

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT, Mayor



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

LARRY E. GREENE, Director
415 City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
410-396-7215 / Fax: 410-545-7596
email: larry.greene@baltimorecity.gov

HEARING NOTES

Bill: 21-0028R

Informational Hearing - Baltimore's Plan for our Neighbors Experiencing Homelessness and Residing in Hotels during the Pandemic

Committee: Economic and Community Development

Chaired By: Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton

Hearing Date: May 25, 2021

Time (Beginning): 2:00 PM

Time (Ending): 3:40 PM

Location: Virtual WEBEX

Total Attendance: ~70

Committee Members in Attendance:

John Bullock Mark Conway Ryan Dorsey Antonio Glover Robert Stokes Odette Ramos

Form with checkboxes for tracking hearing details: Bill Synopsis in the file?, Attendance sheet in the file?, Agency reports read?, Video or audio-digitally recorded?, Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?, Evidence of notification to property owners?, Final vote taken at this hearing?, Motioned by?, Seconded by?, Final Vote?

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Councilmember Odette Ramos

- Mr. Christopher J. Shorter, Office of the Mayor
 - Ms. Carolyn Johnson, Homeless Service Representation Project
 - Mr. Anthony Williams, Homeless Service Representation Project
 - Mr. Peter Sabonis, Partners for Dignity and Rights
 - Mr. Mark Council, Housing Our Neighbors
 - Ms. Tisha Edwards, Mayor's Office of Homeless Services
 - Ms. Alice Kennedy, Department of Housing and Community Development
 - Mr. Aaron Moore, Department of Finance
 - Ms. Faith Leach, Office of the Mayor
 - Ms. Audrey Kelley
 - Mr. Jeff Garrett
 - Ms. Sarah Bluher
 - Mr. Gerardo Benavides
-

Major Issues Discussed

1. Councilwoman Middleton opened the meeting, introduced committee members and City representatives, and read the bill into the record.
2. Councilmember Ramos submitted written testimony and explained the purpose for the bill.
3. Mr. Christopher Shorter commented about the administration's efforts to manage homelessness in Baltimore. He indicated that the pandemic has helped the City to develop innovative collaboration between government and non-government entities to address homelessness. Community stakeholders are critical to helping government understand the needs of the homeless. The mayor is committed to an anti-homelessness strategy. Irene Augustine has been appointed as director of the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS). Bill Welles will serve as the deputy director of MOHS.
4. Councilmember Dorsey asked Mr. Shorter if the Housing Authority of Baltimore City has accepted the full allocation of 278 vouchers. Ms. Tisha Edwards explained that the vouchers have been accepted and a Memorandum of Understanding is being created. The vouchers will be available July 1, 2021.
5. Councilmember Ramos asked for an update on the status of federal funding being distributed for pandemic related reimbursements.
6. Councilmember Stokes suggested that the City focus on permanent housing.
7. Ms. Carolyn Johnson gave a presentation with data about the affordable housing crisis, American Rescue Plan Act - Homeless Resources and other potential resources.
8. Mr. Anthony Williams helped to create The Living Experience Committee which helps and advises consumers. He explained that the City should encourage outreach by MOHS.
9. Mr. Mark Council explained the purpose of Housing Our Neighbors. He commended the City for extending the hotel contract in order to accommodate the homeless. He raised concerns about food and the treatment by staff, safety, help addressing overdoses, transparency in the housing choice voucher system and evictions from homeless housing.

- 10. Mr. Peter Sabonis works in partnership with Housing Our Neighbors to increase the use of vouchers to move people from hotels into permanent housing. He also works to create new affordable units and rehabbed housing. Identified three types of housing the conversion of hotels (social service on 1st floor), conversion of office space (Metro West Social Security Building), and improving vacant housing.
- 11. Ms. Tisha Edwards gave a presentation with updated information about the City's COVID 19 response, outreach and encampments, shelters and hotels and the Housing First Program.
- 12. Agency representatives confirmed their agency's reports.
- 13. Public testimony was taken.
- 14. The hearing was recessed.

Further Study

**Was further study requested?
If yes, describe.**

Yes No

Committee Vote:

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair:.....
 John Bullock:
 Mark Conway:
 Ryan Dorsey:
 Antonio Glover:
 Odette Ramos:
 Robert Stokes:.....

Jennifer L. Coates, Committee Staff
 cc: Bill File
 OCS Chrono File

Date: May 26, 2021