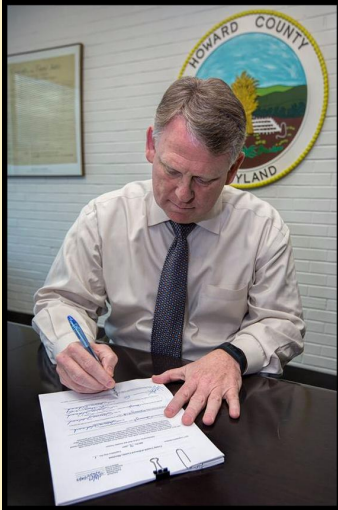




Howard County Happenings *with Allan H. Kittleman*

February 2017

A Message from the County Executive



As a lifelong resident of Howard County, I know first-hand that we are an inclusive and diverse community. I know our government employees treat everyone who lives and visits the county with respect and dignity. We celebrate our diverse cultures throughout the year, including Black History Month each February.

Unfortunately, debate over Council Bill 9 has caused rifts in our county and unnecessarily divided our foreign-born community. I said from the beginning that this legislation is a bad solution to a problem that does not exist here. It is little more than a hollow political statement. The bill offers a false sense of security to undocumented immigrants, compromises public safety efforts and puts the county at risk of losing critical federal funding for community services and law enforcement.

For these reasons, which I further [discussed in my news conference](#) after the Council vote, I have vetoed CB-9. I hope we can move forward to welcome and respect each other with the understanding, cooperation and civility for which our community is known.

Sharing behavioral health resources

On Feb. 10, the [Howard County Health Department](#) launched a Behavioral Health Learning Collaborative to help mental health professionals, partners and others adjust to changes in patient demand, reimbursement and care expectations in the health care market.

In a series of seven monthly sessions, providers, in groups of 15, will pool resources and share best practices. Participants will be guided in creating quality improvement initiatives that help further develop our local mental health network. By working together, residents who need help will have access to quality local treatment and programs.



Planning Board to review APFO results

The [County Planning Board](#) is the next step in a comprehensive review of the [Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances](#) (APFO) to ensure that public facilities and infrastructure keep pace with development. On Feb. 16, the Board will discuss a [technical review](#), conducted by the Department of Planning and Zoning, of the task force recommendations submitted last year. The meeting is open and public input will help finalize legislation to be filed shortly with the County Council to enact needed changes.

Among the recommendations, the upcoming legislation is expected to update how housing is distributed by removing moderate income housing units from most calculations, eliminate sharing housing categories between Established Communities and Growth and Revitalization areas, and clarify technical aspects such as development wait times and the definition of governmental facilities. We also want to ensure that APFO reviews are conducted as part of every General Plan cycle.

Six months after Ellicott City flood

In the six months since Historic Ellicott City was devastated by a flash flood, the dedication and resilience of the community have brought the town back far quicker than we could have imagined. Of the 90 businesses impacted by the flood, more than 70 have reopened, with more scheduled and two new businesses joining Main Street. Still, much work remains to be done.



The [One EC Recovery Project](#) has taken the lead as a resource for Ellicott City residents. Since November of 2016, it has identified more than 30 residences needing rebuilding and rehabilitation help. It is raising financial support, as well as coordinating building supplies, services, in-kind donations and volunteer labor to assist residents.

The [Ellicott City Flood Recovery Community Advisory Group](#) recently completed its [report](#) and recommendations. This group considered hundreds of community ideas. We will review all the recommendations and take on feasible projects that will have the most impact. In addition, the county is seeking "Expressions of Interest" for professional services to help develop a [Master Plan for Ellicott City](#) and its watershed.

Approved tax credits support residents aging in place

The County Council has approved my proposals for tax credits that support residents who want to age in place in the County. The existing [senior tax credit](#) has been expanded to nearly 15,000 residents by lowering the age of eligibility from 70 to 65. A new [Aging in Place](#) credit provides a 20 percent tax credit on up to \$500,000 of assessed property value for property owners who are 65 or older and have lived on their property for at least 40 years. The [Livable Homes Tax Credit](#) will include a greater variety of projects and increase from 50 to 100 percent of eligible costs up to \$2,500 to help seniors make needed improvements to stay safely in their homes.

In addition, the [tax credit for historic properties](#) will expand to include interior projects and streamline requirements for preapproval from the Historic Preservation Commission. Another incentive offers [\\$100 rebates to homeowners](#) who pump out their septic system.

New Subcabinet supports farming

Agriculture accounts for roughly 25 percent of the land use in Howard County. To support the industry, I gathered an internal subcabinet of related county agencies to coordinate and strategize efforts to help our farmers. Newly appointed Agriculture Coordinator James Zoller, who managed the Roving Radish program for three years, will lead the group.



At my recent [Agriculture Roundtable](#), we discussed these efforts with nearly 50 residents involved in farming. Our goals include improving coordination of county agriculture programs; supporting projects that help local farms remain profitable; educating neighbors about farming operations to increase community cooperation; and ensuring that thoughtful, supportive legislation is in place. Topics participants raised ranged from zoning regulations to managing deer populations that damage crops to farmers' use of county roads. Moving forward, the subcabinet will review suggestions and work on appropriate solutions.

Dates to Remember

February 13	First time Homebuyer Education Workshop in Columbia at 6 p.m.
February 16	<i>State of the County</i> address at George Howard Building at 6 p.m.
February 20	Presidents Day - offices closed
February 21	Transportation Funding Priority Letter Public Meeting at 6:30 p.m.
March 8	2nd FY2018 Citizens' Budget Hearing at 7 p.m.
March 11	HoCoWalks at Robinson Nature Center at 9 a.m.