


<b>FROM</b>	NAME & TITLE	Alfred H. Foxx, Director	CITY of <b>BALTIMORE</b> <b>MEMO</b>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	SUBJECT	<b>CITY COUNCIL BILL 11-0685</b>		

**TO** The Honorable President and Members  
of the Baltimore City Council  
c/o Karen Randle  
Room 400 - City Hall

DATE: May 6, 2011

I am herein reporting on City Council Bill 11-0685 introduced by Council Members Clarke, D'Adamo, Curran, Branch, Kraft, Cole, Middleton, Holton, Stokes, Welch, Reisinger, Conaway, Henry and Spector.

The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that actual rather than estimated water meter readings are made; require that actual rather than estimated water meter readings are used for residential billing purposes; and generally relating to water meter readings and billings.

Article II § 45 of the Baltimore City Charter recognizes the City's right to establish, operate, maintain, regulate and control a system of water supply and to make charges for the consumption or use of such water. Article VII § 33 grants authority to the Department of Public Works to have charge of the water supply and all powers and duties connected with the operation of and supplying of water to the City. Article 24 of the Baltimore City Code (2000 Edition, Revised) codifies the manner in which the operation and protection of the City's water supply and facilities are conducted by the Department. City Council Bill 11-0685 proposes to amend § 1-2 (Rates and Charges) of Article 24 to require actual meter readings four times a year and to prohibit the issuance of an estimated water bill to any residential customer.

The City's Water Utility has approximately 410,000 water meter accounts. Each metered account is to be read and billed for water usage during one quarter, for a total of four billing periods a year. Water meters are read manually through assignment to 2,100 routes. Unfortunately, there are circumstances that can prevent the reading of water meters, resulting in an estimated water bill:

- Approximately 17,000 water meters are still located interior to properties, rather than being accessible from the exterior;
- Severe weather conditions may temporarily prohibit access to meter vaults; and
- Some meter vaults are inadvertently buried, damaged, or access is temporarily blocked.

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While it is agreed that a water bill based on an actual read is expected, a clearly labeled estimated bill is an important tool, as well as an industry standard, in keeping a customer's account current. To minimize the frequency of estimations, the Department has hired and trained additional meter readers to ensure adequate coverage of the routes and will be undertaking a pilot testing of an automated meter reading system to rate its success and applicability to all of the water meter accounts.

The Department of Public Works must respectfully oppose passage of City Council Bill 11-0685 for the reasons stated.



Alfred H. Foxx  
Director

AHF/MMC:pat