

Council Voices Concerns About Parking Authority - Council Members Try To Fight Renewal Of Authority's Exec. Director

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The City Council had some serious questions for the head of the parking authority on Wednesday because they believe the agency is being mishandled.

Parking problems for residents of Federal Hill, Mount Vernon and other neighborhoods have resulted in many angry calls to City Council members.

Several council members showed up at Wednesday's Board of Estimates meeting to fight a contract renewal for the parking authority's executive director, Peter Little, who is accused of mismanaging the agency's budget and permitting program.

"We have a chronic problem with the residential parking program that Mr. Little has neglected for the past couple of years. This is a perfect opportunity in this contract approval process to create some deliverables that he would have to demonstrate to the community that he does, in fact, care about this program," said District 11 Councilman Bill Cole, a Democrat.

The issue is so vital to Cole that he left the hospital room of his critically ill father to make the plea in person.

Other council members told the panel that they've never heard so many complaints. Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake pointed to an unprecedented letter from parking employees questioning how Little managed money, created jobs and filled them. "I've been on the council since 1995, and never have I received a letter with employees' first and last names, very clearly stating what their concerns were," Rawlings-Blake said. Despite opposition, the measure to renew Little's contract passed, with "yes" votes from Mayor Sheila Dixon and the city solicitor.

Officials told 11 News that Little has a tremendous amount of support from the administration and has accomplished great things, including collecting \$30 million in revenue each year.

"We've already deferred three weeks, and the agreement gives the board ample authority to act on the matter if it's decided things aren't working out," said city Solicitor George Nilson.

The chair of the parking board said they're pleased with the authority's performance and cited an audit several times as proof, but the City Council president's office said they've never been given a copy of that audit.

The mayor's office refused to release one to on Wednesday.