build affordable units on different sites, in different ratios, as disability units, or pay a fee-in-lieu. The bill also eliminates the ability to convert affordable units to market rate if 60 days passes without an income-qualified renter. *Liz Walsh*

November-January

CB44 Rent Increase Cap Set a 10% annual increase cap on rent for some apartments. Exemptions include apartments that are less than 20 years old. *County Executive Ball; Died on the Table.*

At the public hearing, I heard criticisms of the bill from renters who faced annual moves due to skyrocketing rents to landlords

Upcoming Meetings

February 5, 7pm — Legislative Session
February 12, 9:45am — Joint BOE Meeting
February 20, 7pm — Public Hearing
February 27, 9:30am — Work Session
March 4, 7pm — Legislative Session
Click [here](#) for more.

who worried about their business autonomy. Here is a summary:

- the allowable rental increase still outpaces wage increases
- the exemptions do not cover the “bad” actors in the past years’ exorbitant rent increases
- the definition of exempted units less than 20 years as “newly constructed” is confusing and inaccurate
- the County doesn’t have enough capacity to review appeals for capital improvement surcharge requests
- the definition of capital improvements is inadequate to properly maintain existing buildings.

There was only one amendment filed and it did not take corrective action on these criticisms. Despite these deficits, I voted to untable the bill for consideration but there were not enough votes to move the bill from the inactive pile, leaving it to expire in the middle of January.

Legislation: click [here](#).

County Council Updates

CB43 Right of First Refusal Added non-profits and private entities as groups that could qualify for first opportunity to make an offer on apartments for sale if they agreed to convert a certain percentage of units to affordable; *County Executive Ball; Died on the Table.*

Currently the County and the Housing Commission have the first right to purchase apartment buildings for sale in the County in an effort to create affordable units. This bill would expand the qualifying entities for the right of first refusal to designated non profits and private companies. The Administration stated that private groups are able to access capital faster than other entities.

At the worksession, I asked for poverty metrics to be included in the evaluation of which properties would be eligible. The concentration of poverty in certain Columbia schools indicates that we are repeating all of the housing mistakes from the past. I firmly believe that the County can deliver affordable housing to our current and future residents if we acknowledge that school boundaries create economic microcosms that should not be ignored.

The two proposed amendments created timing conflicts if the County or the assignees did not exercise their Right to Purchase.

There were no amendments attempting to provide fair and balanced distribution of socioeconomics in the separately defined school boundaries.

CB45 Healthy Children's Meals Required independent restaurants with children's menus to provide at least two healthy meal choices meeting specific nutritional, food and drink type, and serving size requirements. *Liz Walsh; Died on the Table.*

This bill had good intentions and I appreciated the work from the NAACP and the American Heart Association. When it comes to healthier behavior, I'm a supporter of the so-called "carrot" not the "stick." Incentivizing and supporting healthy choices would have been my preference. The way the bill is written, a restaurant could be fined up to a \$1000 if they don't have two nutritionally verified healthy meals.



The Council's presentation of Dr. Martirano's retirement resolution.

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Council Updates

While childhood obesity is a concern, I also would have appreciated seeing data that explained the role that kids' menu items at small-scale restaurants contribute to this problem. This bill only applies to independently owned restaurants that have kids' meals. It doesn't apply to national restaurant franchises.

I also worry about the unintended consequences of this bill. Restaurants might eliminate kids' menus, making it less affordable for working parents to get a well-earned break from the dinnertime routine. I was also concerned by the Restaurant Association's testimony that local restaurants do not have the

capabilities to responsibly collect the required nutritional values. The bill states that nutritional values can be obtained from websites and cookbooks but that does not provide enough accurate information to report to the Health Department.

