
CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON SCOTT – MAYOR



ZEKE COHEN - COUNCIL PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

NANCY MEAD – DIRECTOR

100 N. HOLIDAY STREET

BALTIMORE MD, 21202

HEARING NOTES

Bill: 25^{0014R}

Title: Informational Hearing – Vacant & Abandoned Garages

Committee: Housing & Economic Development

Chaired by: James Torrence

Hearing Date: 9/30/2025

Time (Beginning): 5:35 PM

Time (Ending): 6:25 PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Attendance: Approximately 45

Committee Members in Attendance: James Torrence, Odette Ramos, Zac Blanchard

Bill Synopsis in the file?	☒ YES	☐ NO	☐ N/A
Attendance sheet in the 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 file?	☒ YES	☐ NO	☐ N/A
Evidence of notification to property owners?	☐ YES	☐ NO	☒ N/A
Final vote taken at this hearing?	☐ YES	☒ NO	☐ N/A
Motioned by:			
Final Vote:			

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

Alison Kennedy – Housing Commissioner – Department of Housing & Community Development

Sharon Green Middleton – Vice President – Baltimore City Council

Major Issues Discussed

- Chair Torrence opens the hearing
- The floor was open to Vice President Middleton to give opening remarks

- Chair Torrence offered opening comments on the bill
- The floor was open to agency reports
 - Presentation from DHCD, see slides in file
- The floor was open to questions from the Committee members – topics included:
 - Where is the breakdown in community engagement on the topic of abandoned garages– why is this a challenge
 - This has taken years, and while DHCD takes it seriously and has added it to the cost for revitalization.
 - The Vice President noted that she felt that this (community engagement) had not been set as a priority or had appropriate resources dedicated to it.
 - What would an agreement with the administration on a process to deal with the garages look like – can there be an agreement?
 - What monies are we putting toward addressing the issue of vacant garages?
 - In FY 2026 there is a dedicated pot of money from demolition to the demolition of garages
 - By the next hearing – requesting an SOP for addressing garages, specific staff attached to the SOP. Who is responsible for code enforcement, special investigations? Ect... what monies have been allocated to demolition? *
 - 2 tracks for a VBN exist – where garage is attached to the property lot & where the garage is not a part of the adjacent property and may have separate owners and deeds – we need to get VBNs on these and a process to get VBNs on the property attached ones* Would like examples of garages with VBNs on them in each district – making sure that B Blocks is added to VBN data.
 - 311 is usually for high grass and weeds – but folks don’t know they can request VBN inspection – should we include a garage in the VBN 311 process? *
 - Is DHCD using drones to help inspect these garages?
 - DHCD getting drones for processes – finalizing maintenance contract
 - What is the delay in Drones?
 - Staffing shortages and discussions with Law and BPD
 - Asking for a follow-up meeting with DHCD* 3 weeks by 10/21 to discuss these delays, what concerns BPD & Law had regarding the use of drones.
 - Requesting data on what community associations DHCD has gone to talk about garages and what meetings are scheduled with community associations. How will we educate them on this and what to say when they report to 311.*
- Public testimony – see sheet

- Hearing was recessed 6:25 PM

Further Study

Was further study requested?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If yes, describe.

- A memo outlining:
 - SOP for addressing vacant garages,
 - what agencies DHCD is coordinating with,
 - which specific staff are attached to the SOP (who from Code Enforcement, Special Investigations, etc.).
 - What monies have been allocated to demolition? Please include points of contact for all agencies and departments.
 - What legal filings they're making, how often they're going to make those legal filings, the total number of legal filings they're going to make, and how many citations have been made.
- Requesting data on what community associations DHCD has gone to talk about garages and what meetings are scheduled with community associations. How will we educate them on this topic, and what should they say when they report to 311?
- Asking for a follow-up meeting with DHCD regarding drones and the delays in implementing a policy for their use by the department. What have been the concerns of BPD & Law regarding the use of drones? What is the status of a maintenance plan for drones in use by the department?
- Memo detailing how VBNs are going to be processed for both garages that are on the property lot that they are deeded to and for those that are detached from the lot. Can/should vacant garages be included in the VBN workflow for 311? Please include examples of garages with VBNs on them in each council district.

Committee Vote:

Chair: Yea
Vice Chair: Yea
Member: Yea
Member: Yea
Member: Yea

Tony Leva, Date: 10/1/2025

Cc: Bill File
 OCS Chrono File

