

DEB'S DISTRICT UPDATE

Deb Jung • District Four

July-August 2026

Greetings

I hope everyone is having a lovely summer, I have been super busy over the past six months as I pursued a campaign for the role of Howard County Executive. Although I lost the race, I remain your Council Member until December 7 when new Council Members and a new County Executive are sworn into office.

It has been an honor and privilege representing the fine folks of District 4 on the County Council and I look forward to serving you for four more months. I have learned so much about our neighborhoods and the County through this job. I have met so many interesting people who have settled in our wonderful County from all over the world. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to be your representative for almost eight years.

In the meantime, we have a little bit of catching up to do with this newsletter. I've included a wrap up of the highlights from the FY27 budget adoption, substantive Council legislation before the August recess, upcoming events, and our usual monthly report on what's happening in our public schools.

I will be sending out at least one more newsletter before leaving office and I look forward to hearing from you as I wind down my time as your Council Member.

Deb

Council Updates

June-July Legislation

The Council wrapped up its summer legislation on July 29 prior to its mandated recess in August. New legislation will be introduced in September.

CB48 Cigar Stores & Alcohol Consumption

Councilmember Rigby sponsored this bill to address potential changes at the State level allowing alcohol licenses for cigar stores where in-store is allowed. Indoor smoking has been banned in Maryland since 2007 but exemptions include retail tobacco stores (such as cigar shops and other stores selling tobacco products and accessories).

CB48 would narrow the definition of retail tobacco stores to include only retailers that earn 70% of its revenues from the sale of premium cigars, pipe tobacco, and related accessories. This new definition, derived from a State-directed workgroup, would exclude hookah lounges from being able to operate under the indoor-smoking exemption. The bill also prohibits the consumption of alcohol in retail tobacco stores in anticipation of future State changes.

A successful amendment, sponsored by Council Member David Yungmann, eliminated the bill's proposed ban on alcohol consumption in retail tobacco stores. The bill sponsor subsequently tabled the bill. It can be reconsidered in September after the Council's recess. *Sponsored by Council Member Christiana Rigby; tabled*

June-July Legislation

The following bills were introduced on June 1 and voted on July 6.

CR106 School Capacity Chart

Every year the County Council approves the School Capacity Chart, which determines the assigned school districts that are open or closed to new development based on the projected percentage of students attending the schools and how overall attendance compares to the buildings' capacity. Schools with attendance projections that exceed the threshold are closed to development. There are seven elementary schools and four middle schools constrained for future development. *Sponsored by the County Executive; passed*

CB107 Housing Unit Allocation Chart

Along with the School Capacity Chart, the Council approves the number of units allocated for a specific regional category. *Sponsored by the County Executive, passed*

Live and archived meetings are on the Council's Watch Us webpage.

Council Updates

CB44 Administrative Agency Requirement to Appear before the Board of Appeals

This bill would have required the Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) to appear before the Board of Appeals when named as a party in appeals cases. Currently, DPZ does not usually appear before the Board of Appeals to defend its administrative decisions when an aggrieved party files an appeal. *Sponsored by Council Member Liz Walsh; failed*

CB45 Annual Reporting of Student Generation for Housing Tax Breaks

This bill requires reporting of actual numbers of student yields from multi-family developments receiving tax breaks. Currently the Council receives projected student yields only when the legislation is filed to award a tax break to an affordable residential development. I sponsored a successful clarifying amendment that increases the likelihood of reporting compliance. The Council is limited in its authority to direct the school system to take specific action so my amendment directs the Housing Director to receive the annual student yield report. This wording is modeled on the existing APFO requirement for the school capacity chart *Sponsored by Council Member Liz Walsh; passed as amended*

Primary Election Results

The June 22 primary election delivered the final vote outcomes for four out of the five Council seats. Only Councilmanic District 5 is contested in the November general election. The new Council will assume office on December 7. The incoming Council Members include:

- District 1: Kevin Chin
- District 2: Jessica Nichols
- District 3: Christiana Rigby
- District 4: Janssen Evelyn
- District 5: To be determined

Upcoming Meetings

- September 8, 7pm: Legislative Session
- September 14, 10am: Monthly Meeting
- September 22, 7pm: Public Hearing
- September 28, 10am: Work Session
- October 5, 7pm: Legislative Session

Visit the Council's Calendar webpage for more.

