



HEARING NOTES

Resolution: 21-0070R

Informational Hearing - Soil Conservation in Baltimore City

Committee: Health, Environment, and Technology

Chaired by: Danielle McCray

Hearing Date: November 10, 2021

Time (Beginning): 10:45 AM

Time (Ending): 11:45 AM

Location: Webex Virtual Hearing

Total Attendance: Approximately 30 people

Committee Members in Attendance:

Danielle McCray John Bullock

Mark Conway Ryan Dorsey

James Torrence Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer

Bill Synopsis in the file?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Attendance sheet in the file?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Agency reports read?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Evidence of notification to property owners?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A
Final vote taken at this hearing?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Motioned by:	McCray		
Seconded by:	Torrence		
Final Vote:	Favorable		

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Kim Grove, Department of Public Works
- Ava Richardson, Office of Sustainability
- Abby Cocke, Office of Sustainability
- Matt Rescott, Department of Recreation and Parks
- Ashley Bowers, Department of Recreation and Parks
- Liam Davis, Department of Transportation

Major Issues Discussed

1. Chairwoman McCray called the hearing to order, explained the purpose of the resolution and hearing, and discussed the importance of soil conservation and urban agriculture in Baltimore City.
2. Matt Rescott and Ashley Bowers discussed how the Department of Recreation and Parks protects soil as part of its programs and through project review and approval under its Natural Resources Conservation Policy.
3. Kim Grove presented on the Department of Public Works' (DPW) role in erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, soil conservation, and urban agriculture (presentation in file).
4. Representatives for the other agencies summarized the written reports.
5. Councilmembers asked the following questions:
 - a. How many erosion and sediment control complaints has DPW received through 311? On average, there have been 160 service requests related to erosion and sediment control per year for the last 3 years.
 - b. Will any of the \$16 million in American Rescue Plan funds allocated to the Health Department to address food insecurity go to urban farmers? The funding has to support community food resiliency and the local supply chain, and urban farmers may receive some of the funds to provide food. The Mayor's Office will provide additional details as the information becomes available.
 - c. Have City agencies worked with urban farmers during the pandemic to help address food insecurity? Some community farms have helped distribute USDA food boxes in partnership with the Department of Planning.
 - d. What assistance and technical support on soil erosion and water quality does the City provide to urban farms? DPW and the Office of Sustainability provide appropriate guidance documents, technical assistance, and help navigating regulatory requirements.
 - e. When City-owned land is leased for urban agriculture or community gardens, how do the responsible agencies monitor the use of the site to ensure compliance with the lease and appropriate use of the property? The Department Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) adopt-a-lot agreements are yearly and compliance is reviewed when up for renewal. Homegrown Baltimore leases include provisions about maintenance and additional provisions are being added to future leases to help avoid community complaints.
 - f. How many properties are leased through Homegrown Baltimore? Abby Cocke summarized the farms with current leases and leases that are in development. The Office of Sustainability will follow up with a list of Homegrown Baltimore farms.
 - g. What is the City doing to educate young people about urban agriculture and soil conservation? Kim Grove and Abby Cocke discussed the Baltimore City Connecting Children to Nature initiative and other education programs.
 - h. How are builders held accountable for soil erosion? The City can issue stop work orders and small fines for violations. Large projects are often subject to state requirements and the Maryland Department of the Environment can impose more significant penalties. DPW also provides training to help builders avoid violations.
 - i. What practices can farmers use to control runoff from their land and what technical and financial assistance is available to help them implement those practices. Silt fences and

other perimeter controls like gullies and berms are common measures to prevent erosion. DPW and the Baltimore County Soil Conservation District provide some technical assistance. The Office of Sustainability helps connect farmers to grant funding sources that can provide support for conservation practices.

- j. Is the Office of Sustainability the point of contact for farmers to connect to financial resources? The Office is often the starting point for farmers and lists many resources on its website.
 - k. How does DHCD educate inspectors to avoid issuing fines and citations for community gardening and conservation activities that could be mistaken for violations? DHCD inspectors have completed training on recognizing conservation practices and DHCD will send additional information on that training to the Committee.
6. Stephanie Compton from the Energy Justice Network testified on the need to prevent soil contamination, particularly contamination from the application of sewage sludge marketed as fertilizer.
7. The Committee voted to recommend the resolution favorably.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes **No**

If yes, describe.

- 1. The Mayor's Office will provide additional information on whether urban farmers will receive any of the American Rescue Plan funding allocated to the Health Department to address food insecurity.
- 2. The Office of Sustainability will provide a list of farms in the Homegrown Baltimore program.
- 3. DHCD will provide additional information on the training for inspectors on recognizing conservation practices.

Committee Vote:

D. McCray: Yea
J. Bullock: Yea
M. Conway: Yea
R. Dorsey: Yea
P. Porter: Absent
J. Torrence: Yea
I. Schleifer: Yea



Matthew L. Peters, Committee Staff

Date: November 12, 2021

Cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File