CB40 Stream Restoration Exemption

This bill would have eliminated Stream Restoration Projects from the Forest Conservation exemption list. I supported this bill because it is time to stop tearing down the trees in order to save the forests. There are better ways: control the water from the source points to reduce erosion of the streambanks. *Liz Walsh; Died on the Table.*



My Year in Review: 2023

I focused much of my efforts in 2023 on reviewing and revising HoCo By Design (General Plan). I also dug in deep into the FY24 Budget to make sure that our tax dollars were allocated to community needs instead of favors to special interest. I continued to advocate for relief from BWI air traffic noise and to show up for my community at local functions and meetings. I made 2023 my year to help our senior residents stay in their homes so they can continue to be a part of the community they love. I give a lot of my heart and soul to this job and I hope you can see the difference in District 4.

HoCo By Design (General Plan)

This planning tool sets the stage for comprehensive rezoning and determines what our County will look like in the future. I wanted to ensure that the following priorities were integrated into The Plan:

- protection and enhancement of the natural environment
- planned growth that does not outpace school capacity and other public infrastructure
- and preservation of walkability, housing diversification, and forested landscape of Columbia.

Click [here](#) for more details.

My Legislation

- CB34 Altered the qualifying criteria for sole-source purchases to exclude land

ownership. Changed the composition of the review committee of sole source purchases. Required sole source purchases of \$500,000 or more to be provided to the County Council for comment.

- CR37 Expressed the County Council's support for State Senate Bill 162 and House Bill 204, which would amend the composition and duties of the Maryland Aviation Commission.
- CB37 Removed the prohibition on owners of multiple residential properties from receiving the property tax credit for seniors.

Constituent Services

Since taking office, I have requested a Community Center for the Wilde Lake area so that our young residents can have constructive outlets for their time. After several incidents at the Mall and the Village Center, I am pleased to report that the Columbia Flier Building will be repurposed into a community center. More details will be available in this year's budget.

Last year, Howard County became the unwitting host of area drag racers, who convened at local businesses, drove at reckless speeds on state highways, and terrorized neighborhoods with modified engine noise. Despite online harassment by drag racers, I advocated for the Police Department to take swift and focused action on these unsafe and illegal behaviors.

My Year in Review: 2023

FY24 Budget

Major highlights from last year's budget was State funding for Faulkner Ridge to be repurposed into a pre-kindergarten center. I was happy to support the residents and advocates in their dedication to transition this derelict building into a community asset.

I also worked to re-evaluate the costly sole source contract for the proposed Library on the Lakefront. I love libraries and the lakefront but this proposal had an outsized benefit to one powerful entity in the County. Public amenities should not be used to cut costs for private entities.

Korean American Day

This annual event honors the Korean American community and marks the arrival of the first Korean immigrants to the U.S. on January 13, 1903.



General Assembly & State Updates

The 446th General Assembly session convened on January 10.

Howard County State Delegation

This year's chairs are Senator Clarence Lam and Delegate Jessica Feldmark. Local bills and bond initiatives can be found [here](#).

General Assembly 2024 Issue Papers

In preparation for this year's session, the Department of Legislative Services reviews fiscal budgets, Blueprint funding, poverty issues, cannabis regulation, transportation initiatives, climate change, and State aid to local governments. Click [here](#) for more.

County Revenue Outlook 2024

Local governments are projecting minimal revenue growth in the current fiscal year, according to this report from the Department of Legislative Services. Click [here](#) for more. Maryland Association of Counties has more [here](#).

State of the State Economy

Comptroller Brooke Lierman gave an overview of her office's recently released economic report to elected officials on January 5. Click [here](#) for more.

The report found that Maryland has recovered slower from the pandemic than neighboring states and the U.S. We have the highest median income and the lowest unemployment rate in the country, but the economic growth indicators are stagnant. Data indicates that there is low labor force participation with declines in women and men in prime working age groups. Despite a participation drop, there is demand for growth. Maryland has 3.1 job openings for every worker; this is much higher than the national average of 1.3 jobs for every worker. For the first time since World War II, Maryland has experienced a population decline with residents moving to states with lower costs of living.

