

January 14 & 21, 2021 Planning Commission Presentations
Questions & Answers

Department of Finance

- Q: When the Ernst & Young contract for city budget planning [a firm contracted by the City to provide support for financial analysis and management] contract is done, is there any local expertise or firms that could partner with the city for this? Not sure if "buy local" works for budget.
- A: The contract didn't have a local requirement but it had a requirement for W/MBE. We use a firm called DevTech for the Benefits benchmarking.

Mayoralty & Planning

- Q: Can art organizations apply directly to the planning commission when submissions are open in the future vs BDC?
- A: Certain cultural organizations are eligible for the Cultural Spaces Capital Support Fund, which is a competitive process open every two years. [Visit our website](#) for more information.

Department of Recreation and Parks

- Q: Does the Department of Recreation & Parks have any plans to address the flooding on Erdman Avenue that is caused by water from the Clifton Park Golf Course? Several accidents have occurred there, especially when it freezes, and while some mitigation efforts were made, the problem still exists. This is a long-term and serious safety issue that really needs to be addressed in a comprehensive manner.
- A: In 2019, BCRP tasked an Engineering consultant to investigate the continuous flow of water along the curb of Erdman Ave. Stormwater pipes were videoed and utility research performed. Based on those findings, BCRP staff installed roughly 60 linear feet of French drain pipe to collect runoff from the golf course. Since that time, BCRP has been coordinating additional efforts with the Baltimore Municipal Golf Corporation. Additional work to divert and capture the water is being planned for February.

Baltimore City Information Technology

- Q: Would other email/office tools such as those developed by OpenOffice provide the level of security necessary? Thinking of freeware that might avoid upgrade costs from businesses like Microsoft?
- A: It is well documented that Open Source tools, such as OpenOffice provide basic levels of security and can meet the needs of small and some medium size businesses. However the upkeep and level of security in these types of tools pose an unacceptable risk for larger enterprises. Also, transitioning from an established suite of products such as Microsoft Office where employees are very comfortable with its features and functions to another suite of enterprise products is extremely difficult, timely, and usually not successful.

- Q: Is there a way to transition to a Linux system like Ubuntu in very specific areas, to decrease cost of Microsoft products?
- A: Baltimore City does not plan, in full or in part, to transition to Ubuntu. The business and technical case would be too risky for Baltimore to pursue. Most of the products the City owns are compatible with the Microsoft OS not Linux.

Housing and Community Development

- Q: Are there priorities for "green" housing/sustainable housing development, along with the equity and affordability efforts?
- A: HCD has provided information on several initiatives and programs that support green housing and sustainable infrastructure:
- 1) Baltimore City has had a mandatory Green Construction Code since 2009. As green building standards and codes evolved overtime, DHCD continued to amend and update those requirements. In 2020, DHCD worked with a team of engineers, architects and green building consultants to amend and adopt the 2018 IgCC. The team focused its efforts on adopting a Code that supported the City's sustainability goals, while remaining cost effective and practical. With the recent adoption of the updated Code, DHCD expanded the alternative 3rd party compliance paths to include not only LEED and NGBS, but also Green Globes. Those that choose not to go with a separate Green Construction Standard will need to build per the adopted IgCC. Since the IgCC is part of the ICC code family, it acts as an overlay code to the City's existing International Building Code (IBC). The "overlay" makes it easier for applicants to comply with the green building law without the expense of using a 3rd party certification green building standard.
 - 2) As part of the 2018 Building Fire and Related Code Update, DHCD adopted Appendix Q of the ICC's International Residential Code. Appendix Q relaxes various requirements in the body of the code as they apply to houses constructed that equal 400 square feet. This code also applies to areas 400 square feet or less that create sleeping lofts, and allow for ladders, smaller rooms, lower ceilings, alternate stair construction, etc. Per the Zoning Code no "mobile homes" are permitted in the City and all construction must be slabbed on grade.
 - 3) Weatherization – Weatherization services are offered to qualifying owner and tenant occupied properties. These home upgrades lower energy usage, lower monthly utility bills, and make homes safer and more comfortable. Typically, DHCD provides this service to 600 households annually. TO qualify, households must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level
 - 4) Energy Efficiency – DHCD's Office of Rehabilitation and Weatherization Program funds energy efficient specifications in a client's scope of work. Additionally, the agency purchases and installs energy star windows and appliances. Rehab Services is also piloting a project in partnership with Johns Hopkins named SCIBAR. This pilot studies the benefits of the use of cool roof replacements and provides support to low income household repair projects.
 - 5) Baltimore Shines (Low-income renewable energy initiative) The goals of the Baltimore Shines project are: 1. to put rooftop solar on 1,000 homes of low-income

residents; 2. to provide solar job training to 150 trainees and support and maintain 103 permanent jobs The Baltimore Shines model does not rely on a resident's credit score, income, debt ratio—or other typical barriers to financing for home improvement projects like this. Instead, it utilizes private investment from tax equity investors. Residents then make modest payments over time on their energy bills, but even with those payments included, they are paying less than before because of the savings that come from solar. Like the weatherization services offered, eligible clients must be at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Department of Transportation

Q: Any thoughts on switching from pavement to something like crushed gravel on certain roads/pedestrian ways? Based on capital costs of maintaining asphalt roadways that may be able to be switched for bike/walking purposes . Or, are there any other ways to go from high-cost concrete/asphalt to other surface types that have lower recurring maintenance costs?

A: Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) continues to research and familiarize itself with industry best practices for roadway materials and roadway maintenance activities. Various materials and combinations have been considered in the past, including, but not limited to: cement, asphalt, recycled asphalt, porous pavement, gravel, sand, and composites. Within these evaluations, Baltimore City must also adhere to the compliance standards and approved material listings from the Maryland State Highway Administration for the City's federally-eligible roadways. Other factors in the BCDOT's assessment include: local weather conditions, Baltimore City's underlying soil conditions & topography, drainage, estimated initial and lifecycle costs, material strength characteristics (based on roadway type and variety of users - vehicular, transit, heavy-load truck, bike, pedestrian, etc.), and utilities (both from a protection standpoint/limited vibration & need for access/utility cuts). BCDOT is committed to continue this effort for making cost-effective, data-driven decisions with respect to material and maintenance selections, and has requested through CIP Account 527-056 Pavement Condition Survey & Pavement Management Information System funding in FY2022 to further advance development of an optimized pavement program.

Department of General Services

Q: What would it take to money from being constrained to historical buildings to meet prioritized needs without regard to saving historic buildings?

A: There aren't restrictions on City funds for historic properties. There may be a possibility for external funding to support those projects.