



HEARING NOTES

Bill: 21-0083R

Investigative Hearing - Baltimore City Sheriff's Office - Eviction Procedures

Committee: Economic and Community Development

Chaired By: Councilwoman Sharon Green Middleton

Hearing Date: January 25, 2022

Time (Beginning): 2:00 PM

Time (Ending): 4:30 PM

Location: Virtual WEBEX

Total Attendance: Approximately 70

Committee Members in Attendance:

John Bullock Mark Conway Ryan Dorsey Antonio Glover Robert Stokes Odette Ramos

Bill Synopsis in the file? yes no n/a

Attendance sheet in the file? yes no n/a

Agency reports read?..... yes no n/a

Video or audio-digitally recorded?..... yes no n/a

Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file? yes no n/a

Evidence of notification to property owners?..... yes no n/a

Final vote taken at this hearing? yes no n/a

Motioned by:.....Councilmember Odette Ramos

Seconded by:.....Councilmember John Bullock

Final Vote:.....Favorable

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

- Councilmember Kristerfer Burnett
- Jason Gruzs, Chief of Operations, Baltimore City Sheriff's Office
- Lieutenant Larry Salmond, Baltimore City Sheriff's Office

- Elena DiPietro, Office of the City Solicitor
 - Faith Leach, Interim Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Family and Children Success (MOCFS) and also representing the City Administrator
 - Angela Whitaker, Director, Baltimore Community Action Partnerships
 - Stephanie Murdock, Department of Housing and Community Development
 - Marcus Scott, United Way of Central Maryland
 - Katherine Howard, Regional Management, Inc.
 - Albert Turner, Public Justice Center
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Major Issues Discussed

1. Chairwoman Middleton opened the meeting, introduced committee members and City representatives and read the bill into the record.
2. Councilmember Kristerfer Burnett commented on the bill. He emphasized that the bill was introduced to address complaints from tenants, landlords and housing advocates concerning illegal evictions and housing lockouts. He also wanted to address problems associated with tenants not receiving proper eviction notices and the process for communicating and providing resources to those being evicted. He understands that there are many challenges contributing to the housing crisis, homelessness and hardships.
3. Agency representatives testified, in support of the resolution, on behalf of their respective agencies
4. Jason Gruzs presented an overview of the eviction process practiced by the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff's Office works with the Public Justice Center by providing a list of upcoming evictions. A representative of the Sheriff's Office is present at all evictions.
5. Councilmembers asked if the Sheriff's staff is properly trained to handle those with mental health issues and if resources are provided. Staff are routinely trained and those suffering from mental health issues are directed to resources that can help them.

There was discussion about the legality of posting eviction notices on individual properties versus posting on the common entrance of a multi-family building. The committee would like an opinion from the Office of the Maryland Attorney General about this matter;

There was discussion about how the Department of Social Services assists the Sheriff's Office when encountering children during an actual eviction. The committee would like the Sheriff's Office to provide Department of Social Services' contact and resource information. The Public Justice Center is also contacted to assist.

There was discussion about whether there are verifications for eviction notifications that are presented or posted. There is no process in place to verify that a tenant was properly notified about an eviction date. The Sheriff's Office is willing to be responsible for posting the notice on the door. It was suggested that a photo could be taken of the posting.

There was also discussion about whether a database could be created and a call-line established that could provide general information about upcoming evictions. The Sheriff's Office will check with their IT department for advice on this matter.

The Sheriff's Office is obligated to execute court orders. The Sheriff's Office schedules evictions at least 14 days from issuance of a warrant. The warrant must be executed within 60 days.

There was also discussion about how payments are made to tenants and landlords. Based on current policy, payments are made directly to landlords. The MOCFS will provide the payment policy online. Payments made on behalf of tenants are not taxable.

6. Faith Leach gave a presentation about resources provided and efforts the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success take to prevent eviction.
7. Angela Whitaker gave a presentation of how the Baltimore Community Action Partnership (BCAP) assists with evictions. The United Way of Central Maryland works with BCAP to assist the City with relocations.
8. The committee heard public testimony.
9. The committee voted to recommend the bill favorably.
10. The hearing was adjourned.

Further Study

Was further study requested?

Yes **No**

If yes, describe.

The committee requested/recommended the following:

- An opinion from the Maryland Attorney General on whether the eviction notice must be posted on individual property;
 - Department of Social Services contact information and resources available when Sheriff's staff encounter children during an eviction;
 - That the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office check on the feasibility of posting notices of scheduled eviction dates and/or provide a photo to verify that the tenant is notified about the scheduled eviction;
 - That the Baltimore City Sheriff's Office check on the feasibility of creating a call-line and database of scheduled evictions so that tenants can be provided with general information about evictions; and
 - That the Mayor's Office of Children and Family Success provide policy information about how payments are made to tenants and/or landlords.
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Committee Vote:

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair Yea
John Bullock: Yea
Mark Conway: Yea
Ryan Dorsey: Yea
Antonio Glover: Yea
Odette Ramos: Yea
Robert Stokes: Yea

Jennifer L. Coates, Committee Staff

Date: January 27, 2022

cc: Bill File
OCS Chrono File