



# Frederick County Council News

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December 2025

In November, the Frederick County Council met three times on the 4th, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 25th to discuss a variety of important issues facing our community. These meetings gave us the chance to continue ongoing conversations, explore new ideas, and hear directly from residents as we work together to support thoughtful and effective governance.

In her recently announced Legislative Package to the Maryland General Assembly, Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater included a policy position supporting a statewide ban on the 287(g) program. I believe this to be counterproductive. The 287(g) program is a jail-based partnership between local law enforcement agencies and federal immigration authorities. Under this agreement, a select number of detention center personnel receive specialized training from the Department of Homeland Security, authorizing them to check the immigration status of individuals after they have been arrested and booked for committing a crime. Since 2008, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office has lodged 424 detainers under the subject program against individuals found to be in the United States illegally after committing a felony locally. Those cases include 34 individuals charged with murder or attempted murder, 177 charged with assault, 163 charged with domestic violence, and 61 charged with sex offenses against a minor, among other serious crimes. Banning a program that has demonstrably enhanced public safety in our County would be a step backward, and one that undermines both local control and public trust.

The County Council recently approved legislation that relaxes zoning regulations for cannabis dispensaries, allowing them to be located much closer to schools, churches, libraries, and other sensitive sites, as well as nearer to residential neighborhoods. Under the new rules, dispensaries may now be placed as close as 100 feet from homes. I do not believe cannabis dispensaries are compatible with the sensitive uses mentioned above. Reducing these buffers places fundamentally different types of activities in close proximity, which can create unnecessary concerns for families and neighborhoods. In my view, this change represents poor policy.

The County Council recently workshopped two new bills proposed by the administration. The first bill updates animal control definitions and adjusts the fee schedule, including slight increases to certain fees. If these increases are not reduced before the bill is introduced for its first reading, I intend to offer amendments to restore the previous rates. The second bill updates the new jobs tax credit by requiring that qualifying positions pay at least the average wage in Frederick County, replacing the current standard of 150% of the federal minimum wage. Both proposals will continue through the legislative process in the coming weeks, to include a public hearing.

I will be hosting a Budget Town Hall listening session with the County Executive on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm at the Libertytown Fire Hall. I encourage all residents to attend and share their budget priorities as we move closer to developing the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. I appreciate the County Executive's commitment to continuing these annual listening sessions, which reflect good government in action and give both constituents and elected officials an opportunity to speak openly about the needs and future of our County.

As always, the public is invited to attend our meetings every Tuesday night at 5:30 pm at Winchester Hall, located at 12 East Church Street in downtown Frederick. Your involvement and input help shape our County!

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