

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friday, April 27, 2012
11:40 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

BILL 120137 - An ordinance repealing an ordinance (Bill No. 070149-A)...

BILL 120229 - An ordinance amending Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code (The Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code), Subcode PM (The Philadelphia Property Maintenance Code), by amending requirements applicable to vacant premises...

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COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Good morning. We're waiting for one more Councilmember. We'll start on testimony on Bill 120137. Thank you for your patience.

(Pause.)

COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you. Good morning. Thank you. The Committee on Licenses and Inspections will have its hearing, a quorum having been established by Councilman Henon, Councilman Greenlee and Councilman Squilla.

Will the Clerk read the first bill.

THE CLERK: Bill No. 120137, repealing an ordinance (Bill No. 070149-A), entitled "An ordinance amending Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled 'The Philadelphia Building Construction and Occupancy Code,' by amending Subcode 'PM' (The Philadelphia Property Maintenance Code), by requiring that any advertisement or correspondence

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 pertaining to the rental of residential
3 property shall include the housing
4 inspection license number for such
5 property, providing for penalties, and
6 making certain technical changes, all
7 under certain terms and conditions.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
9 you.

10 Councilman Henon, would you
11 like to say a couple of words before we
12 take testimony?

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
14 Madam Chair.

15 It is my intention to have this
16 bill voted out with a favorable
17 recommendation for the simple fact that
18 as we're dealing with some License and
19 Inspection issues and, in addition, some
20 license reforms, I think this is a small
21 step moving forward to streamlining and
22 making the process a little more
23 user-friendly and prioritizing our
24 effectiveness here with the citizens of
25 Philadelphia and the government itself.

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2 So it is my intention as this
3 being a part of a larger goal in trying
4 to make things work more efficient and in
5 a prioritized fashion. So I'm in favor
6 of this, obviously, this bill to be
7 repealed today.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
10 you.

11 We want to note for the record
12 the Apartment Association of Greater
13 Philadelphia has submitted written
14 testimony that will be part of the
15 record. We'll start with our first
16 witness, which is Kelly Difilly from the
17 Law Department, we have Maura Kennedy
18 from the Department of License and
19 Inspection and Mr. Darrell Zaslow from
20 HAPCO here.

21 So can the first witness please
22 approach.

23 (Witness approached witness
24 table.)

25 MS. KENNEDY: Good morning,

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 Chairwoman and members of the Committee.
3 I'm Maura Kennedy for the Department of
4 Licenses and Inspections. Today I am
5 here to provide testimony on Bill 120137,
6 which, if enacted, will appeal an
7 ordinance, entitled "An ordinance
8 amending Title 4 of The Philadelphia
9 Code, entitled 'The Philadelphia Building
10 Construction and Occupancy Code,' by
11 amending Subcode 'PM' by requiring that
12 any advertisement or correspondence
13 pertaining to the rental of residential
14 property shall include the housing
15 inspection license number for each
16 property, providing for penalties, and
17 making certain technical changes, all
18 under certain terms and conditions.

19 The Department of Licenses and
20 Inspections offers no objection to the
21 adoption of this bill.

22 Thank you for the opportunity
23 to provide the Department's testimony. I
24 will be happy to answer any questions at
25 this time.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Any
3 questions?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.

6 Thank you, Maura.

7 MS. KENNEDY: Thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ:

9 Mr. Zaslow.

10 Is the Law Department not
11 testifying, Maura?

12 MR. ZASLOW: She's here.

13 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Can you
14 come forward first? I'm sorry.

15 (Witness approached witness
16 table.)

17 MS. DIFILLY: Good morning,
18 Councilwoman Sanchez and the members of
19 the Committee. My name is Kelly Difilly
20 and I'm an Assistant City Solicitor with
21 the Appeals and Legislation Unit at the
22 Philadelphia Law Department.

23 I'm here today to also provide
24 testimony on Bill 120137, which, if
25 enacted, would repeal an ordinance (Bill

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 No. 070149-A) which, as currently
3 codified in The Philadelphia Property
4 Maintenance Code, Section 102.6.6,
5 requires that any advertisement or
6 correspondence pertaining to the rental
7 of a residential property shall include
8 the housing inspection license number for
9 such property.

10 By way of background, I'm sure
11 you are all familiar with litigation
12 called Alekseev versus City Council,
13 which is the lawsuit filed by plaintiffs
14 Stan Alekseev and HAPCO that challenged
15 Council's failure to provide a public
16 comment period at its regularly stated
17 meetings.

18 As you likely also know, the
19 lawsuit culminated in a November 2010
20 Supreme Court opinion finding Council had
21 in fact violated the Sunshine Act and
22 directing Council to provide for a public
23 comment period at each regular meeting of
24 Council, which it, of course, now does.

25 However, because they were

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2 unable to address the full Council at its
3 original April 26th, 2007 meeting at
4 which the original Bill 070149-A was
5 passed, the plaintiffs also asked the
6 court to declare void all business
7 transacted at that meeting.

