

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 1397 (Delegate Haynes, *et al.*)
Health and Government Operations

Baltimore City Fire Station Closing and Realignment Citizens' Review Board

This emergency bill establishes a Baltimore City Fire Station Closing and Realignment Citizens' Review Board to (1) study the distribution of fire stations and fire and rescue services; (2) hear evidence on fire station closings and service realignments; and (3) make recommendations to the mayor and city council based on convincing evidence the board obtains through its study and hearings. The bill designates the membership of the board. Board members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for board members are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. The bill does not establish a duration for the board, designate a reporting deadline, or specify staffing responsibilities.

Local Effect: None. Baltimore City is not required to implement any potential board recommendations. Any costs associated with possible findings or recommendations are not a direct result of the bill.

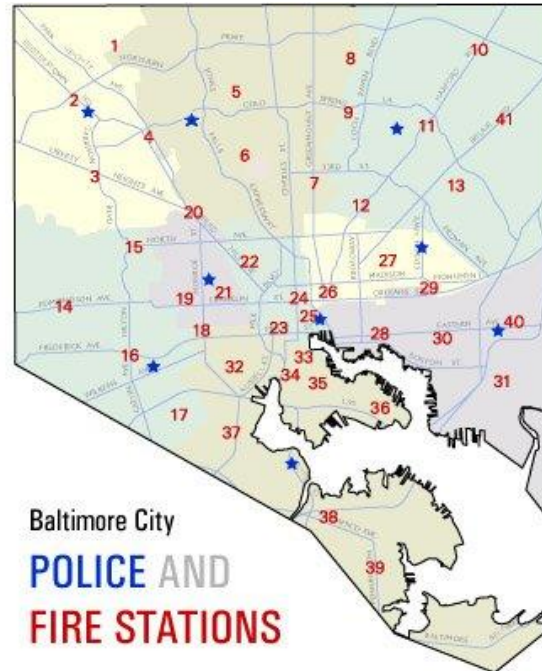
Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Baltimore City has 40 neighborhood fire stations located throughout the city, as shown in **Exhibit 1**. The Baltimore City fire department's budget for fiscal 2010 totals \$153.6 million, of which \$139.1 million comes from city funds, with the remainder coming from federal and State funds and revenue generated from emergency transport fees. There are 1,790 employees in the department, including about 1,300 firefighters

and 200 paramedics. About 90 departmental vacancies currently exist. The department currently operates with four companies being closed per day and night on a rotating basis as a cost savings measure.

Exhibit 1



Note: Individual numbers represent fire stations and stars represent police stations in Baltimore City.

Background: In December 2009, three city fire companies were slated to be permanently closed at the beginning of 2010 and firefighters at those stations reassigned to other stations. According to *The Baltimore Sun*, the city fire chief announced that closing the three companies, located in the central part of the city and near to other units, would allow the city to reduce the frequency that remote fire stations are closed as part of a daily rotation to reduce overtime. The plan was considered a cost-savings measure and endorsed by the mayor. However, opposition to the closings quickly emerged from city council members and union officials who said that response times would grow and put both firefighters and residents in danger. The companies scheduled for closing were (1) Engine 14, 1908 Hollins St. in Carrollton Ridge; (2) Truck 15, 1223 N. Montford Ave. in Broadway East; and (3) Truck 16, 405 McMechen St. in Upton. After much discussion, the closure decision was rescinded, though recent newspaper accounts have said that as many as 125 firefighters and a dozen additional companies could be scheduled for closure in fiscal 2011.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City, Department of Legislative Services

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ncs/hlb

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