



**HEARING NOTES**

**Resolution: 21-0024R**

**Informational Hearing – Baltimore City Tax Sale**

**Committee:** Ways and Means  
**Chaired by:** Councilman Eric T. Costello

**Hearing Date:** Tuesday, July 20, 2021  
**Time (Beginning):** 10:00 AM  
**Time (Ending):** 11:55 AM  
**Location:** Virtual "WebEx" Meeting  
**Total Attendance:** Approximately 55

**Committee Members in Attendance:**

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Eric T. Costello        | Kristerfer Burnett     |
| Robert Stokes, Sr.      | Ryan Dorsey            |
| Danielle McCray         | Sharon Green Middleton |
| Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer |                        |

<b>Bill Synopsis in the file?</b> .....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Attendance sheet in the file?</b> .....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Agency reports read?</b> .....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Video or audio-digitally recorded?</b> .....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Certification of advertising/posting notices in the file?</b> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Evidence of notification to property owners?</b> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Final vote taken at this hearing?</b> .....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<b>Motioned by:</b> .....	Councilmember Middleton		
<b>Seconded by:</b> .....	Councilmember Burnett		
<b>Final Vote:</b> .....	Favorable/Amend		

**Major Speakers**  
*(This is not an attendance record.)*

- Mary Keenan, Law Department
- Stephanie Murdock – Department of Housing and Community Development
- Kathleen Kelleher, Comptroller’s Office/Department of Real Estate
- Henry Raymond, Department of Finance

- Todd Carter, Baltimore City Information Technology
  - Phillip Westry, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
  - Michael O’Leary, Department of Housing and Community Development
  - Daniel Ramos, Mayor’s Office
  - Allison Harris, Speaker
  - Dan Ellis, Speaker
  - Nneka Nnamdi, Speaker
  - Muriel Kelly, Speaker
  - Bree Jones, Speaker
  - Shana Roth-Gormley, Speaker
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### **Major Issues Discussed**

1. Councilmember Ramos, primary sponsor of the Resolution gave opening remarks. Some highlights from her remarks included:
  - Why the hearing was needed, background for same
  - Constituents’ concerns regarding tax sales
  - Recent reform for tax sales
2. Chairman Costello asked the agency representatives to discuss their agency reports.
3. The representative from the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Services testified. Some highlights of this conversation included:
  - Data gathered on the Tax Sale Clinics
    - Statistics for who attends (demographics/types of clients/background of clients) the clinics
  - They support:
    - The strengthening of the tax sale program
    - The Department of Housing and Community Development agency report
  - Talked about some of the experiences, problems encountered and resolutions on behalf of the clients served
  - Concern/Comments: About how properties are currently classified
  - Is happy to participate and/or be a part of/involved in this issue
  - Written testimony was also submitted – *a copy is on file*
4. Committee/councilmembers asked questions, stated concerns, and etc. Some questions asked and/or highlights of discussion were:
  - **Questions**
    - Talk about the role and/or duties of the tax sale clinics, (i.e., the processes and/or auctions)
    - How many tax sales were collected in 2019/2020 at the clinic?
    - Do you have data regarding how many clients attended the clinics during 2019/2020?
    - Communication strategies used through out the year, what are they, specifically for the older adults?
    - What are you doing to reach out to the older population and others regarding being eligible for tax credits?
    - When notices are sent out regarding tax sales what information is included in the notice?

- What are some of the reforms surrounding tax sales that you are thinking about and will there be a workgroup in the future?
  - What right and/or law does the city have for excluding some properties/owners from tax sales?
  - A lot of these issues are interconnected; does the city have any resources for tangled titles?
  - **Two Additional Positions in DHCD FY 22 budget:**
    - What will their duties consist of?
    - Will they be involved in the work of the clinics?
  - **Tax Sale Application and/or Processing**
    - Can you walk us through the key dates throughout the year that pertains to tax sales? What is the process for tax sales?
  - **Comments/Concerns**
    - For all issues/things that relates to homes and/or housing:
      - We need a place, one location, for anything related to homes and/or housing, a one stop shop!
      - When we are trying to resolve constituent concerns and/or problems we are referred to locations all over the place! We need to know where to direct our constituents for assistance.
      - Can you look into finding one location for this?
      - Concern: Too much time and days elapses in order to resolve one (1) person's problem; it was long and drawn out even before the pandemic!
    - Commendation: A committee member commended several agency representatives for working on the "Tax Sale Implementation Program."
  - **United States Postal Services – Backlog**
    - Current issues surrounding delivering mail on time
      - How did the delay affect the tax sale process?
      - How did you adjust to address complaints about mail delivery?
  - **Equity Issues/Concerns**
    - Can you talk about equity under your tax sale review?
    - Black neighborhoods – What mechanism, changes or suggestions have you put in place in terms of fixing the breakdown in communication? (system improvements?) And is data available on the outcome of these changes?
5. Six (6) attendees gave public testimony. Some highlighted topics of discussion and/or concern were:
- Importance of helping neighborhoods
  - Concerns: Too many vacant properties
  - High tax assessments are of concern
  - Concern: Penalties in place for not paying property tax
  - Talked about his/her experiences when trying to solve problems associated with tax sales issues
  - Problems experienced by the elderly
  - Comment: Vacant buildings prevents communities from healing
6. Vote taken. Meeting adjourned.
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**Further Study**

