

# The People's Voice, LLC

## Ethics Ballot™

8815 Centre Park Drive, Suite 245, Columbia, MD 21045

### ETHICS BALLOT QUESTIONNAIRE

#### County Council Primary 2026

Name/District: Jean Xu, District 1

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#### Educational History

Johns Hopkins University  
Master of Business Administration, May 2000

University of South Carolina  
Master of Science  
Biostatistics, December 1994

Beijing University  
Bachelor of Science  
Probability and Statistics, July 1991

#### Languages Spoken/Other Skills/Relevant Experience

##### Languages Spoken:

- English
- Mandarin Chinese

##### Other Skills:

- Community engagement and constituent services
- Policy analysis and budget review
- Land use and zoning review
- Nonprofit leadership and governance
- Cross-cultural communication and outreach

##### Relevant Experience:

- Former Chair, Howard County Ethics Commission
- Former Member, Howard County Board of Appeals
- Served on the HCPSS Operating Budget Review Committee

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- Regular participant in County Council, County Executive, and Board of Education public hearings, with multiple years of formal testimony
- CAPA Founding President
- YMCA Community Leadership Board member
- General Hospital Corporate and Community Engagement Committee member
- Leadership Howard County graduate
- PlanHoward Academy graduate
- Former small business owner and federal sub-contractor

### 1. Why are you running for this office? Non-Incumbents, please describe how your campaign is viable.

I am running for County Council because I believe public service is about giving back and making government truly responsive to the people it serves. As an immigrant who has lived in Howard County for nearly two decades, raised my children through the public school system, and am deeply grateful for this community, I have spent many years serving it through nonprofit leadership and public service. Running for office is a natural next step, another level of service, to help move our county forward.

I am running to challenge the status quo and ensure our county's priorities reflect residents' needs, not entrenched interests or special interest influence. My focus is on responsible funding priorities, strong and fully funded schools, and ensuring our infrastructure keeps pace with growth without overburdening current residents. Howard County can grow, but it must grow smartly, equitably, and transparently.

My campaign is viable because it is truly grassroots and community powered. I was the first candidate countywide to qualify for the Citizen Election Fund in August 2025, demonstrating strong early support from small donors, and I am currently among the top 10 publicly financed candidates in the state of Maryland. I have completed a full round of door knocking across District 1 and continue voter outreach through additional rounds of canvassing and sustained community engagement. I have also participated in a wide range of community events, meet and greets, and neighborhood conversations across the district.

I have focused my outreach on primary voters and consistent re-engagement, which positions our campaign to translate grassroots support into strong voter turnout. In addition, through long-standing relationships in immigrant communities, I have the ability to engage independent voters and bring them into the primary electorate in support of my candidacy, expanding participation among residents who are often underrepresented in local elections.

I am a well-known community advocate who has spent years standing side by side with parents, teachers, and residents on a wide range of issues affecting our neighborhoods and schools. People know me not just as a candidate, but as someone who has consistently shown up, listened, and fought alongside them long before I decided to run for office. That long-standing trust is why voters know my

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policy priorities are grounded in lived experience and genuine advocacy, not just campaign talking points.

Through years of nonprofit leadership and service on county boards and commissions, I have built a strong volunteer team and a broad community network. My campaign has been intentional, disciplined, and data-informed, focusing resources on direct voter contact rather than flashy or costly tactics. Our campaign is well organized and volunteer driven, with the capacity to sustain consistent outreach through Election Day. Most importantly, my priorities continue to resonate with voters because they come directly from listening to residents across District 1.

2. Non-Incumbents: What qualifications do you uniquely bring to hold this office? What experience do you have with the County Council? Have you ever testified before the County Council? What positions did you take?

A key qualification I bring is my availability and responsiveness to residents. I am deeply engaged in the community and make it a priority to respond directly to constituent concerns, follow up consistently, and connect people with the resources they need. Residents know they can reach me and trust that I will take their concerns seriously and work toward practical solutions.

