



WICOMICO COUNTY COUNCIL

PRESS RELEASE

November 22, 2019

For Immediate Release:

Legal Services for Wicomico County

At present, Wicomico County does not have a duly appointed County Attorney. Consequently, the County's operations will soon be adversely impacted if a County Attorney is not promptly appointed in accordance with the County Charter, under which both the County Executive and the County Council have specified authority regarding the appointment and the removal of the County Attorney.

It is important to recognize the significance of this unfortunate state of affairs. Without having a duly authorized County Attorney, Wicomico County will be unable to conduct essential business transactions such as borrowing funds through the issuance of bonds or form bank loans, ratifying contracts and legal documents, accepting grants and approving numerous other matters. In addition, this could adversely affect the County's interest in lawsuits.

As background, during the past six months, Paul Wilber, Esq. has been removed and rejected as the County Attorney by the County Council on two separate occasions in accordance with the County Charter. During this period the Council has offered to meet with the County Executive to consider selection of another County Attorney. Other qualified local attorneys and law firms have expressed interest in that position. Mr. Culver, however, has flatly refused to confer with the Council to resolve this critical matter.

Until recently Mr. Wilber had been serving as the "Acting County Attorney" pursuant to temporary appointment by the County Executive that is limited by the Charter to a 90-day period,

which expired on November 5th. The Charter expressly states that the appointment may not exceed 90 calendar days except by Council approval. During that period Mr. Culver could have worked with the County Council to select another County Attorney or asked Council to extend the temporary appointment but did not do so. Instead, Mr. Culver has informed Council members that he intends to continue to use Mr. Wilber as the County Attorney. Consequently, the Council has notified both Mr. Culver and Mr. Wilber that if Mr. Wilber continues to furnish legal services to the County, with limited exception regarding pending court cases, that could violate the Maryland Attorney's Rules of Professional Conduct.

Whatever damage or harm occurs to the County will be the regrettable consequence of the County Executive's failure to address this matter with the County Council in a reasonable manner. Mr. Culver's duty to the citizens of Wicomico County is to act in a positive and reasonable manner to resolve this vitally important matter by selecting another County Attorney. The Council is available to meet with him promptly and constructively to that end.

Contact: Wicomico County Council Administrator (410-546-4696)