

Baltimore mayor to decline pay raise

Ben Nuckols, *Associated Press*, March 23, 2010

BALTIMORE — Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake said Tuesday she will decline a scheduled \$3,800 pay raise because of a budget deficit that will likely force the city to cut services and lay off employees.

The cost-of-living increase was scheduled to take effect Wednesday under a bill approved by the City Council in 2007, when Rawlings-Blake was council president.

The mayor's office announced Tuesday that the increase will be deducted from her salary and contributed back to the city as part of the payroll process. City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young and Comptroller Joan M. Pratt will do the same thing with their scheduled raises.

The mayor makes \$151,700, and the comptroller and council president make just over \$100,000. Baltimore is facing a \$121 million budget deficit.

Rawlings-Blake took office Feb. 4, replacing Sheila Dixon, who resigned after she received probation before judgment for lying about gifts from her developer boyfriend and embezzling gift cards intended for the poor.

Dixon was mayor when the cost-of-living increases were approved, and she initially pledged to keep her scheduled raise in December 2008, saying she worked long hours and had "a daughter in college." She later relented and promised to donate the \$3,700 raise to charity.

City Council members were also scheduled to receive pay raises of about \$1,400, bumping their salaries to nearly \$60,000. Council members Mary Pat Clarke, William H. Cole IV and Rochelle "Rikki" Spector told The Associated Press that they, too, would give back their raises.

"I think it's the right thing to do, and I'm glad the city is giving us this opportunity," Clarke said.

Council member Agnes Welch plans to donate her raise to charity. The other 10 council members did not respond to e-mailed requests for comment.