If elected, I will serve as a full-time County Councilmember and devote my full professional focus to the responsibilities of this office. This commitment allows me to be consistently available to residents, provide timely and effective constituent service, and give sustained attention to policy development, oversight, and long-term planning. I believe this level of dedication is necessary to meet the demands of the role and to ensure accountable, responsive governance.

In addition, I bring a combination of direct governance experience, long-standing community advocacy, and hands-on policy engagement that uniquely prepares me to serve on the County Council. I have served as Chair of the Howard County Ethics Commission and as a member of the Howard County Board of Appeals, roles that required careful review of appeals, quasi-judicial proceedings, and ethical standards. In these roles, I consistently prioritized transparency, fairness, and the public interest over corporate or special interest influence. These roles required independence, careful judgment, and adherence to law and process, all of which directly translate to effective service on the County Council.

Through my public service and nonprofit leadership experience, I have developed a strong understanding of land use, development pressures, and responsible growth, as well as the ability to work across communities and institutions to build collaboration, find common ground, and deliver real results for residents.

I also have extensive experience engaging with the County Council outside of formal board service. I have regularly brought constituent concerns directly to Councilmembers and county leadership,

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including issues related to school bus service cuts in specific neighborhoods, road safety and infrastructure improvements, and housing and maintenance challenges faced by seniors in aging buildings. In addition to formal testimony, I have provided written input and engaged in ongoing dialogue with Council members on budget priorities, APFO implementation, and growth-related impacts on schools and infrastructure.

Yes, I have submitted testimony before the County Council and at county budget hearings in multiple years. I testified in two consecutive budget cycles advocating fully funding public schools, including both the operating budget and long-deferred maintenance. I also submitted testimony in support of Council Bill 59-2025, introduced by Councilmember Deb Jung, to remove the eight-year cap on the Aging in Place Tax Credit so seniors and retired military personnel can afford to remain in their homes as they age. In addition, I supported Council Bill 1-2020, sponsored by Councilmember Liz Walsh, which extended the school capacity test wait period from four years to seven years to better align school construction timelines with development approvals.

Together, my governance experience, full-time commitment, community advocacy, and proven ability to engage residents and build collaborative solutions prepare me to be an effective, independent, and community-grounded member of the County Council from day one.

### 3. Are you using the Citizens Election Fund (CEF)? Why or why not?

Yes, I am participating in the Howard County Citizens' Election Fund because I believe publicly financed campaigns strengthen our democracy and keep elected officials accountable to residents, not establishment interests or special interest groups. My campaign is guided by the community's voice, and the CEF makes it possible to build a people powered campaign rooted in small donor support rather than large private contributions.

By choosing to use the Citizens' Election Fund, I am committing to transparency, ethical leadership, and genuine community engagement. This program allows me to spend more time listening to residents and addressing their concerns, instead of focusing on fundraising from wealthy donors, while operating within clear spending limits and public accountability. It ensures that my priorities reflect what I hear directly from neighbors across District 1 and reinforces my commitment to serving the public interest.

### 4. If you are elected, what are your top priorities for 2026? Discuss at least three areas in need of change, under the purview of the County Council, and how you would address them.

#### **Priority 1: Responsible budgeting, schools, and infrastructure readiness**

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In 2026, my top priority will be strengthening Howard County's budget process so it is transparent, accurate, and aligned with long-term community needs. The County Council must treat the operating and capital budgets as one integrated strategy, planning for staffing, maintenance, and service delivery alongside the construction and modernization of public facilities. I will advocate for realistic revenue assumptions and responsible use of available resources, including directing PAYGO toward essential services and critical infrastructure rather than deferring costs into the future.

This includes fully funding our public schools, addressing deferred maintenance that affects health and safety, and advancing long-overdue capital projects in communities where growth has outpaced infrastructure. Climate resilience must also be integrated into capital planning through investments in stormwater management, drainage, road resilience, and flood mitigation. Budget discipline and growth management must reinforce each other so development decisions do not create unfunded obligations for future taxpayers.

