

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 05-0073R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Holton, Kraft, Young, Curran, Spector, Rawlings Blake,
Reisinger, Conaway, Clarke, Branch, Harris, Mitchell, D’Adamo, Welch

Introduced and read first time: August 15, 2005

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Public Works, Health Department

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Recycling in Baltimore City**

3 FOR the purpose of reviewing the City’s Recycling Program to determine the effectiveness of the
4 program in diverting recyclables from un-reusable waste; to ascertain the percentage of
5 Baltimore residents and businesses participating in the program; and to discover if incentive
6 programs, information campaigns, and community involvement could be utilized to improve
7 the current rate at which city residents participate in the program.

8 **Recitals**

9 According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States currently recycles
10 nearly 30% of its waste, a rate that has doubled during the past 15 years. During this time,
11 governments, non-profit organizations, and companies have engaged in various programs to raise
12 consumer awareness of available recycling options, impacting consumer behavior to the extent
13 that 40% of all plastic soda bottles and 55% of all beverage cans are now recycled. Still, 70% of
14 solid waste is burned at combustion facilities and disposed of in landfills.

15 Governing, a publication of Congressional Quarterly, Inc., reports that, after years of decline
16 and fall, recycling is in a revival mode, even in urban areas where demographics and density
17 make it harder to get residents to participate, and that cities across the country are instigating
18 new policies to improve the rates at which their residents divert material from landfills. Cities
19 are motivated by the rising cost of tipping fees and transportation costs or are driven by citizen
20 demands for environmentally friendly policies.

21 One of the most inventive approaches is Philadelphia’s, where the city has developed a pilot
22 program to increase the very low rate of residential recycling by, in effect, paying residents to
23 recycle. To encourage participation, the city is offering residents gift certificates to local retail
24 outlets. The amount of the certificate is based on the weight of recyclable material picked up by
25 recycling trucks that are specially outfitted with scales that can weigh a household’s recyclables
26 to the ounce at curbside.

27 The Philadelphia process is further streamlined by having each bin marked with a radio
28 frequency identifier that correlates with the household to which it belongs. Residents are

EXPLANATION: Underlining indicates matter added by amendment.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter deleted by amendment.

1 awarded a \$5 gift certificate for every 10 pounds of recycled material, up to \$25 a month.
2 Recycling rates are already showing a 40% increase in tonnage in the pilot neighborhoods, the
3 city’s haulers have increased their efficiency with the help of bigger trucks and a single-stream
4 processing center, and the city’s recycling coordinator says the program will save the city money
5 on trash disposal.

6 Oakland, California, having passed the statewide 50% requirement for several years, is
7 pushing for a 75% diversion rate by 2010, by providing separate 64 gallon carts for trash, regular
8 recyclables, yard waste, and food scraps. The food scraps component caused a minor setback
9 because of the “yuck factor” in dealing with unrefrigerated spoilables, so the city distributed
10 small plastic containers that fit under sinks and made it easier for people to collect.

11 In Seattle, city officials are upgrading the already successful program by having trash
12 collectors check residents’ garbage for un-diverted recyclables. This year warnings will be
13 issued for those who don’t comply with recycling rules; next year the consequences will escalate
14 in that trash that contains more than 10% of recyclable materials will not be picked up by the
15 city, and non-compliant residents will have to go to the trouble and expense of having the trash
16 disposed of by themselves.

17 The Maryland Department of the Environment reports that Baltimore recycled 40% of its
18 waste in 2001 and 42% in 2002, but by 2003 had fallen back to 40%. Here bottles and cans
19 (including glass jars, glass bottles, aluminum cans, tin cans, all plastic small mouth containers
20 imprinted with #1 or #2, and empty aerosol cans) are collected on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the
21 month citywide. Paper (including newspapers, magazines, phone books, ad mail,
22 cardboard/boxes, mixed paper, and scrap paper) are picked up on the 2nd and 4th weeks of the
23 month according to designated zones.

24 Currently officials of the Recycling Program in the Department of Public Works do not have
25 statistics on the estimated total tonnage that could be recycled in the City, nor are there any
26 figures on the percentage or number of Baltimore households that are actively participating in
27 the recycling effort. A comprehensive review of our program will ensure that Baltimore is doing
28 its part to protect the environment and enhance the overall standard of living in our city, our
29 state, and our country.

30 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this
31 Body will review the City’s Recycling Program to determine the effectiveness of the program in
32 diverting recyclables from un-reusable waste; to ascertain the percentage of Baltimore residents
33 and businesses participating in the program; and to discover if incentive programs, information
34 campaigns, and community involvement could be utilized to improve the current rate at which
35 city residents participate in the program.

36 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
37 Director of Public Works, the Baltimore Health Commissioner, those listed in the Department of
38 Planning Directory of Community Associations, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City
39 Council.