



## **CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE**

**The Honorable Ryan Dorsey**  
**CHAIR**

### **HEARING NOTES**

26-0172

*Charter Amendment – Charter Committee Recommendations*

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**Hearing Date:** 4/15/2026

**Hearing Start Time:** 1:00 PM

**Hearing End Time:** 4:00 PM

**Location:** Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

**Total Estimated Attendance:** 20

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

- **Chair** Ryan Dorsey
  - Odette Ramos
  - Jermaine Jones
  - **Vice Chair** John Bullock
  - Zac Blanchard
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### ***MAJOR SPEAKERS***

*(This is NOT an attendance record.)*

- Committee members
  - Jeff Hochstetler – Chief Solicitor, Department of Law
  - Ty’lor Schnella – Deputy Director, Mayor’s Office of Government Relations
  - Bob Cenamme – Deputy Director, Department of Finance
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### ***NOTES***

- Chair Dorsey welcomed everyone to today’s meeting
- This process was deliberative involving the public, and multiple branches of government
- The Chair welcomed agencies to share their bill reports
  - MOGR
    - Thanked the committee for its thoughtful effort
    - Administration shares the committee’s interest in ensuring the government is effective and responsive to residents
    - Support
      - New budget article
      - Removing contingent fund cap
      - Decoupling revenue ordinance from tax rate from budget bill
      - Removing procurement admin provisions

- Removing board of estimates from preliminary budget process
      - Offering amendment to allow budget delivery on 4/30
    - Removing BOE hearing requirement for minor privileges
  - Oppose
    - Veto timeline
    - Conditions on release of appropriations
    - Non-lapsing funds
  - Reiterates gratitude to commitment to strengthening the charter
- Comptroller
  - Supportive of provisions expanding the Council’s ability to deliberate on the budget
    - Also supports sending the budget straight to the Council
      - If not offers amendment to clarify the public hearing piece in current law
  - Minor privileges – future legislation should incorporate a clear public appeals process
  - Offer amendment to clarify that the BOE be responsible for promulgating rules and regulations related to its operations on procurement
- Law
  - Approved for form and legal sufficiency with minor suggested amendments
    - Recommend new subsection stating that the ordinance of estimates must be adopted no later than the beginning of the fiscal year, regardless of the revision to any veto and veto override process
      - The Chair commented that this would be a helpful clarification
    - Recommend addition to statement providing for the creation of and dedication of funds to non-lapsing funds clarifying that appropriations occur in the ordinance of estimates or supplemental appropriation
      - Clarifies there is not another ambiguous new type of appropriation
      - Accompanies deletion to language clarifying the council can make edits to non-lapsing funds in typical budget processes
    - Recommends editing language to standardize the use of “condition” (as opposed to “contingent”) with respect to the council’s potential conditioning of funds
    - Recommends committee consider keeping provisions in the budget section preventing hiring beyond appropriations
    - Also recommends revising the effective date to reflect dates that exist in state law
- DLR
  - In receipt of amendment requests and endeavors to circulate those in advance of next week’s meeting
- The Chair thanked each of the four agencies for their continued presence in committee meetings that were deliberative and thoughtful
- Planning
  - Commission unable to meet to provide comment – comments provided on behalf of staff
  - Comments on capital budget section

- Charter requires submission 45 days prior to the start of the fiscal year and 30 day notice requirement
      - Recommends budget submission to 4/30
    - Charter requires that budget incorporate capital budget recommendations
      - Permit subsequent recommendations after the submission to the council
    - Conditioning funding
      - Agencies rely on timely access to funds
      - Planning and delivery could experience delays and risks
  - Finance
    - Budget timeline
      - Having a preliminary and final budget does not add much value
      - Also feels April 15 is too early
    - Minor cleanup
      - Remove requirement to publish budget in newspapers
    - Supports efforts to decouple the tax rate certification from revenue ordinance
      - The Chair noted that does not exist in the current bill – would need an amendment
    - Supports additional flexibility around the contingent fund
    - Oppose
      - Conditions on funds
      - Non-lapsing funds – should be a high threshold
      - Veto provisions – timelines are too stringent
    - One additional comment related to supplemental appropriations on grants
      - Current charter requires that agencies come to the council with any additional grants
        - This is nonvalue added work because it comes with conditions attached
    - Procurement
      - Supports removal of procurement requirements from Charter
  - Transportation
    - Concurs with changes on procurement
    - Opposes conditioning funding to appropriations
    - Support minor privilege provisions
- Questions
  - CW Ramos
    - Many peer jurisdictions receive their budget even before the session in Annapolis ends
    - Finance
      - Cannot make changes to the budget after it is submitted to the Council
  - Chair requests that finance look into the level of supplemental appropriation requests submitted to peer jurisdictions
  - On Veto timing – the Chair notes it is functionally impossible to consider overriding a mayoral veto
    - This is not about the current actors, but the potential for future abuse

