This week in City Hall

This promises to be a busy week in City Hall!

Tonight, the full council will vote on second reader versions of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund legislation, Councilman Yitzy Schleifer’s Diaper-Changing Amenity bill, and Councilman Ryan Dorsey’s Complete Streets legislation. City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young plans to introduce a bill to create a Baltimore Tourism Improvement District. Councilmen Bill Henry, Leon Pinkett,
Search Legislation
Watch Hearings on Charm TV

UPCOMING HEARINGS
October 15, 2018 at 5pm
City Council Meeting

October 16, 2018 at 4pm
Public Safety Committee

October 17, 2018 at 5pm
Council Bill 18-0276 -
Lactation Accommodations in
the Workplace

GBC EVENTS
October 17, 2018
7:30 am
Newsmaker Breakfast with US
Attorney for the District of
Maryland Robert K. Hur

November 5, 2018
7:30 am
Newsmaker Breakfast with
Kenneth Thompson, Monitor
of Baltimore's Consent Decree
(Members Only)

November 14, 2018
5:30 pm
Bridging the Gap
Achievement Awards

December 5, 2018
7:30 am
Newsmaker Breakfast with
Baltimore's New Faces in
Annapolis

December 5, 2018
11:30 am
Mayor’s Business Recognition
Awards Luncheon

Event and sponsorship
information:
Lisa Byrd at 410-727-2820

and John Bullock, along with Council President Young, also plan to introduce legislation that would extend prevailing wage requirements to certain projects receiving funds from tax increment financing.

On Tuesday, the City Council's Public Safety Committee will hold a hearing on several important public safety matters, including aerial surveillance and the police auxiliary program.

On Wednesday, the City Council's Labor Committee will consider a bill introduced by Councilwoman Shannon Sneed to require lactation accommodations in the workplace.

If you have any questions or concerns about city council activities, please contact Shaina Hernandez, Director of Local Government Affairs and Strategic Initiatives, at shainah@gbc.org.

If you have thoughts on how we can improve this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Donald C. Fry
President & CEO

Transfer and recordation tax increases pose a challenge for Baltimore
City budget chief testifies to potential impacts

On September 27th, the City Council’s Taxation, Finance, and Economic Development Committee held its first public hearing on Council Bill 18-0221, a bill that would increase the transfer and recordation tax on certain real estate transactions in order to provide funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This legislation serves as the vehicle for the deal Mayor Catherine Pugh struck with housing advocates to provide $20 million for the fund. Its passage was guaranteed by the Mayor when she announced the deal with the advocates in August.
During his testimony, city Budget Director Bob Cenname had strong warnings for the city council regarding the volatility of this funding source and the potential negative impacts of increased taxes. According to Cenname, this tax increase would make it "much more expensive to do business in Baltimore", a jurisdiction that already has the highest property taxes and piggyback income taxes in the region. He also warned that a review of relevant research raised concerns about the slowing of the real estate market, thereby decreasing funds coming into the city's General Fund.

Two amendments were introduced by District 11 Councilman Eric Costello and passed during the hearing, both of which were supported by the Greater Baltimore Committee. The first amendment created a “grandfathering” clause that would exempt certain development projects that are already underway from paying the increased tax. The second amendment would apply a seven-year sunset provision to the bill, allowing city officials to evaluate the effectiveness of the fund before choosing to reauthorize the tax increase.

There were several dozen witnesses who testified on the bill. One witness spoke about the process taken in Philadelphia to raise money for affordable housing. While Philadelphia has dedicated funding for their housing trust fund, the funding came from existing sources instead of tax increases. Last month, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney and City Council members reached a deal with advocates to provide $70 million in funding to the housing trust fund by using money generated by expiring 10-year tax abatements.

Council Bill 18-0221 is expected to come before the city council today for a vote on second reader.

Aerial surveillance discussion continues
Public Safety Committee to discuss issue this week

The City Council’s Public Safety Committee will hold a hearing this week on the Baltimore Community Support Program’s Surveillance Plane.

In 2016, it was revealed that for several months the Baltimore Police Department had been partnering with Persistent Surveillance Systems to utilize aerial surveillance
The cameras on the planes can record footage of 32 square miles of the city at any given moment. However, the cameras do not allow for identification of faces or people, just general movements of an individual or vehicle. The technology was paid for by a private donor. The program was controversial as it was not disclosed to citizens when initiated in January 2016.

The company conducted 100 hours of surveillance in January and February of 2016 and 200 hours of surveillance between June and August 2016. The program was discontinued several months after it began.

Recently a group of community leaders has been meeting with neighborhood associations and elected officials to try and garner support to bring the program back to Baltimore. Mayor Catherine Pugh has said that she is open to bringing aerial surveillance technology back to Baltimore as a crime-fighting tool if there is enough community support.

Lactation bill hearing this week
Legislation would mandate better accommodations

On Wednesday, October 17th at 5:00 pm, Councilwoman Shannon Sneed’s bill regarding lactation accommodations in the workplace will be heard before the City Council’s Labor Committee.

As proposed, the bill would require that all workplaces in Baltimore City that employ two or more people provide a space for lactating mothers to safely pump breast milk that is not a restroom. The space must have an electrical outlet, surface, and a chair and must be in close proximity to the employee’s regular work area. A sink and refrigerator must also be available either in the same designated space or nearby.

The GBC has offered suggested changes to the bill to Councilwoman Sneed’s office and plans to submit testimony, which will be available on our website on Wednesday evening.

Complete Streets bill advances
Second reader vote expected today
Last week, the City Council’s Land Use and Transportation Committee held its second worksession on Council Bill 17-0102 - Complete Streets. Introduced last year by Councilman Ryan Dorsey, the legislation would create a Complete Streets manual and dictate that the city’s Department of Transportation must use Complete Streets tenets when planning capital projects in order to ensure that streets are safe for all users of the road and to increase economic activity.

Over the course of the two worksessions, the Land Use Committee approved a number of amendments, including adding the Fire Chief to the Complete Streets Advisory Council - the body responsible for overseeing the implementation of Complete Streets - and adding a definition of Shared Streets to the list of road typologies in the city. Shared Streets are streets that are designed to limit car traffic and encourage high levels of walkability, making it easier for cities to create more people-centered outdoor spaces.

The bill is expected to go before the full council today for a vote on second reader.

The GBC was pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the legislation in the early stages of drafting. Councilman Dorsey worked with a large coalition of stakeholders on the bill, including Bikemore, the Maryland Building Industry Association, and Associated Black Charities.