



DEB'S DISTRICT UPDATE

Deb Jung • District Four

December 2025

Greetings

The holiday season is a special time to celebrate with family and friends and to share our blessings with those in need. This season of giving benefits our entire County.

I recently spoke with representatives from the Salvation Army who explained to me that for seven months of the year there is a fresh vegetable and fruit giveaway every month at their service center on Pine Orchard Lane in Ellicott City. The cost to run the program is approximately \$60,000, which is paid for by donations from First Emmanuel Church.

At the same location, the Thrift Store is run 100% by volunteers, almost all of whom are in their 70s and 80s. The store raises approximately \$400,000 a year and this amount is distributed throughout Howard County for food and other assistance. The Salvation Army representative, Captain Jeremy Mockbee, shared with me the observation that Howard County is exceptionally generous. I was so proud that our County is well-regarded for its compassion and wanted to share this compliment with each and every one of you responsible for supporting our friends and neighbors who are struggling.

We are fortunate to have a variety of options for supporting and accessing food resources. The Indian Cultural Association provides food items at the Miller Library on Saturdays; Columbia Community Cares operates out of various locations; and the Howard County Food Bank, run by the Community Action Council, offers regular shopping hours. Thank you, Howard County, for your sharing and caring. Your kindness and goodwill makes our County a great place to live.



Deb

Council Update

November-December Legislation

The following bills were introduced on November 3 and were voted on December 1. No new legislation is introduced until 2026 due to the December's legislative recess.

CR215 Board of Appeals Appointment

I nominated Andrea LeWinter, an accomplished land-use attorney and adjunct Hearing Examiner in Montgomery County, to fill a Board of Appeals vacancy beginning January 1, 2026.

The outgoing member, Vice Chair Lynn Foehrkolb, chose December 31, 2025, as her final date of service. I appreciate Vice Chair Foehrkolb's willingness to serve. Board of Appeals members are citizens who must decide controversial cases, often under immense public scrutiny. It is not an easy position to hold.

Since the introduction of CR215, there has been a swirl of resignations, recissions, closed meetings, public meetings, and no less than eight news articles filled with wild accusations and unfounded statements. It has been impossible to keep up with who said what, who is coming, and who is going.

At the December 1 legislative session, Ms. LeWinter's nomination was up for a vote

and it failed. Councilmembers Jones and Yungmann voted against her and Councilmember Rigby abstained. In any other setting, Ms. LeWinter's professional experience would have been a slam dunk for her nomination. But not in Howard County.

The status quo, pay-to-play model was scared of this nominee. They were scared that their weak cases would actually be scrutinized by an expert able to apply the law. They were scared to be held accountable. They were so desperate that they have accused me of forcing out a Board of Appeals member who has resigned four times: once to me verbally, twice in writing, and once in a public meeting with Councilmembers. They were so desperate that they subjected Ms. LeWinter to a worksession for the first time ever for a nominee. They were so desperate that they cast doubt on her professional expertise as if knowing the law would yield unfair decisions.

Community members who have followed the most recent Board of Appeals cases know what bias looks like and might wonder why the Board of Appeals was created in the first place. It was initially designed with the best of intentions to have residents make land-use decisions in the best interest of their communities.

Live and archived meetings are on the Council's [Watch Us](#) webpage.

Council Update

But land use law is more complicated than before and there is more money at stake. The system is open to manipulation through the appointment process and political ambitions.

In my time as a Councilmember, I can think of at least six political candidates who have served on the Board of Appeals. Some step down from the Board prior to running for office, others do not. The Charter contains no disqualifiers so it is up to the individual. As a result, membership on the Board of Appeals provides an opportunity to raise an individual's public profile and make connections with potential donors through favorable decisions.

Many constituents have asked me for help reforming the Board of Appeals so that these conflicts are avoided and the laws are fairly applied. The Charter, which needs a super majority vote and a public referendum, would need to be changed to introduce membership

and disqualification criteria. Certain aspects of the quasi-judicial proceedings can be changed in the Code with a simple majority vote by the Council.

