



BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The Honorable Ryan Dorsey

CHAIR

PUBLIC HEARING

12/3/2025

4:00PM

CURRAN ROOM

LO25-0038

Charter Review

City Council Committees

BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS (BA)

Danielle McCray - Chair
Isaac “Yitzy” Schleifer – Vice Chair
Sharon Green Middleton
Paris Gray
Antonio Glover

Staff: Paroma Nandi (410-396-0271)

PUBLIC SAFETY (PS)

Mark Conway - Chair
Zac Blanchard – Vice Chair
Danielle McCray
Isaac “Yitzy” Schleifer
Paris Gray
Phylicia Porter
Antonio Glover

Staff: Ethan Navarre (410-396-1266)

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James Torrence – Chair
Odette Ramos – Vice Chair
Zac Blanchard
Jermaine Jones
Antonio Glover

Staff: Anthony Leva (410-396-1091)

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Phylicia Porter - Chair
Mark Conway - Vice Chair
Mark Parker
Ryan Dorsey
James Torrence
John Bullock
Odette Ramos

Staff: Marguerite Currin (443-984-3485)

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Antonio Glover – Vice Chair
Ryan Dorsey
Sharon Green Middleton
Paris Gray

Staff: Ethan Navarre (410-396-1266)

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION

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Sharon Green Middleton – Vice Chair
Mark Parker
Paris Gray
John Bullock
Phylicia Porter
Zac Blanchard

Staff: Anthony Leva (410-396-1091)

LABOR AND WORKFORCE (LW)

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James Torrence – Vice Chair
Danielle McCray
Ryan Dorsey
Phylicia Porter

Staff: Julianne Jemmott (410-396-1268)

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John Bullock – Chair
Mark Parker – Vice Chair
Sharon Green Middleton
James Torrence
Zac Blanchard
Jermaine Jones
Odette Ramos

Staff: Julianne Jemmott (410-396-1268)

CITY OF BALTIMORE

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor
Zeke Cohen – Council President



Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead – Director
100 Holliday Street, Room 415
Baltimore, MD 21202

CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

The Honorable Ryan Dorsey
CHAIR

Legislative Oversight Hearing

LO25-0038
Charter Review

For the purpose of the Committee considering proposals to revise the City Charter and recommending bills to revise the City Charter to the full City Council.

BACKGROUND

The current Baltimore City Charter was ratified by the people of Baltimore on [November 8, 1994](#). Since its 1994 ratification, the Charter has seen 30 years of incremental updates. Under the [Constitution of the State of Maryland](#), the Mayor and City Council may propose amendments to the City Charter by resolution before submission to the voters at the next general or congressional election occurring after the passage of the resolution. Voters may also petition for the submission of a Charter amendment to the City electorate via a petition signed by 10,000 registered voters of the City.

In 2020, voters ratified [City Council Bill 19-0441](#) which amended the Charter to require the decennial creation of a Charter Review Commission to make recommendations for necessary deletions, additions, or revisions to the Charter. In 2023, the Charter Review Commission held its first meeting before offering a [final report](#) in 2024. At the outset of its work, a host of helpful [documents](#) were compiled for the Commission, including prior Charter Review Commission final reports; introductions to the City Charter; and, a review of existing Charter provisions. Notably, one report identified an overarching issue present in the City's Charter – the inclusion of “improper charter material.”

In Maryland, the notion of “improper charter material” comes from [Cheeks v. Cedlair Corp., 287 Md. 595 \(1980\)](#), wherein the Court held a proposed amendment to the City Charter was not “charter material” because “a charter is thus a permanent document intended to provide a broad organizational framework establishing the form and structure of government” and that “to permit the voters, by charter amendment, to exercise the City's police or general welfare powers would constitute an unlawful extension or enlargement of the City's limited grant of express powers and would violate the constitutional requirement that those powers be exercised by ordinance enacted by the City Council.”

FISCAL NOTE

Revisions to the City's Charter should not result in any appreciable fiscal impact as materials essential for the Charter include text: establishing the government's composition; establishing the process by

which members are elected, selected, and/or appointed; establishing the duties of the government; establishing the legislative process; and, establishing the budget process, i.e., “a broad organizational framework establishing the form and structure of government.”

Currently, the Baltimore City Charter includes materials outside the scope of those recommended for inclusion in a City Charter. The removal of provisions improper for inclusion in a City Charter could result in a fiscal impact if those provisions are not enacted as code through the legislative process, or if they are enacted differently than they currently exist in the Charter. Likewise, the addition of such provisions could result in a fiscal impact. In advance of any such deliberation or decision on what provisions will, may, or could be removed from or added to the Charter, it is not possible to estimate the potential fiscal impact.

