

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes Approved 2/18/09

Monthly Meeting

February 9, 2009

Chairperson Mary Kay Sigaty called the monthly meeting to order 4:30 p.m. on February 9, 2009, in the C. Vernon Gray Conference Room, 8930 Stanford Boulevard, Columbia.

Members present on call to order: Calvin Ball, Greg Fox, Mary Kay Sigaty, Jennifer Terrasa and Courtney Watson.

Ms. Sigaty indicated that the bond rating agencies will be travelling to Howard County in late February in lieu of the usual trip by county representatives to New York City.

Ms. Sigaty also reported that proposed Ho. Co. 13-09 was discussed at length by the Patuxent River Commission, which ultimately sent her to the delegation's public hearing to oppose the bill.

Ms. Terrasa provided a Priority Bill List from the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Legislative Committee. The list includes MACo's positions. Of particular note, MACo supports HB 300/SB 274 related to Tax Incremental Financing in transit-oriented development. MACo's position on the land use bills in response to Terrapin Run (HB 297/SB 280) is on hold pending further discussion. Finally, MACo supports speed camera legislation in highway work zones (HB 313/SB 277). Ms. Terrasa also submitted the outline of the FY 2010 Budget presentation by Secretary Foster to the MACo Legislative Committee.

In response to inquiry by Ms. Watson, Ms. Terrasa confirmed that MACo is watching to see whether legislation will be introduced to shift the cost of pensions to the counties.

Council members requested staff to evaluate the impact of the Terrapin Run bills on the County in order to decide whether to take a direct position on the bills. Time is of the essence since the hearing is scheduled for February 18.

Ms. Terrasa applauded the Howard County youth face book.

Mr. Fox asked the Administration to update the progress of renovations and for additional participation in the Spending Affordability Committee. Ray Wacks, Budget Director, explained the history and schedule of the Committee.

Steve LeGendre gave the Administrator's report of transition activities, including Board of Education Agreement, Public Information Act request, budget brochure and leave procedures. Flex leave will be suspended during budget in accordance with the approved interim policy. The Council has requested advice from the law office related to substantive amendments to active bills. Finally, a follow up meeting on Granicus was held on February 2, 2009.

Haskell Arnold, County Auditor, reported on completed audits (911 and P- card), audits in review (Financial Disclosure Statements, Hotel/Motel Tax) and six audits in progress. He also reported that expenditures for the month and year are under budget.

Mr. Wacks summarized revenue estimates as of December, 2008. The previously projected deficit has increased from \$1.8 million to \$5.0 million, which reflects decreases in development based revenues and investment income. However, the budget is projected to balance based on strategies already implemented, including sequestering of pay-go money, the conditional hiring freeze, and reductions in discretionary spending. These adjustments are in the range of \$10-15 million, which will provide a cushion should the revenue picture worsen. Mr. Wacks presented a series of charts and analyses for the 12 key revenues. He also explained the rationale for the level dollar and 5% cutback department budgets for FY 2010. Finally, the pending federal stimulus plan will be monitored for its fiscal impact on the County.

Robert Ensor, District Manager, Howard Soil Conservation District, described the activities of the District as a partnership among the federal, state and county levels of government. The functional areas are agricultural businesses, educational outreach and urban sediment and erosion control. The District's activities are more fully described in its 2008 Annual Report submitted at the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.