Welcome to the first edition of City Hall Happenings!

This newsletter is meant to keep you informed of the activities of the Baltimore City Council, including the introduction and status of new legislation, hearings, work sessions, and legislation that has been approved by the City Council.
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UPCOMING HEARINGS

September 26, 2018 at 5pm
Council Bill 17-0102 - Complete Streets
(Work session)

September 27, 2018 at 11am
Council Bill 18-0221 - Recordation and Transfer Tax

October 9, 2018 at 10am
Council Bill 18-0232 - Diaper Changing Amenity

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

GBC EVENTS

October 2, 2018
8:00 am
Best Practices for Employers Managing Opioid Abuse

October 10, 2018
7:30 am
Breakfast Briefing: Effective Networking & Business Development

October 11, 2018
7:30 am
Transportation Summit

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

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

The fall promises to be a busy time for the City Council as it considers several bills that have implications for the business community.

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

Council seeks to reduce speed limits
Bill introduced by Dorsey would cap max speed at 25mph

At Monday evening’s City Council meeting, Councilman Ryan Dorsey introduced legislation that would reduce speeds on the city’s main arteries to 25mph and 20mph on side streets. According to The Baltimore Sun, the speed limit in business districts and on undivided highways in residential areas is currently 30mph while divided highways in residential areas are subject to a 35mph limit. Ten council members have signed on as co-sponsors to Dorsey’s bill.

GBC President & CEO Donald C. Fry has indicated that while the GBC is supportive of reasonable steps to reduce accidents and injuries, the organization will need to do an in-depth analysis of the legislation before committing to a position. No hearing date has been set at this time.

Hearing next week for transfer tax bill
Deal with advocates already dictates outcome

After months of pressure and the threat of a ballot initiative, Mayor Catherine Pugh and City Council leaders last month
agreed to levy two excise taxes on real estate transactions to fund the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which was ratified by the voters in 2016 without a dedicated funding source. The two taxes were originally proposed as part of Council Bill 18-0221 - Recordation and Transfer Taxes - Surtax - Dedicating Surtax Proceeds to Affordable Housing Trust Fund. The Land Use Committee will hold a hearing on the bill next week, but elected officials have indicated the bill's language has already been finalized.

The deal with housing advocates calls for an increase in the transfer and recordation taxes for all real estate sales exceeding $1 million. This increase is expected to generate $13 million for the trust fund. The mayor has also committed to allocating between $2 million and $7 million to provide a total of $20 million. The trust fund will be used to build affordable housing units and to provide homeownership services.

A compromise for short-term rentals
City Council committee passes 18 amendments

Last week in the City Council’s Taxation, Finance, and Economic Development Committee, Councilman Eric Costello introduced 18 amendments to Council Bill 18-0189. The proposed legislation, if passed, will impose regulations on short-term hosting platforms such as AirBnB and Homeaway. The bill was originally co-sponsored by Costello and City Council President Bernard C. “Jack” Young. All of the amendments were passed unanimously by members of the committee.

The amendments include removing language that dictates the number of days someone may rent property through a hosting platform, thereby allowing an individual to rent out their primary residence and one additional property for an unlimited number of days throughout the year. This cap on the number of days a property may be rented was a major point of contention with the Baltimore Hosts Coalition, a group of AirBnB operators opposed to the legislation.
According to The Baltimore Sun, the coalition had asked the council to allow hosts to operate an unlimited number of short-term rental properties.

If passed, the new restrictions would not go into effect until the end of 2019.

**Sneed introduces lactation bill**

Legislation aimed at mandating better accommodations

Introduced last month by Councilwoman Shannon Sneed, Council Bill 18-0276 - Lactation Accommodations in the Workplace will be heard before the City Council's Labor Committee on October 17th.

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 space or nearby.

The GBC was pleased to have the opportunity to submit initial comments on this bill prior to its introduction and looks forward to working with Councilwoman Sneed on this issue.

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