### **Priority 2: Responsible growth, housing balance, and equitable economic development**

Howard County must grow in a way that is smart, sustainable, and fair to existing residents. I recognize that our county is facing a real housing affordability challenge, and that increasing housing supply is part of the solution. However, housing growth must be planned responsibly, with schools, roads, water, sewer, and public services in place before new development proceeds. I will support a strong Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance so that efforts to address housing needs do not create overcrowded schools, traffic congestion, or unfunded infrastructure obligations for current residents.

At the same time, the County must grow its economy in a way that broadens the tax base and reduces the burden on homeowners. As a former small business owner and federal contractor, I understand how business growth creates jobs and generates sustainable revenue. I will prioritize strategies that diversify revenue by expanding commercial investment, supporting redevelopment along Route 1 and Route 40, and attracting and supporting locally owned small businesses. Through zoning, legislation, budget priorities, and oversight, the County Council can ensure growth is balanced, fiscally responsible, and aligned with infrastructure capacity.

### **Priority 3: Community stability, public safety, and quality of life**

Strong communities depend on stability, safety, and responsive government. I will prioritize policies that support seniors who want to age in place, including housing stability, property tax relief, accessible infrastructure, and coordinated services that allow residents to remain safely and affordably in their homes.

Public safety is a core responsibility of county government. I will support responsible funding and strong oversight for public safety agencies, including fire and rescue services, emergency response, and road safety improvements. I will also emphasize community-based approaches that build trust, address underlying challenges, and ensure resources are deployed effectively and equitably in partnership with the communities they serve.

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Across all these priorities, my approach will be grounded in listening to residents, using data and transparency to guide decisions, and ensuring the County Council acts as a responsible steward of public resources. My goal is a Howard County that works for everyone, now and in the years ahead.

5. What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the current County Council? How have you demonstrated your ability to work with people who have diverse positions?

The current County Council has important strengths. Councilmembers are engaged, bring diverse professional backgrounds, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to public service. The Council has addressed complex issues, including budgeting, growth management, and community needs, and many members work hard on behalf of residents.

However, there are areas where the Council can continue to strengthen its effectiveness. At times, differing perspectives among Councilmembers have made collaboration more challenging and slowed progress on complex issues. Some Councilmembers have had to navigate a steep learning curve when taking on the role, particularly in building familiarity with constituent services, community organizations, and county systems. In addition, when availability is limited, it can be harder to maintain consistent responsiveness and proactive engagement with residents. Together, these factors can contribute to a more reactive approach, underscoring the importance of sustained collaboration, preparation, and community engagement.

I bring a different approach. Throughout my career in public service and nonprofit leadership, I have prioritized being accessible, responsive, and present in the community. I believe consistent availability, preparation, and follow-through are essential to restoring trust and effectiveness on the Council. As Chair of the Ethics Commission and a member of the Board of Appeals, I worked effectively with colleagues holding diverse and sometimes opposing views by listening carefully, building mutual respect, and focusing on fairness and the public interest. Those roles required collaboration under pressure and principled decision making.

In my nonprofit and community work, I have consistently made myself available to residents, worked closely with community organizations, and followed through to connect people with resources and solutions. I believe effective leadership requires time, preparation, and accountability. As a Councilmember, I would be fully committed to the role, responsive to constituents, and focused on working collaboratively to deliver results for Howard County.

6. What are your funding priorities for the County? What changes do you believe should be made compared to past budget decisions?

My funding priorities are rooted in long-term, integrated planning and responsible stewardship of public resources. Howard County must treat the operating and capital budgets as two parts of the same strategy,

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not separate conversations. Sustainable growth requires planning for staffing, maintenance, and service delivery alongside the construction and modernization of public facilities. When these plans are aligned, we protect public dollars, maintain service quality, and plan ahead rather than reacting to crises.

A key change I believe is necessary is the use of more accurate and realistic revenue assumptions. For several years, the county has consistently underestimated revenue, making budgets appear more constrained than they ultimately are. Overly conservative projections can lead to unnecessary cuts and delayed investments in essential services. I would push for more transparent and data-driven revenue forecasting so funding decisions reflect actual capacity and community needs.

