

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 12-0049R
(Resolution)**

Introduced by: Councilmembers Henry, Clarke, Middleton, Branch, Holton, Kraft, Spector,
Reisinger, Curran, President Young, Councilmembers Scott, Mosby, Welch

Introduced and read first time: May 7, 2012

Assigned to: Judiciary and Legislative Investigations Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: Department of Public Works, Planning Department,
Department of Finance

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Investigative Hearing – Municipal Composting**

3 FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Public Works, and the Chief, Bureau of Solid
4 Waste to report to the Council on the Department’s progress toward creating a
5 comprehensive Municipal Composting Program; to provide a fiscal impact statement of
6 creating the program, and; an estimated time line for citywide implementation of municipal
7 composting.

8 **Recitals**

9 The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports that yard trimmings and food
10 residuals together constitute 27% of the U.S. municipal solid waste stream – a lot of waste to
11 send to landfills when it could become useful and environmentally beneficial compost instead.
12 Compost offers the obvious benefits of resource efficiency and creating a useful product from
13 organic waste that would otherwise have been landfilled.

14 The EPA defines compost as organic material that can be used as a soil amendment or as a
15 medium to grow plants. Mature compost is a stable material with a content call humus that is
16 dark brown or black and has a soil-like, earthy smell. It is created by: combining organic wastes
17 (e.g., yard trimmings, food wastes, manures) in proper ratios into piles, rows, or vessels; adding
18 bulking agents (e.g., wood chips) as necessary to accelerate the breakdown of organic materials;
19 and allowing the finished material to fully stabilize and mature through a curing process.

20 The Biodegradable Products Institute’s *Case Studies on Municipal Composting* finds that
21 community composting is a big success story. As much as 65% of grass and yard – leaves, brush
22 – trimmings are being composted. While this is a significant achievement, more than 60 million
23 tons of solid waste – food scraps and soiled/wet paper – are still being sent to landfills.

24 The *Urban Garden Center* reports that more and more people are discovering that municipal
25 composting programs are a perfect fit to their busy lives, providing them the opportunity to
26 recycle and do their part in protecting the planet. An additional benefit to home gardeners is that
27 they get a high-quality soil-enhancer to make their trees, flowers, and shrubbery flourish while
28 helping to clean the air.

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

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1 Program rules vary from community to community, but generally the city in charge of the
2 project encourages - and often requires - residents to collect for composting organic waste such
3 as grass clippings, leaves, tree branches and other yard material. Some programs also accept food
4 scraps, which when processed at a compost facility, make an excellent fertilizer for most types of
5 trees and plants.

6 In June 2009, a City Council resolution calling for an informational hearing on the recycling
7 of yard waste found that in Baltimore City the processing of yard waste is limited. At that time,
8 the Department of Public Works provided for the collection of unlimited bagged leaves one day a
9 week from the beginning of October of one year through the end of January of the next. This
10 approach was held to be not only environmentally unfriendly, but wasteful as well.

11 The resolution also expressed the will of the Council that “as the City institutes the One Plus
12 One program to protect the environment by producing less waste and recycling more, it is only
13 appropriate that the issue of yard waste be addressed to produce an equally beneficial outcome.”

14 At the hearing on the 2009 legislation, it became clear that little had been done to establish a
15 municipal composting program in Baltimore City. The current legislation is introduced in the
16 hope of showing progress made in bringing to the residents of the city a composting program that
17 will provide people with one of many ways to “go green” and help preserve the health and
18 natural resources of our planet.

19 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the
20 Director of Public Works, and the Chief, Bureau of Solid Waste are requested to report to the
21 Council on the Department’s progress toward creating a comprehensive Municipal Composting
22 Program; to provide a fiscal impact statement of creating the program, and; an estimated time
23 line for citywide implementation of municipal composting.

24 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
25 Director of Public Works, the Chief, Bureau of Solid Waste, the Director of Planning, the
26 Associations listed in the Department of Planning Directory of Community Associations; and the
27 Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.