



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Henry

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

Investigative Hearing - Municipal Composting

FOR the purpose of requesting the Director of Public Works, and the Chief, Bureau of Solid Waste to update the Council on the Department's progress toward creating a comprehensive Municipal Composting Program, to provide a fiscal impact statement on creating the program, and estimate a time line for citywide implementation of municipal composting.

Recitals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In July of 2012 the Council again held a hearing on a resolution asking for information about the City’s progress in establishing municipal composting. At that time, it was clear that little had yet been done to establish a municipal composting program in Baltimore City. The current legislation is introduced in the hope of showing progress made in bringing to the residents of the city a composting program that will provide people with one of many ways to “go green” and help preserve the health and natural resources of our planet.

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

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

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