The county also must use existing resources more strategically. With nearly 200 million dollars in PAYGO in FY 2025 and nearly 100 million dollars in FY 2026, Howard County has significant public resources that should be directed toward vital services and critical infrastructure rather than sitting unused while needs grow. These funds should be responsibly invested in areas such as schools, deferred maintenance, and long-overdue capital projects. Major funding decisions should also be accompanied by clear performance measures and public reporting so residents can see how dollars are spent and what outcomes are achieved.

Fully funding our public school system is a top priority. Over the past two years, hundreds of teaching and staff positions have been cut or left unfilled, directly affecting students and educators. When operating budgets are not fully funded, learning gaps widen, educator burnout accelerates, and students lose the individualized attention they deserve. In addition, the county must address nearly 200 million dollars in deferred school maintenance, which affects health, safety, and learning conditions. Deferred maintenance is not just a facilities issue. It is a public health and student well-being issue, and delaying these investments only increases long-term costs. While schools must remain a top priority, other core infrastructure such as roads, stormwater systems, and water and sewer capacity must also be funded to support safe, sustainable growth.

Finally, capital investments must be aligned with growth. Communities such as Elkridge have waited decades for promised infrastructure, including a new high school, while development has outpaced capacity. Core infrastructure including schools, roads, and water and sewer systems must be planned, funded, and delivered in step with population growth. Responsible development requires timely and responsible public investment. Investing earlier in maintenance and infrastructure avoids far higher costs later and reduces pressure on future budgets and taxpayers.

7. Do you feel the amount of planned residential growth in the County should be increased or decreased? Include details, such as, overall versus regional goals. Explain your reasons for your positions, and include any changes you believe should occur to APFO. Be sure to include your opinions about the major areas of recommendations by the 2025 APFO Review Committee.

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I do not believe the question of residential growth in Howard County can be answered by simply increasing or decreasing numbers countywide. The more important issue is whether growth is properly paced and aligned with available public facilities, particularly school capacity, and whether impacts are addressed region by region rather than averaged across the county.

Growth pressures are uneven, with some school regions already well over capacity while others may be better positioned to accommodate additional development. For that reason, I support a regionally based approach to growth management that ensures new residential development occurs only where infrastructure, especially schools, is truly adequate or where capacity will be delivered in a timely and reliable manner.

The Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance is a critical tool for achieving this balance. Its primary purpose should remain ensuring that public facilities are adequate before development proceeds, rather than relying on future mitigation to address known deficiencies. Maintaining strong, enforceable school capacity standards is essential to protecting educational quality, community trust, and public confidence in growth decisions. When APFO standards are weakened, residents lose confidence that growth decisions are being made in their best interest.

With respect to the 2025 APFO Review Committee recommendations, I appreciate the effort to evaluate and modernize the ordinance and to address long-standing challenges related to growth and infrastructure funding. However, I have concerns about proposals that would replace the existing school capacity test with a fee-based approach such as the proposed School Over Capacity Utilization Payment. While additional capital funding for schools is important, a payment alone does not ensure that new capacity will be built where and when it is needed. Any changes to APFO should avoid weakening protections against overcrowding or shifting long-term costs onto families and taxpayers.

I support continued evaluation of APFO to improve transparency, predictability, and coordination with capital planning, as well as thoughtful approaches to redevelopment, infill, and affordable housing. Redevelopment and infill should be prioritized in areas with existing or planned infrastructure, not used as a justification to bypass capacity requirements. These goals should be pursued without compromising school capacity standards or educational outcomes.

In summary, I support responsible, well-planned residential growth that is regionally balanced and fully supported by infrastructure, and I believe APFO should continue to serve as a firm safeguard to ensure that growth does not outpace our schools or other essential public facilities.

8. What is your position on locations for new multiplexes and/or ADU's? Include issues of owner occupancy and by right versus conditional use.

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I believe housing policy should balance flexibility with neighborhood stability, infrastructure capacity, and community input. Multiplexes and ADUs can play a role in meeting housing needs, but where and how they are allowed matters greatly.

