



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Camp 83

FOR the purpose of calling on the City of Baltimore to consider two practical and humane recommendations in addressing Camp 83, the campsite of 15 otherwise homeless adults, and to avoid any pre-emptive action which disrupts humane transitions from Camp 83 to voucher-supported permanent housing; and, requesting the Homeless Services Program to report its chosen course of action to the President of the City Council before March 8, 2013.

Recitals

Camp 83 is an encampment of 15 homeless adults who reside on the land between two tall concrete walls between the Fallsway as it rises uphill to intersect with East Chase Street and the on-ramp to I-83 at Madison Street. Camp 83 residents are Mike & Venus, Charlie & Tracy, Mel, Nate, Rich, Clay, Martin, Turk, Jaimie, Bobby, Liz, Kim, and Cedrick.

The City of Baltimore has expressed its intention to evict these residents and break up their encampment as of Monday, March 8, and the residents and their advocates ask consideration of a more practical and humane approach.

In July 2012, the federal government provided Baltimore City with Housing First vouchers restricted to vulnerable populations, including the homeless. The City has assigned Bon Secours outreach workers to help all Camp 83 residents begin the process of securing such vouchers for permanent housing.

Thanks to this outreach, and the work of the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services and the City Housing Department, three Camp 83 residents have already been approved for vouchers and have identified willing landlords and suitable homes to accommodate their needs.

Of the remaining 12 residents, some are either in the process of being recommended to the Mayor's Office for referral to Housing or are still waiting for their initial screenings. A few have been denied after being screened and are engaged with their advocates in appealing for reconsideration.

Because of federal guidelines, voucher approval is an exacting and time-consuming process in itself. After approval, the residents must still find and identify a suitable housing “match,” secure the landlord’s approval, and await a Housing inspector’s approval of the chosen premises.

In effect, help is forthcoming, but time is too short for all Camp 83 residents to complete the transition to permanent housing by the City’s deadline.

A number of Camp 83 representatives and advocates have suggested consideration of two options for more practically and humanely addressing the City’s goals and the residents’ needs in regard to Camp 83 and its pending deadline.

First option is to extend the March 8 deadline by three months, until June 8, 2013. Housing First vouchers are available, but the process from outreach to move-in is time consuming for advocates and applicants alike. Successful approvals in three cases demonstrate that, given this extension, the remaining 12 Camp 83 residents will have time to be referred, screened, and approved - and then the time to find housing matches, secure landlord approvals, have the properties inspected and approved by Housing, and move in.

These three months will meanwhile give advocates the chance to develop alternative housing arrangements for those few Camp 83 residents who may finally be determined ineligible for vouchers, leaving no resident behind.

Second option is to meet a March 2013 deadline for closing the camp - but under conditions which safeguard the residents’ belongings and provide temporary housing without interruption until vouchers are approved and permanent housing secured for all residents.

In this case, resident belongings would be safely stored on their behalf. After that and before any Camp 83 displacement occurs, all residents would be relocated into the motels and hotels generally provided by the City for emergency victims - or comparable 24/7 housing. In no case would this temporary housing be located for any period of time in any public or private shelter.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Council calls on the Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services and the City Administration to consider these suggested options and, whichever course is followed, to avoid any pre-emptive action which disrupts humane transitions from Camp 83 to the permanent housing which the City’s Housing First vouchers have placed within the reach of Camp 83 residents.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Council requests that the Office of Homeless Services report in writing to the President of the City Council before March 8 on its decisions regarding the Council’s recommendations and on the status of Camp 83 and its 15 remaining residents.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Health Commissioner, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Human Services, the Director of the Homeless Services Program, the Chair of the Journey Home Campaign’s Civic Leadership Council, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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