PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORT

2026 Legislative Session

Reference No.:	CB-064-2026
Draft No.:	2
Committee:	PLANNING, HOUSING, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Date:	9/03/2026
Action:	FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

REPORT: Committee Vote: Favorable with Amendments, 3-0 (In favor: Committee Vice Chair Oriadha, Council Members Adams-Stafford and Olson)

On July 2, 2026, the PHED Committee convened to discuss CB-64-2026. On June 9, 2026, the County Council presented and referred Draft-1 of the bill to the PHED Committee. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Prince George's County Housing Code to include definitions of "weeds" and "Conservation Landscaping." It also modifies the property standards and maintenance Code provisions relating to these definitions, as well as the anti-litter and weed ordinance. Additionally, the bill addresses the definition of certain abandoned vehicles and generally pertains to weeds and Conservation Landscaping.

The PHED Committee Director, Rana Hightower, provided a summary of the proposed legislation, including feedback from various agencies within Prince George's County. There were no public comments on the proposed legislation.

Ms. Miller-Whye provided an overview of the proposed legislation. She explained the enactment of CB-064-2026 may have a slight negative fiscal impact due to potential increases in expenditures related to additional training and enhanced engagement with other agencies and stakeholders.

The indirect fiscal impact could lead to positive environmental outcomes by promoting conservation landscaping practices. These practices may enhance on-site stormwater retention, reduce the need for lawn mowing and its associated hydrocarbon emissions, support pollinator habitats, and decrease the reliance

The Planning Department did not provide comments on the bill.

Council Member Dernoga, the bill sponsor, explained the bill would allow people who want to have more natural lawns, particularly for pollinators or rain gardens or things of that nature, to do so without being fined by the Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE) based on complaints. He explained that programs like this already exist in Bowie, Hyattsville, Laurel, and maybe College Park. This type of program has been spreading across the country. Baltimore County is looking for this type of program.

The bill redefines what the weed is and what's not a weed consistently with COMAR. The lawn needs to be intentional and well-maintained. He further explained that the Department of Environment did a rain check rebate program supporting this policy. Still, there have been incidents where DPIE inspectors have been unclear under current law whether natural care is permitted. There is also a state law enacted that says homeowners' associations cannot enforce turf grass requirements on homeowners' HOA properties.

Ms. Angel stated that DPIE would either like to propose amendments or meet with the bill's sponsor to discuss the issue further. She indicated that since DPIE and the Department of Environment (DOE) have different roles, DOE personnel might have a better understanding of the plants involved, a type of knowledge that DPIE staff may lack. Furthermore, some enforcement responsibilities are being transferred from these departments to the Office of Homeland Security, highlighting the need for clarification. She explained there are also concerns about the definitions of what constitutes an intentional lawn versus an unkempt one. The vagueness surrounding these definitions requires further clarification and training before this type of policy can be properly enforced.

Council Member Dernoga explained the legislation and law are not vague but agreed that DPIE high staff are not trained in understanding what would be considered a violation. He stated he understood Ms. Angel's point that DOE staff might be more training in dealing with did types of plants and weeds, but that they are not an enforcement agency that has caused previous confusion.

He explained he is happy to talk about the best way to deal with it, and that he understands that the Office of Homeland Security will become the enforcement agency. He questioned if the concern was proper training, or the enforcement personnel. He explained that if enforcement is needed, perhaps the enforcement staff could consult the Department of Environment staff to make a reasonable determination.

He asked if language could be placed in the bill for the enforcement agency to consult with the Department of Environment.

He further explained he understood this has become an Office of Homeland Security enforcement issue, so it's a matter of proper training, or is it a matter of can we work this out and put it on July 16th? He explained he is not trying to rush the legislation through and that it will likely sit until September.

Council Member Dernoga explained that the legislation is not vague; rather, confusion stems from insufficient training among DPIE staff. Ms. Angel noted that while DOE staff may have relevant expertise, they are not an enforcement agency, which complicates implementation.

Council Member Dernoga also expressed interest in discussing the best path forward and highlighted that the Office of Homeland Security will serve as the enforcement agency. He questioned whether the core issue is training or enforcement capacity and suggested that enforcement staff could consult the Department of Environment to ensure informed decisions.

He asked whether the bill could include language requiring such consultation. He reiterated his commitment to ensuring proper training, asked if a resolution could be reached, and whether the bill could move by July 16th.

He emphasized he is not rushing the process and anticipates the legislation will likely remain under consideration until September.

On motion of PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha, seconded by Council Member Dernoga, the PHEE Committee voted 4-0 to hold CB-064-2026.

On Thursday, September 3, 2026, the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee met to discuss CB-064-2026 (Proposed DR-2).

Ms. Kathleen Canning, Legislative Attorney, provided an overview of the four Council Member Dernoga proposed amendments to the bill. The first amendment is technical; amendments two, three, and four propose the same language in different parts of the Prince George's County Code. The amendments amend the Housing Code, the Property Standards and Maintenance Code, and the Anti-Litter and Weed Ordinance to cover voluntary identification, voluntary registration, voluntary certification, and voluntary signage.

Ms. Mary Abe, Deputy Associate Director from the Department of Environment (DOE) testified in strong support of CB-064-2026. She noted the bill would modernize the Housing Code by clearly distinguishing nuisance weeds from conservation landscaping. She said the bill will improve enforcement clarity, support native plants, reduce stormwater runoff, and boost biodiversity. She also explained that DOE worked with advocates to ensure the definitions are practical and is ready to provide public outreach.

Ms. Lori Parris, Chief of Staff from DPIE, and Ms. Chrystal Tibbs from the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) testified against their agencies enforcing conservation landscaping regulations.

Ms. Tibbs noted that OHS inspectors are trained in property maintenance issues like overgrown grass and abandoned vehicles, but not in identifying conservation landscapes or protected vegetation. This lack of expertise could lead to inaccurate citations and legal challenges. The Department of the Environment (DOE) has inspectors trained in environmental and land preservation, along with funding related programs.

PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha asked who would manage weed violation authority if the bill passes and whether conservation landscaping enforcement would shift to DOE.

Ms. Parris proposed amending Subtitle 13 to eliminate DPIE and OHS enforcement authority over conservation landscaping and designate DOE as the sole enforcement agency. She argued this change would ensure accurate enforcement, reduce litigation risk, and prevent improper citations for legitimate conservation landscaping.

Ms. Abe from DOE responded by noting that their agency does not have an enforcement-driven mission, which lies with DPIE. She also explained that DPIE and the Planning Department review conservation plans and are willing to support the relevant agencies.

PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha requested that Ms. Angel work with the relevant agencies and return to committee with a recommendation on who should enforcement the provisions of the proposed bill. She expressed that she agreed with DPIE and OHS on their response of not having expertise.

On motion of Adams-Stafford, seconded by Council Member Olson, the PHED Committee voted 3-0 to hold the bill.

Next the PHED Committee on motion of council Member Olson, seconded by PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha, the committee voted 3-0 to reconsider CB-064-2026. The bill sponsor Council Member Dernoga requested the bill move forward with the proposed amendment to move enforcement from DPIE to OHS and to work with the Administration on any additional amendments prior to introduction of the bill.

On motion of Council Member Olson, seconded by PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha the PHED Committee voted 3-0 on the amendment sheet.

On motion of Council Member Olson, seconded by PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha, the PHED Committee voted 3-0 to move the enforcement from DPIE to OHS and to work with the Administration on any additional amendments before introduction.

On motion of Council Member Olson, seconded by PHED Committee Vice Chair Oriadha the PHED Committee voted 3-0 on CB-064-2026 with amendments.