

Balking in Baltimore

June 10, 2021

So far, the besieged businessmen of the Fells Point area of Baltimore are only threatening to withhold payments of taxes and fees to the city.

If and when they follow through, the plan is to place the withheld funds in escrow. The money would then be turned over to the city government if and only if the city again meets minimal standards of performance.

Tax resistance? Sure. But not in the usual mode.

Baltimore businesspeople are not trying to dodge city taxes here. They understand very well that one cannot expect to get something for nothing.

Fells Point shop owners are rebelling against a “culture of lawlessness” in their streets, streets managed or mismanaged by the city. They want police to do more — be free to do more — about crime.

In a letter to Baltimore Mayor Brandon Scott



and other officials submitted not long after several shootings in the area, thirty-seven Fells Point businessmen demand that the city “Pick up the trash. . . . Enforce traffic and parking laws. . . . Stop illegal open-air alcohol and drug sales. . . . Empower police to responsibly do their job. . . . Please do your job so we can get back to doing ours.”

What will happen? I fear that, despite this worthy protest, city officials will continue to turn a blind eye. I fear that they will regard the protest as a PR problem, one that will go away and allow them to go on with the usual business of government — the way they see it. Their evasive initial responses to the letter are not encouraging.

Baltimore businesspeople are not trying to dodge city taxes here. They understand very well that one cannot expect to get something for nothing. They just want to get something.

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.