



**BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
COMMITTEE**

Mission Statement

On behalf of the Citizens of Baltimore City, the Public Safety and Government Operations will be responsible for matters concerning public safety, including, but not limited to; emergency preparedness, police services, fire/EMS, and the executive, administrative, and operational functions of the city government and libraries.

**The Honorable Mark Conway
Chairman**

PUBLIC HEARING

**Wednesday, June 15, 2022
1:00 PM**

**Council Bill: 22-0088R
Informational Hearing – CSX Coal Silo Explosion**

CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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Mark Conway
Ryan Dorsey
Antonio Glover
Odette Ramos
Robert Stokes
Staff: Jennifer Coates (410-396-1260)

WAYS AND MEANS (W&M)

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Krisferfer Burnett
Ryan Dorsey
Danielle McCray
Sharon Green Middleton
Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
Robert Stokes
Staff: Marguerite Currin (443-984-3485)

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Odette Ramos
Staff: Samuel Johnson (410-396-1091)

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Staff: Matthew Peters (410-396-1268)

RULES AND LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT (OVERSIGHT)

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Krisferfer Burnett
Mark Conway
Eric Costello
Sharon Green Middleton
Odette Ramos
James Torrence
Staff: Richard Krummerich (410-396-1266)



BILL SYNOPSIS

Committee: Public Safety and Government Operations

Bill 22 – 0088R

Informational Hearing – CSX Coal Silo Explosion

Sponsor: Councilwoman Phylicia Porter

Introduced: February 7, 2022

Purpose:

For the purpose of inviting representatives from the CSX Transportation, Inc., incorporated under the general law of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Baltimore Fire Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the CSX Coal Silo explosion that occurred on December 30, 2021, in Curtis Bay, to address what is being done about air quality in the area, and how an incident of this type may be prevented in the future.

Effective: N/A

Agency Reports

Law Department	
Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management	
Fire Department	

Analysis

Background

Curtis Bay Coal Piers is strategically located on the CSX network and the Chesapeake Bay. The organizations website states that CSX has invested over \$60 million in Curtis Bay Piers over the last five years, setting new standards in environmental stewardship and providing improved throughput capacity, efficiency, and flexibility. An unconstrained and independent dumper configuration improves production at Curtis Bay as the focus has changed from storing coal to “just-in-time” transition of coal into the water vessels. The facility has a rated and demonstrated capacity of 14 million tons of coal throughput annually with room to grow.

While the cause of the December 30, 2021 explosion is still listed as under investigation on public websites, it was reported that a contributing factor was coal dust jammed in a conveyor belt.

Citizen Air Quality Monitoring in Curtis Bay, Baltimore Report – Findings

What is PM 2.5? Fine particulate matter (PM 2.5) is an air pollutant that is a concern for people’s health when levels in the air are high. PM 2.5 are tiny particles in the air that reduce visibility and cause the air to appear hazy when levels are elevated. It can also cause adverse health effects, including increased risk of premature death due to lung cancer and heart and respiratory disease, even in concentrations below federal air quality standards.

In a report published by the Environmental Integrity Project they state that the measurements at both of the sites in Curtis Bay were consistently higher than the PM 2.5 levels recorded at the Maryland Department of Environment’s sites. For example, the average readings at St. Paul’s Church in January 2015 were 23.5 percent higher than the average readings at MDE’s Glen Burnie monitoring site and 20.3 percent higher than at MDE’s Essex site.

- **Recommendations:**

- The Maryland Department of Environment should install a PM 2.5 monitor in the Curtis Bay community, in the area between Curtis Avenue and Pennington Avenue where the Environmental Integrity Project recorded the highest PM 2.5 levels during their sampling;
- State and local agencies, with the proper financial support, should conduct “hotspot” monitoring for PM 2.5 in communities of concern; and
- There should be access to a high-quality laboratory to obtain good data.

Additional Information

Information Source(s):

Analysis by: Samuel Johnson
Analysis Date: June 15, 2022

Direct Inquiries to: (410) 396-1091

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 22-0088R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Porter, Bullock
Introduced and read first time: February 7, 2022
Assigned to: Public Safety and Government Operations Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, Fire Department, Office of Emergency Management

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – CSX Coal Silo Explosion**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from CSX Transportation, Inc., incorporated under
4 the general law of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Baltimore Fire
5 Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the CSX
6 Coal Silo explosion that occurred on December 30, 2021, in Curtis Bay, to address what is
7 being done about air quality in the area, and to address how an incident of this type may be
8 prevented in the future.
9

10 On December 30, 2021, a loud explosion at the Curtis Bay Coal Piers operated by CSX
11 Transportation, Inc. shook the homes in Curtis Bay. Luckily no person was immediately injured
12 and damage was limited to the homes of Curtis Bay residents and commercial properties. What
13 is not know is are the long-term health implications of the explosion. Debris, coal dust, smoke,
14 and other materials were launched into the air that day. Exposure to the resulting poor air quality
15 may have a lasting impact on Curtis Bay residents.

16 The CSX operated Curtis Bay Coal Piers is the second largest exporter of coal on the East
17 Coast. The coal terminal supports coal and iron ore movements on and off the international and
18 domestic waterway systems. There are inherent hazards in handling and transporting coal. The
19 build up of highly combustible coal dust on machinery lead to the explosion on December 30th.
20 As natural byproduct of the industry, these hazards have the potential to echo beyond the CSX
21 facility and into the community of Curtis Bay, and among its residents and businesses.

