

<b>FROM</b>	<b>NAME &amp; TITLE</b>	Robert Cename, Budget Director	CITY of <b>BALTIMORE</b> <b>MEMO</b>	
	<b>AGENCY NAME &amp; ADDRESS</b>	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall		
	<b>SUBJECT</b>	City Council Bill 22-0205 Vacant Structures – Emergency Response Fee		

DATE:

**TO**

The Honorable President and  
Members of the City Council  
City Hall, Room 400

January 18, 2024

**Position: Defers to Law, BCFD and DHCD**

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 22-0205, Vacant Structures – Emergency Response Fee, the purpose of which is to establish a fee structure for City emergency response services provided or rendered at vacant structures.

**Background**

Baltimore has roughly 13,600 vacant structures owned by individuals, companies, and the City. These structures pose numerous problems for the community and for the City government. One issue is fire, which poses a threat to surrounding structures, but particularly to members of the Baltimore City Fire Department. In 2022, three members of the BCFD died fighting a fire in a vacant building. This fire was one of many in vacant buildings. This legislation is written to share the financial burden of responding to incidents at vacant buildings with the owners of vacant buildings.

**Fiscal Impact**

In general, the Finance Department considers that any initiative pursuing adjustments to City fees should be in accordance to the City’s fee policy, which intends to provide guidance in determining the appropriate level for fees based on City costs for providing services. The policy establishes that City fees should be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis to ensure that they keep pace with cost-of-living and or levels of cost recovery.

The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) does not track many of the metrics needed to properly implement this legislation. One of the reasons some of the metrics mentioned in the legislation are functions of the Baltimore Police Department. The BCFD also would need to add staff to accommodate the new fee structures. Finance and BCFD cannot estimate how many staff are needed to process and track the fees prescribed in this legislation. Due to the lack of tracking, the Department of Finance cannot estimate the potential revenues from fees.

Based on data from the Baltimore Office of Information Technology (BCIT), the Department of Finance estimates that BCIT would need to spend between \$20,000 and \$30,000, to purchase and implement systems upgrades in order to implement this legislation.

**Conclusion**

The Department of Finance understands the intent of the legislation which is to charge owners of vacant properties for the City’s response to the fire. BCFD has stated that they cannot track some of the metrics

listed in the legislation, partially due to the fact that they are functions of the BPD. The Law Department has also stated that the fee structure must be tied to program costs. Taken together the Finance Department defers to the Law Department, BCFD and DHCD.

**For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance defers to Law, BCFD and DHCD on City Council Bill 22-0205.**

cc: Michael Moiseyev  
Nina Themelis