



Sanitary Sewer Modified Consent Decree Program



CITY OF BALTIMORE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS 2026 MCD Annual Session Q&A

Baltimore City's Sanitary Sewer Modified Consent Decree (MCD) Annual Public Information Session was held on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at the Cylburn Arboretum Vollmer Center, located at 4915 Greenspring Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland.

The general session was opened by the Director of the Baltimore City Department of Public Works (DPW), Matthew Garbark. Following his remarks, Paul Sayan, Deputy Bureau Head for Water and Wastewater, presented the MCD for the Sanitary Sewer System and the City's significant progress over the past 12 months.

Following the presentation, there was a live Q&A session in which DPW staff answered questions from meeting attendees. These questions were first submitted in writing. During the Q&A session, in addition to addressing the previously submitted written questions and those submitted via the meeting's live stream, attendees were allowed to ask additional questions live via a microphone in the room.

After the Q&A session, attendees were invited to visit the learning stations throughout the meeting room to engage directly with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from key departments within Baltimore City DPW. The learning stations outlined the MCD's primary activities and the City's yearly progress. Community members were encouraged to submit comments and ask questions of the DPW team using the following methods:

- In-person live Q&A
- In-person at each learning station
- Written question forms and comment forms to be submitted at the meeting
- Submitting a comment form within the online virtual meeting room

Below is a summary of questions and comments received at each learning station.

IN-PERSON GENERAL MEETING QUESTIONS

1. How is the cost of the improvements reflected on my water bill?

There have been rate increases since 2002, and they have continued to increase. Some of the 2024 rate increases have covered the costs of completing MCD works, as well as treatment plants and other asset upgrades in our wastewater system. These increases have been used to fund current work and future necessary projects.



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2. Do all jurisdictions that use the sewer system share the cost of repairs?

DPW collects wastewater from Baltimore County, which is conveyed to the two treatment plants. Rate increases are passed on to the County in the same way as to city residents. For information on how the County manages these increases, please contact the County directly.

3. Is there any way to share the assumptions that are being made to help the public do a peer review assessment of the work being done by DPW?

A: The basis for identifying future improvements is stated in the revised Phase 2 Plan. As stated in the Plan, prioritizing planned improvements was based on a comparison of model-predicted and recorded sewer overflow events and volumes. DPW is determining how to improve communication and transparency with our customers, including opportunities to expand our communication channels and hosting more frequent MCD updates and public comment events.

4. Can you clarify when and how you will make your hydraulic model, climate data, and any other modeling data public?

DPW is committed to increasing data sharing and transparency. We recognize the need to improve how we communicate and provide access to technical data. DPW is developing plans to improve data sharing opportunities.

5. How are the future condition models and projections accounting for population growth, future rainfall, and other forthcoming weather events?

The existing conditions hydraulic model was updated to include future population projections established by the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board and dry-and-wet-weather flow based on current flow and rainfall monitoring data.

6. What are all the funding sources used to cover the improvement costs mentioned in the presentation?

All MCD program costs are funded by ratepayers. Some projects are financed using federally funded low-interest WIFIA loans and state revolving loans; however, DPW pays back the loans using funds that are paid by ratepayers.

7. The street sweeping program was not mentioned in the presentation. Why is that?

Baltimore City has two separate systems: stormwater and sanitary sewer systems. The Consent Decree relates to the Sanitary Sewer. The street sweeping program is part of the Municipal Storm Sewer (MS4) Program and is therefore not included in this presentation.



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IN-PERSON LEARNING STATION QUESTIONS

Learning Station 1: Collection Systems & Hydraulic Modelling

Presented by: Jalil Abdul, Engineer Supervisor

Scribe: Mike Lee, P.E. MCD PMT

1. What is the flow monitoring used for?

Flow monitoring is used to collect information on the flow depth and velocity in the sewers. The information is used by our hydraulic model to simulate flow conditions during dry-weather and various wet-weather events.

2. How many collection system flow monitors are there?

Baltimore City maintains 46 locations with flow monitors.

3. What is a pump station? Is it visible from above ground?

A pump station is a facility that uses pumps to convey wastewater from one sewer to another sewer that is at a higher elevation.

4. Is rainfall data available to the public?

We recognize the need to improve how we communicate and provide access to technical data. DPW is developing plans to improve data sharing opportunities.

5. How does a pump station work?

The pump station elevates the wastewater from one sewer line to another sewer line that is at a higher elevation.

Learning Station 2: Proactive & Preventative Maintenance

Presented by: Jamison Smith, Engineer II

Scribe: Sherif Naoum, PhD, PE, PEng, PMP, GISP; MCD PMT

1. What is the connection between my house and the mainline? And who maintains it?

The pipe connecting your house to the main sewer line is called the lateral. DPW maintains only the public side of the lateral, while property owners are responsible for the private side.