REPORTING AGENCIES

- Department of Law
 - Mayor’s Office of Government Relations
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Analysis by: Ethan Navarre
Analysis Date: 10/27/2025

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BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

LO25-0038
Charter Review

Additional Materials

CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Initial Topics Overview

STRUCTURAL TOPICS

The establishment and organization of public bodies

BOARD OF ESTIMATES COMPOSITION

- Revises Board of Estimates membership down from five for a total of three members: the Mayor, Council President, and Comptroller
- Limits designees to the CAO (Mayor), Council VP (President) and Deputy Comptroller (Comptroller)

BOARD OF FINANCE COMPOSITION

- Increase membership from 5 to 7
- Add the Council President and City Solicitor (or their designees) to the Board
 - Elected officials/designees can't serve as the board's chair or vice chair
- Require the Mayor, Council President, and Comptroller to each appoint one additional person to the board
 - Chair and Vice Chair must be selected from amongst the 3 appointees

PARKING BENEFIT DISTRICTS

- Create a special non-lapsing fund for increased revenue sourced from extended pay-to-park hours in commercial districts

REFORM OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGISLATIVE REFERENCE AND OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

- Make the Department of Legislative Reference (DLR) an agency of the Legislative Branch
- Merge the Office of Council Services with DLR

PROCEDURAL TOPICS

The when and how of City operations

OVERLY-PRESCRIPTIVE PROVISION REFORM

- The Charter includes provisions that are typically only found in local government codes

REDISTRICTING REFORM

- A 17-member independent commission, made up of applicants screened for qualification and conflicts of interest by the Comptroller, has independent authority over redistricting
- The commission publishes a draft redistricting plan by May 1, 2031 (2041, 2051, etc) and finalizes it by October 1, to be approved by City Council by October 15
- The commission holds a hearing in each council district
- Council can reject plan and return it for commission for further consideration, but Council cannot amend. Mayor can veto as well.
- If Commission cannot reach consensus with Mayor and/or City Council, ultimately the commission's map is approved

VETO REFORM

- Decrease, from 3 to 2, the number of regular City Council meetings that must elapse before a Mayor must decide whether to issue a veto on legislation passed by the Council
- Allow the City Council to override Mayoral vetoes at special meetings, rather than just at regular meetings

TIMING OF BUDGET DELIVERY TO COUNCIL

- Move, from May 15 to April 15, the deadline by which the Administration must present their proposed budget to the City Council

REVENUE CERTIFICATION SCHEDULE

- Require the Department of Finance to present to the City Council by/before February 15
- Require final certification by/before April 15, with explanation of any changes since February presentation to City Council

AUDIT TIMING REQUIREMENTS

- After the close of each fiscal year (June 30), the Administration must submit the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report to the City Council and Board of Estimates by/before December 31 of that year

MINOR PRIVILEGES REFORM

- Repeal the requirement for BOE approval

CITY SEAL

- Moving control of the City Seal from the Treasury to another caretaker

FINANCIAL TOPICS

Related to the City budget, supplementals, and other
fiscal/financial agreements

CONDITIONAL BUDGETARY AUTHORITY

- Permitting the Council to place conditions on budget allocations to City agencies in the budget process

PROCUREMENT REFORM

- Remove overly prescriptive provisions
- A BOE policy document; no Council role by ordinance
- Best value contracting

BIENNIAL AUDIT REFORM: AGENCIES

- Increase accountability for public dollars by ensuring the audits of agencies that are funded by the annual Ordinance of Estimates
 - ADD:
 - Group A: Clerk of the Circuit Court; Sheriff's Office
 - Group B: Register of Wills; State Attorney's Office; Board of Elections
 - UPDATE:
 - Group A (to reflect their current names) : Mayor's Office of Human Services; Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success
 - Group B: Remove Law Department

BIENNIAL AUDIT REFORM: REDUNDANCIES

- Remove mandated financial audits which are already covered by the requirements of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report

CAPITAL BUDGET REFORM

- Create a process for the Administration to provide a proposed capital budget to the Council for negotiation/approval, akin to that of the operating budget

CLOSE-OUT SUPPLEMENTAL REFORM

- Clarify that the City Charter does not require close-out supplemental appropriation bills

SPLIT-RATE TAXATION: ENABLING

- Redefines classes of property subject to taxation to distinguish the value of land from the value of the property on the land
 - Intended to disincentivize speculative buying/holding
 - Will require enabling legislation from the MGA

OUTSIDE COUNSEL REFORM

- Outline process for City entities subject to the opinions of the City Law Department to petition the Circuit Court to engage outside counsel
- Creates recourse for City entities that would otherwise rely on the Law Department to determine that they do need for external counsel

ADDITIONAL TOPIC SUGGESTIONS
ARE WELCOME

Submit yours to

Charter.Review.Committee@baltimorecity.gov