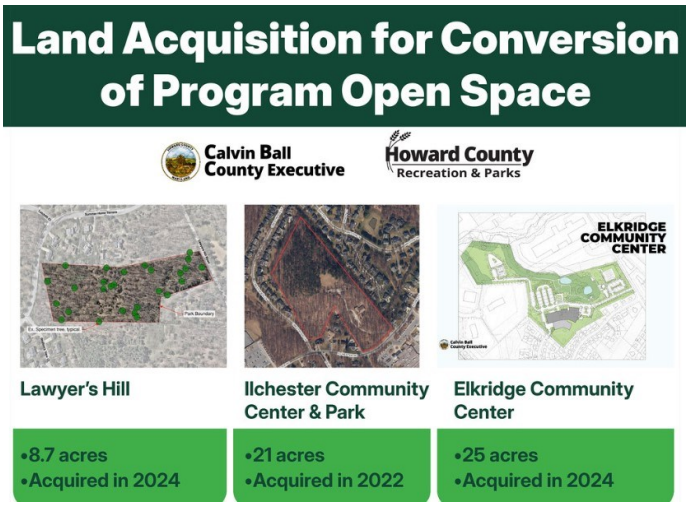


Current legislation can be found on the Council's Legislation webpage.

HCPSS Update

Future High School #14 in Elkridge

The County completed the land transfers needed to satisfy the State's open space restrictions on a future Elkridge high school site in Troy Park (see the graphic below). After Council approval of the conveyance of the 48.64 acre site to the Board of Education (BOE) in July, the site is now available for future construction funding.



Board Certified Teachers

Congratulations to the 195 HCPSS teachers who recently achieved their National Board Certification (NBC). HCPSS now employs 626 teachers who have earned the education profession's highest credential level.

Educational Facilities Master Plan

The updated 2026 Educational Facilities Master Plan identifies Bollman Bridge, Centennial Lane, Hammond, and Phelps Luck Elementary Schools as high priority (Tier 1) schools due to attendance utilization rates that exceed the threshold in the near and long-term. Recommendations addressing overcrowding include using portables to supply temporary seats and redistricting these schools following the completion of current middle school construction projects. The plan is available on the BOE's Board Docs site under the June 25 agenda.

Policy Advisory Committee Applications

Deadline August 21

HCPSS is consolidating several policy advisory groups (including donations, fundraising, nepotism, and coaches) into one Standing Policy Advisory Committee, beginning in the fall of 2026. Visit HCPSS's Recent News webpage for information on the committee application.

Update Emergency Contact Information

It is time to update your Family File before the start of school. Log into HCPSS Connect Synergy as the parent, click Online Registration and select Family File Verification.

HCPSS Student Test Scores

HCPSS students performed better than state averages in math and English Language Arts, according to the 2026 Maryland Report. Howard County ranked second overall in math proficiency (42.1%) and fourth in ELA (65.9%). Read more on the Maryland State Department of Education Report Card webpage.

Visit HCPSS News webpage for more.

FY27 Budget Update

The FY27 Budget was adopted on May 20. Here are some highlights. The approved FY27 Capital and Operating Budgets can be found on the County's Budget Publications webpage.

Capital Budget

The FY27 Capital Budget was approved at $435.6 million total, an increase of $54.8 million (17.9%) over FY26. This increase excludes water and sewer projects, which have dedicated funding sources.

Projects categorized as General County represented 40% of the total Capital Budget and increased in funding by $51 million (55%) from last year's levels. Noteworthy projects in this category include the Indoor Track, Community Solar, and Elkridge Community Center.

School construction was funded at a County contribution of $98.6 million, an increase of $15.9 million (16%) from last year and a fulfillment of the Board of Education's capital request. HCPSS' school construction projects represented 32.2% of the Capital Budget.

School renovations and additions include:

- Oakland Mills Middle School ($16.8million)
- Dunloggin Middle School ($5 million)
- Patapsco Middle School ($6.5 million)
- New Elementary School #43 ($5.3 million)

Capital budget categories that experienced funding decreases included Sidewalk/Curb, Road Resurfacing, Community College, Bridge Improvements, Road Construction, and Police.

Source of Capital Budget Funds

GO Bonds: $120.6 million

Pay Go (surplus funds):$79 million

Budget Funding Comparison FY26 to FY27

Program Category	FY26 Approved Budget (in millions)	FY27 Proposed Budget (in millions)	Change in $	Change in %
Education	122,176	125,070	2,894	2.4%
General County	102,079	160,784*	58,705	57.5%
Recreation & Parks	12,842	16,430	3,588	27.9%
Transportation	69,846	59,511	(10,335)	-14.8%
Total	**306,943**	**361,795**	**54,852**	**17.9%**

FY27 Budget Update

Capital Projects in D4

Cedar Lane Park received appropriations in the Park Systemic Improvements category (N3108) for replacement of the existing adult fitness equipment and drainage enhancements for Field #5. The drainage work will install subsurface stormwater storage to better manage runoff and reduce erosion in the adjacent forested area.

