

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORT

2020 Legislative Session

Reference No.: CB-060-2020

Draft No.: 1

Committee: Committee of the Whole (C.O.W.)

Date: 10/1/2020

Action: FAV

REPORT:

Committee Vote: Favorable, 10-1 (In Favor: Council Members Turner, Anderson-Walker, Davis, Dernoga, Franklin, Glaros, Harrison, Ivey, Streeter and Taveras. Opposed: Council Member Hawkins).

The Committee convened on October 1, 2020, to discuss this legislation, which amends the County Code regarding the reclaiming and redemption process for impounded vehicles. Kenneth Battle, Council staff, described the County's existing process regarding impounded vehicles, which requires notification of the last known registered owners of the vehicle (as well as secured parties) by registered mail within two working days of impoundment. This notice must include:

- (1) A statement as to the reason why the vehicle has been impounded;
- (2) The year, make, model, and vehicle identification number of the vehicle;
- (3) The location of the impoundment facility where the vehicle is being held;
- (4) A statement that the vehicle owner or secured party has the right to a hearing to contest the validity of the impoundment at any time within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the date of such notice by filing a request for hearing with the Police Department on a request form which shall be included with such notice; and
- (5) A statement that the owner or the secured party may have a right, depending upon the reason for the impoundment, to reclaim the vehicle upon payment of all outstanding parking violations and all towing and storage charges resulting from the storage and towing of the vehicle.

Mr. Battle indicated that CB-60-2020 would add the payment of fees associated with outstanding traffic citations to the requirements for vehicle reclamation. Tonya James, Director of Public Safety Programs for the Revenue Authority, provided details on the vehicle towing/impoundment process for abandoned vehicles since this process was recently acquired from the Department of the Environment, indicating there will be a need to revise procedures to enhance coordination between the Revenue Authority and the Police Department. Director James indicated there could be an annual positive fiscal impact of approximately \$80,000 from the collection of traffic citations associated with abandoned vehicles. Currently, owners can reclaim the vehicles by paying towing/storage costs only, which are paid directly to the tow companies.

Concerns were raised regarding the increased reclamation costs to residents, and Director James

estimated the average cost of traffic citations at \$500, acknowledging that actual costs can range from \$200 to as high as \$2,000. The Committee focused on the potential impact on residents who can least afford to pay the additional costs. The Revenue Authority provides payment plans to allow owners to reclaim vehicles prior to payment of all fees. The Committee's discussion also included concerns regarding the need to coordinate with municipalities which have their own towing programs and regulations, as well as the need to review the procedures for the reclamation of stolen vehicles.

After the discussion, the Committee voted favorably on CB-60-2020 by a vote of 10-1.