

Howard County Council Candidates Questions and Answers 2022

BUDGET

How can you, as a council member, ensure that the school system meets the financial obligations of Kirwan/Blueprint for Maryland's future?

Hank Boyd:

Since I have spent 30 years in the trenches, I know that the craft of teaching doesn't come easy. Many of my colleagues have bestowed upon me the label of being a master teacher. Yet, the truth of the matter is that the profession of teaching is a never-ending journey to hone one's prowess in the classroom. With that said, what keeps me going is the sheer joy of exciting learning in others. I can do so because I am free of encumbrances such as administrative overreach. Having the autonomy to present in a fashion that I deem appropriate has fueled my passion for teaching. Therefore, I would argue that the most pressing issue facing the profession is to allow K-12 educators their rightful autonomy to teach as they see fit. Time and time again, we have come to the same conclusion - excellence in teaching is not based upon set curricula, fancy PowerPoint presentations, or the latest and greatest technology. Instead, the magic lies within the caliber and commitment of the teacher. Under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, I don't believe that a minimum starting salary of \$60,000 by 2026 is commensurate with all the duties and skills required to be an effective teacher. These days, with a confluence of economic factors, a teacher ought to be paid more. Due to the pandemic and its subsequent effects on the overall economy, inflation is running rampant. Therefore, new teachers must be paid more to draw them to this noble profession. Case in point, the benchmark ought to be what starting nurses make given the importance of teaching to society.

At \$60,000 a year, we are essentially paying teachers \$30 per hour. While in the not-so-distant past this figure was deemed impressive, it no longer is sufficient to pay mortgages, cover bills and household expenses. In media, we far too often hear dreadful stories about teachers who are forced to take second and third jobs to meet their financial commitments. At the end of the day, this deplorable situation must be corrected. Thus, I would assert that starting teachers should garner a starting salary of \$72,000.

What percentage of the County's budget do you think should be spent on the school system?

Hank Boyd:

At present, Howard County allocates \$750,000,000 toward education. Compared to other school jurisdictions this is vast sum of money. Therefore, we must revisit how those dollars are disbursed. Are we spending too much on technology in the classroom? Is there too much administrative bloat that could be curtailed? I know firsthand that teachers often are forced to pay out of pocket for necessary supplies. Why is this so in one of the wealthiest counties in the nation? To be frank, it's rather embarrassing for teachers to ask for donations from parents during *Back-to-School Night*.

Do you see a need to increase the County's revenues? If so, how would you increase the County's revenues?

Hank Boyd:

Since we have been fortunate to weather the economic fallout from the pandemic, we should see an upward adjustment in property taxes based on robust market valuations. It stands to reason that this main source of revenue will only grow given the favorable demand for District 4 neighborhoods like Maple Lawn, Enclave at River Hill, and Brighton Estates.

This year the County Executive and the school board used American Rescue Plan funding and some of its ESSER III (Elementary and Secondary Emergency Relief fund) grant to give bonuses to schoolteachers. If you had the good fortune to receive more unexpected federal dollars, how would you spend them and why?

Hank Boyd:

We have got to meet head on the issue of burnout. These days, teachers are leaving the profession in droves because of low pay and lack of respect. We must change this narrative in Howard County and communicate to the public at large that we value the importance of K-12 in our county. When we do so, we should be able to combat this disturbing trend sweeping the nation, at least in our own backyard.

LAND USE

The council will approve the next General Plan after the election. Based on the current progress, what amendments are you most likely going to need to implement?

Hank Boyd:

Under the administration of Howard County Executive Calvin Ball, we have made significant strides in affordability. By implementing his Housing Opportunities Master Plan, we can lay claim to real opportunities for affordable homeownership for those of limited means.

To ensure growth, on May 18, 2021, Executive Ball noted that \$5 million had been earmarked for the Housing Opportunities Trust Fund. At the end of the day, the idea is a simple one - we need more moderate-income housing units. Our current stock cannot meet the demand found throughout the county. To combat this shortcoming, we must: (1) revise land use, planning and zoning regulations where appropriate; (2) improve existing policies and find other creative solutions; and (3) balance infrastructure concerns moving forward.

The shining example of how things can be done in a productive manor is Patuxent Commons. This project is desperately needed right now because the median home sale price in Howard County is north of \$500,000 and a one-bedroom apartment costs more than \$1,700 a month in rent. This timely enterprise consists of 76 total units, 19 for those with disabilities, 30 for seniors and 27 for families. To date, current zoning practices require developers of new housing starts to set aside generally anywhere from 10-15% of housing stock for those who have moderate income. This set of potential and eager buyers consists of (1) first time homebuyers, (2) county government employees, (3) HCPSS personnel, and (4) those working for nonprofits. These valued members of our community ought to be able to live where they work.

Do you support fast tracking a revitalization of the Route 1 Corridor?

Hank Boyd:

Yes, my first priority would zero in on the Route 1 Corridor. Thankfully, Robert Charles Lesser & Company (RCLCO) has pointed us in the right direction. Case in point, this area consists of only 8% of Howard County but it generates 30% of our job base. Therefore, it only makes sense that we promote mixed use development to create the necessary office space and STEM-related labs so that a creative class can coalesce in this region.

What parts of the county are ripe for "redevelopment" or "revitalization" projects? What tools will you use to revitalize areas?

Hank Boyd:

My second priority would be the Snowden River Parkway area. I wholeheartedly agree with the market demand assessment performed by RCLCO. The firm determined that this swath of land (less than 1% of Howard County) yields 5% of our jobs. This is another golden opportunity to erect Class A office space combined with mixed-use development.