A pathway that runs parallel to Cedar Lane will be upgraded to support bicycles. This will be implemented in partnership with the Columbia Association and will receive funding through the Bicycle Plan Projects (K5066).

Willow Bottom Drive and Harpers Farm Road are being investigated for crosswalk improvements under the School Crosswalk Improvements category (T7088-FY2001). Potential changes include the addition of a west and south leg, push button pedestrian crossing and ramp improvements at the traffic signal between the two roads. Design and construction schedule is not determined at this time.

Projects in the Street Lighting Program (T7094-FY2007) are planned for Harpers Farm Road ($10,000) and Trotter Road ($10,000).

Traffic signal improvements are scheduled for Harpers Farm Road at Beaverkill Road ($200,000), Cedar Lane at Freetown Road ($250,000), and Ceder Lane at Owen Brown Road ($275,000) through the Signalization Program (T7105-FY2011).

There are two ongoing projects within the Clarksville-River Hill Streetscape Improvements category (T7108-FY2016). The planned bike route, which provides a shared-use path along Ten Oaks Road, has reached the 65% design milestone. The Clarksville Streetscape segment along MD 108 is undergoing design refinements to reduce impacts and construction costs. A multimodal traffic study was recently completed to evaluate reallocating portions of the eastbound auxiliary and travel lane to a bicycle path. The design will be refined and presented to the public. Construction of the project is anticipated to begin towards the end of FY27. More information can be found on the County's Clarksville Pike Streetscape webpage.

FLASH Bus Service

Extension of Montgomery County's rapid bus system (FLASH BRT) along Rt 29 into Howard County continued to receive funding in the FY27 budget. Nine new buses were purchased, completing the fleet assembly. Bus stop construction is ongoing with stops in Maple Lawn, Johns Hopkins APL, and Downtown Columbia. Service is forecasted to begin in fall 2026.



FY27 Budget Update

Downtown Columbia Projects

Every budget cycle, the Council receives an update on the Downtown Columbia projects, as well as revenues from and expenses of the tax increment financing project.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

County tax revenues collected from the TIF district totaled $6.47 million as of July 2026. Tax credits for energy efficient buildings reduced revenues to a total of $3.83 million that must first be applied to the repayment of the infrastructure bonds (referred to as the "first set aside") used at the onset of the development in 2017. This portion of the project is categorized in the Budget book as the Tax Increment Financing Projects (C0319-FY2010).

The remaining $1.5 million in tax revenues can be directed towards the "second set aside" projects, including the rebuild of Toby's Dinner Theater, a new library, and a school. An estimated $13 million has accumulated in the Downtown Columbia's TIF fund since inception and draw downs are scheduled for bond repayments of Toby's Dinner Theater redevelopment. Starting in 2030, it is anticipated that the New Library will also tap into remaining TIF reserves.

New Cultural Center

Demolition of Toby's Dinner Theater has been completed and reconstruction of the replacement building, known as the New Cultural Center, is underway. Phase 1 includes construction of the exterior envelope of the building, mechanical and electrical installations, and the finished dinner theater. The expected completion date is December 2026. The first part of Phase 2 includes construction of the remaining building (black box theaters, art gallery, classrooms, and a lobby) and the parking garage. The second part of Phase 2 involves building the residential tower. Phase 2 is expected to conclude in May 2029. This project is categorized in the Budget book under New Cultural Center C0364-FY2021.

Transit Center

Tentatively located in the Mall/Merriweather Row area, the transit center (classified as C0353-FY2024 Transit Center) is still in Phase 1: evaluating short-term operational and site improvement options. Phase 2 will advance site selection and concept design. Completion of Phase 1 is expected at some point in FY2027. Under the terms of the community enhancement agreement (known as "CEPPA"), Howard Hughes and Howard County will provide a site for the Transit Center upon the issuance of building permits reaching 3.2 million square feet or after 10 years from execution of the agreement. The budgeted funds will be used to support design development, interagency coordination, stakeholder engagement, and positioning the project to be eligible for Federal transit funding.

FY27 Budget Update

Operating Budget

The County's General Fund this fiscal year totals $1.7 billion, representing a 6.8% increase over last year. This increase includes an additional $7.4 million of costs from the State.

