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# 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

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## BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

The Honorable Danielle McCray  
CHAIR

### HEARING NOTES

25-0129

*Supplementary State Fund Operating Appropriation – Department of Recreation and Parks  
(Service 654 - Urban Forestry) – \$415,146*

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**Hearing Date:** 2/17/2026

**Hearing Start Time:** 9:03 AM

**Hearing End Time:** 9:23 AM

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

**Total Estimated Attendance:** 85

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	ABSTENTION
<b>Final Vote:</b>	4		1	

#### Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** Danielle McCray
- Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
- **Vice Chair** Sharon Green Middleton
- Paris Gray

#### Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Odette Ramos
- 

#### **MAJOR SPEAKERS**

*(This is NOT an attendance record.)*

- Michelle Toth, Law Department
  - Laura Larsen, BBMR
  - Jenny Morgan, BCRP
  - Shaun Preston, BCRP (Camp Small)
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#### **NOTES**

Chair McCray called the hearing to order reading into the record the bills to be heard in the committee. Starting with 25-0129, *Supplementary State Fund Operating Appropriation – Department of Recreation and Parks (Service 654 - Urban Forestry) – \$415,146.*

- Chair noted the hearing on this Bill was previously recessed because the appropriate representatives from the Department of Recreation and Parks were not in attendance.

The Chair asked referred agencies to comment on their Bill Report.

- The Law Department stood by their Bill Report for form and legal sufficiency.
- The Finance Department stood by their favorable Bill Report.
- Department of Recreation and Parks stood by their favorable Bill Report.

The Chair opened the hearing to questions from the committee members.

- What Safety precautions are there for staff after the Camp Small fire?
  - Site has been cleared, all debris has left the facility, and increased staff through grant support. Additionally, we removed all excess materials, added additional fire lanes, and ensured materials are properly stored based on code and regulations
- Have there been any conversations of acquiring the vacant vinegar plant nect door?
  - It is currently being leased by Harrington and Sons to store equipment
- Bill Report stated there would be an increase in revenue – what is the revenue stream?
  - Camp Small is an Innovation Fund Program, and therefore all revenue goes back to the innovation fund. Currently in the black with payoff to the fund, so looking to purchase additional equipment. Revenue comes from the sale of materials, some of the materials are donated to public projects. Prices are based on current markets as well as the cost of labor and cost of materials. Sell about \$150,000 in lumber and material and then donate about \$100,000 worth of material to the city. Additionally, the city is able to save on removal fees.
- Grant ends 12/31/2027, what is the sustainability plan for the 2 positions and the training costs beyond that date?
  - 1 position is a recurring apprenticeship program with the Baltimore Tree Trust and the other would be a permanent position.
- What was the cause of the fire at Camp Small?
  - It was investigated by the Fire Department, but a cause was undetermined. Noted that the fire was not caused by woodchips. Possible that it was accidental arson. Put in additional precautions to add security to prevent non-employees from coming into the facility.
    - No Smoking
    - Additional gate
  - Are there security cameras?
    - Yes, but there are no security cameras at the front gate. Comments from Council to implement battery operated cameras since there is no electricity access.
- What is the training program?
  - 6-month training program on heavy machinery, wood shop skills, and basic forestry and sawmilling. Emphasis and focus on safety and maintenance of equipment.
  - Can only train city employees of the heavy machinery, but there are additional workforce development programs established with the Baltimore Tree Trust.
  - Comments from the Council emphasized the importance of retaining individuals that go through the apprenticeship programs.

The Chair noted that there was no public testimony for this Bill and moved to vote on the Bill.

- Councilman Gray moved the Bill as Favorable. A roll call vote took place, and the motion passed to move the Bill as Favorable. The Bill will move to 2<sup>nd</sup> Reader at the next Council Meeting on February 23, 2026 [See Voting Record in Bill File].

The Chair adjourned the hearing on Bill 25-0029. The hearing was recessed to move on to the next agenda item.

***FURTHER STUDY REQUESTED***

No Further study or data requested.