For multiplexes, I do not support broad by-right approval across established residential neighborhoods. Higher-density housing should be strategically located in areas that already have appropriate infrastructure, transit access, and services, such as designated growth areas, mixed-use zones, and redevelopment corridors. Allowing multiplexes by right in areas without adequate parking, road capacity, schools, or public services risks undermining quality of life and placing additional strain on already stressed infrastructure. I believe conditional use review is appropriate so impacts can be evaluated case by case, with meaningful community input.

For Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), I am supportive when they are owner-occupied and designed to meet clear standards related to size, parking, safety, and neighborhood compatibility. Owner occupancy helps ensure ADUs serve community needs, such as aging in place, multigenerational living, or caregiver housing, rather than becoming speculative investment properties. I do not support ADUs being used to facilitate absentee ownership or unchecked commercialization of single-family neighborhoods.

With respect to by-right versus conditional use, I believe conditional use review remains an important tool, particularly in residential areas. It allows the county to assess cumulative impacts, infrastructure capacity, and neighborhood context, and it gives residents a voice in decisions that directly affect their communities. Removing these safeguards risks repeating past mistakes where growth outpaced planning and public trust was eroded.

Overall, my approach is guided by the same principles that should underpin all land use decisions in Howard County: transparency, infrastructure readiness, environmental protection, and respect for existing communities. Thoughtful planning, not blanket approvals, is the best way to expand housing options while preserving the character and livability of our neighborhoods.

### 9. How do you think the County can best increase the supply of more affordable housing units?

Howard County can best increase the supply of affordable housing by using a targeted, data-driven approach that focuses on delivering units where they are most needed and most appropriate, while protecting existing neighborhoods and ensuring infrastructure is in place.

First, the County should make better use of public land, redevelopment sites, and designated growth areas for affordable and mixed-income housing. Focusing affordability near transit, employment centers, and existing services reduces costs, supports residents' daily needs, and avoids placing additional strain on schools, roads, and utilities in established residential neighborhoods.

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Second, the County should strengthen and fully utilize inclusionary housing policies and ensure that affordable housing requirements are realistic, enforceable, and actually result in units being built. This includes careful oversight of how developers meet affordability obligations and ensuring that buy-outs or alternatives do not undermine the goal of creating long-term affordable units.

Third, affordability must be paired with long-term sustainability. That means prioritizing deeply affordable units for seniors, working families, and people with disabilities, and ensuring affordability is preserved over time rather than expiring after a short period. Supporting aging in place through appropriately designed housing options is also a key part of this strategy.

The County should also align affordable housing investments with accurate budgeting and infrastructure planning. Housing policies that ignore school capacity, transportation, and public services risk creating new problems rather than solving existing ones. Affordable housing must be planned as part of a broader strategy that includes operating and capital budgets, not as an isolated goal.

Finally, community engagement and transparency are essential. Residents must have a voice in where and how affordable housing is developed, and decisions should be based on clear data and local context rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. When affordability is addressed thoughtfully, collaboratively, and with infrastructure readiness in mind, Howard County can expand housing opportunities while maintaining trust and quality of life.

10. What positions do you hold regarding the current levels of low and moderate income housing in the County? What changes to specific policies, that the Council can control, would you sponsor or support to implement your positions?

Howard County needs additional low and moderate income housing, but it must be planned carefully and delivered in ways that are effective, sustainable, and aligned with community needs. Simply increasing density or approving housing without adequate infrastructure does not guarantee affordability and can undermine public trust.

I believe the County should prioritize housing that is truly affordable and remains affordable over the long term, particularly for seniors, working families, and residents with disabilities. The County Council plays an important role in shaping policies that ensure affordability commitments are meaningful and enforceable, not just theoretical.

To advance this approach, I would support Council actions that strengthen on-site affordable housing requirements, limit over-reliance on fee-in-lieu options, and improve transparency and accountability so residents can see whether affordability goals are being met. I also support directing affordable housing

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to appropriate locations such as redevelopment areas, transit-accessible corridors, and publicly owned land where infrastructure and services already exist.

Affordable housing policy should be aligned with APFO and long-term infrastructure planning so that housing needs are addressed without overcrowding schools, straining roads, or compromising environmental protections. Overall, I support thoughtful, targeted housing policies that balance affordability, infrastructure readiness, and community engagement.