My third priority would be to redouble our efforts along the Route 40 Corridor. Of late, we have seen a marked increase in demand for the Columbia village centers. Arguably, this coveted space has matured and there exists abundant potential through rezoning for mixed use. Such a move would be consistent with the new urbanism throughout the U.S.

ENVIRONMENT

With limited space available in the East, would you be willing to build new schools in current green spaces? What is more important – schools or green spaces?

Hank Boyd:

As lifelong educator, I am biased and therefore I would opt for schools. Yet, I know that green spaces provide a tremendous benefit for the public. Hence, I seek to find a balance for these two potentially competing issues. Case in point, over capacity remains a gremlin in Howard County. We simply can't keep building physical structures to meet student demand in the short term and be left with aging and unused infrastructure after this bulge works its way through the system. Instead, we must rely more so on using online instruction where appropriate.

REPRESENTATION

Would you support legislation to increase the size of the county council? Why or why not?

Hank Boyd:

No, as things stand the current size of the county council provides sufficient representation for residents. To enlarge the size of the legislative body would only diminish its efficiency and effectiveness. By design, each of the five districts comprising the county has one representative.

EXPERIENCE

What piece of legislation would you like to set forth if elected/re-elected?

Hank Boyd:

I would impose a 10% affordable housing mandate on new developments. To achieve this laudable goal, as I stated in my prior response, we must abolish *in lieu of fees* and build moderate income housing units.

If I am fortunate enough to be elected to the Howard County Council, I will be staunch advocate for affordable housing. I believe that the bedrock of community hinges on ownership as opposed to rental. Once, a person has a vested interest, he or she tend to be good stewards of the property and ultimately reap the financial benefits of equity and upward mobility.

It behooves us to have more affordable housing in Howard County. We must erect more rental units to meet demand. At present, we have little in the way of apartments. The dictates of the market reveal that stock is limited because a 2-bedroom in Fulton is around \$2500 a month. The princely sum easily prices most families out of the market.

When affordable housing is mentioned, there is always a contingent of residents who cry – NOT IN MY BACKYARD – due to the impact on property values. To arrest this mindset, we must give

working folks a real ownership stake. In my view, the solution is a rent-to-own policy for those individuals who qualify for affordable housing. I look forward to the day when K-12 teachers, medical technicians, police officers, and firemen can afford to live in the community that they serve.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Besides the use of SROs in schools, what else will you legislate to make our schools safer?

Hank Boyd:

I grew up in a military family. Hence, I value structure and order. When it comes to public safety, there can be no compromise. Whether out on a stroll or visiting a park, one should be safe in their community. Certainly, our public schools must remain havens. Therefore, we must reconsider the role of School Resource Officer (SRO) officers.

By design, SROs should have a visible presence in schools to maintain law and order. In my view, SROs ought to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment for those who want to learn. Most disturbing, there has been a marked increase in hate crimes impacting District 4. To quell this unrest, we need the physical presence of authority figures inside our schools.

SERVICES

How would you improve bus service in the County?

Hank Boyd:

Since moving to Howard County in 2005, I have been struck by just how many of my friends and neighbors work in either DC or Baltimore. To manage this arduous commute, they rely on public transportation, mainly the commuter bus system.

For reasons passing understanding, Howard County has been reluctant to be a part of the Metro system. Perhaps, this fact stems from the county's farming persona. Be that as it may, we still need to provide adequate means to get folks to work. Therefore, I would propose offering more funding for public transportation when the county has a windfall.

Of course, in time this problem should be self-correcting because post-pandemic a lot of people will continue to work remotely. Also, the advent of ZIP cars and Uber will help to alleviate some of the stress as we delve deeper into the 21st century.

POLICY

Do you see yourself more as a critical reviewer of executive legislation or a facilitator?

Hank Boyd:

I see myself as a facilitator. If elected, I would maintain an open-door policy with my constituents. As I stated prior, my top priority is education. As long as Howard County keeps its No. 1 ranking in Maryland, my constituents will be at ease. When I talk with realtors the first thing home buyers seek is the best educational system for their children. The evidence strongly suggests that a sterling public school system boosts home values which in turn, raises the property taxes that ultimately fund the local school system.

Would your DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) objectives be most achievable through the council's rezoning authority or increased services in the community?

Hank Boyd:

It is past time that we have real conversations about systemic racism in this country. Naturally, it should take place at the schoolyard. We must equip our K-12 teachers with the necessary training to handle this sensitive topic. In my view, we can no longer gloss over the root cause of limited upward mobility - racial bias. Even standardized test scores for college acceptance aren't immune to this problem.

Essentially, we are kidding ourselves if we think that going forward as a society, we can simply push those BIPOC-related issue to the side without real consequences. By all accounts, we are at an inflection point where "everything that rises must converge." Therefore, historically underrepresented groups must be given a voice in the classroom. At the same time, white privilege must be acknowledged. Finally, allyship will define the American experience of an ever-growing multiracial society.

WRAP-UP

Have you signed the no dark money pledge?

Hank Boyd:

Since declaring my candidacy on February 19, 2022, I have not been offered donations of any sort from local developers. In the interest of full disclosure, I met with the Howard County Chapter of the Maryland Building Industry Association on April 14. At that event, I gave a PowerPoint presentation about my background and reason for getting into this race.

(<https://web.marylandbuilders.org/events/MBIA-Howard-County-Chapter-Meeting-featuring-guest-speaker-Hank-Boyd-candidate-for-Dist-4-HYBRID-4228/details>). Thus far, I have not taken the No Developer Donation Campaign Pledge.

Have you received any support from the Howard Hughes Corporation for any previous races (including, but not limited to, village board races)?

Hank Boyd:

No, I have not.

Are you currently, or have you ever been, a PTA member?

Hank Boyd:

Yes, my wife and I are supporters of the PTA.