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FROM	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cename, Budget Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4774		
	SUBJECT	Council Bill 20-0550 – Charter Amendment – City Council Modernization and Re-Structuring Act		

DATE:

TO

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400

September 3, 2020

Position: Oppose

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 20-0550, Charter Amendment-City Council Modernization and Re-Structuring Act, the purpose of which is to decrease the size of the City Council from 14 members to 5 members and establish the Vice President as an at-large position. The bill provides provisions for the Vice President to become President in case the position becomes vacant.

Background

The composition of the City Council was last changed in November 2002 through a Charter amendment, confirmed by the voters. The City Council previously contained 6 three-member districts and a City Council President elected at-large for a total of 19 members. The final details were prescribed into law by the Mayor and City Council. The first election under the new City Council structure was in November 2004.

Fiscal Impact

Although the legislation prescribes fewer City Council members, the scope of the offices will change in order to maintain the current level of service and demonstrate best practices as modeled by peer cities. Organizationally, at-large and district council offices are distinct entities. The newly created at-large City Council Vice President office will require accommodations comparable to the current structure of the City Council President’s Office. This includes an increased salary for the at-large councilmember, senior staff who have citywide responsibilities, and additional community relations staff to reach each district.

District offices will also gain additional staff to supplement the increased workload of having larger districts. Currently, district offices are budgeted for four positions, including the councilmember, technician, secretary, and assistant. To maintain the current level of service for district residents, each office would gain two additional secretary positions.

Below is one example of a staffing structure that would be cost neutral compared to the current model.

Position Class Title	Current			Proposed		
	Number	Cost	Total Amt.	Number	Cost	Total Amt.
District						
Council Member	14	107,876	1,510,266	5	107,876	539,381
Council Technician	14	91,474	1,280,630	5	91,474	457,368
Secretary City Council	14	71,912	1,006,767	15	71,912	1,078,679
Council Assistant	14	66,239	927,340	5	66,239	331,193
At-Large		-			-	
At-Large Council Member	1	175,341	175,341	2	175,341	350,681
Operations Officer III	0	-	-	1	133,966	133,966
Operations Officer I	1	134,779	134,779	3	134,779	404,336
Neighborhood Liaison	10	92,301	923,010	16	92,301	1,476,817
Council Assistant	0	-	-	1	67,208	67,208
Total	68		5,958,133	53		4,839,628

Other Considerations

One potential consequence of this legislation is an increased cost for candidates running for office. At-large members and larger districts require more resources to support effective voter outreach efforts of campaigns. This could also impact who is able to run for these positions because it favors incumbents and candidate slates.

In addition, the Department of Finance identified that the legislation as presented does not include information on procedures should the Vice President seat become vacant. The Charter provides details on what to do in case of vacancy for other elected positions and this legislation amends current procedures if the City Council President position is vacant, but there are no separate and distinct provisions for the case of a vacancy of the Vice President, which would become a distinct at-large seat.

Conclusion

The Department of Finance believes that major changes to the structure of the City's government should go through a Charter Review Commission. Making changes to complex structures such as representation of City residents could have unintended consequences if not appropriately considered.

For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance opposes City Council Bill 20-0550.

cc: Henry Raymond
Matthew Stegman
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