HCPSS Funding

Total Board of Education (BOE) request: $1.2 billion
County approved funding: $871.5 million
State approved funding: $393 million
Prior to submission of their annual budget to the County Executive, the BOE approved a significant shift of funds and staffing from general education to the Blueprint pillars and the use of fund balance to close an anticipated funding gap. The County contribution represents 67.82% of the total budget, and State funding represents 30.61%.

This fiscal year marks the second year in a row that the State has reduced their budgetary shortfalls by shifting costs to the local school systems; these costs include

- pension liability increases: $2.6 million
- private pre-K match: $2.9 million.

Water and Sewer Rates

The cost for the delivery of water to Howard County residents from our Baltimore City water supplier has increased. Additional costs for sewer services provided by Baltimore County have further added to the structural imbalance in the self-sustaining Water and Sewer fund. As a result, the County Executive sponsored CR81, raising rates by 12.3% and a later amendment scaled back the increase to 10%. I believed that both hikes were too burdensome on residential and commercial customers at a time when other costs are skyrocketing. I sponsored a successful amendment that lowered the increase to 6%. The Administration expressed concern that this lower increase would result in a higher increase next year. To avoid this, I encourage future budget proposals to pursue cost savings and one-time funds as alternatives to hefty, year-upon-year rate increases.

Faulkner Ridge Groundbreaking

I was so pleased to see that construction is underway to transform this derelict building into the County's first pre-K center. The 1960s-era bunker is being outfitted with windows and other modern systems and will host 260 students by August 2027. Here I am with the members of the community excited to welcome the young scholars.



County & Community Updates

Grassroots Loses Crisis Hotline Funding

The Federal government has terminated its contract with Grassroots Crisis Intervention to provide overflow support for 988, the national suicide and crisis prevention hotline. This contract employed 62 people who will be laid off in September.

On August 11, the County Executive announced additional funding to the organization to cover overhead costs impacted by the withdrawal of Federal funds. He also reported that Grassroots will still operate its local 988 hotline and all other local services.

Paid Parking at the Mall

The Mall has recently converted 120 spaces near Restaurant Row and Main Event into paid parking spots. Prices cost $2.45 for the first hour, $6.45 for up to three hours, and $10.45 for four hours or more. Payment can be made through an online parking app.



New Traffic Safety School Zones

August 12, 5-6pm

The Department of Public Works will hold a virtual outreach meeting to discuss the proposal of 18 new areas near schools that will receive traffic safety enhancements. More information can be found on DPW's Traffic Engineering Division's webpage.

Surveillance Cameras

I have received multiple questions from constituents about surveillance cameras on Broken Land Parkway and elsewhere in District 4. My staff contacted Howard County Police Department (HCPD) and learned that cameras installed in the medians along County roads are owned and operated by the department and are not Flock cameras.

Cameras owned by HCPD are automated license plate readers (ALPRs) and have been used since 2011 to support police operations. ALPRs owned and operated by HCPD have stricter data usage requirements, set by State law, than commercial surveillance cameras produced by Flock. Data collected through HCPD's ALPRs are owned by the police department and may only be shared for law enforcement purposes. The system collects visible vehicle attributes, including license plate numbers as well as the vehicle's make and model. It doesn't collect driver information. HCPD has a dedicated ALPR FAQ webpage with more information.

Upcoming Events

Town Hall: Community Input on the Cannabis Reinvestment & Repair Fund

- Public town hall: August 12, 6-8pm, Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, 10431 Twin Rivers
- Public hearing on distribution plan: September 16, 5.30pm, Department of Community Re*sources & Services,* 9830 Patuxent Woods

The Maryland General Assembly created a fund, receiving 35% of revenues collected from cannabis sales tax, to rebuild communities impacted by past cannabis laws. The public is invited to provide input and feedback about ways to invest the money allocated to Howard County. You can also provide feedback through their online survey available on the Community Reinvestment & Repair Fund webpage.



Lakefront Live

Columbia Lakefront

- September 4, 8pm: Movie Night, *How to Train Your Dragon*
- September 5, 7.30pm: Leonardo Garcia Y Son Horizonte, salsa and salsa jazz
- September 11: Movie Night, *Shang-Chi & the Legend of the 10 Rings*
- September 12, 4.30pm: Making Movies, eclectic rock and Panamanian fusion



Color Burst Park

September 18, 6pm: Movie Night, *Super Mario Galaxy*

September 25, 6pm: Movie Night, *Masters of the Universe*

October 2: Movie Night, *Toy Story 5*

October 9: Movie Night, *Moana*