Environmental Sustainability Legislative Breakfast

The Environmental Sustainability Board held its annual event on January 8 at the Howard Community College. Featured state legislative initiatives included the [RENEW act](#), which would fund \$900 million for disaster relief associated with climate change. An advocate for electrified buildings shared news that the state's Public Service Commission determined that the Maryland grid can accommodate electrification of buildings and transportation; insufficient grid infrastructure has been cited as a major impediment to electrification mandates in the past. State delegates shared news of introductions of bills limiting leaf blowers and two-stroke engines, increasing mattress recycling, and providing protections for vernal pools.



County & Community Updates

Flag Commission

The Howard County flag was adopted more than 50 years ago through a public art contest. On January 22, 2024, County Executive Dr. Ball announced the establishment of a new commission to undertake a public process soliciting design submissions and to recommend three finalists for the County's new flag design.

Click [here](#) for more.

- Winter 2024 – Commission launch
- Spring 2024 – Solicit public design submissions
- Fall 2024 – Preliminary selection of designs for public feedback
- Winter 2025 – Select finalists and publish design recommendations

Downtown Columbia Redevelopment Monitoring Report

The 2023 report provides updates to the implementation of the 2010 Downtown Columbia Plan, including residential and commercial development. Click [here](#) for more.

HC DrugFree Teen Advisory Council

Eighth to 12th graders are invited to join this Advisory Council members to provide perspectives to the staff and Board of Directors of this non-profit, working to reduce drug use and addiction in Howard County. Click [here](#) for more.

ATTENTION EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

You could be eligible for free tuition, fees, and books at Howard Community College through the Child Care Career and Development Fund (CCCPDF)!



Click [here](#) for more.

Village Center Tours

Wilde Lake Village Center

I joined the Village Manager, Howard County Economic Development Authority, and Kimco on a tour of Wilde Lake Villages shops. I met shop owners and service providers who have been operating in the center for years. They shared with me what makes their businesses special and how they would like to see the village center flourish into the future.



Nathan Thee Barber at the Anthony Richard Barbershop and their antique barber chair.

Curry & Kabob's owner Arjan Armand; this photo needs smell-a-vision.

Wilde Lake Karate's Dimitar Genchev



Village Center Tours

Harper's Choice Village Center

The second part of my Village Center tour took me to Harper's Choice where I met shop owners and service providers who contribute to the success of the Center.

Beauty N Go has a large selection of high-quality wigs and beauty products. I do hope you'll stop in and support this local business. Online retailers make it harder to succeed in these kinds of brick-and mortar shops. Here I am with the owner Keeyop Kim and village manager Steve Ingley.



Misako Ballet Studio is a wonderful cultural resource for us. We are so lucky to have Misako Aoki's talent and experience right here in Harper's Choice. She was trained at the Royal Ballet School in London and dance professionally with Matsuyama Ballet Company in Japan.

Her dance studio offers classes for children and adults in ballet, modern, hip-hop, ballroom, belly dance and more. Click [here](#) for more.



Keeping up with Deb



HCAR Legislative
Breakfast

Howard County Flag Commission



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission Holiday Celebration

School Updates

Acting Superintendent


On December 14, the Board of Education (BOE) appointed William Barnes as HCPSS Acting Superintendent beginning January 10. Barnes previously served as Chief Academic Officer for HCPSS. Click [here](#) for more .



