A major development in Baltimore City is the growing role of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The OIG is led by Isabel Cumming, who brings an extensive background and wealth of experience in fraud and abuse investigations, serving in similar roles in previous positions. To learn more about the current and future role of the OIG, please attend our next Newsmaker Breakfast on May 22, from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. at the GBC’s Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700. To register or learn more about the event, click here.

The OIG, created a year ago after it was approved by Baltimore City voters, investigates allegations of misconduct, including fraud, waste and abuse, by Baltimore City employees and contractors, which may involve violations of criminal law, civil statutes, regulations or employee standards of conduct. Reports of the OIG include findings and recommendations regarding program weaknesses, contracting irregularities and other institutional problems that are discovered as a result of the investigations conducted by the office.

The GBC maintains that a strong climate for business competitiveness includes a system built around honest
government and transparency. The idea of an independent inspector general is not new - the federal government has inspector generals for all 92 agencies. Some local jurisdictions also utilize the inspector general model, including the City of New Orleans and Miami-Dade County.

The elevated role of the OIG emerged as a policy issue during the 2019 session of the Maryland General Assembly with the introduction of Senate Bill 818 -- *Baltimore City - Office of the Inspector General - Authority Over Police Department of Baltimore City and Baltimore City Public Schools*. The bill, which did not pass, sought to provide the OIG with the same authority over the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) and Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) that it has over all other departments of Baltimore City government or Baltimore City employees. This legislation may not return in 2020 as the OIG and BPD recently signed an agreement that gives the OIG the authority to investigate complaints of fraud and abuse within the department. It is uncertain if a similar agreement is being reached with BCPS.

We hope you will attend on May 22 to meet Isabel Cumming and learn more about the evolving role of the OIG. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Donald C. Fry
President and CEO

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**Adrienne A. Jones Elected Speaker of the House**

Delegate Adrienne A. Jones was unanimously elected Speaker of the 141-member House of Delegates on May 1, 2019. Speaker Jones is a Democrat representing District 10 in Baltimore County and served as Speaker Pro Tem for the previous 16 years. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, she served as Chair of both the Capital Budget Subcommittee and the Education and Economic Development Subcommittee.

Speaker Jones is the first African-American and first woman to be elected speaker of Maryland and only the third African-American woman to be in that position in U.S. history. Her emergence as Speaker was unexpected following her withdrawal from consideration the previous week in favor of Economic Matters Committee Chair Dereck E. Davis (D-Prince George's). Appropriations Committee Chair Maggie McIntosh (D-Baltimore City) was the other declared candidate for the position. After a consensus could not be reached among members of the House Democratic Caucus on either Delegate McIntosh or Delegate Davis, Delegate Jones emerged as the accepted candidate.

Further changes in the House are expected following the election of Speaker Jones. At a minimum, she will need
replacements for her previous role as Speaker Pro Tem and her subcommittee chairmanships. It is unknown whether Speaker Jones will alter the leadership ranks or membership of the House’s six major committees. The GBC congratulates and looks forward to working with Speaker Jones.

Shaneka Henson named District 30A Delegate

After the passing of Speaker Michael E. Busch, Ward 6 Annapolis Alderwoman Shaneka Henson was tapped by the Anne Arundel County Democratic Central Committee and appointed by Governor Lawrence J. Hogan to serve the remaining three and half years representing District 30A. This district resides in Anne Arundel County and includes the City of Annapolis. Ms. Henson, who earned a B.S. degree from Coppin State University and a law degree from the University of Baltimore, becomes the first African-American woman to represent Annapolis in the Maryland General Assembly.

Capital Budget Highlights

Every legislative session, the Governor introduces and the legislature passes two budget bills - an operating budget and a capital budget. Oftentimes, the capital budget receives less attention, but it has a tangible impact in every corner or the State, including the Greater Baltimore region.

The Maryland General Assembly passed a fiscal 2020 capital budget totaling $1.942 billion.

The capital budget includes funding for: (1) State facilities, including colleges and universities, correctional facilities, Military Department facilities and the public safety communication system; (2) grants to local governments for public school construction, community college facilities, and local detention centers; (3) health and social services facilities, such as hospitals, community health and addiction facilities, and low-income housing; (4) environmental programs, such as the Chesapeake Bay Water Quality programs, Community Parks and Playgrounds, Program Open Space (POS), Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation and Tobacco Transition programs, and drinking and stormwater programs; and (5) local projects and legislative initiatives (Source - 90 Day Report, Department of Legislative Services).

In the Greater Baltimore region, there were many items funded through the capital budget. Some highlights include:

Anne Arundel County

Annapolis Middle School renovations - $7,125,000

Riviera Beach Library construction - $200,000

AA Community College Health Sciences and Biology Building construction - $22,657,000

County Central Holding and Processing Center construction - $1,715,000
Baltimore City

Program Open Space grants - $6,000,000
UMMS Comprehensive Cancer Treatment and Organ Transplant Center - $3,000,000
JHU new academic building for the SNF Agora Institute construction - $2,900,000
Sinai Hospital's primary care complex - $1,000,000
BPD evidence storage facility - $1,400,000
BCCC Liberty Campus road improvements - $874,000

Baltimore County

Woodlawn High School construction - $12,519,000
Community College of Baltimore County Campus-wide facilities renewal - $475,000
Program Open Space Park acquisition and development - $7,681,894
MedStar Franklin Square Hospital - $1,750,000

Carroll County

Westminster High School science facilities - $1,135,000
Westminster Library renovation - $800,000
Carroll Community College Campus-wide systemic renovations - $227,000
Program Open Space Park acquisition and development - $1,528,723

Harford County

Abingdon Library renovation - $120,000
Program Open Space Park acquisition and development - $2,273,207
Harford County National Center for Manufacturing Sciences - $875,000
Maryland Center for the Arts - $125,000

Howard County

HCC Mathematics and Athletics Complex construction - $1,412,000
Howard County General Hospital - $347,000
Community Action Council Early Childhood Education Center - $50,000
Gateway Innovation Center - $200,000
Commentaries by GBC President and CEO Donald C. Fry

Click here to read Don Fry's commentary, 5G is Knocking on Maryland's Door - But We're Not Answering, in The Daily Record, posted on April 19, 2019.

Click here to listen to Don Fry's commentary, Mayor Pugh Controversy Brings About Proposals for Government Reform on WBAL News Radio 1090, posted on April 30, 2019.

Upcoming Dates of Interest

On May 22, the GBC is hosting a Newsmaker Breakfast with Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General for the City of Baltimore. This event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at the GBC Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202.

On June 11, the GBC is hosting a Breakfast Briefing with Michael Hankin, President & CEO of Brown Advisory. This event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at the GBC Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202.

On June 26, the GBC is hosting a Breakfast Briefing featuring a conversation about cybersecurity in the workplace and what you need to know to help keep your company's data safe. This event will begin at 7:30 a.m. at the GBC Office, 111 South Calvert Street, Suite 1700, Baltimore, MD 21202.