8 After the Supreme Court issued
9 its opinion, the case was eventually
10 remanded to the Court of Common Pleas,
11 where the case was scheduled for trial
12 this past March.

13 The issue at trial would be the
14 remedy for Council's violation of the
15 Sunshine Act. Therefore, to avoid
16 possible invalidation of the duly enacted
17 ordinance of Council, the Law Department
18 worked with Councilman Henon to introduce
19 a bill repealing the ordinance, thereby
20 making the Alekseev case moot.

21 Furthermore, while this bill
22 seeks to repeal this legislation now,
23 Councilman Henon, as he just mentioned,
24 through his broader Bad Neighbor
25 Initiative has been exploring a variety

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2 of legislative means to fight blight and
3 property maintenance problems by
4 landlords and others in the City.
5 Therefore, it is our understanding that
6 the Councilman is open to introducing or
7 supporting legislation in the future,
8 perhaps as part of a comprehensive
9 property maintenance legislative package,
10 that addresses the ills which Bill No.
11 070149, now codified at Philadelphia Code
12 Property Maintenance 102.6.6, was meant
13 to combat, and obviously were that to be
14 done, it would have the added benefit of
15 having public comment at that time.

16 Thank you for the opportunity
17 to provide the Law Department's testimony
18 on Bill 120137, and if there are any
19 questions, I'm happy to answer them now.

20 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Any
21 questions of this witness?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
24 you, Ms. Difilly. I will move on now to
25 Mr. Zaslow.

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2 (Witness approached witness
3 table.)

4 MR. ZASLOW: Good morning,
5 Madam Chairman, members of the Committee.
6 Darrell Zaslow, legal counsel to HAPCO,
7 the Homeowners Association of
8 Philadelphia.

9 Madam Chairman, we are here
10 today to support the Bill 120137
11 repealing the ordinance referenced in the
12 bill. The property owners were greatly
13 concerned over the privacy issues in the
14 bill. Property owners were concerned
15 over the vandalism that would result from
16 advertisement of unoccupied properties,
17 and perhaps more importantly, as my
18 esteemed opposing counsel in that
19 litigation has correctly outlined, if we
20 have this ordinance repealed, it will
21 obviate the need for us to go back to
22 court to argue about remedies for the
23 Sunshine Law violation, which, of course,
24 has now been corrected in our city in the
25 fashion of which you are all aware. The

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2 matter would become moot and we can avoid
3 further litigation and the expense of
4 unnecessary litigation.

5 I would like to be clear with
6 the Committee, however, that while the
7 license publication ordinance was
8 problematic to us, we stand firm and will
9 stand firm in our endeavoring to be of
10 value and assistance in corralling
11 unlicensed property owners. It damages
12 good property owners. It deprives the
13 City of the right to enforce violations
14 against unlicensed property owners, and,
15 frankly, it costs, by our estimation, a
16 great deal of money that the City is
17 losing because most properties, it seems,
18 are not licensed.

19 So we will be supporting
20 efforts. We have had the privilege of
21 working with all members of Council and
22 especially this Committee in supporting
23 legislation which fairly will seek to it
24 that owners meet their responsibilities,
25 and the most basic one is to have a

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2 license. And we will continue to
3 cooperate, with our own suggestions.

4 If I may offer it for the
5 record, because I've mentioned it before,
6 we would suggest as a very simple matter
7 to begin that every real estate tax bill
8 and every water bill that the City sends
9 out, at no cost to the City, with just a
10 little bit of extra ink, adds to the
11 bottom of the water bill and the real
12 estate tax bill a note in big print,
13 Every property occupied by tenants must
14 be licensed or the occupancy is illegal.
15 That would start at least an educational
16 process and put landlords and tenants and
17 owners on notice that such a requirement
18 of licensing is a requirement of our fine
19 city.

20 I thank you, Madam Chair,
21 members of the Committee, for hearing
22 from us and for your efforts. We hope
23 that we will continue to be privileged to
24 address the Committee in a cooperative
25 fashion, and we hope you enjoy the public

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2 comment as much as the public seems to
3 enjoy presenting it to you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: We think
5 of you every single Thursday.

6 MR. ZASLOW: I was afraid of
7 that.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You
9 should be.

10 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ:
11 Councilman Henon.

12 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
13 Madam Chair.

14 Mr. Zaslow, I appreciate your
15 taking your time out here and address the
16 Committee, as always your cooperation
17 with each and every member of the L&I
18 Committee addressing some of these
19 issues. I believe -- well, not I
20 believe. I know we all share your same
21 concerns with the unlicensed landlords
22 who are renting illegally and
23 circumventing that the taxes that they
24 should be paying the City, and, more
25 importantly, the license fee for an

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2 inspection for a safe dwelling place for
3 people to live and the quality of life of
4 the neighbors and the surrounding
5 community.

6 So I look forward to continuing
7 to work with you, your organization and
8 many other organizations in trying to
9 address these matters, especially I love
10 your ongoing persistence with the very
11 little additional ink on the bills, which
12 I believe we're all taking seriously.
13 Duly noted.

14 MR. ZASLOW: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you
16 very much.

17 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
18 you.

