

 on behalf of

FROM	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cenname, Chief	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4774		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 21-0016R – Investigative Hearing – Building Backups of Untreated Sewage		

DATE:

TO

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

March 22, 2021

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 21-0016R, Investigative Hearing-Building Backups of Untreated Sewage, the purpose of which is to invite representatives from various agencies to appear before the City Council to discuss the effectiveness and sufficiency of measures being taken to address basement backups of raw sewage. Similar legislation was introduced in 2019 and three hearings were held to discuss the program.

The City takes a comprehensive approach to addressing sewage backups. The 2017 Modified Consent Decree Expedited Reimbursement Program provides a reimbursement for City residents costs arising from backups. Efforts to prevent and eliminate overflows include the Headworks Project, as well as regular analysis and preventative maintenance.

As part of the 2017 Modified Consent Decree, the Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW) administers the Expedited Reimbursement Program for sewage backups caused by wet weather. The program offers up to \$2,500 per dwelling unit, per event for reasonable, documented clean-up and disinfection costs. Since beginning in April 2018, DPW has reimbursed eleven claims totaling \$15,909.41.

The Headworks Project will eliminate more than 80 percent of the volume of sewage overflows. During periods of excess rain, the amount of sewage and rain that enters the system exceeds capacity causing a bottleneck, which leads to backups into homes and watersheds. The Headworks Project will construct a 36 million-gallon storage facility and add eight 1,000 horsepower pumps and accompanying infrastructure to actively pump sewage and break the bottleneck. The influent pumped into the storage facility will then gradually be released into the system for treatment. The \$430 million project was recently completed and became operational in December 2020.

In addition, the City's preventative maintenance and analysis give insights into the effectiveness of reducing sewage backups. Through December 2020, DPW has cleaned 453,400 linear feet of pipe, replaced 68,096 linear feet of pipe, and installed 6,492 linear feet of new pipe. Additional repairs are being undertaken that will increase effectiveness. Information monitoring systems are also being put in place to monitor the effectiveness of the completed projects and a Phase II plan will be developed by December 2022 to address any remaining deficiencies in the system.

In an effort to promote transparency and accountability, the Department of Finance and DPW have established a separate activity in the Fiscal 2022 budget for this program to ensure that the cost of this project is publicly recorded and tracked.

The Department of Finance will attend the hearing for this Resolution and respond to fiscal inquiries concerning the City's response to basement backups of raw sewage.

cc: Henry Raymond
Natasha Mehu
Nina Themelis