11. What is your position on County-funded housing trusts? Should fund usage be public, private, or both and why?

I support County-funded housing trusts when they are used carefully, transparently, and with strong public oversight to produce long-term affordable housing that meets clear community needs. A housing trust should be a targeted tool, not a way to bypass planning, zoning, or infrastructure requirements.

I believe housing trust funds can be used for both public and private projects, but only with clear guardrails. Public funds should prioritize projects that deliver meaningful, long-term affordability, are located where infrastructure and services already exist, and align with the County's land use, budget, and APFO framework. Public-private partnerships can be effective when affordability requirements are enforceable and outcomes are transparent.

Accountability is essential. The County Council should require clear criteria for how funds are awarded and regular public reporting so residents can see whether projects are delivering promised results. Housing trust dollars should not be used to justify development in areas that lack adequate school capacity, transportation, or public services.

Overall, County-funded housing trusts can play a positive role when they are well governed, aligned with infrastructure readiness, and focused on serving residents with the greatest housing needs, including seniors, working families, and residents with disabilities.

12. How do you feel about large-scale commercial uses on Preserved Agricultural land, such as solar panels, mulching, alcohol production uses?

Preserved Agricultural land exists for a clear purpose: to protect farming, open space, and rural character for the long term. I do not support large-scale commercial uses on preserved agricultural land when they undermine that core purpose or function as de facto industrial or commercial development.

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Any proposed use on preserved agricultural land must be evaluated through a preservation-first lens, not an economic convenience lens. Activities that significantly alter land use, generate heavy traffic, require substantial infrastructure, or permanently remove land from agricultural viability are inconsistent with the intent of preservation and should not be allowed by right.

With respect to solar installations, I support renewable energy, but not at the expense of permanently removing prime agricultural land from production. Large-scale, utility-style solar facilities should be directed to rooftops, parking canopies, brownfields, landfills, and already disturbed sites. Any limited solar use on agricultural land should be narrowly defined, clearly secondary to farming, reversible, and subject to strict size and location limits.

For mulching and similar processing operations, I do not support large-scale commercial or industrial activities on preserved agricultural land. These uses often introduce heavy truck traffic, noise, environmental impacts, and operational intensity that are incompatible with agricultural preservation and nearby rural communities.

Regarding alcohol production uses, I believe there is a meaningful distinction between small-scale, farm-based operations that are clearly tied to on-site agricultural production and larger commercial facilities that function primarily as manufacturing, entertainment, or event venues. Only the former should be considered, and even then, with clear limits, conditional use review, and strong enforcement to ensure the agricultural use remains primary.

Overall, I believe preserved agricultural land must be protected from incremental erosion through exceptions that gradually change its character and function. The County Council should maintain clear standards, resist pressure to broaden allowable uses, and ensure that preservation policies are enforced consistently and transparently. Protecting agricultural land is about long-term stewardship, not shortterm economic gain.

13. What is your position on using PayGo funds for deferred HCPSS maintenance? What percentage would you choose to use for that purpose this year? Are there other budget areas you would prefer to see that money fund, or be added to the priority list?

I strongly support using PAYGO funds to address deferred maintenance in Howard County Public Schools. Deferred maintenance is not optional spending. It directly affects student health, safety, learning conditions, and long-term fiscal responsibility. When maintenance is delayed, costs grow and classrooms are disrupted, which undermines both educational outcomes and public trust.

Given the nearly \$200 million in deferred school maintenance and the availability of substantial PAYGO balances, I believe a majority of PAYGO funds this year should be directed toward addressing critical HCPSS maintenance needs, particularly projects that impact safety, HVAC systems, ventilation,

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roofs, and building systems that disrupt instruction when they fail. Treating these needs as a top PAYGO priority reflects responsible stewardship and long-term planning.

At the same time, PAYGO should not be used in isolation or without discipline. Funds should be directed based on clear criteria, transparency, and readiness to proceed, ensuring dollars are spent efficiently and deliver measurable improvements. Using PAYGO strategically for maintenance helps stabilize future capital budgets and avoids shifting today's costs onto future taxpayers.

