

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 06-0167R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Harris, Young, Curran, Holton, Mitchell, Welch, D’Adamo,
Clarke

Introduced and read first time: April 10, 2006

Assigned to: Education, Housing, Health, and Human Services Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Finance, Board of School
Commissioners, Department of Real Estate, Baltimore City Public School System

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Baltimore City Public School System – Disposal of Surplus Property**

3 FOR the purpose of calling on the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System to place a
4 moratorium on plans for, or disposal of, any real property owned by or under the jurisdiction
5 of the Baltimore City Public School System; requesting the CEO, the Director of Facilities,
6 and the Real Estate Officer of the Baltimore City Public School System to report to the City
7 Council on the number of properties owned or under the jurisdiction of the Baltimore City
8 Public School System, the current use of each property, and the projected need for continued
9 use or plan for disposal of the property; urging the Director of Finance, the City Comptroller,
10 and the CEO to adopt a plan to appraise all surplus property, to sell it at fair market value,
11 and to dedicate all proceeds for use for instructional programs in the Baltimore City Public
12 Schools, within 90 days of passage of this Resolution.

13 **Recitals**

14 Baltimore City government has historically done a less than satisfactory job when managing
15 its real estate. Although the real estate division of the City Comptroller’s office has attempted to
16 become a central repository of information on the City’s holdings, it has been difficult to achieve
17 this end because there are other City agencies that are separately responsible for City-owned
18 buildings and property. The Housing Department, the Department of Public Works, and other
19 agencies, as well as the Baltimore City Public School System, each have City-owned property
20 under their jurisdiction.

21 To address the current crisis in the Baltimore City public school education system, the
22 Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners has proposed a plan to move 5,300 students
23 from 5 school buildings to 19 other schools in August as part of a plan that is committed to
24 reducing operating space by 15%, or 2.7 million square feet, in the next 3 years because of
25 declining enrollment and deteriorating buildings. The closings are expected to save the school
26 system \$14 million that would be used for capital improvements at the schools receiving the
27 students.

28 In part, the school system is being made to make urgent changes under pressure from the
29 State to close schools quickly or lose school construction dollars. The system must show
30 significant progress toward more efficiently operating a system that has space for 125,000

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

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1 students, but where only 85,000 are enrolled. In tentatively approving \$18 million in
2 construction money for next year, State officials reserved the right to withdraw approval if a
3 substantial number of schools are not recommended for closure.

4 The climate exists for gross, if unintentional, misappropriation of public property or the
5 proceeds from the sale of public property. With the State pressuring the school system to
6 dispose of property on the one hand – and an inadequate mechanism to assess and market
7 surplus property on the other – it would be very easy for the unscrupulous or savvy entrepreneur
8 to take advantage of the situation.

9 As those who protect the best interests of the public and the kids to whom the proceeds are
10 owed, we must be sure to take a long and appraising look before we leap into the business of
11 disposing of real estate holdings that may be worth much more than they appear to be at first
12 glance.

13 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That this
14 Body calls on the CEO of the Baltimore City Public School System to place a moratorium on
15 plans for, or disposal of, any real property owned by or under the jurisdiction of the Baltimore
16 City Public School System; requests the CEO, the Director of Facilities, and the Real Estate
17 Officer of the Baltimore City Public School System to report to the City Council on the number
18 of properties owned or under the jurisdiction of the Baltimore City Public School System, the
19 current use of each property, and the projected need for continued use or plan for disposal of the
20 property; and urges the Director of Finance, the City Comptroller, and the CEO to adopt a plan
21 to appraise all surplus property, to sell it at fair market value, and to dedicate all proceeds for use
22 for instructional programs in the Baltimore City Public Schools, within 90 days of passage of
23 this Resolution.

24 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
25 Comptroller, the CEO of Baltimore City Public Schools, the Director of Finance, the Director of
26 Facilities and the Real Estate Officer of the Baltimore City Public Schools, and the Mayor’s
27 Legislative Liaison to the City Council.