



Montgomery County Chairman Ike Leggett Used To Be For Government Transparency — Until He Wasn't

As County Promises Billions In Corporate Welfare To Amazon For HQ2, Chairman Leggett Refuses To Share The Details With Taxpayers

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In January 2018, after Montgomery County was announced as a shortlist contender for Amazon's HQ2 Headquarters, Chairman Leggett reportedly said that the county would put out a "full statement with additional details" about the county's proposal, including about financial incentives.

"[I]t would lack transparency to not inform the public about every facet of our proposal." (Bethesda Magazine, "[Montgomery County on Shortlist for Second Amazon Headquarters](#)," Joe Zimmermann, Andrew Metcalf and Bethany Rodgers, 1.18.2018)

As of August 2018, Montgomery County had yet to reveal details of its bid, including to the *New York Times* who received a completely redacted report following a public information act request on the county's incentive offer.

"And when officials in Montgomery County, Md., did respond to a request for information on their bid, they delivered, among other items, a 10-page document of incentives — with every single line of text redacted." (*The New York Times*, "["Cities' Offers for Amazon Base Are Secrets Even to Many City Leaders](#)," Julie Creswell, 8.5.2018)

Chairman Leggett is making no apologies for the lack of transparency in the bid process, saying its secrecy is a prerequisite for attracting the tech-retail giant to the County.

"We're not going to discuss any of the details of our proposal at this point and time." (*The Sentinel*, "["County Refuses to Release Amazon Bid Info](#)," Neal Earley, 8.10.2018)

During his 2009 State of the County Speech, Chairman Leggett named government transparency as one of the "core values" that drives his administrations decisions and actions.

"To ensure an inclusive and transparent form of government, I pledged an administration that would be open and honest. I said, without a doubt, that there would be times when some of us would disagree on public policy matters... but that we could disagree without being

disagreeable. As I stand before you tonight, I am proud to say that I have been steadfast in upholding these standards.” (Maryland Politics Watch, “[Ike Leggett's State of the County Speech](#),” 10.7.2009)

In November 2014, Leggett proposed legislation to hire the county’s first development ombudsman, a position that would “help major commercial and residential projects through the pipeline” as well as “identify challenges facing the county’s oft-criticized regulatory processes.”

“The proposed development ombudsman, according to documents provided to the Montgomery County Council, will work ‘across government agencies to address systemic problems and reduce regulatory burdens while promoting transparency and predictability regarding regulatory activity, consistency of business regulation within the County, appropriate flexibility, and a reasonable balance between the underlying regulatory objectives and the burdens imposed by the regulatory activity.’” (Washington Business Journal, “[Leggett pitches 'development ombudsman' for Montgomery County](#),” Michael Neibauer, 11.24.2014)

In July 2015, Montgomery County redesigned CountyStat, a performance measurement program that “collects, measures, and reports” on several County initiatives, including on priority objectives, departmental performance data, and cross-department initiatives.

“County Executive Ike Leggett says about the first revision to CountyStat since 2007, “[...] This upgrade of the site shows that we are serious about continually improving our methods so that the site will be of even more use to our residents and businesses as they examine the work of their government.” (Socrata.com, “[Montgomery County Sets New Bar in Performance Measurement](#),” Ewan Simpson, 7.13.2015)

The Montgomery County Government’s Mission Statement currently includes transparency as an “essential value” that its employees “strive to embody in our work.” (Montgomery County [Government Mission Statement](#), Accessed 8.13.2018)

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