

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 09-0111R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Clarke, Cole, Holton, Conaway, President Rawlings-Blake,
Councilmembers Curran, D’Adamo, Branch, Young, Middleton, Henry, Kraft, Reisinger,
Welch

Introduced and read first time: February 23, 2009

Assigned to: Taxation, Finance and Economic Development Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Finance

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Erroneous Tax Sale Notices – Special Benefit District Property**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Finance and the Chief of the Bureau of Revenue
4 Collections to report to the City Council at a public hearing on what caused many taxpayers
5 to receive erroneous tax sale notices and alley paving bills and what procedures can be put in
6 place to avoid this situation in the future.

7 **WHEREAS**, In 2008, the Baltimore City Finance Department and the Baltimore City Council
8 recognized that the City had failed to apply legitimate and documented property tax credits due
9 to Benefit District property owners because of the Benefit District surtax related to their
10 properties; and

11 **WHEREAS**, Finance applied such credits to all Special Benefit surtaxes in preparing tax bills
12 for fiscal year 2009; and

13 **WHEREAS**, Due to computer cliches, hundreds of surtax payers were mistakenly mailed
14 overdue tax notices, including property tax sale foreclosure warnings; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Some of these notices included alley paving charges there had been no prior
16 notification of but that were being cited as a basis for sending the property to tax sale; and

17 **WHEREAS**, Hundreds of those mistakenly receiving tax sale notices tried to call the phone
18 number listed on their tax sale notices; and

19 **WHEREAS**, Many of these taxpayers reported “sitting on hold” for hours at a time, only
20 finally to speak with a person who had no knowledge of the tax sale situation and who could not
21 help; and

22 **WHEREAS**, The alley paving bill was included as part of the notice of the property tax sale,
23 personnel at that number had no knowledge of the alley paving charge and the number they
24 provided the taxpayer was not answered.

25 **WHEREAS**, The very owners who pay a Property Tax-Plus have now experienced a lengthy
26 “On Hold” response in seeking redress from tax sale mistakes by Baltimore City.

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

Council Bill 09-0111R

1 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That Finance
2 explain how these mistaken tax sale notices and alley paving bills were generated and how the
3 phone number listed for inquiry was inadequately staffed and briefed to handle such a deluge of
4 calls.

5 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Taxation, Finance and Economic Development
6 Committee of the Baltimore City Council be requested to conduct a public hearing to determine
7 how best we can avoid both improper tax sale notices and lengthy “on hold” waits to further
8 avoid such instances.

9 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
10 Director of Finance, the Chief of the Bureau of Revenue Collection, the Community
11 Organizations of the Special Benefit Tax Districts, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the
12 City Council.