

BALTIMORE REGIONAL WATER GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE

MEETING #6 – DRAFT REPORT REVIEW MEETING

MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024

6:00 – 9:00 P.M.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Key Actions:

- The Consultant Draft Report to the Taskforce was summarized and discussed. The Taskforce then began the planned process to move from the Consultant's Recommendation to forming their Recommendation.
- The Chair asked the Taskforce if they would like to take a vote related to recommending a model for further study.
 - The Taskforce declined to do so at this time. Members Powell and Moran both stated they would second a decision to defer the vote to the Taskforce's final meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2024.
- Taskforce's Draft Recommendation will be posted on the public websites.
 - Taskforce members will return comments to the Chair and Consultant by end of day, Friday, January 12, 2024.
 - Public Comment will be requested by Friday, January 19, 2024.
- A final draft of the Taskforce's Recommendation will be voted on during the meeting on Thursday, January 25, 2024.

No.	Public Comment	Action Requested	Taskforce Response
Public Comment Session #1 – Pre-Taskforce Discussion			
1.	<p>Name: David Wheaton, NAACP Legal Defense Fund</p> <p>Comment: I'm concerned that this draft does not address what was stated or the questions that the Taskforce had at the last meeting. It represents only a consultant's view and it was funneled to the public that this was the recommendation of the Taskforce and to have none of the concerns that were voiced in the last meeting part of the draft is concerning.</p> <p>Suggest we do a racial equity, economic equity assessment before we are picking what is the right governance model. Again, there needs to be some type of feasibility study to even see if this is doable economically from the City's perspective and for ratepayer's perspective. If rates are going to go up as they did in Detroit, then I think the task force members should really take a second look that other governance models that would not affect rate payers as much, especially our low-income rate payers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advance the Taskforce's recommendation development process following the Taskforce's review of the Consultant's draft report and recommendations. • Perform a racial equity and economic equity assessment. • Explore impacts to rates. • Reject the recommendation of Model E. 	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>The process of moving from the Consultant's recommendation to the Taskforce's recommendation is intentional and has been detailed throughout our meeting series. The website detailed and distinguished the Draft Consultant report as "The Consultant's recommendation in the draft report to the Task Force". In the interest of transparency, the public was afforded the ability to review the Consultant's report in parallel with the Taskforce members. The Consultant addressed in their Draft Report all items, to the extent feasible and practicable, from the published list of "Follow-ups from Meeting 5 to be Addressed in the Draft Report" in the Meeting 5 Notes online.</p> <p>Your suggestions for further analysis will be recorded, and the issues raised will be kept in mind as we work to select a new governance model and for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
2.	<p>Name: Jomar Lloyd, Food and Water Watch</p> <p>Comment: We urge you to reject the draft report's recommendation of a regional authority and instead we ask you to recommend improving the intermunicipal agreements and creating a joint City-County Advisory Committee.</p> <p>We have argued since the inception of the task force that a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a City-County Advisory Committee. • Reject the recommendation of Model E. 	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>The process of moving from the Consultant's recommendation to the Taskforce's recommendation is intentional and has been detailed throughout our meeting series. The website detailed and distinguished</p>