Reform is possible but with the failure of Ms. LeWinter's appointment, it is unclear what future changes will be successful.

CB74 Agritourism Zoning Changes

This bill adds new business activities as accessories to farming. New uses include overnight stays, Bed and Breakfasts, festivals, as well as weddings.

Breweries and wineries are already allowed as accessories to farming under current regulations but this bill allows larger crowds, live music events, and removes other operational limits. Previously it was required to plant at least two acres of grapes or a primary ingredient in brewing on the alcohol-producing farm.

Upcoming Meetings

- January 5, 7pm: Legislative Session
- January 12, 10am: Monthly Meeting
- January 20, 7pm: Public Hearing
- January 26, 10am: Work Session
- February 2, 7pm: Legislative Session

Visit the Council's [Calendar](#) webpage for more.



Adopted legislation can be found on the Council's Legislation Search [webpage](#).

Council Update

This bill changes the requirement to “an ingredient” instead of a “primary ingredient” for a brewery.

While I support economic diversification for farms, I am concerned that turning agricultural areas into tourist attractions will create conflicts with existing neighbors. It was explained to the Council that Howard County is too restrictive in its accessory uses for farming and that other Counties are surpassing us with business opportunities. The Director of the Department of Planning and Zoning explained at a worksession that Howard County doesn't have the dedicated agricultural zones

that other Counties have and that this separation in uses reduces potential conflicts with residential areas.

I was concerned about the allowances for amplified noise, especially music festivals. My Amendment 12, which did not pass, put limitations on the number of hours, days, and times that amplified noise can occur. Amendment 1 to 11, sponsored by the County Executive, passed and limited only the hours for amplified noise. I voted for this amendment because I wanted whatever limits possible to keep the farm breweries from turning into the next Woodstock.



Howard County Pride 2025

Howard County celebrates LGBTQ+ in October, the month of remembrance and history for the community. The Chrysalis and Symphony Woods hosted an all-ages festival with booths staffed by local churches, businesses, and non-profits.



Current legislation can be found on the Council's [Legislation](#) webpage.

Lakefront Library Update

The Council voted on two pieces of legislation (CR223 and CB69) introduced by the County Executive to purchase land for a new Lakefront Library.

I was the only Councilmember to vote against this legislation, which seemed premature, short on details, and intended to put maximum pressure on the Council to forfeit its fiduciary responsibility. I stated in my voting remarks on December 1 that I could not commit to a new library when school buildings are crumbling and kids are crammed into closets serving as classrooms and when our hospital has emergency wait times that are hours long. I can't commit to a land purchase when I don't know the sale price or when the County is being forced to use the landowner's building design.

Chapter One: Surprise Library

In 2023 the County Executive held a press conference to announce plans to construct a new Central Library at the Lakefront. Prior to this public event, the Council had not been informed that there were plans to relocate the DRRA-required replacement library to a site outside of the Merriweather District.

In the FY24 Budget, the Council put a portion of the proposed Library project funding into

contingency so that other sites and bids could be pursued. Per the conditions set by Council, the Administration conducted in-person and online surveys of the community.

During the next budget cycle, Amendment 14 on CB36-2025, sponsored by Liz Walsh, put a condition on the \$5 million of the appropriated funds to require the purchase of the Lakefront property by September 15 for \$14 million. I voted against this amendment because it would force the County into a purchase agreement that could be even more unfair and expensive than the original proposal. The problems with the original proposals included:

- lack of a competitive bidding process in violation of our County's procurement laws,
- Howard Hughes' requirement that we use their preferred (and expensive) design and architect, and
- County-funded parking garage that allowed Howard Hughes to offset its parking obligations onto taxpayers.

The September 15 deadline came and went with no word on progress or next steps. I assumed that the Council would learn more during the FY27 Budget starting April 2026.

