

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, President, Baltimore City Council
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CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE APPROVES MARITIME ZONING BILL

*Amended MIZOD Legislation now moves to the full City Council for vote
Rawlings-Blake says many Port issues remain and urges further collaborative action*

BALTIMORE - Today, the City Council's Land Use and Transportation Committee approved an amended version of the Maritime Zoning Industrial Overlay District (MIZOD) legislation. The legislation seeks to protect Baltimore's Maritime Industry by extending the sunset provision of the MIZOD until 2024. The amendments to the legislation were approved in accordance with the recommendations of the city's planning commission.

"I am very pleased that the members of the Land Use and Transportation Committee have approved the amended MIZOD legislation. I fully support the amended MIZOD bill." City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said. "Protecting the Port of Baltimore has always been a priority for the City Council. For many years, our port has been a vital economic engine for the City and is the source of thousands of good jobs for our citizens."

"I would like to especially thank Council Vice President Ed Reisinger (District-10), Councilman Jim Kraft (District-1), Councilman Bill Cole (District-11), and all the committee members for working so diligently on this important legislation," Rawlings-Blake said.

Rawlings-Blake noted that many of the Port-related issues that were brought to light during the legislative process are much larger than the MIZOD legislation itself and will need to be addressed through the city's comprehensive rezoning process, by creating a regional entity, improving reports and by continuing negotiations with the Maryland Port Administration.

Rawlings-Blake outlined several recommendations for further consideration and action. "If we can successfully implement these recommendations, I believe that we can ensure the protection, success and growth of the Port not just until 2024, but for many years after," Rawlings-Blake said. She outlined the following "Port Protection" recommendations in a memo to stakeholders:

TRANSFORM BALTIMORE

As the City undertakes its first comprehensive rezoning in over 35 years, the Planning Department through the 'Transform Baltimore' should:

- Incorporate regulations for buffers and transitional uses into the Zoning Code that are specifically tailored for protection of areas in and around the MIZOD.
- Consider areas that might need MIZOD protection, such as Fairfield, Hawkins Point, Curtis Bay, and areas adjacent to Port Covington
- Draft proper disclosure language in real estate contracts and leases for areas that are in and around the MIZOD.

CREATION OF A REGIONAL ENTITY

There are many stakeholders in the Port of Baltimore, including Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Maryland Port Administration, private port entities, labor, and others. However, there is little coordination among these various entities to ensure data sharing and cooperation to plan for future needs. Baltimore City, in cooperation with these various interests, should form a regional entity to resolve outstanding issues such as:

- Coordination and creation of policy recommendations to preserve and protect essential transportation corridors.
- Protection for off dock and off port land use such as Port Breeze and Chesapeake Commerce Center.
- Creation of port safety and security regulations that include architectural and engineering design standards.
- Formation of equitable share calculation, to ensure Baltimore City does not bear a disproportionate amount of the costs associated with the Port.
- Creation of a port venture fund and tax incentives that would help finance future port expansion and infrastructure needs.
- Coordination of zoning classifications among the regional jurisdictions.
- Implementation of a strategic master plan for the port.

COMPREHENSIVE YEARLY REPORTS

By ordinance, the Department of Planning must evaluate and report on the operations of the Maritime Industrial Zoning Overlay District. The annual report should be much more comprehensive and include the following:

- The amount of property taxes collected within the MIZOD.
- The number of building permits issued within the MIZOD.
- The fixed costs of investments made within the MIZOD.
- The number of new firms in the MIZOD as compared to the rest of the City.
- The cargo volume as compared to other competitive ports.
- The benefits received from the MIZOD versus opportunity costs foregone, including recommendations made to the Regional Entity on equitable cost share formulas.
- An analysis of funding levels for the Maryland Port Administration.
- The size of the Port's market share.

- A study on the creation of special taxing districts within the MIZOD for infrastructure upgrades.

MARYLAND PORT ADMINISTRATION NEGOTIATIONS

The City Council should continue negotiations with the Port Administration in order to discuss:

- Lost revenue to the City from Port operations
- Review of PILOT agreements

“I believe that these issues are much larger than the MIZOD legislation, which alone I am afraid will not be sufficient enough to ensure a vibrant and growing port for the next century,” Rawlings-Blake said. “As we work to protect the port for today, it is critical that all the stakeholders continue to work together to protect our port’s future.”