



HEARING NOTES

Bill: 23-0182R

Informational Hearing

Committee: Public Safety and Government Operations

Chaired by: Mark Conway

Hearing Date: September 27, 2023

Time (Beginning): 01:00 PM

Time (Ending): 02:30 PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex Virtual Hearing

Total Attendance: Approximately 25 people

Committee Members in Attendance:

Mark Conway Kristerfer Burnett Phylicia Porter
Odette Ramos

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Bill Synopsis in the file? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Attendance sheet in the file? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Agency reports read? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Evidence of notification to property owners? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Final vote taken at this hearing? | <input type="checkbox"/> YES | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> N/A |
| Motioned by: | | | |
| Seconded by: | | | |
| Final Vote: | | | |

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

Bill Henry – Baltimore City Comptroller – Regional Water Governance Task Force Chairman
Tyler Schnell – Mayor’s Office of Equity and Civil Rights
Richard Luna – Interim Director of Public Works

Major Issues Discussed

1. Chairman Conway called the hearing to order and introduced the committee members in attendance.
2. Chairman Conway opened the floor to bill sponsor Councilmember Ramos for opening remarks.
3. Agencies presented reports on the bill.
4. The Department of Public Works gave a presentation.
5. The Mayor's Office of Equity and Civil Rights gave their bill report.
6. The agencies took questions from the committee members – which included:
 - a. Asking for remarks on the findings from the 2021 study (see executive summary in bill file)
 - i. The City and Baltimore County have as a result of this study begun meeting more to resolve joint water issues including clearing a backlog of maintenance requests and beginning to work on policies to address concerns like drought.
 - b. Billing Issues and dispute resolution department.
 - i. This department has had a recent reformation which has helped a great deal.
 - c. What kinds of governance are being looked at?
 - i. Several structures are being looked at three things are not being considered:
 1. A system where the City does not own the water system.
 2. Turning over operations to a for-profit company.
 3. Keeping the current status quo
 - d. How will a new structure impact billing?
 - i. This is something that the task force is looking at but may not be able to address in its recommendations.
 - e. How will a new governance model affect equity programs for water access in the city?
 - i. Equity is not a part of the legislation authorizing the task force but it is something that is being considered – The task force could recommend that new governance keep equity programs or conduct an equity study as a part of its operations.
 - f. How will new governance affect city and union jobs?
 - i. This is not clear yet – but labor is represented on the task force.
 - g. Who is liable?
 - i. The Regional Authority would be.
 - h. Concerns about regional authorities – particularly in terms of accountability.
 - i. There are models that could offer more accountability for instance where the members of the authority are elected or if appointed the authority could act as a firewall to make sure that unpopular decisions such as needed rate increases are not tied to political decisions.
 - i. Why is there no equity analysis?
 - i. Was not a part of the legislation – and now there may not be time or capacity to have a proper study done.
 - j. Will municipal councils need to approve recommendations?
 - i. This will depend on the recommendations and how executives move forward with them.
7. Chairman Conway opened the floor to public comments (see attendance record in bill file)
8. Closing remarks from Councilmember Ramos.

9. Chairman Conway recessed the hearing.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes **No**

If yes, describe.

1. Why is there such a short timeline to create these recommendations?

Committee Vote:

M. Conway:
K. Burnett:
Z. Cohen:
E. Costello:
A. Glover:
P. Porter:
O. Ramos:

Tony Leva,
Committee Staff

Date: May 25, 2023

Cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File