

Tax Sale Work Group

Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday, October 28th

Time: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Location: WebEx

Work Group Attendees: Daniel Ramos, Dan Ellis, Margaret Henn, Nneka Nnamdi, Shana Roth- Gormley, Heidi Kenney, Claudia Wilson Randall, Andy Frank, Owen Jarvis

Other Notable Attendees: Councilmember Dani McCray, Matthew Stegman, Councilmember Odette Ramos, Pedro Aponte, Alice Kennedy, various agency representatives

Agenda:

- I. Introductions**
- II. Brief Remarks - Councilmember McCray**
 - a. Emphasized need for focus on legacy residents – especially black homeowners in their homes and supplying resources to them
- III. Presentation - Councilmember Ramos**
 - a. Slide deck
 - i. Maryland Tax Sale Task Force 2017 Report - <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/022600/022602/20180151e.pdf>
 - ii. Additional State Legislation overview
 - iii. Baltimore City Council Tax Sale Reform Legislation
 - iv. CM Ramos Legislative Proposals Requiring General Assembly action
 - v. Further Work needed by Mayor/City Council and Status
- IV. Meeting Cadence – Daniel Ramos**
 - a. Monthly for about 2 hours
- V. Seeking Presenters for Future Meetings – Daniel Ramos**
 - a. Send recommendations to Co-Chairs or staff to the work group
- VI. Written Testimony – Daniel Ramos**
 - a. Yes, members are comfortable with individuals providing written testimony
- VII. In Person Meetings – Daniel Ramos**
 - a. Willingness among group members dependent on COVID restrictions and metrics
- VIII. Ground Rules**
 - a. Be respectful of all perspectives
 - b. Viewing issues through equity lens
 - c. Open Meetings Act applies – overview of process
- IX. Discussion of Areas of Focus – (topic suggestions from Members and Attendees)**
 - a. Timing of redemption
 - b. Improvements on payment plans or need to pay all taxes to redeem
 - c. Homeowners Tax Credit discussion – attempt to not need to apply every year
 - d. Notify people earlier in season about deadlines to avoid tax sale

- e. Tax assessment reevaluation – inflated in some areas
- f. Enabling legislation to delay/cancel tax sale (based upon lessons learned during pandemic)
- g. Margaret Henn - “Tangled titles”- often the title is in the name of the deceased and the family cannot transfer the property because of the fees. Next of kin also cannot get the homeowner’s property tax credit because they don’t own the house.
- h. Pedro/Mara - Outstanding balances that must be dealt with because the build-up is unsustainable.
- i. Julie Day- It might be worth it to look at two buckets for tax sales: residents and commercial vacants
- j. Dan Ellis- Separating properties into owner vs. non-owner occupied vs. vacant
- k. Nneka Nnamdi- consistency for disclosures between purchasers and lawyers
- l. The cases where funds, like attorneys fees, are not being returned to homeowner’s post foreclosure like attorney fees.
- m. Heidi Kenny- timing of the tax sale and when the next year’s taxes are due (currently in. Making a single point of payment so you don’t have to go to the purchaser AND the city, but often the jurisdictions don’t want to take the burden.
- n. Claudia Randall- Session 2022 we have an opportunity for everyone with reverse mortgage delinquency they should be screened for homeowner’s tax credit and the homeowner’s assistance program so they don’t get sent to tax sale.
- o. Shana Roth-Gormley- Seconds Nneka’s suggestion. Ensuring that a clear notice goes out to property owners with information about how the system works and how to find assistance. Can we re-visit why people have to apply for the homeowner’s tax credit every year? Claudia says that it is IRS rules that income must be certified each year.
- p. Mike O’Leary- Once people get into tax sale trouble, many have a difficult time avoiding tax sale. Problems arise because notifications come at the end of the year. But the whole process could be front-loaded a little earlier. Once January 1st comes many often don’t have time to deal with going to tax sale.
- q. Is there a time that makes sense to change the tax sale occurrence?
- r. Mike- After what point in the calendar can you not add a \$20 or \$30 charge that would help people not go into tax sale at the very last minute when it’s too late to get assistance?
- s. Nneka- The tax assessments with predominantly black populations are inflated. People also find it difficult to navigate the appeals process. Can we regulate the tax assessment to ensure it is done in an equitable fashion?
- t. Dan says we may want to put in enabling legislation that gives the City discretion to be responsive to things that may affect the tax sale.

X. Next Meeting

- a. November 18th 1-3PM