Beyond school maintenance, I believe PAYGO should also support other essential infrastructure priorities, including long-overdue capital projects tied to growth, road and transportation safety improvements, and infrastructure that supports public safety and core county services. However, these investments should not compete with or displace the urgent need to address deferred maintenance in our schools.

Overall, I believe PAYGO should be used deliberately and transparently to address backlog needs that cannot be ignored, rather than accumulating unused while facilities deteriorate. Prioritizing school maintenance through PAYGO is a fiscally responsible choice that protects public assets, supports students and educators, and aligns spending with our values as a county.

14. What is your position on the Engineering News Record cap on the Council's ability to increase building excise taxes and moderate income housing unit fee-in-lieu rates?

I believe the ENR cap should be viewed as a baseline safeguard, not a permanent ceiling that prevents the County from responsibly funding growth-related impacts. While tying fee increases to a recognized inflation index like ENR provides predictability and discipline, it should not function as a rigid constraint when infrastructure costs, school construction, and public service demands are rising faster than ENR adjustments.

Building excise taxes and moderate income housing unit fee-in-lieu rates exist to ensure that growth helps pay for the infrastructure and services it requires, rather than shifting those costs onto existing residents and taxpayers. When caps prevent fees from keeping pace with actual construction and service costs, the result is underfunded schools, delayed infrastructure, and greater pressure on the operating budget and homeowners.

I support giving the County Council limited, transparent authority to exceed the ENR cap when justified by clear data, documented cost increases, and demonstrated infrastructure needs. Any adjustment above the cap should require a public process, strong justification, and clear linkage between the fee increase and specific capital or service impacts caused by new development. This approach maintains accountability while restoring the Council's ability to act responsibly.

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With respect to moderate income housing unit fee-in-lieu rates, I believe they should be set at levels that reflect the true cost of producing affordable units, not discounted amounts that undermine housing goals. Fee-in-lieu options should be carefully limited and structured so they do not become a routine substitute for on-site affordability or weaken long-term housing outcomes.

Overall, I believe the County Council must retain the flexibility to adjust growth-related fees when conditions warrant, while maintaining transparency, data-driven decision making, and public trust. Growth should contribute fairly to the costs it creates, and existing residents should not be left to fill funding gaps created by outdated or overly restrictive caps.

15. Do you believe that County volunteer boards should have legal/regulatory training? What is your opinion of the current procedures of the Board of Appeals?

Yes, I strongly believe County volunteer boards should receive regular and structured legal and regulatory training. Many boards, particularly the Board of Appeals, perform quasi-judicial functions that affect residents' rights, property interests, and community outcomes. Proper training is essential to ensure decisions are fair, legally sound, consistent, and based on due process.

My perspective is shaped by my direct experience serving on the Howard County Board of Appeals and participating in amendments to the Board's Rules of Procedure. That work reinforced the importance of clear procedures, strong legal grounding, and ongoing training so members fully understand zoning regulations, evidentiary standards, and their legal responsibilities. Training strengthens decision-making and builds public trust.

I also believe Board of Appeals members should demonstrate relevant experience or competency in zoning and land use and be prepared for the significant time commitment the role requires. The workload is heavy, cases are complex, and members must carefully review records, participate in lengthy hearings, and issue well-reasoned written decisions.

During the Rules of Procedure amendments, I supported the intent behind adding alternate members to improve continuity. However, when the Office of Law advised that the proposal could not meet legal sufficiency requirements, I voted against it. Upholding the rule of law and protecting the integrity of the Board's quasi-judicial role was essential.

Overall, the Board of Appeals' procedures appropriately reflect its quasi-judicial function, including public hearings, sworn testimony, and written decisions. I believe these procedures would be further strengthened by consistent legal training and by ensuring the Board's legal advisor provides guidance in advance of hearings to help members understand applicable law, procedural requirements, and case issues before deliberation begins. These steps support lawful, transparent, and nonpartisan decisionmaking across county volunteer boards.