

## **Parking director's pact OK'd - City panel's vote comes despite requests for delay**

By Julie Scharper, *Baltimore Sun*, November 26, 2009,

Baltimore's spending panel renewed a \$123,000 annual contract of the embattled head of the parking authority Wednesday despite requests from City Council members to delay the vote to further scrutinize his performance.

Mayor Sheila Dixon supported the move to renew the contract of Executive Director Peter Little, but City Council President Stephanie C. Rawlings-Blake opposed it. Rawlings-Blake complained that she had not received an audit of the parking authority before Wednesday's meeting.

"I would like to make an informed decision about this contract," said Rawlings-Blake. "I think not having the audit report puts me at a severe disadvantage, and I've expressed that to the administration."

The mayor, noting that the parking authority's board of directors supports Little, resisted an effort from the council president to delay the renewal and, along with other members of the spending board, voted to immediately approve the one-year contract. Rawlings-Blake cast the lone dissenting vote. Dixon, who left the jury deliberations in her criminal trial on theft charges to preside over the estimates board meeting, effectively controls the five-member panel.

"We have a parking authority volunteer board, and that is approved by the City Council and the Board of Estimates," Dixon said.

Little has drawn criticism for his management of the residential parking permit program, which is intended to help residents obtain parking in the city's most crowded neighborhoods.

Council Vice President Edward Reisinger, who represents some of the South Baltimore neighborhoods where parking can be most difficult, told the spending board that he has been "bombarded with phone calls with complaints from my constituents" about the management of the residential parking permit program. "We have never had this many problems," he said.

In addition, several parking authority managers wrote to the authority's board of directors last month with concerns about spending, hiring practices and a newly implemented software program. The employees urged the authority to dismiss Little. A group of 14 employees also wrote to the City Council with personnel concerns.

But according to authority chairwoman Patricia McGowan, most members of the parking authority's volunteer board are confident in Little's leadership.

Little, who was a vice president of Standard Parking before joining the parking authority five years ago, did not return a call Wednesday seeking comment.

Reisinger and Councilman William H. Cole IV have introduced a plan to move control of the residential parking program to another department.

Councilman Bernard C. "Jack" Young, the council's liaison on the parking authority's board, said that he voted against the renewal of Little's contract. "I just didn't think we should have moved ahead so quickly," he said after the meeting.