Baltimore City | Question F

November 3, 2026 General Election | Official ballot label: QUESTION F - CHARTER AMENDMENT - LEGISLATION, BUDGET, AND BOARD OF ESTIMATES

What the question proposes

Question F changes three connected areas of Baltimore City government: how the City Council passes legislation and handles mayoral vetoes; how the annual budget is prepared, amended and adopted; and which officials perform duties currently assigned in the Charter to the Board of Estimates. This is a package of changes, not a separate vote on each item.

Legislation and vetoes

It shortens the period available to the Mayor to veto Council legislation and shortens the Council's period to override a veto. The change accelerates decisions, but leaves less time for review and negotiations.

Annual budget

The amendment eliminates the preliminary budget hearing process. It assigns the Mayor, rather than the Board of Estimates, responsibility for preparing and submitting the proposed budget before April 30. The Council must adopt the budget at least eight days before the July 1 fiscal-year start, and veto/override procedures must conclude by then.

It permits the Finance Director and Planning Commission to make revised recommendations after the budget is submitted and permits Council additions based on those recommendations. It removes the current $1 million cap on the contingent fund for emergencies or unexpected needs. Removing the cap does not automatically appropriate unlimited money.

Board of Estimates responsibilities

The Finance Department would take over revenue estimates and formulation of property-tax rates; the Finance Director would estimate surpluses. The Mayor would receive authority regarding municipal officers' salaries during budget preparation. The Finance Director or Planning Commission would make certain supplemental appropriation recommendations.

The Charter would also remove several other specifically assigned Board of Estimates duties, including fiscal-policy execution, contract advertising and procurement procedures, emergency contract approvals, employee wage scales and collective bargaining approvals, official bonds, claims procedures, and approvals for new improvements. Removing a duty from the Charter does not necessarily eliminate the underlying government function; implementation may require ordinances, regulations, or administrative reassignment.

Voting FOR (approval)

The described Charter changes take effect in stages: December 3, 2026 for most changes; November 7, 2028 for removed Charter sections unless a governing ordinance or regulation is adopted earlier; and December 5, 2028 for legislation approval and veto changes.

Potential effects include a changed balance of budget and procurement authority, fewer Charter-level constraints on contingency appropriations, and faster legislative deadlines. Whether transparency or efficiency improves depends on subsequent procedures and oversight.

Voting AGAINST (denial)

Existing Charter provisions governing the legislative process, annual budget, and Board of Estimates remain in place. The proposed redistribution of responsibilities and timing changes do not take effect through Question F.

A vote against does not bar officials from proposing future legislation or a different Charter amendment.

Questions to consider

How would procurement and collective bargaining oversight be handled after Charter duties are removed? What public hearings or transparency mechanisms would replace the eliminated preliminary budget hearing? How would the larger potential contingency fund be monitored?

Sources: Maryland State Board of Elections, 2026 ballot questions: https://elections.maryland.gov/elections/2026/ballot_questions.html ; The Baltimore Banner, 2026 Baltimore City ballot-question guide: https://www.thebanner.com/voter-guide/2026/baltimore-city/baltimore-city-ballot-questions-L4NDEPL6YVF2JOQAXAK3JF5TOQ/