



City of Baltimore

City Council
City Hall, Room 408
100 North Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

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
Performance Measures - "Blue Light Cameras" - Crime Prevention

FOR the purpose of requesting the Baltimore Police Commissioner to report to the City Council on the status of the CCTV camera program; the phase out of the original blue-light cameras and replacement with closed circuit units; the increase in certain crimes and decline in clearance rates; and the measures in place for monitoring the cameras.

Recitals

News that Baltimore Police will be phasing out the familiar blue-light cameras mounted high above the City streets in high-crime areas has been met with consternation by some neighborhood residents, despite the fact that they are being replaced by more sophisticated and effective closed-circuit units.

The original cameras, first installed in 2005, have limited technology application that requires considerable manpower - these movable PODSS cameras have to be monitored on site by an officer with a laptop style computer or the video stored in the cameras can be reviewed, although there is often trouble in interpreting the images recorded unattended at an earlier time.

The Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice reports that Baltimore's Crime Camera Program has grown quickly over the past several years. Baltimore currently has 480 CCTV cameras and 100 movable PODSS. Most recently, the City installed 29 CCTV cameras in the Poplar Grove area at a cost of \$1.4 million. Since 2005, a significant investment has been made in purchasing and installing cameras, which have a live feed and are monitored at police districts, police headquarters, and the Atrium.

The cameras have been a critical tool in preventing and solving crime. In 2007, overall crime was reduced by 10% in camera areas as compared to the previous year. In 2008, the cameras were instrumental in solving and preventing shootings, robberies, and assaults. Through Citiwatch at the Atrium alone, camera monitors assisted police in making 729 arrests in the Downtown Business District in 2008 - an increase of 32% from 2007.

A closer look at the CCTV camera program will give assurance that this important law enforcement tool is being fully utilized - that reported cut-backs in personnel have not affected the monitoring of the cameras; that

communities where the “old” blue-light cameras are being phased out are being properly informed of the better crime-fighting capabilities of the “new” cameras; and that the statistics accurately reflect the effectiveness of CCTVs in Baltimore’s most threatened neighborhoods.

Furthermore, the Council would like to be briefed on any correlation between rise in robberies and aggravated assaults and decline in clearance rates. Specifically, the number and clearance rates of arrests, armed robberies, and aggravated assaults year to date as compared to last year.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, That the Baltimore Police Commissioner is requested to report to the City Council on the status of the CCTV camera program; the phase out of the original blue-light cameras and replacement with closed circuit units; the increase in certain crimes and decline in clearance rates; and the measures in place for monitoring the cameras.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Mayor, the Baltimore Police Commissioner, the Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice, the Baltimore City State’s Attorney, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.

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