19 MR. ZASLOW: Thank you, Madam
20 Chair.

21 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Anybody
22 else here to testify on this bill?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: That
25 ends the testimony on Bill 120137.

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2 Will the Clerk read the title
3 of Bill 120229.

4 THE CLERK: Bill No. 120229, an
5 ordinance amending Title 4 of The
6 Philadelphia Code (The Philadelphia
7 Building Construction and Occupancy
8 Code), Subcode PM (The Philadelphia
9 Property Maintenance Code), by amending
10 requirements applicable to vacant
11 premises, all under certain terms and
12 conditions.

13 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
14 you.

15 Before we start with the
16 testimony of Maura Kennedy from the
17 Department of License and Inspection, I
18 just wanted for the record to say that I
19 introduced this bill last year in
20 response to the large number of
21 foreclosure and building and public
22 safety issues that I was confronted with
23 in my district and some of my colleagues
24 throughout the City given the large
25 number of foreclosures; in particular,

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2 the Bob Coyle properties, which are about
3 480 in the Kensington area. The bill
4 before us today, which has some
5 amendments, so folks who are here, if you
6 get the amendments -- so I re-introduced
7 the bill in January and we have some
8 amendments, and really what we are
9 looking to do in this is to require
10 specified categories of vacant properties
11 to be sealed with commercial quality seal
12 security panels and windows that have
13 been -- that we have in the past failed
14 to adequately prevent trespassing and
15 other issues.

16 The categories are large vacant
17 commercial/industrial properties,
18 particularly targeting those foreclosed
19 vacant properties that exist. It extends
20 to large vacant commercial/industrial
21 properties, the inspection and
22 registration requirements currently
23 applicable for foreclosed vacant
24 properties, including the designation of
25 a 24-hour local property manager. It

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2 requires that large vacant
3 commercial/industrial properties to
4 provide co-insurance for the City and
5 sets aside the amount based on the size
6 of the building and further codifies the
7 bonding already required. It establishes
8 a procedure for designating a property a
9 public safety hazard, subject to
10 heightened sealing requirement in
11 particular areas, as we've seen, that
12 fall prey to trespassers and other folks,
13 and establishes that any large vacant
14 commercial/industrial property that is a
15 fire hazard qualifies as imminently
16 dangerous rather than unsafe. And,
17 again, this term being that we want the
18 situation remedied. It doesn't
19 necessarily call for the immediate
20 demolition of the property, but that the
21 property be sealed appropriately.

22 So with that, I want to thank
23 the Department of License and Inspection
24 who has been working with us since last
25 year in trying to put forth these

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2 enhanced building code standards.

3 So with that, Maura Kennedy.

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 MS. KENNEDY: Hi. Good
7 afternoon, Chairwoman Sanchez and members
8 of the Committee. I'm Maura Kennedy for
9 the Department of Licenses and
10 Inspections. Today I'm here to provide
11 testimony on Bill 120229, an ordinance
12 which, as introduced, propose changes to
13 The Philadelphia Property Maintenance
14 Code by amending requirements applicable
15 to vacant premises to provide additional
16 requirements related to the sealing of
17 foreclosed vacant residential properties.
18 The Department supports the bill as
19 originally proposed.

20 The Chair has also very
21 recently shared with us amendments to the
22 bill that would significantly expand the
23 scope of the bill to impose new
24 requirements related to the sealing of
25 all large commercial properties. We have

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2 not had sufficient time to fully evaluate
3 these specific measures, however, and are
4 not in a position to provide our views on
5 them today. We share the Councilwoman's
6 belief that owners of vacant structures
7 should be held responsible for their
8 maintenance, and appreciate the
9 opportunity to continue to work with the
10 Councilwoman on this ordinance as we
11 evaluate the impact of the proposed
12 legislation.

13 In October of 2011, the
14 Department launched a new initiative as
15 part of a larger program led by the
16 Managing Director's Office and the
17 Finance Director's Office regarding how
18 both City and privately owned vacant
19 property is bought, sold and maintained.

20 This program intends to make
21 private owners accountable for the
22 maintenance of their vacant properties.
23 The Department identified approximately
24 25,000 structures in its database that
25 were believed to be vacant because the

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2 owner had either obtained a vacant
3 property license or been cited for
4 violations that are likely indicators of
5 vacancy.

6 First, the Department is
7 focused on finding the right owners of
8 the property. In the past, the City has
9 faced difficulties in holding private
10 owners responsible for the conditions of
11 their blighted or vacant properties
12 because of inconsistent or incomplete
13 ownership information that prevented
14 effective legal notice against these
15 individuals.

16 In its current initiative, the
17 Department is using a dedicated team of
18 researchers to cross-reference several
19 database to find good names and addresses
20 for the owners of these vacant
21 properties.