More can be found on the County's [Downtown Columbia Plan](#) webpage.

Lakefront Library Update

Chapter Two: Surprise Legislation

CR 223 declares the intent to purchase a Lakefront Library site. This resolution is comprised of “whereas” clauses stating general conditions without specific details or supporting documentation. Resolutions like this are non-binding but this resolution implies unwavering commitment to a project with many remaining questions.

According to the Administration’s testimony, CR 223 endorses action by the County Executive to enter into an agreement with Howard Hughes for the following:

- 1) a fee simple acquisition of land intended for a new Central Library at the Columbia Lakefront,
- 2) purchase and sale agreement will include a term that Howard Hughes may request

to purchase back the property if the County hasn’t pursued constructed within four years.

- 3) a land swap agreement for the development of a low-income apartment building in the Merriweather District, and
- 4) a financing plan for inclusion of the new library in the FY2027 Capital Budget.

CB69 is an emergency bill that strikes the Council-approved condition that a purchase agreement occur prior to the defunct date of September 15. According to testimony by the County Executive’s staff, an emergency bill was needed to strike the restriction so that the appropriated funds could be used for the land purchase. This emergency bills successfully garnered the four votes needed to pass.

Calvin Ball
County Executive

NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY FUNDING

Funding Secured to Date

- **\$488,000** from the Downtown Columbia Permanent Public Improvement Fund
- **\$10,000,000** in restricted State grant funding for the new Central Library

Anticipated Future Funding Sources

- **\$80,000,000** in dedicated Downtown Columbia TIF funding for the new Central Library
- **\$10,000,000** in additional dedicated State grant funding
- **\$10,000,000** to be funded by private philanthropy dollars raised by HCLS
- **\$6,000,000** in dedicated, library-specific State grants

Council Update

Downtown Columbia Affordable Housing Plan

In 2016, the Development Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (DRRA) created the housing plan for Downtown Columbia. The DRRA required the construction of affordable housing projects, co-located with public amenities, including a new library, Toby’s Dinner Theater, Banneker Fire Station, and Transit Center. A provision allows substitute locations for the County housing projects. There is also a section requiring Howard Hughes to build 322 for-sale market rate units that, if undeveloped, increase their affordable unit requirements.

Affordable Housing Requirements & Progress from the [Downtown Columbia Progress Tracker](#)

Unit income range	Number of units	Location of units	Status of built units
Very low	200	Howard Hughes buildings	26
Middle income	200	Howard Hughes buildings	26
Low income	417	County-funded buildings	87
Live Where You Work	83	Howard Hughes buildings with employer-sponsored subsidies	19

TIF Facts

A special financing tool (Tax Increment Financing or TIF) was used to fund infrastructure in the Merriweather District. TIF revenues (the additional property tax generated from the increased density in the district) are legally restricted to pay debt service.

After debt service and associated expenses, remaining TIF revenue is subject to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the County and Howard Hughes and is intended to be spent on public amenities outlined in the DRRA and a school serving Downtown Columbia.

But the parties acknowledged in the MOU that the County may spend the funds on any legal purpose. Unrestricted TIF fund balance is currently \$21.5 million.

FY 2026 HOWARD COUNTY APPROVED BUDGET

Governmental Funds

TIF District Fund: Downtown Columbia

Description

This fund has been created, as required and authorized by the legislation creating the Crescent (Downtown Columbia) Tax Increment Financing District, to deposit any incremental property tax revenues collected on real property located in the Crescent (Downtown Columbia) Tax Increment Financing District. If incremental property tax collections are insufficient to meet the debt service obligation for the 2017 Special Obligation bonds issued to fund infrastructure improvements in the Crescent Tax Increment Financing District, a special tax will be imposed.

