

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



CHARTER REVIEW SPECIAL COMMITTEE

*LO25-0038 - Charter Review
&*

*26-0172 – Charter Amendment
Charter Committee Recommendations*

Public Testimony

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

Attendance Sheet
 4/22/2026

26-0172

Charter Amendment – Charter Committee Recommendations

NO PUBLIC TESTIMONY – Voting Session			Position:		Check if Baltimore City lobbyist*
FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	ORGANIZATION AND/OR CONTACT INFORMATION	SUPPORT	OPPOSE	
JOAN	FLOYD	JOAN L FLOYD @ hotmail.com	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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* IF YOU ARE COMPENSATED OR INCUR EXPENSES IN CONNECTION WITH THIS BILL, YOU MAY BE REQUIRED BY LAW TO REGISTER WITH THE CITY ETHICS BOARD AS A LOBBYIST. REGISTRATION CAN BE DONE ONLINE AND IS A SIMPLE PROCESS. FOR INFORMATION VISIT: [HTTPS://ETHICS.BALTIMORECITY.GOV/](https://ethics.baltimorecity.gov/) OR CALL: (410) 396-7986

CITY COUNCIL BILL 26-0172 - WRITTEN OPPOSITION TESTIMONY OF JOAN FLOYD

NOTE: This supplements oral testimony given on April 15, 2026. Because of time limitations, this document does not attempt to review all portions of the bill. Support for sections not mentioned should not be assumed.

ISSUES:

- A. GENERAL OBJECTION**
- B. COMMITTEE CONDUCT**
- C. PURPOSE CLAUSE**
- D. NON-LAPSING FUNDS**
- E. MINOR PRIVILEGES**

A. GENERAL OBJECTION

This bill has only existed in the public view since April 6, 2026. To require voters to respond to it within this time frame is to deny them sufficient opportunity to review and understand it.

A legislative process that works against the voters' interests is indicative of a bill that does the same.

B. COMMITTEE CONDUCT

This Committee (composed entirely of elected officials, whereas the mandated Charter Review Commission notably contains no elected officials) conducted a series of meetings outside City Hall in which the treatment of attendees was disturbing in several ways.

Described as "listening sessions," these Committee meetings absurdly compelled attendees to sit and **listen to** Committee members and staff talk for long periods — in some instances, for the first hour. The advertisement of these Committee meetings as "hearings" on the calendar was simply false. When attendees were allowed to speak, they were in some instances prevented from hearing one another because of the imposition of a "breakout group" format.

Unlike meetings held at City Hall, these Committee meetings were not taped, so their content is not a part of the public record. Statements made and opinions expressed by Committee members, including those that were erroneous and misleading, are not available for review. After statements were made and opinions were expressed by attendees, their input simply evaporated. The so-called "Minutes" that are posted online do not reflect what took place at these meetings — not even the attendance or absence of Committee members is noted.

The effect of this Committee conduct was to allow misrepresentations to be made with impunity. The Committee used these meetings to lobby voters, to manipulate and confuse them, to urge them to accept changes that are contrary to their interests; some of the changes actually diminish the power of Baltimore City voters.

C. PURPOSE CLAUSE

The bill's purpose clause is deficient and misleading. It is insufficient to convey the content and effect of the bill. It misrepresents the legislative intent.

- Stunningly absent from the Purpose clause is any suggestion of an amendment that would allow Non-Lapsing Funds to be established “by Ordinance.” This is a major Charter change that removes the voters’ sole authority to approve or deny the establishment of a Non-Lapsing Fund on an election ballot. Yet instead of being referenced in the Purpose clause, this amendment is inserted by stealth on p. 14 as new Subsection 8 of Article VI.
- The phrase “providing for the grant of **certain** minor privilege rights under a process established by ordinance” masks the true purpose of the Committee’s changes to the minor privilege portion of the Charter. The phrase fails to convey that the procedure for **all** minor privileges — not just “certain” ones — is amended.
- The Purpose clause fails to indicate that it not only changes the Minor Privilege approval process, it also repeals the provisions for fees.
- The Purpose clause fails to indicate that the bill redefines “Temporary” and “Permanent” Minor Privileges.
- The phrase “removing certain improper . . . provisions” does not seem to be supported by the contents of the bill. Does the Charter actually contain “improper” language now, or does this term merely refer to language the Committee simply doesn’t like?

D. NON-LAPSING FUNDS

One of the most significant provisions of this bill, as it reduces the power of Baltimore voters, is new Subsection 8 of Article VI on p. 14. The effect of this two-line, 23-word insertion is to remove the voters’ sole authority to approve the establishment of a Non-Lapsing Fund, which they now exercise by voting during an election. It also removes the voters’ power to deny the establishment of such a fund.

This power grab would take immediate effect.

E. MINOR PRIVILEGES

At its meetings, the Committee has ridiculed the current Minor Privilege application and approval process by citing “bay windows” and “signs attached to buildings” to exemplify innocuous impacts.

In reality, Minor Privileges cover a wide spectrum of encroachments on the public right-of-way, including:

Bus Shelters - Fences and Walls - Art Installations - ZipCar Stations - E-Bike Stations
Gas Regulators - Lighting - Charging Stations - Neighborhood Signs

And there will always be new (currently unimagined) ways of using our public rights-of-way. It takes very little imagination to understand that the system in place should be retained.

To repeal the current Board of Estimates procedure for all Minor Privileges, and suggest that “an Executive Agency” will be a suitable replacement, is based on the unsupported premise that the latter will be more efficient. The **only** certainty is that this change, if made, will remove important, long-standing protections and rights of property owners in the vicinity with respect to others’ use of the public right-of-way, and will abandon a public process by a public body that is subject to the Open Meetings Act, with advance notice of its meetings and agenda.

Removal of Important Notice Requirement for Minor Privilege Applications

A fundamental right and protection being removed by the bill is the advance notice requirement under current Subsection 2 of Article VIII: “Before filing the application with the Board of Estimates, the applicant shall serve copies thereof on the owners of the adjoining properties.” Notably, the bill does not merely remove the words “with the Board of Estimates” — it removes the entire requirement.

New Definitions of “Temporary” and “Permanent” Minor Privileges

The bill redefines “Temporary” and “Permanent” Minor Privileges by adding a word to each definition while removing the illustrative examples. **These new definitions would take immediate effect.** The rationale for redefining “Temporary” and “Permanent” Minor Privileges has not been explained, nor has the impact been examined.

The amendment significantly redefines some items, such as windows that overhang the public right-of-way, from “Permanent” to “Temporary” Minor Privileges. This places structural items now classified as “Permanent” Minor Privileges in the same category as sidewalk displays. It is unclear what would be considered a “Permanent” Minor Privilege under the new definition.

Removal of Minor Privilege Fee Provisions

The bill removes all language respecting Minor Privilege fees, leaving it unclear whether, how, and when fees would be imposed, collected, renewed, and expired.

— Joan Floyd, 2828 N. Howard Street, JoanLFloyd@hotmail.com