22 Second, the Department is
23 utilizing new enforcement measures. The
24 Department now enforces a doors and
25 windows ordinance passed by Philadelphia

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2 City Council that allows the Department
3 to ask the court to fine owners \$300 per
4 day per opening that is not covered with
5 a functional door or window. Properties
6 in violation of this ordinance are posted
7 with a bright pink poster. Also, State
8 Act 90 sponsored by Representative John
9 Taylor allows the Department to ask the
10 court to attach these potentially
11 high-dollar fines to an owner's personal
12 property. Further, the Department can
13 also leverage these fines to bring the
14 property to Sheriff sale.

15 Finally, the Department has
16 utilized some new legal tools. In the
17 past, enforcement efforts had run into
18 difficulties getting cases into the court
19 system. In its current initiative, the
20 Department has worked alongside with the
21 City of Philadelphia Law Department and
22 Judge Bradley Moss to dedicate court
23 dates exclusively to address the vacant
24 initiative. This ensures that these
25 cases flow through the legal process

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2 quickly. We are also collaborating with
3 the Revenue Department to send vacant
4 tax-delinquent properties to Sheriff sale
5 quickly.

6 Through our efforts so far, the
7 Department has not only forced the sale
8 or repair of more than 30 percent of the
9 structures cited, but we will also
10 collect more than half a million dollars
11 in license and permit fees, fines and
12 unpaid taxes.

13 It is our hope that in addition
14 to the good work that everyone in the
15 Department does every day with this
16 initiative and support from the
17 Committee, we will start slowly shifting
18 neighborhoods. Philadelphia can no
19 longer afford to pay the price for
20 neglectful owners.

21 Thank you for the opportunity
22 to provide the Department's testimony on
23 Bill 120229. I will be happy to answer
24 questions at this time.

25 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Any

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2 questions of this witness?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
5 you. We look forward to continuing to
6 work with you as we fully implement this
7 piece of legislation.

8 MS. KENNEDY: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Next we
10 want to ask Chris Kozicki, Vice President
11 of Government Affairs, to come forward,
12 Joe Casdia from the Philadelphia Housing
13 Authority and Jeff Carpineta, President
14 of East Kensington Neighbors Association.
15 That is our next panel. And then
16 following that, we will have Sandy
17 Salzman from New Kensington, Rick Sauer
18 and Christopher Sawyer.

19 (Witnesses approached witness
20 table.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Please
22 proceed with your testimony. And thank
23 you so very much for all your help.

24 MR. KOZICKI: Chairwoman
25 Sanchez and members of the License and

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2 Inspection Committee, my name is Chris
3 Kozicki and I am the Director of U.S.
4 Government Affairs for VPS, Vacant
5 Property Specialists, a global company
6 dedicated to securing, maintaining and
7 managing vacant, at-risk properties.
8 Thank you for this opportunity to testify
9 in front of you today.

10 VPS is an industry leader
11 continually developing and building upon
12 our best practices to create products
13 that protect existing commercial,
14 government buildings and new
15 construction. We work with housing
16 authorities, school districts and local
17 governments around the nation to tackle
18 the problems against vacant properties.
19 We are proud that our products rate 99.6
20 percent effective against break-ins.

21 The VPS-developed reinforced
22 steel security screen is virtually
23 impossible to compromise. In the market
24 of high-security products, VPS is a
25 proven leader nationally. We have worked

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2 with local governments to profile our
3 products and have proved their efficacy
4 at preventing loss of property and at
5 preventing the often more tragic
6 consequences of break-ins. Notably,
7 though VPS is a global company with U.S.
8 headquarters in my hometown of Chicago,
9 our customer service and operations are
10 located nearby in Bristol, Pennsylvania.

11 Regrettably, the recent spate
12 of tragic fire events in Philadelphia is
13 not isolated to this city. All cities
14 face increased risk of these consequences
15 where vacant properties allow for easy
16 illegal entry. However, the chances of
17 warehouse fires, many of which have
18 happened in Councilwoman Sanchez's
19 district in the last few years, are
20 significantly mitigated if vacant
21 properties are secured with something
22 more protective than plywood that is
23 easily compromised. Many of these tragic
24 fires would be averted with secure
25 technology that renders illegal entry

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2 nearly impossible.

3 Our product is not new to
4 Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Housing
5 Authority has used it for years. We are
6 proud that the PHA has found that our
7 products to be an effective tool on
8 protecting the agency's important
9 property assets.

10 I wish to thank Councilwoman
11 Sanchez and Justin DiBerardinis and her
12 staff for leading efforts to bring this
13 legislation forward that will direct our
14 product as well as other similar
15 high-security products on the market to
16 be used in high-risk environments. I
17 also want to thank Commissioner Fran
18 Burns and the officials at the Department
19 of License and Inspections for their
20 encouragement and also for that
21 department's effort to help craft an
22 approach that is practicable, enforceable
23 and affordable. I also want to thank
24 Deputy Chief Richard Bailey from the
25 Philadelphia Fire Department for his

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2 support for the use of this technology,
3 for his helpful suggestions and attention
4 as this bill has been developed.

5 Thank you again for your
6 consideration for this legislation that
7 we know will save lives and properties.
8 I'd be happy to answer any questions that
9 you may have.

10 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
11 you.

