

COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND
Legislative Session 2026, Legislative Day No. 15

Resolution No. 26-26

Councilmembers Marks & Crandell

By the County Council, August 3, 2026

A RESOLUTION of the Baltimore County Council encouraging the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to continue honoring the current lease regarding the historic Jerusalem Mill Village in Gunpowder Falls State Park and engage in serious and candid discussions over the stewardship of the Jerusalem Mill Village with the Friends of Jerusalem Mill.

WHEREAS, Jerusalem Mill (the Mill) and the surrounding village (the Village) are nationally registered historic sites that were once the center of a thriving 18th and 19th century Quaker settlement located along the Little Gunpowder Falls on the border between Baltimore and Harford Counties; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, the State acquired the Mill and the Village as part of Gunpowder Falls State Park (GFSP), but left the structures vacant and abandoned until a group of volunteers formed the Friends of Jerusalem Mill (FOJM) in 1985 to restore the Mill and Village; and

WHEREAS, through the hard work of FOJM, a visitor center and museum were dedicated in 1995 and, with the fundraising efforts of FOJM, the blacksmith shop, gun shop, miller's house, spring house, smokehouse, and general store have been preserved and restored, with work continuing or planned on other structures, including the Percy Lee Bank Barn; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, FOJM signed a 20-year exclusive use lease with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) that allows FOJM to operate the Mill and Village; and

WHEREAS, just four years into the 20-year lease, DNR, as part of its GFSP expansion and modernization efforts, began demanding that FOJM sign an affiliation agreement; and

WHEREAS, the affiliation agreement conflicts with the FOJM Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws with no set order of precedence and inaccurately characterizes FOJM as a private non-profit when they are, in reality, a public non-profit under the IRS rules; and

WHEREAS, the affiliation agreement would also have the following consequences:

- Cancel FOJM's 20-year exclusive-use lease and require FOJM to preemptively agree to all future DNR policy changes without knowledge of what they may be;
- Terminate FOJM's authority to sublease property in the Village, which accounts for approximately \$21,000 per year of income towards FOJM's preservation efforts; and
- Require FOJM to terminate onsite, after-hours security and caretaker presence for the Village, which would reduce event income by \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year; and

WHEREAS, thus far, FOJM has not signed the affiliation agreement due to these issues, but have asked and offered to negotiate the agreement with DNR multiple times, even going so far as to send a draft agreement for DNR's consideration that FOJM would be willing to sign and offering to convert from a lease agreement to a Resident Curatorship Program agreement; and

WHEREAS, all offers have been ignored and attempts to negotiate have been refused; and

WHEREAS, at two meetings set up by Senator Jennings, FOJM raised the following major concerns with DNR representatives, who summarily dismissed them:

- The current lease agreement along with the FOJM insurance policy already mitigates the State's liability in relation to residential subleases and FOJM is unsure as to how a different agreement with fewer protections would be an improvement.
- DNR's efforts to modernize the Village by adding additional GFSP administrative

buildings, parking lots, or other infrastructural additions would be against the collective interests of every Marylander and would irreparably damage what is known as “the oldest, most intact mill village in the United States” that has drawn thousands of visitors each year from around the nation, been included in numerous films and televisions productions, and received an award from the First Lady of the United States; and

WHEREAS, as far as FOJM understands them, DNR’s modernization efforts would incrementally erode the historical integrity of the Village and include:

- Converting a house listed on the National Register into administrative offices, removing a fence and several healthy trees in the process;
- Increasing the number of commercial vehicles parked next to the Mill and around the exclusive-use leased area on a daily basis; and
- Removing an artifacts display pavilion and privacy fence on the Village’s exclusive-use leased area in order to install a shed;

WHEREAS, FOJM also denies any claims that they have hindered DNR staff efforts or deterred members of the public (aside from private ticketed events on the FOJM exclusive use leased area) from accessing the park at GFSP; and

WHEREAS, FOJM has demonstrated its commitment to the preservation of one of Maryland’s most significant historical resources and the community it serves; and

WHEREAS, while uniform policies can be a valuable tool for efficiency in government, the Mill and Village are not a standard facility and the work required to maintain it cannot be served by a one-size-fits-all approach; and

WHEREAS, FOJM’s stewardship is the reason this unique resource continues to exist in its intact state, and any decision affecting its future should reflect the nature of the work done there

as well as the impact on the community as a whole; and

WHEREAS, for these reasons, the Baltimore County Council respectfully believes that DNR should give full consideration to the concerns of FOJM and engage them in serious and candid negotiations over the future management and stewardship of the Mill and Village; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND, that the Council encourages the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to seriously and candidly engage with the Friends of Jerusalem Mill over the current lease agreement and the future preservation and management of the Mill and the Village; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution shall be sent to the Governor of Maryland; the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources; the Baltimore County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly; and the Baltimore County Executive; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect from the date of its passage by the County Council.