

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 603 (Montgomery County Delegation and Prince George's County Delegation)
Environmental Matters Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission - Commissioners and General
Manager - Duties and Removal Procedures**
MC/PG 107-05

This bill aligns the provisions for removal of Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) commissioners between Montgomery and Prince George's counties. In both counties, either the county executive or the county council could initiate a removal, subject to approval of a majority of the council if the executive initiates removal and subject to a veto, without override, by the county executive. The bill requires that an orientation program for new commissioners be provided. Moreover, the bill more clearly defines the duties of the general manager and the commissioners, giving both the general manager and the WSSC chair input into the commission's agenda. It defines additional duties for the commission and delineates the need for long-term strategic and financial plans. The bill specifies that the general manager is the chief executive officer of the WSSC and responsible for its daily operation. However, the bill also specifies that the general manager is accountable to the commissioners, and it requires a two-thirds vote of the commissioners from each county to remove the general manager.

The bill takes effect on June 1, 2005.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: The bill would not materially impact WSSC finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: In Montgomery County, a WSSC commissioner may be removed by the county executive with the approval of a majority of members of the county council, or by resolution of a majority of the members of the county council unless the county executive disapproves of the resolution in writing within 30 days of its adoption. In Prince George's County, however, a WSSC commissioner may only be removed by the county executive with the approval of a majority of members of the county council. Furthermore, in Montgomery County a public hearing regarding the removal of the WSSC commissioner must be held by the body initiating the removal, and in Prince George's County, by the county council.

There are six WSSC commissioners, with three each appointed from Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

There is no provision in statute specifying the procedure of removing from office the WSSC general manager. WSSC advises, however, that current practice is to specify removal procedures in each general manager's contract.

Background: WSSC is among the 10 largest water and sewer utilities in the country, providing water and sewer services to 1.6 million residents in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. It has a total budget of \$691 million in fiscal 2005, 420,000 customer accounts, serves an area of around 1,000 square miles, and currently employs more than 1,500 people. This agency operates four reservoirs, two water filtration plants, and six wastewater treatment plants.

Local Fiscal Effect: WSSC advises that they have provided orientation programs in the past, for some commissioners, and that the cost of the orientation program should be minimal and can be handled with existing resources. WSSC further advises standardizing the removal procedures for WSSC commissioners, codifying the removal procedure for the WSSC general manager, and defining the roles and responsibilities for WSSC commissioners and the general manager would not materially impact WSSC finances.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 15, 2005
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