12 Any questions of this witness?
13 Councilman Henon.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you
15 for coming in and testifying --

16 MR. KOZICKI: You're welcome.

17 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- for the
18 Committee today.

19 Obviously vacant properties
20 left alone is extremely dangerous. Can
21 you tell me is there -- the long- and
22 short-term cost effect on the type of
23 sealings in the --

24 MR. KOZICKI: I'm sorry.
25 You're saying costs?

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: Costs.

3 MR. KOZICKI: Basically in a
4 typical Philadelphia row house, it would
5 cost approximately \$150 per month. I
6 mean, obviously with this technology, the
7 longer it's on, the less money it costs,
8 but right now that would be the typical
9 average price for a Philadelphia house.

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: In the
11 long-term, the long-term costs I think is
12 what I'm asking for aside from the
13 product. In your experience in PHA and
14 across the country, there must be a
15 tremendous amount of savings in the long
16 term --

17 MR. KOZICKI: Right.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- with the
19 product and the neighborhoods and the
20 resources that the City must use, aside
21 from tragedy in the --

22 MR. KOZICKI: Well, obviously
23 the cost savings to the cities arise
24 because obviously the calls for service
25 go down. We were down in Miami, Florida

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2 and we did a large property there, and
3 the first thing the Police Chief said is,
4 My calls for service went from 15 a day
5 to one a day, so now my police can go out
6 and fight other crimes.

7 So the cost saving comes a lot
8 with city services. Our resources can go
9 into other areas and are not being gone
10 time and time again to go to the same
11 vacant property, not to mention -- you
12 know, I can read a litany of statistics,
13 but when we get down to fire damage, fire
14 damage throughout the United States costs
15 about 900 billion in losses. So, again,
16 the cost to vacant properties is very
17 high, and, of course, the cost you can't
18 put on is the loss of life. That's
19 something you truly cannot put a cost to.
20 So if you can save lives, you can help
21 reduce costs and make city government
22 more effective because you're taking
23 these eyesores not being broken into and
24 the criminal activity, that's where
25 you're going to save your costs.

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: I have no
3 further questions. Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
5 you, Councilman Henon.

6 Can you tell me how other
7 cities are currently using this standard?

8 MR. KOZICKI: Yes. Of course,
9 with the housing we're doing a lot of
10 housing authorities around the country,
11 also school districts. Like
12 unfortunately for Detroit, they've lost a
13 great number of population, so they had a
14 very high risk of liability. So we
15 probably secured about 60 schools for
16 them. And obviously they are -- Detroit
17 is hard-pressed with funds, so we worked
18 with them to make sure the cost fit in
19 their needs.

20 In terms of cities right now,
21 City of Chicago, I was a former deputy
22 for Mayor Daley for a long time and one
23 of my responsibilities was vacant
24 properties. They actually passed a law
25 requiring this because the Mayor, quite

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2 frankly, was upset with the banks just
3 not stepping up to the table and these
4 buildings sitting vacant. So he actually
5 passed a law asking for this stricter
6 requirement.

7 The City of Miami in two weeks,
8 they're also going to pass an ordinance
9 that requires a more strict way of
10 securing. Los Angeles is very deep in
11 their negotiations. A lot of cities what
12 we're seeing too, they're doing the first
13 step. They're doing a registry, because
14 they're just new to fighting this
15 problem, and after the registry, then
16 they usually get into depth of, well,
17 plywood is not working, we go out there
18 and spend a lot of money. I think
19 statistics show here like Detroit spent
20 over 15 million in plywood boarding, and
21 it becomes a waste of money a lot of
22 times because it keeps getting broken
23 into, these same buildings.

24 So basically we're seeing a lot
25 of activity around the country in terms

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2 of wanting to secure their buildings with
3 a more effective method.

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
5 you.

6 Have you been able to -- if you
7 have any anecdotal data around the public
8 safety issue. One of our biggest
9 concerns that we face in Philadelphia is
10 people breaking into these properties to
11 steal copper and other in terms of public
12 safety.

13 MR. KOZICKI: Copper threats,
14 of course, is huge thefts. I mean,
15 you're talking like -- the FBI came out
16 with its report. I think it's a 1
17 billion a year industry. They're
18 stealing out, ripping out copper and are
19 sending it overseas to like Russia and
20 China and reselling it. So it's huge in
21 the criminal theft market right now.

22 There's some other studies that
23 just talk about when you have a vacant
24 building with plywood, it's usually
25 broken into every three to six months.

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2 That's by the Real Estate Finance
3 Investment article from April of '11.
4 You also have the Police Executive
5 Research Forum. They talk about usually
6 with vacant properties, crime rises 40
7 percent in the areas, and not to mention
8 in the fire with U.S. Fire Administration
9 fire report from August of 2010, you have
10 28,000 vacant residential fires a year
11 that lead to 45 deaths, 225 injuries and
12 again -- I'm sorry; earlier I said
13 billion, but it's million -- 900 million
14 in property losses, and about roughly
15 half of these are set intentionally.

