

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 16-0298R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Kraft, President Young, Councilmembers Branch, Scott, Stokes,
Costello, Henry, Reisinger, Clarke, Middleton, Holton, Welch, Curran, Mosby

Introduced and read first time: April 7, 2016

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

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

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Water Bill Increases**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting that representatives from the Water Billing Department in the
4 Department of Public Works and the Department of Finance appear before the Council to
5 discuss the recent increase in water bills received by residents since the installation of the
6 BaltiMeter system, the reasoning behind these unexpected increases, and steps to assist
7 residents with unaffordable bills.

8 **Recitals**

9 Last year, the Department of Public Works installed a new water meter system in residential
10 properties throughout Baltimore City. These meters were described as much more accurate than
11 the old system. They are digitized and can be read remotely by the Water Billing Department.
12 Previously, the meters had to be read manually, approximately every 3 months. Oftentimes the
13 consumption was estimated, and the consumer/resident would receive a minimum bill payment.
14 This would amount to about \$130 (including Stormwater fee and Bay Restoration Fee) four times
15 a year for a rowhome with 2-4 residents.

16 After the installation of the new water meters, there was a delay in the billing cycle. This has
17 resulted in many residents receiving bills for 120 – 250 days of consumption. This alone has
18 caused the bill amount to be much higher. It is understandable that in some cases the average
19 daily consumption has not changed, but due to the increase in number of days, the total bill has
20 increased. This usually would have been paid over two or three billing periods. Now, residents
21 are being burdened with paying two or three times as much at one time.

22 In other cases, residents are now being charged for water that was used in the past but not
23 paid for sufficiently. Those previously estimated bills are now showing up in the form of current
24 consumption readings that are exorbitantly high. The residents are further being burdened by
25 past errors that were out of their control.

26 Despite all this, when residents are afforded the opportunity to appear for an “informal
27 conference,” they are receiving the unfortunate news that nothing can be done to adjust their bill.
28 They are told that the bill is accurate and it must be paid.

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

Council Bill 16-0298R

1 The Council recognizes that a fair fee must be paid in order to maintain, repair, and improve
2 the water and wastewater system throughout the City. However, the sudden, drastic, and
3 incomprehensible increase in bills must be reasonably detailed for the residents to understand
4 past and present consumption. Additionally, residents ought to be given a payment plan option if
5 bills are higher than past average usage. All of these concerns must be addressed in a timely
6 manner.

7 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
8 Council requests that representatives from the Water Billing Department in the Department of
9 Public Works and the Department of Finance appear before it to discuss the recent increase in
10 water bills received by residents since the installation of the BaltiMeter system, the reasoning
11 behind these unexpected bills, and steps to assist the residents with unaffordable bills.

12 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
13 Director of Public Works, the Head of the Department of Public Works' Bureau of Water and
14 Wastewater, the Finance Director, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.