

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 130088, **Version:** 0

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Authorizing City Council's Committee of the Whole to hold public hearings on the procedures that the City currently employs and proposes to employ to collect the delinquent real estate taxes owed the City and School District by owner-occupants, the effectiveness or shortcomings of existing and proposed procedures, and the additional measures and resources required to improve the system for collecting delinquent real estate taxes owed by owner-occupants.

WHEREAS, It is essential that Philadelphia taxpayers have faith and trust in the fairness of the City's tax collection process and procedures. This trust can exist only if it is clear that the City diligently, comprehensively and in a timely manner pursues and collects the taxes that are due it; and

WHEREAS, According to the PEW Charitable Trusts Philadelphia Research Initiative, 56-percent of real estate tax revenues come from residential properties, and that 54-percent of those properties in the City are occupied by their owners; and

WHEREAS, An examination of 2012 data from Revenue, OPA and L&I suggests that nearly half of all delinquent residential properties are owner-occupied and that the balance due on this group of properties represents one third of the total due; and

WHEREAS, It is a long standing belief that homeownership improves and supports local economies, encourages neighborhood safety, and promotes the livability and stability of communities; and

WHEREAS, City Council members want to ensure that all constituents, particularly owner-occupants, have access to payment arrangements and that the terms and details of those arrangements are fair, transparent and reasonable, while balancing the City's need to collect delinquent real estate tax; and

WHEREAS, On February 4, 2013 the City of Philadelphia announced that new delinquent tax collection strategies will be employed to increase collection rates and improve taxpayer confidence in the collections processes; and

WHEREAS, In anticipation of the forthcoming proposed Operating Budget for FY2014 and the City's move to property assessments based on actual values (known as the Actual Value Initiative), it is critically important for Council, the public and all home owners to understand clearly the tax collection procedures that are currently in place and any proposed changes to the City's collection strategies, particularly as they relate to real estate tax; now therefore

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That the Committee of the Whole is hereby authorized to hold public hearings on the procedures that the City currently employs and proposes to employ to collect the delinquent real estate taxes owed the City and School District by owner-occupants, the effectiveness or shortcomings of existing and proposed procedures, and the additional measures and resources required to improve the system for collecting delinquent real estate taxes owed by owner-occupants.

RESOLVED FURTHER, That these hearings will also allow the Committee of the Whole to investigate the

procedures and practices that the City currently employs and proposes to employ to collect delinquent real estate taxes from owner-occupants, the effectiveness or shortcomings of those procedures with a particular focus on payment arrangements and the transparency and accessibility of those arrangements.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That in furtherance of such an investigation, the Committee is hereby authorized to issue subpoenas as may be necessary or appropriate to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents to the full extent authorized under Section 2-401 of The Philadelphia Home Rule Charter.