BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SHEILA DIXON
Mayor

FREDERICK H. BEALEFELD, III
Police Commissioner

March 5, 2009

TO: The Honorable President and Members
          of the Baltimore City Council
        Room 400 City Hall
        Attn. Karen Randle

FROM: Deborah A. Owens, Deputy Commissioner, Administrative Bureau
        James H. Green, Deputy Legal Counsel

RE: City Council Bill No. 09-0108R-Legislative Oversight-Baltimore Police
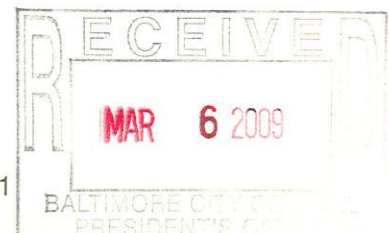   Department

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed City Council Bill
No. 08-01108R-Legislative Oversight. The resolution request that the Baltimore
Police Commissioner report to the City Council on the effect of overtime
spending budget cutbacks on crime prevention; and on the efficacy of
restructuring the present formation of police districts as well as reporting methods
of minor crimes in order to shorten response time and to provide better service to
the citizenry.

In 2008, the Baltimore Police Department reduced overtime spending
while achieving the lowest homicide rate in twenty (20) years. The reductions in
overtime spending have been achieved through targeted, strategic spending and
have saved the City of Baltimore a total of $14 million in 2007 and 2008.

Overtime reductions over the past two years are closely connected to the
Department's efforts to improve recruitment and retention which have resulted in
higher staffing levels. Today, the Department is fully staffed with only fourteen
(14) vacancies that exist only until the next police academy recruit class
commences. In 2005, the Department had 149 police officer vacancies. In 2006
and 2007, there were close to 110 vacancies. By the end of 2008, the Department
filled all police officer vacancies and now uses all vacancies that occur due to
retirements or separations to fill incoming academy classes.

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Comments

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The Department has used these additional officers -- as well as other existing resources -- to increase the number of sworn officers working in operational roles. In other words, over the past year, the Department has put more police officers out on the streets of Baltimore. These officers are patrolling our neighborhoods, getting illegal guns off the streets, and investigating homicides, shootings and robberies. Today, there are over 130 more officers assigned to operational roles than there were one year ago. The Patrol Division has seen the greatest gains. In 2005, there were 175 hard vacancies in the Patrol Division. In 2006, there were 146. By summer of 2008, the Department had reduced vacancies in Patrol to seventy-eight (78). Today, there are only thirty-seven (37) vacancies in the Patrol Division and the Department continues to work towards bringing that number down to zero. Fewer vacancies means more officers on the streets and less need for overtime spending.

Recent history demonstrates that overtime spending does not correlate with homicide numbers. In 2006, the Department spent $35,880,997 in overtime and there were 276 homicides. In 2008, the Department spent $21,810,296 in overtime -- $14 million dollars less -- and there were 234 homicides. In November 2008 and January 2009, Baltimore experienced a few weeks where there were increases in homicides as compared to earlier months in 2008. But, the first two (2) weeks of January were followed by a significant decrease in the total number of shootings and homicides in February. And, overall violent crime is at a record low. The Department is confident that current staffing levels and deployment strategies are appropriate for sustaining overall violent crime reductions in 2009. Experience shows that results are dictated by solid work and strategic use of resources.

The resolution also calls for a discussion surrounding the restructuring of the present formation of police districts. The Department is happy to begin preliminary discussions about this issue and will work with the Administration and the Council.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

cc: Frederick H. Bealefeld III, Police Commissioner, BPD
      Angela Gibson, Mayor's Legislative Liaison
      Sheryl Goldstein, MOCJ