
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

HEARING NOTES

26-0202 – Charter Amendment – Department of Water and Wastewater
26-0201 – Charter Amendment – Parking Benefits District – Local Fund

Hearing Date: 6/10/2026

Hearing Start Time: 01:00 PM

Hearing End Time: 4:00 PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Estimated Attendance: 30

Committee Members in Attendance:

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

(This is NOT an attendance record.)

- Jeff Hochstetler – Department of Law
 - Bob Cename – Department of Finance
 - Matthew Garbark – Department of Public Works
 - Nina Themelis – Mayor’s Office of Government Relations
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NOTES

- Chair Dorsey began today’s hearing
- Director Garbark from DPW presented 26-0202
 - We are an outlier in having a regional utility within a city agency
 - The bill would create a new department making water and wastewater separate from DPW
 - Streamline finances, accounting, accountability
 - Account for utility more effectively – clear demarcation of administrative costs
 - Introduced now because of financial issues with wastewater utility
 - FY25 failed to meet debt service coverage ratio – cash reserves not maintained for bond rating purposes
 - Goal is to turn what remains in DPW to a department of environmental protection
- Agencies shared their reports on 26-0202

- Finance – favorable, may result in minor additional costs to stand up the department (administrative costs, etc.); however, admin costs are already separated in the city budget
- Comptroller – favorable, water governance task force (which Comptroller chairs) made this recommendation
- Planning – favorable, minimal change to planning processes
- Law – approved for form and sufficiency, question whether director of new department should have a charter mandated deputy, removal of “drain” in discussion of sewers from current DPW section on water and wastewater
- Committee questions
 - Chair Dorsey – “sewer” in current article 7 section 34 is linked to storm water and we want to be clear that facilities related to stormwater are not a part of this amendment
 - CW Ramos – believes storm water should be in the new agency
 - Chair Dorsey – on the deputy director, was there an amendment drafted on that, executive departments article of the charter should be generally reworked for 2028 election – restating things over and over again as opposed to one general operating rule for all executive departments
 - MOGR – given the effective date is 1/1/29, understands further charter amendments may clarify, no need at this time
- Kishia Powell – GM and CEO of WSSC
 - Supports the amendment, positioned for the future
- Discussion regarding stormwater
 - CW Ramos – what does drain actually refer to
 - Law – no reference to stormwater in the charter
 - What about the public local law
 - Essentially restates that which is in the charter
 - Would like stormwater to be in the new department because it is similar procurement, engineers, etc. very different than environmental services
 - Chair Dorsey – clarifies stormwater utility is currently intermingled with other parts of DPW
- CM Jones – why this is necessary by charter amendment
 - Currently DPW is in the charter and historically a huge amount of city services were handled by bureaus of the department of public works
 - Over time, different functions have been broken out into standalone departments
- Chair Dorsey – why now if not implemented until 2029, considering there is more work to be done
 - Benefits to ratepayers
 - Reduction in collections, increase in bad debt, increased costs
 - Pressure on wastewater enterprise fund, fail to meet debt service ratio
 - Further stress could result in additional bond rating downgrade
 - Strong governance of utility may help restore bond rating, close of the fiscal year is imminent, bonds will be reviewed again
 - Will show that the city is taking the lead in ensuring the governance reflects that of a modern utility to preempt the discussion of who actually owns the system
 - This seems urgent – again why not implement immediately
 - DPW believes there will be a strange existing DPW – multiple transitional steps
 - Showing the intent with the charter change is ultimately very important on its own, wants to minimize disruption in the meantime