Was further study requested?

Yes  No

If yes, describe.

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**Committee Vote:**

E. Costello: ..... Yea  
K. Burnett: ..... Yea  
R. Dorsey: ..... Yea  
D. McCray: ..... Yea  
S. Green Middleton: ..... Yea  
I. Schleifer: ..... Yea  
R. Stokes, Sr.: ..... Out of Meeting

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*Marguerite M. Currin*

Marguerite M. Currin, Committee Staff

Date: July 22, 2021

cc: Bill File  
OCS Electronic File

# BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE VOTING RECORD

DATE: 7-20-21

RESOLUTION #: 21-0024R

RESOLUTION TITLE: Informational Hearing – Baltimore City Tax Sale

MOTION BY: Middleton      SECONDED BY: Burnett

- FAVORABLE                       FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS  
 UNFAVORABLE                       WITHOUT RECOMMENDATION

NAME	YEAS	NAYS	ABSENT	ABSTAIN
Costello, Eric - Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Burnett, Kristerfer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dorsey, Ryan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
McCray, Danielle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Middleton, Sharon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Schleifer, Isaac	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stokes, Robert	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<u>6</u>	<u>—</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>—</u>

CHAIRPERSON: Eric T. Costello *Eric T. Costello* m.m.c

COMMITTEE STAFF: Marguerite M. Currin Initials: m.m.c.

# City of Baltimore

City Council  
City Hall, Room 408  
100 North Holliday Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

## Meeting Minutes - Final

### Ways and Means

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Tuesday, July 20, 2021

10:00 AM  
Public Webex Hearing: Phone: +1-408-418-9388, Access Code:  
179 081 4947, Password: Public, Link:  
[https://bmore.webex.com/bmore/onstage/g.php?](https://bmore.webex.com/bmore/onstage/g.php?MTID=eee342054fad75d19c506c38d77fbb4fc)  
MTID=eee342054fad75d19c506c38d77fbb4fc

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21-0024R

#### CALL TO ORDER

#### INTRODUCTIONS

#### ATTENDANCE

Present 7 - Eric T. Costello, Kristerfer Burnett, Ryan Dorsey, Danielle N. McCray, Sharon Green Middleton, Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer, and Robert Stokes Sr.

#### ITEM SCHEDULED FOR PUBLIC HEARING

##### 21-0024R

##### **Informational Hearing - Baltimore City Tax Sale**

For the purpose of inviting the Baltimore City Department of Finance, the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, the Comptroller, Baltimore City Information Technology, the Law Department, the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service and other relevant parties to provide information and complete details and timeline, and amounts of liens owed, disaggregated where appropriate by demographics, ages, owner-occupied versus non-owner-occupied, and number of residents who have owned their property for more than 25 years in tax sale this year; in addition, discussing the City's powers related to the state, programs already in place to assist homeowners in tax sale, possible reforms, an update on implementation of the *In Rem* process for vacant and abandoned properties, and any other relevant information of interest to the Baltimore City Council.

**Sponsors:** Odette Ramos, Danielle N. McCray, Phylcia Porter, John T. Bullock, Sharon Green Middleton

A motion was made by Member Middleton, seconded by Member Burnett, that City Council Resolution 21-0024R be Recommended Favorably with Amendment. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes: 6 - Costello, Burnett, Dorsey, McCray, Middleton, and "Yitzy" Schleifer

Out-Chamber: 1 - Stokes Sr.

#### ADJOURNMENT