

**BALTIMORE REGIONAL WATER GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE
MEETING #1 – EXISTING ORGANIZATION AND AGREEMENTS
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2023
6:00 – 9:00 P.M.**

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No.	Public Comment	Action Requested	Taskforce Response
1	<p>Name: BG</p> <p>Comment: I used to pay \$70 per quarter for water, now I am paying \$122 a month which is five times more. Please explain why my bills are rising? The costs of infrastructure are being passed on to citizens but we are unable to pay our bills making for difficult decisions – paying for medicine or paying for water, for instance. We should be getting some assistance with paying our bills.</p>	<p>Taskforce should look into why and alternatives to the burden of rising costs for customers.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. For a long time, the City did not raise water rates though the costs were rising and the maintenance was reactive and suboptimal while the assets continued to age. We are now incurring costs for improvements and repairs that should have been addressed by previous generations. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
2	<p>Name: Antoinette Ryan-Johnson, City Union of Baltimore</p> <p>Comment: Staffing issues need to be addressed along with organization structures and model considerations. The business process review report already flags many of these. For example, vacancy issues, low salaries, and high turnover rates. Please keep these concerns in mind and address them. Employees are concerned and uncertain about their future.</p>	<p>Taskforce should look into remedies to staffing and retention challenges not linked to organizational model selection</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. While some of these items are not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work after selection of the new model.</p>
3	<p>Name: WG</p> <p>Comment: Billing residents in apartment complexes and similar properties is complex. People, particularly in Baltimore County, do not see the full cost of using water and wastewater services in their bills since sewer charges are a component of property taxes. There needs to be a better way to do this and I think monthly billing of water and sewer charges for County customers, like is done in the City, would be a good solution.</p>	<p>Taskforce should look into modeling County billing for water and sewer charges after City practices.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
4	<p>Name: WG</p>	<p>The Taskforce look into basis of minimum charges for water bills.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new</p>

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	<p>Comment: What is the basis for calculating the minimum charge on the water bill. Is it a fixed charge? Should it be there?</p>		<p>governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
5	<p>Name: Lawrence Comment: Approximately US\$7 million in billed consumption has not been collected by the City of Baltimore from some customers including corporations [such as Ritz Carlton and Bethel Steel]. Seniors are losing houses because of the bills.</p>	<p>Taskforce should look into rising water bill cost impacts to Seniors.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model. At the Baltimore City level there are programs to help Seniors that are on fixed income such as the Water4All program.</p>
6	<p>Name: Lawrence Comment: There are several billing and metering issues that need to be addressed. New meters that were supposed to be read remotely and not functioning properly.</p>	<p>Taskforce should look into how meter reading issues affect rising water bill cost impacts to Seniors.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model. At the Baltimore City level there are programs to help Seniors that are on fixed income such as the Water4All program.</p>
7	<p>Name: Mr. Wheaton Comment: If you do look at different cities, please look at Detroit and Birmingham. These are both majority black cities that experienced mass shut-offs when they moved to their regionalization model. Also, Detroit receives lease payments and that can be a revenue generator to help fund affordability programs.</p>	<p>Taskforce recommendations should take into account racial and economic (affordability) equity so that a governance model does not exacerbate existing burdens.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. One of the criteria for fiscal analysis (section g(4)(ii) of the Bill) is analysis surrounding “asset leases and capital planning”. A racial equity study is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via</p>

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	<p>In Baltimore there are 108 census tracts that are majority black and brown have high levels of water unaffordability. Whatever governance model is chosen should not exacerbate that unaffordability.</p> <p>Is the Taskforce doing any racial equity study for the different governance models reviewed?</p> <p>Is the Taskforce going to make sure that Water4All, shut-off protections, and folks making less than 120%AMI are preserved with whatever governance model is chosen?</p>	<p>Taskforce should look at Detroit and Birmingham to see what not to do if the Taskforce recommends a regionalization governance model.</p>	<p>House Bill 843, but one of the criteria for alternative governance structures (section g(3)(iii) of the Bill) is “ongoing operations and maintenance of safe, efficient, <u>equitable</u>, and affordable water and wastewater systems serving the Baltimore region” (<i>emphasis added</i>).</p> <p>Although affordability program implementation is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
8	<p>Name: Jamal (representative of Human Water Watch Today)</p> <p>Comment: Protection against water shut offs, programs such as Water4All etc. should be able to continue under the new governance models.</p>	<p>Taskforce should look to preserve existing protections programs that offset cost burden for water customers and avoid water shut offs.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. Although affordability program implementation is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.</p>
9	<p>Name: (representative of Human Water Watch Today)</p> <p>Comment: Is there any potential for P3s?</p>	<p>Taskforce should not recommend the sell Baltimore’s water infrastructure.</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model. The Taskforce will recommend that any new governing structure for the utilities <u>not</u> utilize privatization.</p>

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10	<p>Name: CM, Staff Attorney at Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service</p> <p>Comment: Water affordability disproportionately effects Black Baltimore residents. Taskforce is responsible for rate payers in Baltimore City and County. Will the Taskforce do any racial/economic equality analysis of the governance models before one is chosen?</p>	Taskforce should conduct racial/equity analysis before selecting a governance model.	Thank you for your comment. A racial equity study is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, but one of the criteria for alternative governance structures (section g(3)(iii) of the Bill) is “ongoing operations and maintenance of safe, efficient, <u>equitable</u> , and affordable water and wastewater systems serving the Baltimore region” (<i>emphasis added</i>).
11	<p>Name: Robert</p> <p>Comment: How will property tax that Baltimore County uses to pay for water work – how will that be rolled out?</p>	Taskforce to provide information about how property tax bills will be paid	Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.
12	<p>Name: Robert</p> <p>Comment: Meters should be set up in a way so that it's known what kind of organization is using the water. An example is non-profits.</p>	Taskforce should look into how metering and billing disadvantages or advantages certain businesses, such as non-profits.	Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model.
13	<p>Name: Robert</p> <p>Comment: Is the sewer system combined or not?</p>	(No action requested)	Thank you for your comment. The Baltimore City-County system is not a combined sewer system.
14	<p>Name: Martin</p> <p>Comment: Any plans any plans to install meters so residents can sign up for service [in condominiums]?</p>	(No action requested)	Thank you for your comment. This is not something that the Taskforce will be addressing.
15	<p>Name: David</p> <p>Comment: Are you going to continue capital improvement projects in the interim period of recommending a</p>	Taskforce should continue carrying out capital improvement	Thank you for your comment. While this item is not within the specific charge of the Taskforce to select a new

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	governance model? The way that work is changed for could change as a result of the governance model recommendation.	projects in the interim period of recommending a governance model.	governance model via House Bill 843, this comment will be recorded and kept in mind for any future implementation and policy work around the new model. One of the criteria for fiscal analysis (section g(4)(ii) of the Bill) is analysis surrounding “asset leases and capital planning” and existing capital plans will be carried out while the governance planning is underway.