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	<p>predetermined outcome to establish a new water authority was decided for the Taskforce before it even began. The consultant provided no evidence or data to justify the recommendation of the authority. The Consultants have directed the Taskforce to choose a regional authority but there is little to no actual proof that an authority would resolve the issues the system currently has. We are stunned and disappointed to see the Consultants released the draft report in December without having shared with the Taskforce members, nor incorporating any of the concerns and doubts about the authority model. The second draft that you have referenced here was not shared with the public ahead of this meeting.</p> <p>The creation of a new water authority presents significant risks related to transaction costs to refinance debt, cover lease payments, and provide for worker retirements. This could lead to bill hikes, water shut-offs, water privatization, and loss of unionized positions. We have provided a written analysis on these items.</p> <p>The legislature gave you an unreasonable task. The time was insufficient to obtain information to assess the governing models. That is why the only reasonable recommendation is one that would improve the existing structure.</p>		<p>the Draft Consultant report as “The Consultant’s recommendation in the draft report to the Task Force”. In the interest of transparency, the public was afforded the ability to review the Consultant’s report in parallel with the Taskforce members. The Consultant addressed in their Draft Report all items, to the extent feasible and practicable, from the published list of “Follow-ups from Meeting 5 to be Addressed in the Draft Report” in the Meeting 5 Notes online.</p> <p>The “second draft” referenced is not of the Consultant draft report, but a proposal for the Taskforce recommendation which has since been posted online.</p> <p>Your suggestions for further analysis will be recorded, and the issues raised will be kept in mind as we work to select a new governance model and for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
	<p>Public Comment Session #2 – Post-Taskforce Discussion</p>		
3.	<p>Name: Jorge Aguilar, Food and Water Watch</p> <p>Comment: We’re really grateful that the Taskforce members have been wrestling with the decision going forward. It’s very difficult to know exactly what all is being recommend, the latest draft of the Taskforce’s recommendation has not been shared with us so we are not aware of its contents. We’ve heard every member bring up threshold issues related to the Authority. Several Taskforce members have wrongly insinuated that the choice is between status quo and transitioning to a water authority. This has been</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a City-County Advisory Committee. • Reject the recommendation of Model E. • Continue to advance the Taskforce’s recommendation development process following the Taskforce’s review of the 	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>The process of moving from the Consultant’s recommendation to the Taskforce’s recommendation is intentional and has been detailed throughout our meeting series. The proposal for the Taskforce recommendation has since been posted online and members of the</p>

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	<p>mischaracterized as something the advocates want. The advocates have called for creating the much needed improvements in the system by reworking the intermunicipal agreements and creating a new City-County Advisory Committee. Thank you for supporting that recommendation. The threshold issues are the result of only one of the options: the authority.</p> <p>It has been very clear that the County wants to have more control over the water and wastewater system built by the City. And yet, there's been no evidence that an authority would actually address any of the shortfalls facing the system so we believe this task force should not move to any unsupported, drastic governance changes like a water authority just because of the County's desire for more control.</p> <p>A compact commission dedicated to watershed planning could be a way to really improve the regional coordination without all the issues of an authority. The threshold issues have been discussed for six months and can't be worked around. We are requesting a chance to provide written comment on your draft [Taskforce] report before that final meeting. We're hoping you do not move in any more conversations about a water authority.</p>	<p>Consultant's draft report and recommendations and allow for public comments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore compact commissions. 	<p>public can comment on it.</p> <p>Your suggestions for further analysis will be recorded, and the issues raised will be kept in mind as we work to select a new governance model and for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
4.	<p>Name: David Wheaton, NAACP Legal Defense Fund</p> <p>Comment: By statute this Taskforce is charged with assessing different governance models to ensure that the water and wastewater systems serving Baltimore are safe, efficient, equitable, and affordable. Yet the draft report recommends a reasonable authority governance model without doing the proper analysis to determine if this governance model is the best thing for the City of Baltimore and its residents. Research and history show that regionalization can lead to unaffordable water rates and loss of control over a major asset without showing any of the benefits of improved water quality or increased service to residents. There are still several questions that need to be addressed by this Taskforce before it adopts the draft report recommendation of a regional authority governance model, both long term and short term. Questions include racial and economic equity, effect of regional authority on low-income residents, and fiscal impact of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to explore threshold questions before the recommendation of Model E. Work with Baltimore County on affordability programs separately. Continue to advance the Taskforce's recommendation development process following the Taskforce's review of the Consultant's draft report and recommendations and allow for public comments. 	<p>Thank you for your comment.</p> <p>Your suggestions for further analysis will be recorded, and the issues raised will be kept in mind as we work to select a new governance model and for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p> <p>The proposal for the Taskforce recommendation has since been posted online and members of the public can comment on it or the revised draft ahead of the next meeting.</p>

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	<p>lease of assets on both the City and County.</p> <p>The Right to Water Coalition would like to work with Ms. Buckler and Baltimore County and getting a water for all program in Baltimore County. We don't need a new model for this to be possible.</p> <p>Will the comments on the new draft of the Taskforce recommendation be open to comment by the public?</p>		