

**CITY OF BALTIMORE**  
**COUNCIL BILL 23-0181R**  
**(Resolution)**

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Introduced by: Councilmembers Cohen, Porter, Bullock, Middleton, Conway, Dorsey, Ramos,  
Torrence, Glover, Burnett

Introduced and read first time: July 17, 2023

Assigned to: Ways and Means Committee

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REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, City Administrator, Department of  
Recreation and Parks, Baltimore Police Department, Department of Transportation, Fire  
Department, Department of Human Resources, Department of Public Works

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A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Special Event Permitting Processes**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Department of Transportation, Department  
4 of Recreation and Parks, Department of Public Works, Baltimore Police Department, Fire  
5 Department, Department of Human Resources, City Administrator’s Office, and any other  
6 relevant parties to come before the City Council to: (1) detail the causes of widespread  
7 challenges with the City’s special events permitting processes, including application  
8 backlogs, staff shortages, and system irregularities; (2) outline solutions to ensure that these  
9 backlogs, staff shortages, and irregularities do not continue to impact beloved City events and  
10 public safety; and (3) outline reasons for permit denials and detail the City’s strategy for  
11 responding to unpermitted events.

12 **Recitals**

13 The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges within City special events permitting  
14 procedures and caused some processes to grind to a halt. Many of these have never resumed or  
15 recovered and, as a result, have threatened the cancellation of major events, including the 2022  
16 Mayor’s Christmas Parade, and have contributed to unsafe, unpermitted events, including  
17 Brooklyn Day in 2023.

18 City permitting processes protect public safety. When festivals, block parties,  
19 demonstrations, races, parades, and other such gatherings occur, permits ensure that organizers  
20 address concerns that include security, sanitation, and traffic.

21 With proper resources, the permitting process in Baltimore City is efficient and economical.  
22 It protects public safety, offers a major revenue stream for the City, and ensures that businesses  
23 and community groups adhere to City Code and regulations.

24 Due to the cumbersome nature of event permitting processes, situations arise where groups  
25 feel forced to circumvent the permitting process. The burden is on City government to make the  
26 event permitting process as efficient, clear, and inexpensive as possible.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.  
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

## Council Bill 23-0181R

1 Applicants for special event permits have reported the following frustrations, setbacks,  
2 delays, and miscommunication, among other complaints:

- 3 • Applicants have waited months to hear back from City officials regarding approval of  
4 a special events permit and, in some cases, have not known the status of the event just  
5 a few days before the event's scheduled date, which leaves organizers unsure if  
6 vendors can be prepaid or other advanced planning can take place;
- 7 • Applicants and organizers have been unable to reach a live representative or staff  
8 member by phone or email and general inquiry emails have been unanswered;
- 9 • Staff shortages in critical areas have created chokepoints for the overall permitting  
10 process;
- 11 • Agencies have not directly coordinated between themselves when 1 agency redirects a  
12 permit applicant to another agency, and applicants are not given a time line for the  
13 agency's response;
- 14 • Event dates that are not available due to conflicting City events and limited resources  
15 are not communicated to applicants early enough in the application process; and
- 16 • There is a general lack of information and inability for applicants to receive status  
17 updates about where the City or a specific City agency is in the permitting process.

18 Baltimore City's permitting process should be easy to navigate, transparent to the public, and  
19 operate efficiently. The permitting process should engender trust in the City's agencies and  
20 procedures, and should create a gateway to investment in and enjoyment of our City's public  
21 spaces.

22 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City  
23 Council invites representatives from the Department of Transportation, Department of  
24 Recreation and Parks, Department of Public Works, Baltimore Police Department, Fire  
25 Department, Department of Human Resources, City Administrator's Office, and any other  
26 relevant parties to come before the City Council to: (1) detail the causes of widespread  
27 challenges with the City's special events permitting processes, including application backlogs,  
28 staff shortages, and system irregularities; (2) outline solutions to ensure that these backlogs, staff  
29 shortages, and irregularities do not continue to impact beloved City events and public safety; and  
30 (3) outline reasons for permit denials and detail the City's strategy for responding to unpermitted  
31 events..

32 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Director of the  
33 Department of Transportation, the Director of the Department of Recreation and Parks, the  
34 Director of the Department of Public Works, the Commissioner of the Baltimore Police  
35 Department, the Chief of the Fire Department, the Director of the Department of Human  
36 Resources, the City Administrator, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.