

Introduced by: Councilwoman Ramos

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning

Informational Hearing - Regional Water Governance Task Force

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the Office of the City Administrator, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Mayor's Office of Government Relations, the Office of Equity and Civil Rights, and any other relevant agencies to report on the topics outlined in this Resolution and provide additional information as needed by the Committee.

Baltimore City's water is among the best water in the country. In the 2022 Water Quality Report, Baltimore City's water contaminants are below the United States Environmental Protection Agency's standard, which is excellent. Baltimore's water and sewer system was ahead of its time when developed over 100 years ago. While the water and sewer infrastructure is aging, the quality of Baltimore's water continues to be top notch.

Despite Baltimore's exceptional water quality, residents express dismay about the inequities in the system, particularly around water billing. Baltimore residents pay much more than County residents, although Baltimore County subsidizes the costs. There are still issues within the system that need to be addressed.

The Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force ("Task Force") was created by Senate Bill 880/House Bill 843 of the 2023 Maryland General Assembly. The purpose of the Task Force is to review the relationship between Baltimore City and Baltimore County and other nearby counties, relative to water and sewer services and operations.

The Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force is a welcome initiative to address the inequities and continue to strengthen the overall system to continue our history of high quality water and improve sewer treatment to protect the Chesapeake Bay.

The Task Force is charged with evaluating the recommendations outlined in the 2021 Water/Sewer Services Comprehensive Business Process Review study and other governance models to see how they might apply to maintenance, billing, capital improvements, rate stability, services delivery, and more to the 1.8 million residents served by Baltimore City water.

The Mayor of Baltimore will make 5 appointments to the Task Force, and work with Baltimore County to staff the Task Force. The Task Force must publish its findings in January of 2024, and prepare any legislation it proposes to implement its findings.

There remain several outstanding questions regarding the work of the Regional Water Task Force that the City Council would like to discuss with agency officials. During the hearing, the City Council would like to be briefed on the following:

- an outline of the recommendations in the 2021 Water/Sever Services Comprehensive Business Process Review study;
- a list of the individuals who will be appointed to the Task Force by the Mayor of Baltimore City;
- an outline of the process the Task Force will be taking to create and assess various recommendations, including, but not limited to:
 - how the Task Force will allow the public to provide input on challenges with the current systems;

- how the Task Force will allow the public to provide input on the Task Force’s draft recommendations;
- an equity assessment to inform the recommendations as they are developed and a future equity assessment on the Task Force’s draft recommendations;
- an economic assessment on the impact of the recommendations;
- an assessment of the impact on workers and jobs for City employees;
- an analysis of how the recommendations will preserve the Baltimore City’s control of the water system;
- a timeline for a report draft and public comment period; and
- any other relevant information the Committee may need.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council representatives from the Office of the City Administrator, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Mayor’s Office of Government Relations, the Office of Equity and Civil Rights, and any other relevant agencies to report on the topics outlined in this Resolution and provide additional information as needed by the Committee.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the City Administrator, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Interim Director of the Mayor’s Office of Government Relations, the Chief Equity Officer and Director of the Office of Equity and Civil Rights, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.