Administrative Staff Changes

Acting Superintendent Barnes announced the following cabinet level assignments:

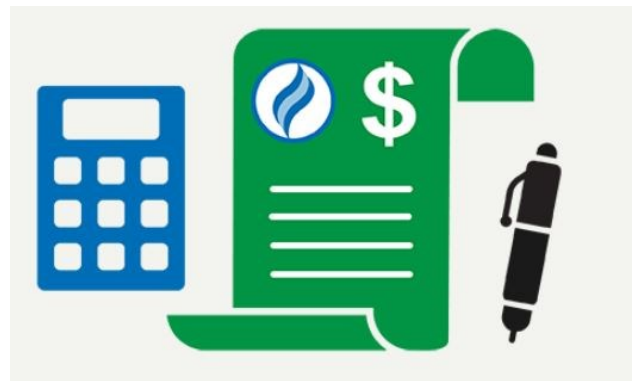
- Dr. Caroline Walker, Acting Chief Academic Officer
- Daniel Lubeley, Acting Chief Operating Officer
- Jahantab Siddiqui, Office of Student Transportation
- Darin Conforti, Executive Director of Budget, now a cabinet-level office.

BUDGET PROCESS STATUS: The Board of Education is holding work sessions and public hearings to gather feedback on and revise the proposed budget 

FY25 Operating Budget Calendar

The first public hearing on the Superintendent's Proposed Budget was held on January. The current schedule is listed below but may be subject to change. Click [here](#) for more.

- January 29, 1pm — Work Session #1
- February 1, 1pm — Work Session #2
- February 15, 1pm — Work Session #3
- February 15, 7pm — Public Hearing #2
- February 20, 7pm — Public Hearing #3
- February 22, 7pm — Work Session #4
- February 29, 4pm — BOE Budget Adoption



Overview of FY25 Budget Request

HCPSS created a toolkit to more easily understand the Superintendent's FY25 Proposed Operating Budget. The toolkit can be accessed [here](#).

Click [here](#) to read the full Superintendent's Proposed FY25 Operating Budget. Budget testimony can be submitted to the BOE at budgetfeedback@hcpss.org.

School Updates: Superintendent's FY25 Budget

UNDERSTANDING INCREASED COSTS

\$71.7 million in new costs | 132.30 new positions

Priorities: Budget items that support existing policy, defined goals and objectives, and specific issues.

Expenditures Include:

- \$25.8m Employee Compensation Increases Marker
- \$7.3m & 51.50 new positions Special Education
- \$2.6m Utility Cost Increases
- \$1.5m & 13.00 new positions Expiring COVID Grants
- \$1.0m Technology Contracts
- \$800k Student Technology Device Delivery Model
- \$559,470 and 7.20 new positions Enrollment-Related Staffing Adjustments
- \$537,935 and 3.00 new positions Board Requests/Reorganization



PROPOSED REDUCTIONS

\$46.6 million in budget reductions to existing services
& a reduction of 347.85 in existing positions

Programmatic School-Based Reductions: \$24.6 million and 245.80 existing positions

- Class Size Related Reductions: \$9.5 million and 144.90 existing positions for increasing class size ratios by 2 at all levels
- Non-Class Size Related Reductions: \$15.1 million and 100.9 existing positions

Programmatic Non-School Based Reductions: \$22.0 million and 102.05 existing positions.



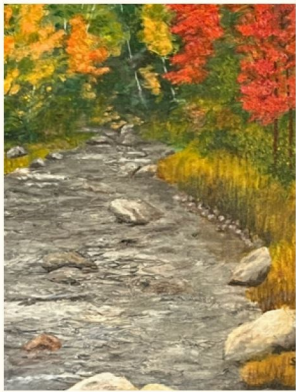
Upcoming Events

HOWARD COUNTY RESTAURANT Weeks & CRAFT BEVERAGES

JANUARY 22 - FEBRUARY 4, 2024

Bernice Kish Gallery

Slayton House, Wilde Lake Village Center
Works by local artists Homeira Nazariyan,
Evanson Elad, and Steele Hill.



HCC Concerts Series



Guest Artist Concert: Orlando Cotto Quartet

Saturday, February 10, 2024 7:30 PM

St. Louis Concert Series:

Jazz Cabaret

February 9, Click [here](#) for more



February 24, 2024 | 7 - 11 pm
HCLS East Columbia Branch

HCLIBRARY.ORG/STACKS