16 So, again, anecdotally we see a
17 lot of rise in crime. I just know from
18 my previous life, we know whenever these
19 opened up, you had a large number of like
20 criminal sexual assaults happen in
21 buildings and just gains -- storing guns
22 in there, not to mention the fire damage.
23 So obviously nobody wants to have their
24 grandchildren or children walking by
25 these eyesores. Nobody should have to

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 have their quality of life affected like
3 that that have these things right next to
4 their houses.

5 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Is there
6 anything that shows around property
7 values, decrease in property values?

8 MR. KOZICKI: Yes. Actually, a
9 lot of my statistics too is coming right
10 from the federal government, that General
11 Accounting Office did a report in
12 November of last year. They're saying
13 foreclosed homes depress values by
14 roughly 9 percent. In Chicago alone, it
15 was 20,000 per household. And also it
16 also leads to the difficulty in
17 refinancing homes, and then, of course,
18 we discuss the increase of crime in
19 neighborhoods. And it also seeks too a
20 lot of times people don't want to --
21 don't really want to insure houses if
22 you're right next to a vacant property.
23 So if you lose your insurance and, God
24 forbid, your house catches on fire, then
25 you just lost your entire asset.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.

3 Any other questions?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank

6 you so very much for coming. I know you

7 have to leave out of town.

8 MR. KOZICKI: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank

10 you so much for your work. We will

11 continue to work on this. This

12 unfortunately is a bigger problem than

13 this, as Councilman Henon has been

14 working on some other issues. We've all

15 been working around blight in the City

16 and our land bank legislation and other

17 things. So we'll --

18 MR. KOZICKI: Thank you,

19 Chairwoman and members of Council.

20 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank

21 you.

22 Our next witness is Joe Casdia

23 from Philadelphia Housing Authority. Are

24 they -- no. He's not here? Okay. And

25 Jeff. Well, Jeff, you want to come up

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 with Sandy and Rick.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Proceed
6 with your testimony. Thank you.

7 MS. SALZMAN: Good afternoon,
8 Councilwoman and members of the
9 Committee. I'm Sandy Salzman, Executive
10 Director from New Kensington Community
11 Development Corporation. We work in the
12 Kensington, Fishtown, Port Richmond,
13 Juniata neighborhoods. We go up as far
14 as the Frankford Creek.

15 I am not an expert in how to
16 deal with boarding up buildings. I mean,
17 you know, you all are much more -- have
18 much more expertise than I do. So for
19 me, I don't care if it's steel, wood,
20 plywood with stucco, cinderblock. All I
21 know in our community, we need help and
22 we need to do something.

23 We have Landvest and other
24 people who have just walked away from
25 their houses and just leave them open.

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2 We have a number of vacant factories. We
3 were the textile capital of the world, so
4 we have these heavy timber, five-story
5 buildings. We have very small streets.
6 The houses are right up abutting the
7 factories.

8 Two and a half weeks ago, we
9 had a catastrophe in our neighborhood
10 when the Buck Building went on fire. Two
11 firemen lost their lives, but, more
12 importantly, our whole neighborhood could
13 have burnt down, except for the heroism
14 of the Fire Department.

15 My office is five blocks away
16 from that building and I had embers on my
17 windowsill.

18 We have a textile building, an
19 old textile building, that we turned into
20 the Carl Street Arts House. That is
21 three blocks away from the Buck Building.
22 We had a number of holes in our roof. We
23 have a rubber roof we had to have
24 repaired. So, you know, this could have
25 been so much worse, and we need help from

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 you all to make sure that this never
3 happens again.

4 Unfortunately, we've had six
5 major fires of old factories in our
6 neighborhood in the last ten years, and I
7 mean, the only good thing is is that we
8 don't have that many more big factories.
9 But there are still some and they're
10 still open.

11 We have a double-edged sword,
12 because we have a number of drug dealers
13 and drug addicts in our neighborhood that
14 go into these buildings and they scrap.
15 I was saying to Jeff, my biggest fear
16 from the Buck Building is that one of
17 these scrappers was in there who started
18 the fire, and I don't think he started it
19 deliberately, but he was maybe cooking
20 something or trying to keep warm and the
21 building went up in flames, and hopefully
22 he got out, because it was the middle of
23 the night and it was very dark and there
24 was a lot obstacles in that building, and
25 if you're not really familiar with it, he

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 could have been incinerated.

3 We do believe that there needs
4 to be some kind of a bond or insurance
5 with the City as an additional insured on
6 these buildings, because we understand
7 that people have property rights, but the
8 communities also have rights, and the
9 people who own these buildings need to
10 take care that the communities are also
11 safe and secure. You can't own one of
12 these properties and not pay attention to
13 it, and unfortunately, we have way too
14 many people who do that.

15 I just want to say that we've
16 worked very closely with License and
17 Inspections over the last few years and
18 they have made a lot of improvements.
19 There's still a lot of improvements to be
20 made, but as a community development
21 corporation, we look forward to working
22 with you all to come up with the
23 solutions for our neighborhoods, because,
24 you know, if we don't, I mean, who knows
25 what's going to be the next catastrophe.

