



Hickory Ridge Community Association

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March 9, 2026

Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive
County Council Members: Liz Walsh, Opel Jones,
Christiana Rigby, Deb Jung & David Youngmann
George Howard Building
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Police Chief Gregory Der
Northern District Headquarters
3410 Court House Dr
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Dr. Ball, County Council members and Chief Der,

The Hickory Ridge Village Board is reaching out regarding the recent police shooting of a resident of Patuxent Commons, a community developed specifically to address housing needs of adults with disabilities.

We are dismayed and upset with the outcome of the interaction between Howard County Police Officers and a community resident on Sunday, March 1, 2026. The outcome of this interaction is especially shocking because the Howard County Police Department has the 911 Address Flagging program. This program gives residents the option to voluntarily “flag” their address in the system. This “flag” purportedly provides the 911 Call Center with first-hand knowledge that an individual with Autism resides at a given address and that he or she may be nonverbal, oversensitive to sirens, unaware of danger, prone to elope, or exhibit other note-worthy behaviors. This information is then forwarded to first responders prior to their arrival on the scene. It seems the Flagging program failed.

In addition to the Flagging program, the Howard County Police Department website states the following, *“HCPD has a robust program to train officers in mental health situations and to offer resources and services for the public. Police officers are often the first people to make contact with someone in a mental health crisis. HCPD has focused significant resources on preparing officers for these encounters, partnering with clinicians and tracking these incidents for follow-up. The goal is to prevent people who may be in crisis from hurting themselves or someone else, and to refer them to appropriate services.”*

With these systems in place to deal with both individuals with Autism and mental health situations, the outcome of Sunday's interaction is even more shocking and counter to the results Howard County residents expect from their Police Department.

What gaps in procedure occurred to lead to a fatal outcome in the encounter? Why were non-lethal options not used? How will a similar outcome be prevented in the future?

Cordially,

Hickory Ridge Village Board members:

Steve Hannon, Mark Covington, Kristine Amari,
Micajah McGarity, Mariah Robertson and Skye Anderson