	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimated	FY 2026 Budget
Revenues			
Incremental Property Tax	4,981,372	4,795,353	4,939,214
Other	250,530	100,000	137,000
Total Revenues	5,231,902	4,895,353	5,076,214
Expenses			
Contractual Services	50,562	100,000	120,000
Debt Service	2,571,219	2,531,820	2,923,220
Expense Other	0	0	2,032,994
Total Expenses	2,621,781	2,631,820	5,076,214
Fund Balance			
Beginning Balance	14,596,691	17,206,812	19,470,345
Net Change Current Year	2,610,121	2,263,533	0
Appropriation to Fund Balance	0	0	2,032,994
Fund Balance Ending - Unrestricted	17,206,812	19,470,345	21,503,339

Council Update

October-November Legislation

The following bills were introduced in October and voted on November 3.

CR183 FY2027 HCPSS Capital Budget

HCPSS total Capital request for FY27 is \$116.6 million (\$27.1 million to the State and \$89.5 million to the County). The request to the State is for systemic renovations (including air-conditioning for 10 gyms and security improvements) and roofing.

D4 schools on the list include:

- Fulton ES: roof
- Clarksville MS Gym: HVAC
- River Hill HS Gym: HVAC

The total County request includes four individual construction projects as well as additional systemic repairs:

- Oakland Mills MS renovation/addition
- Dunloggin MS renovation/addition
- New Elementary School #43 (Southeast region)
- Patapsco MS renovation/addition

The State cost split for Howard County has declined from 61% in FY2012 to 51% in FY26. FY27 will receive a 50% State share, the lowest share allowed by State law.

The County funded request was submitted as an amendment (Amendment 1) based on the Board of Education (BOE)'s vote on November 6. The BOE decided to reallocate

special State funding away from Oakland Mills HS, which had previously been scheduled for a renovation/addition, to other projects that ranked higher in the prioritization list. Many Oakland Mills students and families came to the Council's public hearing asking to vote down Amendment 1.

I completely understand the community's frustration but I did not feel comfortable countering the BOE's authority. I also question whether the Council's vote against Amendment 1 would be binding. The Council approves funding requests but we don't allocate funds to individual projects.

The real solution, in my opinion, is to increase funding to HCPSS so that communities aren't competing against each other.

Passed as amended

CR167 Solar PILOT

A farm belonging to the Carroll family requested a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for a solar project. Howard County offers tax breaks, also known as PILOTs, to solar projects on agricultural lands. This proposed project will produce energy for the University of Maryland Medical System.

Passed as amended

CR184 Affordable Housing PILOT

Orchard Club asked for an extension on an existing PILOT for its mixed-income apartment building in Elkridge. *Passed*

HB1450: School Construction Revenue

From August 2024 to June 2025, I sat on the HB1450 Task Force to identify school Capital needs and potential revenue solutions. The Task Force's final report projected an average funding gap of \$40.7 million annually. To close the gap, the report recommended increasing the amount of State funding to the County, allocating capital funds to better leverage State funding, and working to adjust the State's requirements for construction and programmatic space needs.

While I agreed with most of the majority report, I felt that it fell short in prioritizing allocations of school Capital projects. I worked with several other Task Force members to identify alternative and additional recommendations for closing the projected \$40.7 million gap. The resulting HB 1450 Addendum recommends the following:

Addendum Recommendations

- Dedicate at least 50% of prior year's surplus (PAYGO) to school Capital projects.
- Revisit allocation of Transfer Tax and consider existing fund balances

- Avoid increasing taxes on County residents who already face high tax burdens.
- Adjust school Capital funding to reflect HCPSS's size and scope and escalating construction costs.
- Investigate State construction and funding requirements to reduce costs, expedite timelines, and support timely repairs of older facilities.

Since FY24, the County has experienced significant increases in prior year's surplus funds (PAYGO), which have been near or above \$100 million. PAYGO can be assigned to any Capital project or one-time Operating expenses by the County Executive.