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2 So thank you for allowing me to
3 testify today.

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
5 you so very much for all the work you do.
6 I'm going to let Jeff go next.

7 I think you have a closing, you
8 got to get out of here. Thank you for
9 your patience.

10 MR. CARPINETA: Thank you.
11 Thank you, Maria Sanchez, who is our
12 District Councilperson, and Mark Squilla
13 as well and all of you here today who are
14 taking this issue serious enough to
15 actually put something into motion.

16 This has been one of the
17 hardest months of my life. We're facing
18 a major setback in the neighborhood, and
19 there's families who will never see the
20 people they love again. It couldn't be
21 more serious.

22 My name is Jeff Carpineta. I'm
23 the President of the East Kensington
24 Neighbors Association. For the record,
25 East Kensington is a neighborhood just

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 west of Fishtown or bordered by Frankford
3 Avenue to the east and to the west the
4 Market-Frankford El Line.

5 The East Kensington Neighbors
6 Group is a group of concerned residents,
7 volunteer group who frequently makes up
8 for where the City falls short. We clean
9 up trash. We push back at slumlords. We
10 work with police and investigators. We
11 partner with the New Kensington CDC to
12 try to turn the table in the neighborhood
13 towards the good.

14 We've made a lot of progress in
15 the last ten years following up on the
16 legacy of New Kensington CDC over the
17 last 20 years, but when a catastrophe
18 following this factory fire hits the
19 neighborhood, it rolls us back a decade
20 in some senses. So we need to do better
21 as a community and as a city and also
22 certainly the owners.

23 Today I consider an important
24 day in sort of beginning to a sober
25 reckoning of the facts that I don't think

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 the City has squarely put its attention
3 on, a recognition that Philadelphia has a
4 factory fire problem that it doesn't talk
5 about. Several cities in the nation
6 right now are experiencing this problem,
7 but it's been happening for years.

8 The consequences are severe.
9 Sandy hinted to the scale of this
10 disaster, and anybody who thinks that
11 this was just like a serious building
12 fire with some unfortunate loss of life
13 is mistaken. I urge you to visit the
14 neighborhood and see the swath of
15 destruction through the western edge of
16 our neighborhood that could have very
17 easily been a factory fire the people
18 across this nation would have talked
19 about for the next hundred years.

20 We were very close to having
21 five large old textile mills involved.
22 There was eight houses that were severely
23 damaged or destroyed. There were
24 firefighters who were severely injured,
25 which, of course, doesn't get as much

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 press as the guys that lost their lives.
3 And there's like no printed tally of the
4 cost, but it's worth mentioning here
5 today, because the discussion today has a
6 lot to do with cost versus benefit, a lot
7 to do with prevention versus responding
8 to disasters. I'm talking about the cost
9 of telephone poles and Streets Department
10 actions and License and Inspection
11 engineering and demolition crews and
12 emergency police response and ATF
13 investigation and special staffers and
14 organizers on the site and attorneys and
15 legal counsel for the City. And how
16 could we even tally up what the Fire
17 Department is dealing with? And then all
18 the environmental issues that will stem
19 from this and the toxicity that was
20 released into the neighborhood. It is
21 for sure in the millions of dollars.

22 So part of today has to do with
23 a move towards being -- to getting away
24 from the penny wise pound foolish
25 approach of the past and sort of a wish

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2 think that, Well, things will probably be
3 okay. Thing will not be okay. These
4 buildings are burning. The ones that are
5 vacant will burn. Just in my ten years
6 in the neighborhood alone, I've seen
7 almost a half a dozen, each one I'm sure
8 with a million dollar price tag that
9 hasn't been published and tremendous risk
10 of life.

11 So it's time to sort of get
12 real about the accounting and say what
13 can we do to try to prevent this and, of
14 course, putting as much responsibility on
15 the owners as we can. The bill I think
16 is a fantastic step towards doing that.
17 It spotlights the urgency of sealing the
18 buildings. We hope that following this
19 piece of legislation, there will be and
20 there always should be a careful review
21 in the field of what does it mean that a
22 building is unsecure.

23 For instance, the Thomas Buck
24 Hosier Building that just burned was a
25 hundred thousand foot building with a

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2 courtyard, and behind one opening
3 possibly from the side street, there may
4 be 82 more openings in the courtyard.
5 It's going to require some intelligence
6 as far as the fieldwork of L&I to sort of
7 think on when do we call the building
8 open and unsecure.

9 It should never be overlooked
10 that just the fact that these buildings
11 do not have any fire detection or fire
12 suppression is alone a catastrophic risk.
13 When you look at the original building
14 drawings from the 1800's, there's two
15 things on those drawings. There's the
16 original layout of the building and
17 there's a whole lot of language and
18 drawing and descriptions of all the
19 things that were built into the building
20 to prevent fire. There was a sort of
21 careful consciousness of that in the
22 1800's and somehow that's gotten
23 overlooked now in the year 2012. For a
24 building of that nature, massive timbers,
25 to be sitting empty with no fire

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2 detection or fire suppression in it is
3 ridiculous.