22 According to a 2016 study by the Environmental Integrity Project, Curtis Bay ranks first in
23 Maryland for emissions of air toxins from stationary sources – including coal plants. From 2005
24 to 2009 Curtis Bay ranked among the top ten zip codes in the United States for air toxins
25 released, and number one from stationary sources. Curtis Bay is already burdened by significant
26 inequitable environmental conditions. The explosion on December 30th leave the residents of
27 Curtis Bay increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of poor air quality caused by concentrated coal
28 particulate in the air.

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

Council Bill 22-0088R

1 With this investigative hearing the City Council seeks to better understand:



- 2 1. how and why the explosion happened;
- 3 2. how CSX is addressing environmental concerns in Curtis Bay as related to the coal
4 piers' close proximity to residents; and
- 5 3. how air quality is affected by the operation of the coal piers, and more specifically
6 how the December 30th explosion impacted air quality measures.

7 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, That the
8 Baltimore City Council invites representatives from CSX Transportation, Inc., incorporated
9 under the general law of the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Baltimore Fire
10 Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the CSX Coal
11 Silo explosion that occurred on December 30, 2021, in Curtis Bay, to address what is being done
12 about air quality in the area, and to address how an incident of this type may be prevented in the
13 future.

14 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Director of
15 State Relations for CSX Transportation, Inc., the Chief of the Baltimore Fire Department, the
16 Emergency Manager of the Office of Emergency Management, and the Mayor's Legislative
17 Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND
GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
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AGENCY REPORTS

F R O M	Name & Title	Niles R. Ford, Fire Chief 	CITY OF BALTIMORE MEMO	
	Agency Name & Address	Baltimore City Fire Department 401 E. Fayette Street, Mezzanine		
	Subject	City Council Bill #22-0088R – Informational Hearing – CSX Coal Silo Explosion		

TO: The Honorable Nick J. Mosby, President
And All Members of the Baltimore City Council
City Hall, Room 408

DATE: March 14, 2022

The proposed legislation invites representatives from CSX Transportation, Inc., the Baltimore Fire Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the CSX Coal Silo explosion that occurred on December 30, 2021, in Curtis Bay, to address what is being done about air quality in the area, and to address how an incident of this type may be prevented in the future.

On December 30, 2021, Baltimore City Fire Department Operations Units were dispatched to 1910 Benhill Avenue for a report of a building fire at the location. The response assignment is as follows:

Initial Dispatch Time:	1127 hours
Initial Dispatch Assignment:	Engines 57,5,26,2, 47 – Trucks 21 & 6 – Battalion Chiefs 6 & 2 – Medic 9
At 1128	Anne Arundel Engine County 31
At 1129	Anne Arundel County Truck 31
At 1131	OEM 4 & 2 - SOC (Special Operations Command) 1
At 1132	Hazmat Coordinator 2 – Collapse Unit
At 1134	Fire Rescue Boat 1 & 2
At 1135	Car 5 (Shift Commander)
At 1142	Fire Investigation Bureau (FIB 9-14)
At 1143	Rescue 1
At 1145	Airflex 1
At 1233	Public Information Officer (PIO)

The Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) looks forward to discussing Council Bill 22-0088R.

NF/kw

CITY OF BALTIMORE

BRANDON M. SCOTT
Mayor



DEPARTMENT OF LAW
JAMES L. SHEA, CITY SOLICITOR
100 N. HOLLIDAY STREET
SUITE 101, CITY HALL
BALTIMORE, MD 21202

June 13, 2022

The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Attn: Executive Secretary
Room 409, City Hall
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Re: City Council Bill 22-0088R – Informational Hearing – CSX Coal Silo Explosion

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Law Department has reviewed City Council Bill 22-0088R for form and legal sufficiency. This resolution is for the purpose of inviting representatives from CSX Transportation, Inc., the Baltimore Fire Department, and the Office of Emergency Management to investigate the cause of the December 30, 2021 coal silo explosion in Curtis Bay, to address how to prevent such an incident in the future, and to address air quality remediation in the area.

The City Council has an inherent power to investigate “in furtherance of its legislative function.” 4 McQuillin Mun. Corp. § 13:7. The City Council may “exercise within the limits of Baltimore City all the power commonly known as the Police Power to the same extent as the State has or could exercise that power within the limits of Baltimore City,” and may “pass any ordinance, not inconsistent with the provisions of this Charter or the laws of the State, which it may deem proper in the exercise of any of the powers, either express or implied, enumerated in this Charter, as well as any ordinance as it may deem proper in maintaining the peace, good government, health and welfare of Baltimore City.” City Charter, Art. II, §§ (27), (47).

A resolution is an appropriate way for the City Council of Baltimore to conduct an investigative hearing. See, e.g., *Inlet Assocs. v. Assateague House Condominium*, 313 Md. 413, 428 (1988). Therefore, the Law Department approves this Resolution for form and legal sufficiency.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Hochstetler
Chief Solicitor

cc: James L. Shea, City Solicitor
Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations
Elena DiPietro, Chief Solicitor, General Counsel Division
Hilary Ruley, Chief Solicitor
Ashlea Brown, Chief Solicitor