- A relatively small change to the budget seems something reasonable to be considered on a short turnaround
- The Chair asked whether there is opposition to the simplification of language related to the Council's general veto override provision
  - The Mayor's office does not support any changes to the mayor's veto timeline
  - This proposal would give the Mayor *at least* 14 days, 4 days longer than other peer jurisdictions
    - More often this would allow for 4 weeks
- Vice Chair Bullock
  - Is the thinking that the council would restrict funds in an unthoughtful manner
    - MOGR contends this is an infringement on executive authority
      - It expressed concern over who is the arbiter on whether a condition has been met
- Chair Dorsey noted that conditions in budgeting is not unique or something only available to the legislature
  - The City Council are not less trustworthy than legislators at the state level
- CM Blanchard
  - Anything submitted by a Council member must get through the Council's deliberative process
- CM Jones
  - Be mindful of not supporting amendments that are reflective of other jurisdictions and then supporting others because it is what other jurisdictions do
  - These concerns could be addressed in the legislative process
  - This is a discussion about what authority the council has, not what that authority looks like
- Chair Dorsey
  - The state has a state treasurer which is a representative of the legislature, that is not being proposed here
  - It seems the person making a decision would actually be the finance director
- CW Ramos
  - Non-lapsing funds
    - Need the power to create funding sources to put money into those funds
    - The objections assume that if we create a fund it must be funded
    - You cannot assume every new fund would be some additional tax
- The Chair notes that as a deliberative policy-making body, the body should even be able to make policy decisions related to taxation
- The Chair noted there are 11 special funds in the Charter
  - 3 out of 11 are receiving funds
  - Would likely have fewer funds on the books if there was an ordinance practice
  - There is no deliberation on whether money should go into funds because everyone knows there is not agreement on the funding mechanism for those that already exist
  - This is evidence that the council is not going to recklessly create funds
- Finance continues to note that the primary mechanism would be a new tax – this point is widely dispute by members in attendance
  - The Chair notes that as the policy makers, they should have the ability to make these determinations

- The Vice Chair suggested that this does not necessarily mean the council will unthoughtfully create these funds
  - CM Blanchard
    - Wants to allow parking meters in main street areas to run later and use those funds to go towards the main streets they are based in
    - If something can be legislated in, it can be legislated out
  - CM Jones
    - There is broad-based agreement on procurement
    - The proposal is to remove existing procurement standards and the requirement that we only accept lowest bid
    - If we are going to remove this guardrail, what will it be replaced with
    - Procurement team would be happy to work with the Council to create new standards
      - Best-value would move the city to a request for proposal method
      - This would result in criteria and scoring mechanisms
    - It would be helpful to have a framework out in the public prior to the general election
    - The Chair concurred that it would be good to get the ball rolling on this as soon as possible
    - CW Ramos noted that she would like to see new standards in the code as opposed to a regulation
- Public Testimony
  - The people should be given the right of referendum
  - Concern over the timeline
- The Chair expressed thanks to all in attendance for the spirited conversation today and over the past several months
  - Including the public and agency staff

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**Hearing Packet in bill file?** -----  YES  NO  N/A  
**Attendance Sheet in bill file?** -----  YES  NO  N/A  
**Vote Record in bill file?** -----  YES  NO  N/A  
**Agency reports read?** -----  YES  NO  N/A  
**Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded?** -----  YES  NO  N/A  
**Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill file?** -----  YES  NO  N/A  
**Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file?** -----  YES  NO  N/A

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Notes by: Ethan Navarre                      Direct Inquiries to: [Ethan.Navarre@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Ethan.Navarre@baltimorecity.gov)  
 Notes Date: 4/15/2026