***SEE FINAL VOTE RECORD IN BILL FILE***

<b>Hearing Packet in bill file? -----</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Attendance Sheet in bill file?-----</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Vote Record in bill file? -----</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Agency reports read? -----</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? -----</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill file?-----</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>
<b>Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file? -----</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>NO</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>N/A</b>

Notes by: Paroma Nandi  
Notes Date: 2/17/2026

Direct Inquiries to: [Paroma.Nandi@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:Paroma.Nandi@baltimorecity.gov)

# BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

The Honorable Danielle McCray  
CHAIR

## HEARING NOTES

26-0151

*Taxes - Property Tax - Increase of Homestead Tax Credit Percentage*

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**Hearing Date:** 2/17/2026

**Hearing Start Time:** 9:26 AM

**Hearing End Time:** 10:47 AM

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

**Total Estimated Attendance:** 85

**Final Vote:** No vote, hearing was recessed for further discussion.

### Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** Danielle McCray
- Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
- Antonio Glover
- **Vice Chair** Sharon Green Middleton
- Paris Gray

### Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Odette Ramos
  - Zac Blanchard
- 

### **MAJOR SPEAKERS**

*(This is NOT an attendance record.)*

- Bob Cenname, Department of Finance
  - Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissionaire
  - Desiree Luckey, Law Department
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### **NOTES**

Chair McCray called the hearing to order for 26-0151, *Taxes - Property Tax - Increase of Homestead Tax Credit Percentage*.

- Introduced on Feb 9, 2026, and sponsored by VP Middleton at the request of the Administration.
- As a co-sponsor of the Bill, McCray noted her support for the policy that directs the Bill – tax fairness, predictability for homeowners, and tax competitiveness with broader goals of property

tax relief. Regardless, as Budget Chair the Committee must ensure that the details and outcomes of this Bill are clear.

The Chair asked referred agencies to comment on their Bill Report.

- The Law Department stood by their Bill Report for form and legal sufficiency.
- The Finance Department stood by their favorable Bill Report.
- The Department of Housing and Community Development stood by their favorable Bill Report.

The Finance Department included a presentation along with their Bill Report. Bob Cename, Deputy Finance Director presented on behalf of DOF and Administration [See Presentation in Bill File].

- 10-Year Financial Plan Tax Reduction Strategy
  - Tax Rate Re-Alignment
  - Direct Tax Relief
  - Protecting Vulnerable Residents
- The Net impact of this proposal is a net cost to the city, which means putting dollars back into the hands of homeowners.
- To achieve these goals there are 4 initiatives being launched in 2026
  - Adjust Homestead Tax Credit from 4% to 6%
  - Reduce Effective Residential Rate to \$1.99 in FY 27
  - Boost Enrollment in Tax Credits
  - Expand Eligibility for State Homeowners and Renters Tax Credits
- 75,000 eligible property owners for the Homestead Tax Credit
- State allows the local jurisdiction to set the cap between 0-10%, City's has been set at 4% for decades.
- Calculation of the credit is done by comparing the actual assessed value of the property vs the assessed value within the allowable Homestead Cap – the effect is that the homeowner is shielded from paying taxes on the amount of assessed property value that exceeds the cap on an annual basis.
- Proposal with this Bill will increase the cap to 6%, the Administration will reduce the Residential Tax Rate to \$2.04 to \$1.99 – This is a 5-cent reduction and would be a net cost to the city, which means homeowners would see savings.
  - Approximately 64,218 will see a tax decrease, and 10,807 will see no impact, and 437 taxpayers would pay slightly more.
    - The administration has made a commitment to propose additional legislation to ensure the taxpayers will not pay more
      - This means the calculation would be updated to calculate the value of the total assessment not only on the improvement value.

The Chair opened the hearing to questions from the committee members.

- Why wasn't the "harmless" legislation not included as a companion legislation?
  - Timing issue primarily - the initial data in the test scenarios showed no impact. Once we ran the tests on the Group 2 data we saw the very nominal increase to those 400 households. After additional research we determined the cause and the administration

wanted to ensure there was a commitment to ensuring there would be tax relief or no impact on every eligible homeowner.

