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

HOUSING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
The Honorable James Torrence
CHAIR

HEARING NOTES

25-0003R
Informational Hearing – Permit Reform

Hearing Date: 2/10/2026
Hearing Start Time: 5:20 PM
Hearing End Time: 7:20 XM
Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex
Total Estimated Attendance: 52

Committee Members in Attendance:
- **Chair** James Torrence
- Zac Blanchard
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember
- **Vice Chair** Odette Ramos
- Jermaine Jones
- Select a Councilmember

Additional Councilmembers in Attendance
- Zeke Cohen
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember
- Select a Councilmember

MAJOR SPEAKERS
(This is <u>NOT</u> an attendance record.)

- **Alice Kennedy**
- **Jason Hessler**
- **Clavin Young**
- **Layla Layman**
- **Justin Williams**
- **Tylor Schnella**

NOTES

- Chair Torrence opened the hearing
- Opening Comments from CP Cohen
  - Clearly identify who is in charge of process
  - Feedback group – with external users, committee members, and admin meeting monthly

- o Full consolidation of permit process. Plan for 1 stop shop in 6 months*
- Opening Comments from Chair Torrence
- Opening Comments from Vice Chair Ramos
- Witness testimony
- Agency Report (slides in deck)
- Committee Questions Topics include:
  - o CP Cohen - Level set that information that the members get from developers and constituents do not match what the agency is showing.
  - o When will the council get a plan to consolidate the permit process
    - ▪ 2-3 years to implement a consolidation JW?
    - ▪ CP asking for 1 agency – Admin not willing to commit to that not sure that a single agency is the correct process.
  - o *Asking for a consolidated approach to permitting with 1 agency in charge* - plan in 6 months* response to request in 1 week*
  - o CM Ramos – timeline to get a message board in Accela
    - ▪ Aiming for spring 26 – heading for beta testing in March and will move forward from there. AK & LL
  - o Expedited permits – gut rehabs without permits or using minor permits and they keep a VBN
    - ▪ JW – selling a property without permits is fraud and should be handled as such by the state's attorney. Relators and land attorneys also responsible for due diligence.
      - • Ramos – previously we spoke about a phone call to follow up on permits that had not been heard from – waiting for a prosecution is not an acceptable strategy.
    - ▪ JW – would rather have funds go to getting the system to move permits out the door and unpermitted work is lower on the priority list.
    - ▪ *In one week requesting budget numbers for a proactive system, what that system will entail (process), staffing cost, capacity both in technology and staff. When can this be moved forward to operationalized (timeline)*
  - o CM Jones – *what has been the total cost of the permit system of Accella – follow up in one week*
  - o How much revenue has the city generated in permits – how much are we looking to spend on the system in FY27 and how much we hope to generate – i.e. is the system revenue positive, neutral, or negative? Follow up in one week
  - o CM Blanchard – permits issued 24 & 25 still less than it current is
    - ▪ JW better measure is permit applications in and permits out
  - o When do we hit the goal in permitting – permit library?
    - ▪ JW this is the goal to minimize the time for permits – AK – this is part of the reframe Baltimore program.
  - o CM Torrence - BCIT – have we built a redundant system for when we transition to new kind of systems
    - ▪ LL looking into more incremental changes – will cost more time and resources but should result in a better project when new systems come online
    - ▪ Robbie? – will need more testing especially in the migrating of data will allow for more validation in the creation of processes.
  - o What SOPs are we building around this

- - - LL 1 piece is discovery looking at the processes upfront in the project
  - o Are we designating staff fulltime to the project
    - - LL Yes that is the ask for resources as we develop the system
  - o CP Cohen – *will you commit to establishing a user group in 6-8 weeks with Admin, staff, council, stakeholders that will meet regularly to give feedback, stress test, and create a continuous loop*
    - - AK – we have held monthly focus groups since before Accela launched including high end users.
    - - CP – not getting that from one of the users that the Commissioner mentioned.
    - - JW – reluctant to promise others time – but also will be meeting with the BMORE FAST advisory group once stood up.
    - - CP – looking for clear commitment
      - - JW looking to open the next meeting that AK mentioned on the 27th
    - - CY – will get data to the BMORE FAST advisor board stood up in one week.
    - - Follow up in standing this meeting in one week
  - o CM Ramos – lack of electrical reviewers – where are we at in this
    - - AK – interviews today and yesterday for 1 electrical reviewer and recruiting for an Architecture reviewer. Temp staff does not have the capacity to fill in.
  - o What is the total number looking to be hired
    - - CY – team is assessing how many we need total
  - o Managing expectations – letting people know when to expect their permit
    - - JW - Working on a public facing dashboard and materials to help with understanding where permits are in the process – this is in the planning process. Timeline on dashboard by next permit hearing.
  - o CM Jones – which permits have been dragging? Going beyond their expected timelines
    - - JW – no data driven research on this but looking at construction, & special event permits
  - o New permit system is seen as the delay – why did we change to this system?
    - - AK – old system was 15 years old and built in house without normal protocols of documentation. We could not make changes or update and we had issues with functionality and security.
    - - LL – security concerns and age
  - o CM Blanchard – will message board allow for direct interface between applicant and reviewer
    - - JW – yes
  - o Live Baltimore report – says we need x units a year with so many being rentals– is there someone who can say how many units we built in 2025
    - - JH – this is a report that would need to built but could be done
  - o Cohen – summary of commitments
    - - Meeting in a week to talk council participation in the meeting.
  - o Ramos – recoding America - book recommendation
- Public Testimony
- Closing

FURTHER STUDY REQUESTED

COPY IN SPREADSHEET

SEE FINAL VOTE RECORD IN BILL FILE

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 bile? ------------ ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒ **N/A**
Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file? ---------------- ☐ **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒ **N/A**

Notes by: Tony Leva   Direct Inquiries to: Anthony.Leva@baltimorecity.gov
Notes Date: 2/10/2026