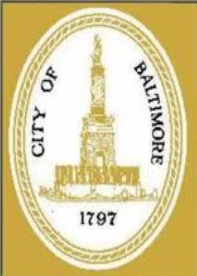


FROM	NAME & TITLE	Richard J. Luna, Interim Director	CITY of BALTIMORE <i>MEMO</i>	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Department of Public Works 600 Abel Wolman Municipal Building		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 23-0153R		

July 6, 2023

TO: Economic and Community Development Committee

I am herein reporting on City Council Resolution 23-0153R introduced by Council Members Ramos, Bullock, Burnett, Middleton, and Porter.

The purpose of the Resolution is to invite representatives from the Departments of Public Works, Housing and Community Development, Real Estate, Fire, and the Office of the City Administrator to report why Section 116.4.6 of the Baltimore City Building Code, which requires the Department of Housing and Community Development to inform the Department of Public Works that there is a vacant building and that the water must be shut off, is not being implemented, the impact of not implementing this section of the Building Code, and a path toward implementation.

In 2021, the City of Baltimore had approximately 15,400 vacant and abandoned properties that could qualify for water service shut offs. Of this number, approximately 1,300 were Mayor and City Council-owned properties.¹ The status of these properties can fluctuate, depending upon potential development opportunities, property consolidations, demolitions, tax sale and In-Rem foreclosures, ownership changes, and the addition of newly vacant properties. Due to the size of this list, the Department’s initial focus was on water service shut offs for health and safety reasons. The Department wishes to make clear that decisions about water service shut offs to vacant properties has never been about increasing liens on these neglected and abandoned vacant properties.

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), through strategic initiatives and demolitions has, as of May 2023, reduced the number of vacant properties to 14,188, of which 1,047 are Mayor and City Council-owned properties.² In a series of coordination

¹ Source: Department of Housing and Community Development response to CCR 21-0037R

² Source: Department of Housing and Community Development response to CCR 22-0130R

meetings, DHCD and Public Works agreed that to effectively address such a large number of vacant properties with water service turnoffs, it made sense to group the vacant properties into one of five (5) categories of ascending priority to minimize the potential for interfering with rehabilitation opportunities and to address demolition properties sooner:

- Tier 1 – Demolition pipeline
- Tier 2 – Vacant Building Notice (VBN) issued > 10 years ago; no open permits; deed date > 1-year old
- Tier 3 – VBN issued > 5 years ago; no open permits; deed date > 1-year old
- Tier 4 – VBN issued < 5 years ago; no open permits; not in DHCD project area
- Tier 5 – All remaining VBN properties

DHCD is in the process of cleaning up these lists before forwarding to Public Works. It is important to note that turning off water service does not ensure that the shut off will be maintained, as the shut off process can be reversed to restore water to a property. While water service abandonment, which includes the removal of the water meter, is a more permanent solution, there are legal implications that prevent the City from removing a water meter without a property owner's consent.

Representatives of the Department of Public Works will attend the hearing on City Council Resolution 23-0153R to assist with the Committee's discussion of turning off water service to vacant structures.



Richard J. Luna
Interim Director

RJL/MMC