- This is the first time the Council has been looking at tax relief. Will impact the medium homeowner right away. Council could help with outreach – what ways we can do that – if there is a list of households that have not taken advantage of the tax credit.
- Payment plans for taxes – DOF working with City Council
- Outreach plans regarding tax credits? Is there a new plan specifically surrounding the legislation that will include new staffing?
  - DHCD has a comprehensive strategy that includes tax sales and tax credits. There is more that can be done to broaden outreach. Will be working Mayor’s Office of Community Affairs and Council.
  - Current plan exists, but no new plan with additional staffing has been assigned
- How many owner-occupied households are eligible but not receiving the credit?
  - State Homeowners Tax Credit - likely thousands of eligible people may not be receiving it. Annual certification and eligibility criteria based on income make the credit more challenging to sign up for. There is legislation at the State level to expand eligibility.
  - Homestead Tax Credit is being taken advantage of since it is a one-time application and by law any time property transfers the owner is required to receive the form to sign up.
- Older Adults Office – keep the data on outreach
- Homestead Tax Credit Bill in question increases the cap from 4% to 6%, which removes protection for long-term homeowners in the city. The presentation shares a larger strategy, but if the Council votes to pass this Bill the legislation doesn’t say anything about reducing the property tax. Additionally, some parts of this strategy is part of broader legislation at the State level. Why can’t we find other savings, and keep the cap at 4% and also reduce property taxes? Need data on each household that will be impacted.
  - The administration is committed to reducing the Property Tax, and this Bill will allow that. However, required to do that is a fiscally responsible way.
  - Since the City has not seen higher growth consecutively in Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3, so there is less risk. Also, if there was higher growth consecutively, then the City could lower property taxes further.
  - There are also additional tax credits like Chap that protect some of the outliers
- 10-year plan will have progress periodically updated or any changes
- Historically Baltimore seeing many firsts – investment in crime prevention and violence reduction, investment in schools and community development – Need to ensure the communication and outreach is in the forefront.
- Why is it only the homeowner property taxes?
  - More expensive to do an overall rate release, and less meaningful since we want the reduction for residential homeowners and not landlords or property owners that do not live here.
  - Fiscal Integrity Office to run checks to confirm homeowners
- Concerned about the facts of the Bill – 50% is a lot higher. DHCD report states that long-term residents will help them stay in the city? Concern about the additional cost to homeowners.
  - Statement is based on a larger strategy that would reduce the property tax rate.
  - Big factor is not about legacy homeowners; it’s about high growth.

- AG Opinion on tax credits – is it legal to have tax rates vary based on who’s living in it?
  - Law Department requested a follow-up email with CM Schleifer.
- Importance of Outreach – different events and opportunities led by the Council

The Chair noted that there was no public testimony for this Bill. The Chair then stated that it was important for the committee to prioritize this hearing due to the timelines, but that the Committee does not rush a vote and deliberates on the information.

The Chair recessed the hearing on Bill 26-0151 and moved to the next agenda item.

***FURTHER STUDY REQUESTED***

*COPY IN SPREADSHEET*

***SEE FINAL VOTE RECORD IN BILL FILE***

<b>Hearing Packet in bill file?</b> -----	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Attendance Sheet in bill file?</b> -----	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Vote Record in bill file?</b> -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Agency reports read?</b> -----	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded?</b> -----	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill file?</b> -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file?</b> -----	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>N/A</b>

Notes by: Paroma Nandi  
Notes Date: 2/17/2026

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# BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

The Honorable Danielle McCray  
CHAIR

## HEARING NOTES

LO25-0001  
*Quarterly Budget Briefing*

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**Hearing Date:** 2/17/2026  
**Hearing Start Time:** 10:56  
**Hearing End Time:** 12:15 PM  
**Location:** Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex  
**Total Estimated Attendance:** 85

### Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** Danielle McCray
- Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
- Antonio Glover
- **Vice Chair** Sharon Green Middleton
- Paris Gray

### Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Odette Ramos
- 

### **MAJOR SPEAKERS**

(This is NOT an attendance record.)

- Laura Larsen, Budget Director
  - Sara Paraniyam, Department of Planning
  - Courtenay Desabaye, Baltimore City Public Schools
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### **NOTES**

Chair McCray called the hearing to order LO25-0001, *Quarterly Budget Briefing*. The hearing began with a presentation from BBMR.

Director Larsen presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter FY26 Budget [See Presentation in Bill File]. Highlights of the presentation included:

- Snow emergency impact is not reflected in Q2 Summary
- Income Tax Revenue is increasing – mainly due to a lower assumption in FY 26 (per State recommendation) – Positive Growth due to wages & low unemployment in the city
- Property Tax is increasing due to personal property taxes from Public Utility assessments and real property assessment changes as of Jan 1

- Recordation & Transfers although there is a deficit, there is significant improvement from Q1 projection.
- Traffic Cameras – speed cameras will not be relocated and tiered fines are still attributing to the lower-level fines
- BOE Approved an increase in the landfill tipping fee from \$60 to \$127.50 per ton in Nov 2025, City has already noted that large waste haulers are not using landfill with a decline of 49.2% in tonnage – although a decrease in revenue this is overall good for the City’s landfill
- Personnel cost expenditures increase due to Fire Union Contracts (based on arbitration decision)
- Both costs at the Fire & Police are up compared to Q1 - Both Departments have large academies to fill vacant positions, but length of training impacts the ability to fill the positions
- Overall, a decrease in vacant positions
- 14 agencies have a surplus (mainly due to vacant positions) and 10 agencies have a deficit

The Chair opened the hearing to questions from the committee members.

