

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 11-0005R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Welch, Henry, Curran, President Young, Councilmembers
Middleton, Clarke, Holton, Spector, Branch

Introduced and read first time: December 8, 2011

Assigned to: Recreation and Parks Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Recreation and Parks

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Greater Community Involvement in Recreation and Parks Project Planning**

3 FOR the purpose of urging the Department of Recreation and Parks to reevaluate the process it
4 uses to plan and prepare projects in neighborhoods throughout Baltimore with an eye toward
5 finding more ways to involve community groups in that process as early and often as
6 possible.

7 **Recitals**

8 Many City services are more or less generic in nature - throughout Baltimore roads must be
9 paved, trash picked up, and fires put out, all in much the same way from neighborhood to
10 neighborhood. Many other services are highly particularized, how they are provided must vary a
11 great deal in approach in different areas according to each community's unique characteristics.

12 Much of the work done by the Department of Recreation and Parks falls into the latter
13 category. For example, a neighborhood with many young children may desperately need a
14 playground in a nearby park, while one with mostly elderly residents might prefer a garden in a
15 similar space. Some communities need recreation centers that focus on academic subjects and
16 support, while others are best served by having a space to host youth sports leagues. From the
17 outside, these needs may not be obvious to planners focused on the City as a whole.

18 Despite the intensely local factors that go into a neighborhood's recreational needs, some
19 community groups have complained that the City sometimes uses a one-size fits all request for
20 proposals (RFP) process better suited to city-wide repaving projects to plan and bid-out park or
21 recreation center projects. This kind of a formalized, centrally directed, process can leave
22 communities feeling like their needs are not being taken into account.

23 Too often, a community first learns the details of a project when an RFP is issued. When this
24 happens, neighborhood groups can be surprised by the RFP's contents. This in turn can lead to
25 confusion and conflict that makes the process unnecessarily long and difficult, and undermines
26 the chances of a project that meets the community's needs coming to fruition.

27 To avoid this, a better job needs to be done of involving communities in planning recreation
28 and parks projects in their neighborhoods well before formal steps are taken. Neighborhood
29 groups should be routinely consulted before RFPs are issued, and included in the RFP process, to

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

Council Bill 11-0005R

1 ensure that the goals of projects align with what the community wants and expects. Making sure
2 that a community both feels like it is part of the process from the beginning, rather than an
3 afterthought expected to sign off on a project conceived elsewhere, and genuinely understands
4 the nature of the process as well as why particular requirements must be included in formal
5 RFPs, is essential for arriving at the best possible outcome for the community in the most
6 efficient manner.

7 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
8 Council urges the Department of Recreation and Parks to reevaluate the process it uses to plan
9 and prepare projects in neighborhoods throughout Baltimore with an eye toward finding more
10 ways to involve community groups in that process as early and often as possible.

11 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
12 Director of Recreation and Parks, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.