

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON SCOTT – MAYOR

 ZEKE COHEN - COUNCIL PRESIDENT



OFFICE OF COUNCIL SERVICES

NANCY MEAD – DIRECTOR

100 N. HOLIDAY STREET

BALTIMORE MD, 21202

HEARING NOTES

Bill:LO25-0028

Title: Acquisition Strategy & IN REM Filings

Committee: Housing & Economic Development

Chaired by: James Torrence

Hearing Date: 10/21/2025

Time (Beginning): 5:15 PM

Time (Ending): 6:35: PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Attendance: Approximately 30

Committee Members in Attendance:

James Torrence, Odette Ramos, Jermaine Jones, Zac Blanchard,

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
Hearing televised 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
Moted by:
Final Vote:

Major Speakers

(This is not an attendance record.)

Alice Kennedy – Housing Commissioner

Major Issues Discussed

- The Chair opened the hearing – noting the bill and members in attendance
- The floor was open for the Vice Chair to make opening comments
- The floor was open to a presentation from DHCD (slides in the bill file)
- The floor was open to questions from members topics included:
 - The capacity of staff for IN REM – What is the number of attorneys – 1.2 million was put into the budget for vacant reduction – what staff has been hired with that budget enhancement? 50 was mentioned during the budget hearings

- What is the optimal caseload for attorneys?
 - Attorneys filing about 6-8 per month with caseloads of 50-60 per attorney
 - Joe Krishner – Assistant Comish for legal section – cases take on average about 6 months – increasing caseload will make it take longer
- Have we invested into software to help?
 - Yes one of the 1st investments made in the process
- Delayed BVRI Funding – has put the city about a year behind in acquiring properties on the BVRI list
 - 3 part MOU officially announced
- Any turnover in attorney positions for acquisitions
 - Just 1
- How are we managing the paralegal workload
 - Lots of paperwork and legwork for notices, mailings, ect... 1.3 paralegals to attorney
- Are we using the digital system to track mailings
 - This is one of the efficiencies DHCD is working on. Looking into a 3rd party mailer.
- Should the Council consider removing the prefile notice for IN REM?
 - We do need to keep that function – but looking into the 5-day post-filing notice – just extra paper
- What is the recommendation for capacity – is there a legislative fix – do we need more attorneys
 - Not a good idea to reduce the prefile notice – it's the 1st communication from the city explaining the liens
- Where are the priority blocks in each district –
 - Pipeline questions
- Money for court staffing capacity - additional magistrate – not just court staff
 - Money from state is multiyear
- Acquisition status – clarification on active acquisition
- How can we ramp up in the 12th district?
 - Working on ramping up in all council districts – one problem is that in some areas of district 12 the property values have crept up which mean that there needs to be more liens to get to the tipping point for IN REM foreclosure.
- *Request for a heat map of assessed values around IN REM eligible properties – requesting from DHCD for each council district.
- Process to do disposition for acquired properties –
 - City owns over 900 properties – some not ready to be disposed of because its between vacant properties
- 717 in the target for IN REM – how are we prioritizing
 - Whole block, working with BVRC, block-level planning, CDO request
- IN REM 2 – we need to prioritize how to get to 25 attorneys
- Heart money issue, foreclosure crisis, 3rd party developers who are looking to take advantage of TIF
 - DHCD has done a full analysis of properties in the current tranche of TIF

Further Study

Was further study requested?

☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If yes, describe.

Requesting a heat map of assessed home values around in rem eligible properties for each council district

Committee Vote:

Chair: Yea
Vice Chair: Yea
Member: Yea
Member: Yea
Member: Yea

Tony Leva, Date: 10/21/2025

Cc: Bill File
 OCS Chrono File