- What is the percentage/dollar amount of overtime vs change in wages due to arbitration that is causing the overspending at the Fire Department?
  - \$32.2 million deficit in OT costs, a portion of that is offset by costs from vacant positions.
  - Will follow up with Chair
- What is the timeline for having the OT demand date to decrease with the training academies? What type of OT governance is going to be put in place to reduce the numbers – what is the agency and BBMR going to do differently?
  - No exact timeline, but classes in April and May are in the pipeline, possibly at the end of these classes. This trend is not predicted to go down by this FY
  - Staffing level assumption is what is budgeted – little that BBMR can do to stop that spending.
  - One of the items that is causing a deficit in the Fire Department’s budget is the Battalion Tech Program – requested for funding in multiple budget cycles, however it was not funded but the department continues to implement it through unbudgeted overtime.
  - To reduce overspending - must either cut back service or fund the department differently
  - Fire Department created an internal fiscal stat to determine inefficiency and OT monitoring – stepping things up internally to monitor costs regularly
- Projected surplus in Property Tax and Income Tax – why do we need to increase the cap to Homestead Tax Credit?
  - Forecasting the strength in growth is why the City can reduce the Property Tax. Due to overspending the City cannot just reduce the property
  - Concerned about the City’s overspending
- Traffic Camera program – what is the overall cost of the program vs the revenue?
  - \$10 million of the revenue (projection for the fiscal year) and the cost to administer the program is \$16.5 million
  - Program is not necessarily a way to generate money, but to contribute to traffic safety. Program has been in place since 2017

- What happened with the relocation of the speed cameras?
  - Relocations are strategically planned using crash data, speed studies, and traffic volume analysis and documented safety needs – evaluated on a reoccurring basis
    - A committee request was submitted to obtain the camera data
  - DOT noted that they have been deploying new locations, but in the past, there have been statements noting a delay in relocations. A committee request was submitted to get clarity.
- Loss of revenue in the tipping fee. Is there less dumping?
  - Most of the drop offs were previously coming from large haulers, assuming they are now going to different locations with the increase in fees.

Sara Paranilam presented on the Capital Budget for Quarter 2. [See Presentation in Bill File].  
Highlights of the presentation included:

- Report that provides a general picture of capital projects that includes the total appropriations, total expenditures, and total obligations – not just Quarter 2 data
- Summary by agency is a long list – presentation includes highlighted projects
- Capital Stat will be implemented – first meeting has not been scheduled yet.

The Chair opened the hearing to questions from the committee members.

- What is the development status of Capital Stat?
  - Mayor’s Office of Infrastructure Development leading the Stat and may be able to join in the next meeting
  - Still in the beginning planning stages
- One clarification regarding BDC and DHCD together?
  - The way the projects live in Workday is that they are part of the same Fund, they do have different cost centers and have their own projects. The presentation is a summary at the agency level, since BDC is a quasi-agency that gets its authority through DHCD.

Courtenay Desabaye presented on the Baltimore City Public Schools Quarter 2 data. [See Presentation in Bill File]. Highlights of the presentation included:

- State and City expenditures are on track for Quarter 2
- Outlier in Investment earnings – higher than expected, but will continue to monitor

The Chair opened the hearing to questions from the committee members.

- Was there any support from Central Office during the most recent snowstorm – including support to remove snow on all the sidewalks?
  - Yes, there is coordination between Central Office and Schools. It varies per school based on need and staffing
- Barbed wire put up on Edmondson School – Have asked for an update regarding this by schools.
  - Committee request on what can be done to alleviate that issue.
- When schools need additional support, do the schools reach out, or do you proactively reach out?
  - Combination – areas manager – they have a sense of what is needed – but coordination is required to determine how much physical support is needed.

Chair recessed the hearing on LO25-0001.

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***FURTHER STUDY REQUESTED***

1. The timeline and list of locations on where the speed cameras are going to be moved.
2. Camera data on the number of tickets issued by each camera over the past year.
3. Breakdown in overspending costs at the Fire Department between overtime and wage arbitration.

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***SEE FINAL VOTE RECORD IN BILL FILE***

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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: Paroma Nandi  
Notes Date: 2/17/2026

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