- CW Ramos
 - Does removing “drains” preclude us from putting storm water in this agency
 - Law – don’t believe so, will confirm this would not preclude before the next meeting
- The Committee recessed on this bill
- Councilman Blanchard presented 26-0201
 - We spent a long time trying to be a great county and we should be trying to be a great city
 - It’s not just convenient to live in a walkable city, it drives people’s sense of place and what a neighborhood is
 - Things providing more funding in neighborhood corridors should be considered rigorously and seriously
 - Non-lapsing fund by ordinance was removed from the committee’s bills
 - “the devil is in the details and the details should be in the ordinance”
 - Encourage the administration to take that into account when expressing concerns
- Chair Dorsey
 - We should be setting rates at parking at a level that matches the demand
 - Businesses may be convinced that paid parking in front of their business is valuable if they enjoy in the profits of the parking spot
 - This measure is directly out of the playbook to have good parking policy
- Vice Chair Bullock
 - Discuss the commission component
 - CM Blanchard – revenue should be allotted by ordinance
- CW Ramos
 - A formula in ordinance makes sense, a commission creates an additional layer of accountability
 - How is the pooled portion of revenue allotted
- CM Jones
 - Any work or numbers on projections?
 - CM Blanchard – depends on the creation of the districts
 - Want to have the revenue high enough such that there is spot turnover
 - Opportunity to increase increments when appropriate
 - Extension of hours, including Sundays, etc.
 - Could establish new metered areas with benefit areas
 - Parking meters often overlap with main street areas
- CW Ramos
 - Raising money would not take from the general fund but would be to add specific new revenue
 - CM Blanchard – envisioned to be net neutral to the general fund
- Law – some issues in first reader, worked with sponsor for amendments, approved for form and legal sufficiency with amendments
 - Chair Dorsey – legally, is a commission required
 - Law – no
- Finance – unfavorable, does not support special funds, blocks off revenues for particular purposes in a permanent basis

- Parking revenues flow through parking funds to the general fund
 - There could be a diversion of current revenue
 - Parking revenues are pledged to debt service
- Parking Authority – unfavorable, expect pressure from benefits district neighborhoods to expand metered parking
- DOT – unfavorable, concern about impact on enforcement
- BDC – defer to finance, support policy
- MOSMBAD – without recommendation
- DHCD – defer to parking authority
- CM Jones – DOT is opposed to additional enforcement
 - DOT – parking enforcement is funded by parking fund, which comes from metered parking
- Chair Dorsey – we continue to generate substantial revenue exceeding the cost of parking enforcement
- Vice Chair Bullock – how recently have meters been installed
 - PABC – constantly updating equipment, no major initiatives in some time – Harbor Point several years ago
- CW Ramos – is HUR used to fund Tos
 - Finance – No
 - Chair Dorsey – budget identifies more HUR eligible expenses than the amount of HUR that we will get
 - There are many ways that we could do this – hours, dollar amounts, etc.
 - Finance notes this would still take money that could go towards the general fund
- MOGR – supports the intention but not the legislation
- Chair Dorsey – dedicating certain revenues to certain uses is cut and dry
 - Parking benefits districts are ALSO a best practice
 - This cannot be implemented unless the policy decision is made to dedicate certain revenues to certain sources
- CM Blanchard
 - Revenues for parking enterprise fund includes parking fines
 - It is important to have funds with actual revenue streams
 - Do you have any sense of how we could get to yes with the admin on this fund
 - MOGR – does not have that information at this time
- Chair Dorsey
 - Parking authority says purpose of meters is to manage demand
 - We monitor intake at a small geographic area
 - Managing parking depends on the ability to monitor the intake of revenue, there must be a link in analysis between enforcement and revenues generated
 - There wouldn't be metered parking in an area that didn't need it, the existence of the district cannot in and of itself necessitate enforcement
 - Do we believe in the concept of a parking benefits district?
 - If yes, we need to pass this amendment to permit for the enactment of subsequent detailed ordinances
- MOGR does not want the framing to be that the administration does not support parking benefits districts
 - Chair Dorsey – you cannot have it both ways

- The administration’s position is that elected policy makes cannot set certain fiscal policy, despite that being inappropriate for a Charter
 - And then this amendment would ask the voters to make that determination and the administration does not support it
- CM Blanchard – parking authority concerns on best practices could be handled by ordinance
- Chair Dorsey – why is there a use of a number 1 as opposed to an “A”
 - This is changed in amendments
- CW Ramos – on Commission
 - If no set formula in ordinance, a group of people to advise on how to direct money collected that does not go immediately to area of generation
- CM Dorsey – if not certain on need for advisory commission, not something inclined to put into charter
- The Committee recessed on this bill

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

Notes by: Ethan Navarre
 Notes Date: 6/11/2026

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