In FY25, PAYGO funding for projects categorized as "General County" (one-time priorities that fall outside of the ongoing Capital needs of the County departments) far exceeded PAYGO funding to HCPSS despite the school system having more employees, serving more individuals, and owning more square footage than the County.

Table 1a. FY25 Capital PAYGO Projects

Capital Budget Category	Amount
HCPSS	\$15 million
Bridges	\$500,000
Community College	\$5 million
General County	\$65.2 million
Library	\$4 million
Recreation & Parks	\$4.3 million
Road Resurfacing	\$15 million
Sidewalks	\$2.5 million
Traffic Improvements	\$75,000

HB1450: School Construction Revenue

The final Task Force report stated that \$50 to \$54 million per year will be allocated to school Capital projects by the County. No evidence was provided to support the County’s intention for flat funding or for the projections of future County revenues. Flat funding will result in declining future investments in HCPSS due to escalating construction costs and other inflationary factors.

Flat funding also doesn’t represent a proportionality of spending in regards to HCPSS size, scope, and service mandate. In the FY26 Budget, the County government received \$266.4 million in funding and HCPSS received \$100.6 million.

The Administration also did not provide projection modeling for future revenues but in the HB1450 Addendum we provided a comparison of County revenues between FY25 and FY26 as a summary of sources of funds and growth indicators:

- Property tax revenue increased by 4%
- Income tax revenues increased by 4%
- Property tax and income tax revenues have increased at a steady average rate of 4.2% each since FY20.
- Interest income (categorized as “Use of Money & Property”) increased by 100.9% to \$24.1 million in FY26.

Table 3. FY26 Revenue Summary & Comparison to FY25

FY 26 Revenue Summary

	FY 2025	FY 2026	\$	%
	Budget	Proposed	Change	Change
Property Tax	698.0	729.9	31.8	4.6%
Income Tax	635.9	662.2	26.3	4.1%
Recordation Tax	19.3	19.0	(0.3)	-1.6%
Other local taxes	9.1	8.9	(0.2)	-1.9%
State Shared Taxes	5.6	6.1	0.6	10.1%
Other Agency Rev.	10.3	13.4	3.1	29.8%
Permit/licen/Charge/Misc	22.2	20.6	(1.6)	-7.2%
Interfund Reimbursements	48.4	48.3	(0.1)	-0.3%
Use of Money & Property	12.0	24.1	12.1	100.9%
Total Revenues	1,460.8	1,532.5	71.7	4.9%

Further Reading

Read the recommendations in the HB1450 Task Force and the HB1450 Addendum reports. Both reports can be found on my [Legislation & More](#) webpage on the Council’s website.

HCPSS Updates

Attendance Area Adjustment

The Board of Education (BOE) approved the final redistricting plan on December 4. Approximately 120 students from Bryant Woods ES and 40 students from Harpes Choice MS will be reassigned. The changes will take effect at the start of the 2026-2027 school year. Visit HCPSS's [News](#) webpage for more.



Nominate Your Favorite Teacher

Deadline January 7

Do you know a teacher or principal who is doing a phenomenal job? Nomination forms for Principal of the Year and Teacher of the Year are available on the HCPSS [News](#) webpage.

Class of 2026 Graduation Dates

The window for the Class of 2026 high school graduations will be May 18 to June 4. No graduations will be held on Memorial Day, Eid al-Adha, or weekends. The final dates will be announced in the spring.

Apply to JROTC

Deadline January 6

Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) programs are offered at Atholton (Army), Howard (Army), and Oakland Mills (Air Force) high schools. Each JROTC program provides an introduction to career opportunities in the U.S. Armed Forces and teaches principles of leadership, discipline, and civic responsibility. Students interested in JROTC may apply regardless of their assigned school. Visit HCPSS's [News](#) webpage for more.

