

**BALTIMORE REGIONAL WATER GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE**

**MEETING #7 – DRAFT REPORT REVIEW MEETING**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024**

**6:00 – 9:00 P.M.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

## **Key Actions:**

The Task Force reviewed the last draft of the Task Force's Recommendations and workshopped each paragraph, voting to adopt the final form of each paragraph after comments were reviewed and potential edits discussed. After an overview of the Executive Summary, the Task Force began with Phase I – Short Term recommendation details, moved to the Phase II – Long Term recommendation details, and then returned to edit and adopt the Executive Summary of the Recommendation.

### Phase I – Short Term

- The Task Force discussed proposed language relating to the establish of a City-County Water Advisory Committee to evaluate short term operational issues in Transparency and Equity areas. A prior draft included contract administration related suggestions around Intermunicipal Agreement Improvements, but in discussion the Task Force suggested to delete this section. A motion to adopt that language was made by Task Force Member Mr. Barr and then seconded by Ms. Buckler. All other Task Force Members and the Chair voted affirmatively for the resolution and so the language, as edited, was kept.

### Phase II – Long Term

- The Task Force discussed proposed language relating to the establish of a working group to evaluate threshold issues in Equity, Financial, Human Capital, Legal and Operational areas. A motion to adopt that language was made by Task Force Member Ms. Buckler and then seconded by Ms. Reed. Mr. Moran voted no, all other Task Force Members and the Chair voted affirmatively for the resolution and so the language, as edited, was kept.
- The Task Force discussed proposed language relating to potential further study of a Rate Board. Edits were made and this insertion was made one of the now six (6) issues to be studied by the working group. A motion to adopt that language was made by Task Force Member Dr. Summers and then seconded by Mr. Barr. All other Task Force Members and the Chair voted affirmatively for the resolution and so the language, as edited, was kept.
- The Task Force discussed proposed language relating to other forms of regional governance structures, including compact commissions. Edits were made to remove some of the details that were in the prior draft. A motion to adopt that language was made by Task Force Member Mr. Barr and then seconded by Mr. Kebede. All other Task Force Members and the Chair voted affirmatively for the resolution and so the language, as edited, was kept.
- The Task Force discussed proposed language relating to legislation and providing of sufficient resources for the working group from the General Assembly. A motion to adopt that language was made by Task Force Member Dr. Summers and then seconded by Mr. Barr. All other Task Force Members and the Chair voted affirmatively for the resolution and so the language, as edited, was kept.
- The Task Force discussed proposed language that all nominees from City and County officials to future temporary study groups or permanent board or commissions arising from this work be confirmed through a process with the appropriate local legislative body. Task Force Member Ms. Buckler made a motion to strike this paragraph, which was seconded by Task Force Member Dr. Mitchell. All twelve (12) Task Force Members voted in favor of this motion and so the paragraph was struck.

### Executive Summary

- The Task Force edited and voted on the Executive Summary. A motion to adopt that language was made by Task Force Member Ms. Buckler and then seconded by Ms. Powell. Mr. Moran voted no, all other Task Force Members and the Chair voted affirmatively for the resolution and so the language, as edited, was kept.

### Meeting Conclusion

- Public Comment was then accommodated, which is summarized on the following page.
- Task Force Member Ms. Reid made a motion (seconded by Task Force Member Mr. Kebede) to approve the recommendations as discussed and agreed to during this meeting. A roll call vote was taken. All Task Force Members and the Chair voted unanimously in favor of this motion.
- The Task Force's Final Draft Recommendation will be posted on the public websites on or about Friday, January 26, 2024.
- The Task Force's Final Recommendations and Findings will be provided by the Chair to the Mayor, County Executive, Governor, and General Assembly on or before Tuesday, January 30, 2024.

No.	Public Comment	Action Requested	Taskforce Response
1.	<p><b>Name: Jorge Aguilar, Food and Water Watch</b></p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Thank you, Chair Henry, and Task Force members for your continued work on this final recommendation, which we know has been an enormous effort. We support the short term goals generally but we do recommend that you acknowledge City ownership of the assets, as in the previous draft and ensure that the City has the majority of seats on the City-County Advisory Committee. It should also be clear that any long-term work group should also have majority representation by the City officials as well.</p> <p>We do worry that the term “professional” which appeared to be added by the County is intended to keep out community voices from the Committee and Work Group. I don’t think that’s the intention, but we do ask that you provide space for impacted residents and workers as part of the future work.</p> <p>We appreciate your due diligence approach to the long-term recommendations. We still see some language that still sort of predetermines that the outcome of that new work group is a regional authority. Some things were still left in. We suggest that the lines at the top of Phase Two section should say “recommending how a regional governance structure should be structured, if it is feasible” and that the Taskforce should strike all references to an authority under the list of items - equity, financial, human capital, and legal – that the Work Group will explore. This will ensure the Phase Two language is not predetermined to be a regional authority.</p> <p>The Executive Summary, though, should also express the significant threshold issues associated with Option E that went unresolved for much of the workgroup. As written now, it says that Option E shows promises that other options do not. Option E has major issues which is why the workgroup did not resolve these questions. As written, it suggests that the workgroup did not have time to resolve these issues, but we did discuss the major threshold issues. All of this should be articulated in the Executive Summary.</p> <p>These changes will ensure that as the report is passed on to other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect City’s role as owner of assets in future representation.</li> <li>• Make community members and advocates part of City-County Advisory Committee and Work Group.</li> <li>• Continue to not presuppose any conclusions.</li> </ul>	<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>

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	officials, they are not set up to review a pre-determined outcome.		
2.	<p><b>Name: David Wheaton, NAACP Legal Defense Fund</b></p> <p><b>Comment:</b> Thank you for doing a racial and economic equity assessment before fully recommending a regional authority. It's best for the City of Baltimore to do a full feasibility study and a full racial economic equity study to make sure that whatever governance model is chosen, it does not negatively impact black and brown and low income Baltimore residents.</p> <p>We also believe that having directly impacted people like low income rate payers and also local community organizations or nonprofit legal organizations that represent low income rate payers and also representatives of union workers should be explicitly put in the final report, that the Mayor or County Executive can select to be on the Advisory Committee. We understand that there was a "professional" wording added but emphasize that the Mayor and County Executive can select from those groups.</p> <p>The City of Baltimore should be given the majority of seats on whatever new board, or Advisory Committee, is enacted, so that the City and its residents which actually own the asset do not lose decision making authority over critical issues, such as rate setting and project prioritization over the asset that the City owns. Baltimore actually has banned privatization of its water and wastewater system in 2008. All of Baltimore's residents are serviced by the City's water and wastewater system and so since Baltimore controls those assets it is critical that Baltimore maintains control over the water and wastewater system.</p> <p>Again, I want to thank the Task Force for doing an amazing job and for slowing down the process to do a racial and economic equity assessment before fully recommending a regional authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank you for continuing to support the recommendation from the Consultant for a racial and economic equity assessment.</li> <li>• Reflect City's role as owner of assets in future representation.</li> <li>• Make community members and advocates part of City-County Advisory Committee and Work Group.</li> </ul>	<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>