



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: President Rawlings-Blake

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing - Fire Department - Rotating Company Closures

FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore City Fire Chief to report to the City Council on the effect of the newly adopted "rotating company closures" policy on the delivery of fire suppression and paramedic services to City residents, the impact of the policy on the response times to fires and medical emergencies, the impact of the policy on the availability of trucks and engines to jointly respond to fire scenes; and the fiscal impact on budget shortages and the retention or layoff of experience department personnel and the hiring of new recruits.

Recitals

In order to meet budget reduction requirements, the Baltimore City Fire Department ended the practice of filling vacant shifts by paying overtime, resulting in the possible closure of some truck or engine companies on days with staff shortages. It was anticipated that this "rotating company closures" policy would save the Department \$5.5 million in overtime expenditures.

Prior to instituting the "rotating company closures" system, firefighting crews worked 4 shifts a day, with nearly 300 firefighters on duty at a time. To fill vacancies, the Department called in off-duty workers and paid those workers overtime. Under the new system, firefighters are redeployed, based on a given day's regular staffing. This could possibly result in some stations lacking the requisite number of employees to open or in fewer available units to respond to calls.

The number of units that are available to respond to call for service could be impacted by the new system in another way. Fire Engines and Fire Trucks perform different functions at a fire scene. Fire engines are equipped with hoses to provide water so that personnel can aggressively fight the fire. Fire Trucks are like the firefighters tool box - carrying ladders, rescue equipment, and other tools to enable personnel to support firefighting activities. Have the rotating closures changed the ratio between the units in a manner that impacts public safety?

When it became clear that cutbacks would have to be made in order to meet budgetary shortfalls caused by the national recession, Fire Department officials first considered closing at least 2 stations, in addition to the rotating closures. At that time elected officials, firefighters, and the general public voiced concerns about the impact on public safety - would there be a delay in response time, an increase in loss of life and loss of property, and a negative

impact on the health of overworked personnel?

In order to address these concerns, it is prudent to take a look at changes in policy and changes in services at the earliest opportunity so that adjustments can be made, if necessary, to ensure the safety of residents and firefighters alike.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Baltimore City Fire Chief is requested to report to the City Council on the effect of the newly adopted rotating company closures policy on the delivery of fire suppression and paramedic services to City residents; the impact of the policy on the response times to fires and medical emergencies; the fiscal impact on budget shortages; and the impact on the retention or layoff of department personnel.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Director of Finance is requested to take an active part in the hearing on this Resolution.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore Fire Chief, the President, Baltimore Fire Officers Association, the President, Baltimore Firefighters Union, Local 734, the President, Vulcan Blazers, the Director of Finance, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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