FY27 Operating Budget

The BOE will soon begin its annual Operating Budget process; visit HCPSS's [Budget FY27](#) webpage for more. Key dates:

- January 8 Superintendent presents his proposed budget to the BOE
- January 15 & 22: BOE Budget worksessions
- January 29: Public hearing

Renaming the Applications and Research Laboratory (ARL)

The Board of Education will be considering a name change for the newly renovated ARL at the beginning of the 2026-2027 school year. There will be a public hearing to hear your suggestions on January 15, 2026.

Visit HCPSS [News](#) webpage for more.

County & Community Updates

Aging in Place Tax Credit Extension

Deadline January 9

Seniors who received the Aging in Place tax credit starting in 2017 are able to extend the credit for another two years. The Department of Finance mailed recertification letters to qualifying residents. All other applications will be accepted in Spring 2026. Visit the Finance Department's [Tax Credit](#) webpage.

Water & Sewer Payments

The County has begun charging residents the credit card and bank convenience fees associated with using these payment options. To avoid a fee, enroll in direct debit via the County's Utilli portal. Select "Payment Options/Direct Debit" to add a bank account. This option can be used for existing charges but can be set up in advance for future charges. Visit the Finance Department's [Water and Sewer Billing](#) webpage for more.

Thank You to the Scot's Glen Community

Every year, Scot's Glenn Community collects donations for Swansfield Elementary students and families. School supplies and holiday gift cards for families in need were among this year's donations to the school community.

Food Assistance Programs

The holiday season brings high demand for food assistance. The Howard County Food Bank is offering extended shopping hours on



FREE Flu Vaccine Clinics

HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

- For ages 6 months and older
- No appointment necessary, walk-ups welcome
- Includes regular dose vaccine and limited supply of high dose vaccine (for 65+, please bring Medicare card)
- Multiple locations and times, including evenings and weekends

SCAN ME!

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/HoCoFlu for a full list of upcoming events

The poster features a photograph of an elderly man and a young girl, both with their arms raised as if receiving a vaccine. The background is blue with white virus icons.

Thursdays. Donations of rice, pasta, soups, tuna, peanut butter, as well as feminine hygiene products are needed. Visit the [Community Action Council](#) website for more information.

Grassroots runs an emergency shelter, crisis center, and a day-resource center. Grassroots is asking for donations of food and toiletries. Visit Grassroots [Current Needs](#) webpage.

Columbia Community Care is a nonprofit in Wilde Lake that provides food assistance to employed families who don't qualify for Federal assistance. Pantry needs include canned items, ramen, cereals, granola bars, juice boxes, and shelf-stable milk. Visit [Columbia Community Care](#) website for more.

Keeping up with Deb



Veterans Day Parade



Rotary Club of Howard West
Celebration



Office on Aging and Independence
Thanksgiving Luncheon



Maryland Association
of Counties
Winter Conference

Keeping up with Deb



**Chabad Hanukkah Celebration
Ellicott City 50+ Center**



**Chapel Celebration
Lutheran Village at Miller's Grant**



**Korean American Senior Association
Chuseok Festival**

Upcoming Events

Merriweather Symphony of Lights

November 29-January 4

Enjoy the beloved lights display on foot or car.

The final walk through celebrates a family friendly New Year's Eve. Visit [Merriweather Lights](#) website for more.

The Collective Encore

Holiday and New Year's Eve parties and performances take the stage at this Lakefront live

music venue. Visit the [Collective Encore's](#) website for a list of shows.

St. Louis Church Concert Series

February 7, Jazz Cabaret

Visit the St. Louis Church [Concert Series](#) webpage for more.



2025 KWANZAA CELEBRATION

 **Calvin Ball**
County Executive

 **Howard County**
Office of Human Rights & Equity

 **Harriet Tubman**
CULTURAL CENTER

 **Howard County**
Recreation & Parks



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2025
12:30-4:30 PM
8045 HARRIET TUBMAN LANE
COLUMBIA, MD 21044

Immerse yourself in the rich cultural heritage and values that this unique holiday embodies.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect, reflect, and celebrate the spirit of Kwanzaa with us!