2. What size is the lateral pipe? My house was built 100 years ago.

Most likely it is 4' to 6' in diameter. For older homes, it is likely 4' diameter pipes.



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3. What material is the lateral pipe made of?

The pipe is likely made of vitrified clay (VCP), unless it was replaced recently.

4. How are the lateral pipes cleaned?

A high-pressure sewer jetter is used to clean the lateral.

5. There is a cap in my yard. What is it, and why can I not take it off?

It might be a cleanout cap. A sewer cleanout, typically a vertical PVC pipe with a square nut on top, is located near your house or in the yard. Only a licensed plumber or DPW crews are authorized to remove the cap for maintenance or repairs, but it must stay on at all times to prevent rainwater or debris from entering the system. It serves as an access point for DPW or a licensed plumber to inspect your sewer line using CCTV or to clean out a section of the lateral line from your home to the main line. Residents should be cautious around the cleanout cap when mowing or using a weed whacker, as it is a common source of damage.

6. I think I may have root issues. What do I need to do?

Call 311 to request a DPW inspection. The crew will assess whether a root problem exists and identify whether the issue is on the public or private side of the lateral. DPW will only address public-side lateral issues.

Learning Station 3: Building Backup Reimbursement (BBRP) & Sewage Onsite Support (SOS) Programs

Presented by Vince Pompa, Operations Officer I

Scribe: Shamika Bland

1. How do we clean up water in basements once approved for the Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO)?

DPW sends a contractor to clean, disinfect, and remove all damaged materials as requested on the application.

2. Does living on a hill help prevent sewage backup?

Backups can occur at any time and in any location if lateral lines or sewage mains are the cause, regardless of ground slope.

3. Has the eligibility for the program changed over the years?

Customers should contact 311 to report any backup. DPW will contact customers who have reported their backup and qualify for the SOS program. DPW will ask if the customer wishes to participate in the SOS program.



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Learning Station 4: Compliance – Water Quality Monitoring & Investigation (WQMI)

Presented by: Kimberly Grove, DPW Chief, OREP

Scribe: Van Sturtevant, DPW Pollution Control Analyst

1. Where can I find more information about FOG?

Information about FOG is available on the Baltimore City Department of Public Works website. The FOG program educates residents and businesses about how Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOG) affect the sewer system. Wastewater treatment facilities, such as the Back River and Patapsco centers, also provide details on the FOG program and serve as helpful resources.

2. How does the Office of Research & Environmental Protection (OREP) work with Blue Water Baltimore (BWB)?

Blue Water Baltimore shares their field results with OREP for investigation. In return, OREP shares their findings with BWB.

Learning Station 5: Design & Projects in Construction

Presented by: Carlos Stephenson, DPW Engineer II

Scribe: Angela Cornish, DPW Construction Project Supervisor II

- **No questions received from the public.**

Learning Station 6: Office of Marketing & Communications

Presented by: Shawn Sloan, Community Liaison

Scribe: Terrance Brown, Community Liaison

1. Can the street sweeping program be stopped?

No, it cannot. Street sweeping may be suspended only when weather conditions prevent safe completion of service.

- The mechanical street sweeping program is a city-wide service that removes dirt and debris from streets to keep Baltimore City residents and visitors safe, healthy, and attractive.
- Regular removal of dirt and litter from street curbs is essential to prevent stormwater drains from clogging, which can lead to flooding of your street and neighborhood.
- It also removes nails and other dangerous items that could harm people, animals, or vehicle tires.
- Street sweeping helps protect water quality by reducing pollutants like trash and sediment from entering Chesapeake Bay.



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- The program also aids the City in complying with the state stormwater discharge permit.

Learning Station 7: Office of Boards & Commissions

Presented by: Diona King

Scribe: Gary Witherspoon, MCD PMT

- **No questions received from the public.**

Learning Station 8: Small Business Development (SBD) Training Program

Presented by: Kerwen Whatley, PMT SBD Lead

Scribe: Gary Witherspoon, MCD PMT

1. What is this program?

The Small Business Development (SBD) Training Program provides minority and women-owned businesses with the knowledge and tools necessary to compete for Baltimore City contract opportunities. This 11-week program covers a range of construction topics taught by DPW staff and industry experts. Our aim is to help small business owners expand their businesses and develop strong professional networks.

2. How do you go about growing small businesses?

SBD helps small businesses grow by teaching construction-related skills, providing hands-on training and useful resources, and offering opportunities to network with Program graduates and DPW and City professionals. We are committed to continuously enhancing the Program to better serve small business owners and build their capacity.

3. Where can you get more information about the program?

For more information about this program, contact the SBD team at 410-618-0100 or email sbd@baltimorecity.gov.

4. What kind of businesses are accepted?

The SBD Training Program was designed for business owners in construction and construction-related fields, including concrete construction, construction project management, pipeline installation, landscaping, excavation, and more. However, we welcome business owners from all industries and encourage anyone who believes the Program will support their growth to apply.