

**CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 15-0264R
(Resolution)**

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

Introduced and read first time: September 21, 2015

Assigned to: Public Safety Committee

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Adopted: December 10, 2015

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION CONCERNING

**Restoring 911 as an Efficient and Responsive Public Safety Partner Upon Which
Baltimore City Callers Can Confidently Rely for Help**

FOR the purpose of calling upon the City Administration and Baltimore Police Department to immediately restore 911 operators and dispatchers as public safety employees with the Baltimore Police Department; to cross-train operators and dispatchers so that both groups can handle either position; and to provide adequate staffing and sufficient management to avoid busy signals, delayed dispatch of crimes in progress, and other current miscommunications, which have negatively affected citizen confidence in a 911 system on which our calls for help and very lives depend.

Recitals

WHEREAS, 911 operators and dispatchers are the public’s vital link to help and safety in times of crisis from fires, injury, heart attacks, violence, shootings, holdups, and “real time” crimes in progress.

WHEREAS, The working conditions, morale, dedication, training, and supervision of these operators and dispatchers affect their ability to rise to the occasions of our emergencies. Immediate access to the 911 system they operate is a crucial gateway to the first responders whose help we require and upon whom our very lives may depend.

WHEREAS, After years of confidence in the 911 system, citizens throughout the City have recently and increasingly complained that 911 is no longer the “fail-proof” system we had taken for granted for so long. In emails, on chat rooms, and at public safety forums, such as one recently held in the Northern Police District, incident after incident is described of 911 busy signals and disconnects and of delayed dispatches to crimes in progress. Citizens identify such lapses as failures in our public safety system, which must be urgently and effectively addressed.

WHEREAS, Times have changed, and 911 must invest in keeping pace with the increased 911 calls occasioned by so many on-the-scene cell phone callers reporting emergencies and by the recent national spike, reflected locally, in incidents of criminal violence.

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

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1 **WHEREAS**, “Keeping pace” requires adequate City investment in the recruitment, hiring, and
2 training of sufficient numbers of 911 operators and dispatchers to meet the demand and
3 reinvestment in the flexible leave benefits, which traditionally permitted timely days off to
4 recover from extended periods of stressful call center and dispatch services. Such benefits mean
5 better service resulting from less on-the-job fatigue and error.

6 **WHEREAS**, In 2011, 911 operators and dispatchers lost such benefits when they were
7 transferred out of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD) into the Mayor’s Office of Information
8 Technology (MOIT), a cost-saving measure. They also lost recognition as acknowledged
9 partners of Baltimore City’s public safety coalition of Fire, Police, and EMS professionals, a
10 blow to morale. In response, many 911 professionals retired or transferred to other subdivisions,
11 leaving a shortage of seasoned personnel and a blow to 911’s traditional esprit de corps.

12 **WHEREAS**, 911 worked well when its operators and dispatchers worked directly for the
13 Baltimore Police Department as equal partners in the first responder system. Especially now, as
14 a class of new operators prepares to join 911, a transfer back to this traditional arrangement
15 should be effected for both operators and dispatchers.

16 **WHEREAS**, Operators and dispatchers work in partnership with one another by police district.
17 The system would also benefit from cross-training so that each could effectively fulfill either
18 position as needed, helping to prevent unanticipated gaps in 911 operations. In no circumstances
19 should this partnership be undermined by leaving operators with MOIT while dispatchers return
20 to BPD employment and supervision. Seamless cooperation is crucial to efficient 911
21 operations.

22 **WHEREAS**, Our citizens require a fair, efficient, and accountable public safety system and
23 have called upon the City to add “fixing 911” to the list of needed reforms.

24 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE**, that the
25 Baltimore City Council calls upon the City Administration and the Baltimore Police Department
26 to immediately:

- 27 1. Restore both 911 operators and dispatchers as Baltimore Police Department employees
28 supervised by BPD personnel and with flexible leave policies as provided before the 2011
29 transfer to MOIT;
- 30 2. Cross-train operators and dispatchers so that both groups can handle either position in
31 avoiding gaps in service; and
- 32 3. Provide adequate staffing and sufficient management to avoid 911 busy signals, dropped
33 calls, disconnects, and delayed dispatch of crimes in progress and other current
34 miscommunications, which have negatively affected citizen confidence in a 911 system
35 on which our calls for help and very lives depend..

36 ~~**AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Baltimore Police Department is requested to report~~
37 ~~to the Mayor and City Council in writing by January 15, 2016, on the accomplishment of~~
38 ~~recommendations 1. & 2.; and, through Comstat data analysis, on improvements to rates of~~
39 ~~immediate public access when calling to 911 and on dispatch records for prioritizing crimes in~~
40 ~~progress.~~

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1 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That the Baltimore City Police Department and the
2 **Baltimore City Fire Department are requested to jointly report to the Mayor and City Council in**
3 **writing by January 15, 2016 about the current status of emergency communications in Baltimore,**
4 **particularly noting improvements made thereto, and including data on public access to the 911**
5 **system and dispatch metrics pertaining to crimes in progress.**

6 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the
7 Police Commissioner, the Chief Information Officer, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the
8 City Council.