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CITY COUNCIL LEADERS QUESTION \$40 MILLION LOST AND FOUND

Oversight Hearing Called to Review the Matter

BALTIMORE—Last night, leaders of the Baltimore City Council scheduled an oversight hearing to question a recent audit that uncovered \$39,714,985 of property tax collections that were not recognized as revenue and as a result were not placed into the City's General fund. The city audit outlining the accounting error was presented publicly for the first time last Wednesday to the City's Board of Estimates and the Department of Finance has accepted responsibility for the error.

"Obviously, whenever a significant amount of City money is lost and found, taxpayers deserve to have a full and complete accounting of what happened," said City Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake. "As a result of the fact that this money was not allocated to the proper general fund account, the City may have lost opportunities to direct funding to important priorities including public education, public safety and property tax relief."

"City Council members, as the elected representatives of the citizens, have a responsibility to openly review this matter and we intend to do so," said Councilman William H. Cole (District 11), who serves as acting Chairman of the Council's Taxation, Finance and Economic Development Committee. "The purpose of this review is not to point fingers, but to provide answers to the taxpayers and to ensure that something like this never happens again."

"We have a responsibility to thoroughly review all of our legal options as we move forward," said Councilman Bernard C. "Jack" Young (District 12), who serves as Chairman of the Council's Budget and Appropriations Committee. "There may be a creative way to put this money to better use, other than debt service."

The oversight hearing is scheduled for Thursday, April 30th at noon to be held in the Du Burns Council Chambers, 4th Floor City Hall. "I am certain that an overwhelming majority of council members will support this open and transparent review for the benefit of City taxpayers," Rawlings-Blake said.

"President Barack Obama reminds us, 'those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account - to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day - because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.' These principles must be the foundation of good government here in Baltimore," Rawlings-Blake said.

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