

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 326

(Montgomery County Delegation and Prince George's
County Delegation)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission - Office of the Inspector General -
Technical Changes
MC/PG 104-19

This bill corrects specified obsolete references to the “Internal Auditor” of the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) to the “Inspector General,” in accordance with the creation of the Office of the Inspector General of the WSSC under Chapter 130 of 2018. The bill also corrects erroneous references to the “executive director” of the WSSC to the “general manager.” **The bill takes effect July 1, 2019.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: None. The bill does not affect WSSC’s operations or finances.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: WSSC employees in the Internal Audit Office are not granted the rights of WSSC merit system employees. Furthermore, WSSC’s internal auditor is required under current law to review and approve certain costs for facilities designed and constructed by a developer.

Section 17-608 of the Public Utilities Article requires the inspector general to notify WSSC’s chair, vice chair, and executive director if any WSSC employee or official fails

to provide any information or document requested concerning WSSC operations, budget, programs, or vendor contracts with reasonable promptness. The WSSC chair, vice chair, or executive director is required to take administrative action to produce compliance with a pending request for information by the inspector general as warranted.

Office of the Inspector General

Chapter 130 of 2018 established the Office of the Inspector General in WSSC and transferred all the functions, powers, and duties of the Office of Internal Audit to the Office of the Inspector General effective October 1, 2018. The Office of the Inspector General is required to (1) assist WSSC by providing independent evaluation and recommendations regarding opportunities to preserve WSSC's reputation and improve the effectiveness, productivity, and efficiency of WSSC programs, policies, practices, and operations; (2) ensure public accountability by preventing, investigating, and reporting instances of fraud, waste, and abuse of WSSC property or funds; (3) examine, evaluate, and report on the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of internal controls and their related accounting, financial, technology, and operational policies; (4) report noncompliance with and propose ways to improve employee compliance with applicable law, policy, and ethical standards of conduct; (5) conduct audits of specified construction costs as part of the commission's Capital Improvement Plan and 10-year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Plan; and (6) conduct other audits related to the operation of the commission.

The Office of the Inspector General is authorized to (1) conduct administrative investigations; budgetary analysis; and financial, management, or performance audits and similar reviews; (2) provide management advisories; and (3) utilize the assistance from any other government agency or private party to complete a project initiated by the office.

All employees who transferred to the Office of the Inspector General as a result of Chapter 130 were required to be transferred without any diminution of their rights, including collective bargaining rights, benefits, or employment or retirement status.

Background: WSSC is among the largest water and wastewater utilities in the country, providing water and sewer services to 1.8 million residents in Montgomery and Prince George's counties. It has approximately 475,000 customer accounts, serves an area of approximately 1,000 square miles, and currently employs more than 1,500 people. The commission operates three reservoirs, two water filtration plants, and six wastewater treatment plants. The six wastewater treatment facilities, as well as the Blue Plains Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant, handle more than 200 million gallons of wastewater per day. The commission maintains more than 5,700 miles of water main lines and over 5,500 miles of sewer main lines.

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

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