FROM			
	NAME & TITLE	Matthew W. Garbark, Acting Director	CITY of BALTIMORE *MEMO*
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building	
	SUBJECT	**City Council Resolution 21-0007R**	

March 24, 2021

TO:

Rules and Legislative Oversight Committee

I am herein reporting on City Council Resolution 21-0007R introduced by Council Members Conway, Ramos, Burnett, President Mosby, Council Members McCray, Middleton, Bullock, Torrence, Glover, Porter, Stokes, and Cohen.

The purpose of the Resolution is to invite the Acting Director of the Department of Public Works and the Director of Finance to address the crippling problems with and describe solutions for the water billing system described in the recent report jointly published by the Baltimore City and Baltimore County Inspectors General.

While representatives of the Department will be present at the hearing on City Council Resolution 21-0007R, the following information may help inform the discussion:

- The Legacy System - The collection of water consumption usage by customers of the City of Baltimore's water system transitioned from an all manual system to a remote data collection system in 2016. Common to both the old and new systems is the brass water meter that measures the amount of water drawn by the customer when they flush a toilet, take a shower, wash hands or dishes. The manual system required meter personnel to collect water usage readings by opening individual meter vault lids and writing the meter register figures into a book (the book is the group of meters assigned to be read). Office personnel would enter the recorded usage for each meter account into an outdated computer billing program developed in COBALT, known as the Legacy System. This manual system could only be managed under a quarterly billing system. It provided at least two opportunities for errors in recording usage numbers (in the field and in the office), and the only consumption information the City and its customers had was the reading at the beginning and at the end of the quarter.

- The Baltimeter System - The transition to the Baltimeter program in 2016 involved installing new brass meters, replacing metal meter vault covers with composite lids, connecting an ERT to the meter that transmits recorded hourly usage to a collector, which in turn, sends the consumption data electronically to the UMAX billing system. This new system enabled the switch to monthly billing, removed the need to read individual meters in the field, and sent hourly readings electronically directly to the UMAX billing system. The UMAX system also provides the opportunity for customers to sign up for a self-service portal that allows them to look at their daily and hourly usage, track usage patterns, and receive alerts should unusual usage occur.
- Baltimore County Customers – Baltimore County residents who are served by the Baltimore City water system also participated in the Baltimeter program. With the exception of some properties located adjacent to the City/County borders, Baltimore County chose to record their meter readings with specialized equipment in a vehicle that collects the readings while driving by the meter vaults. In addition, Baltimore County has yet to fully transition to the UMAX system. It is still being supported by an aging Legacy System, and County customers are still receiving quarterly bills. Please keep in mind that County customers are only being billed for water usage. Baltimore County is responsible for billing their residents for wastewater services. These costs, and the County's share of any water and wastewater capital costs managed by the City, are included in the Metropolitan Charge that appears on their annual tax bills.
- Stormwater Fees – Baltimore City water and sewer bills also include a property's stormwater fee. Baltimore County adds their stormwater fee to the customer's annual tax bill.

Matthew W. Garbark
Acting Director

MWG/MMC