4 So we hope that the bill as it
5 makes a move to categorize these
6 buildings as imminent fire hazards, that
7 that is remembered. They are certainly
8 imminently dangerous.

9 There are other buildings that
10 will burn soon. I don't want to be
11 negative and I'm not paranoid, but we
12 hope that this legislation and that the
13 conversations that are happening now will
14 sort of incubate a new partnership
15 between the City and the community and
16 the owners, we hope, to prevent the
17 seventh fire. We know where it's going
18 to happen and we're already reporting it.

19 It's essential at this point
20 that this bill is sort of a gateway to
21 put the responsibility on the owners in a
22 more clear fashion, but also that it
23 paves the way towards action, real
24 action, at the street level to do what
25 needs to be done.

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2 I would not feel comfortable
3 saying to any family member of Daniel
4 Sweeney or Lieutenant Neary that notices,
5 administration, policy and procedure was
6 good enough. When the owners fall short,
7 and we know that they will, there has to
8 be the power in partnership between the
9 City and the community to do what needs
10 to happen at the street level to try to
11 prevent this from happening.

12 I've done some research
13 personally on the VPS technology, and
14 it's an excellent product. I hope that
15 we can find some partnership to put those
16 things to use in the neighborhood. They
17 also have sort of power source-free video
18 surveillance and security detection
19 equipment that would be worth looking at
20 in addition to the 14 gauge steel sealing
21 products that they have.

22 We need to do this. Our lives,
23 our history, our city, our first
24 responders' wellbeing is at stake and I
25 would say is in the balance. It is not

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2 guaranteed that we will move forward into
3 a vibrant Philadelphia just by mechanisms
4 of the real estate market or just by the
5 good volunteer energy in the neighborhood
6 that keeps sticking it out through the
7 years. It is not a guarantee, and if we
8 don't do better to prevent these
9 calamities, the future of the City may be
10 at stake.

11 Thank you for the opportunity
12 to make comments, and look forward to
13 partnering with you however we can.

14 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
15 you, Jeff, and thank you for -- I know
16 that you guys marshaled some quick
17 community support and healing, and I want
18 to thank you for that and being as
19 proactive and keeping us on task. I know
20 Councilman Squilla and I appreciate the
21 fact that your organization keeps us to
22 task. So thank you.

23 MR. CARPINETA: We know you do.
24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Rick.

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2 I want to ask Chris if you want
3 to come up to the witness stand. I know
4 Jeff has to go.

5 And with that, if no one else
6 is here to testify, that will complete
7 the testimony on this.

8 Proceed. Thank you.

9 MR. SAUER: Thanks. Good
10 afternoon, Chairwoman Sanchez and members
11 of the Committee. Thanks for the
12 opportunity to testify. My name is Rick
13 Sauer and I'm the Executive Director of
14 the Philadelphia Association of Community
15 Development Corporations.

16 So I don't have the knowledge
17 of the neighborhood level in Kensington
18 that Jeff and Sandy so eloquently spoke
19 to about the impact of this most recent
20 fire and the result it has on the
21 community, but as a citywide association
22 of 90 organizations that are engaged in
23 housing and economic development and
24 stabilizing and working to reuse vacant
25 properties, I think we can bring sort of

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2 a larger citywide perspective to this
3 that may be of use.

4 And we all know that experience
5 has shown that when property owners -- it
6 doesn't matter if you're a homeowner or a
7 rental property, a commercial property or
8 industrial property, but if they don't
9 maintain the properties, the resulting
10 blighting influence on the surrounding
11 community has significant cost, both to
12 adjoining property owners, the
13 neighborhood and the City overall.

14 And we all know as well that
15 Philadelphia suffers from the ills caused
16 by larger amounts of blighted and vacant
17 properties, over 40,000 throughout the
18 City, some very small row houses, some
19 very large commercial/industrial
20 properties and a range of things in
21 between.

22 We commissioned a cost-benefit
23 analysis back in 2010 with the
24 Redevelopment Authority that had sort of
25 three big findings. One, that all these

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 vacant properties resulted in \$3.6
3 billion in lost household wealth.
4 Secondly, that maintaining those vacant
5 properties costs the City over \$20
6 million every year on a very conservative
7 basis, and there is additional tax
8 revenues that continue to go uncollected
9 on these vacant properties every year.
10 So there's significant overall cost
11 implications as a result of failure to
12 more adequately address this major
13 problem.

14 And then we have those
15 additional problems that are related,
16 whether it's criminal nuisance, public
17 health issues, diminishing spirits in
18 neighborhood pride in the neighborhoods
19 and the residents and businessowners that
20 are in those communities.

21 So we know that blighted
22 properties lead to progressive levels of
23 neighborhood decline and reduced property
24 values in the City's tax base, which is
25 even a bigger issue given the budget

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2 challenges faced by both the City and the
3 School District at this time.

4 It was mentioned earlier I
5 think when Maura Kennedy testified, she
6 ran down a number of new tools the City
7 does have at its disposal, some of them
8 as a result of the passage of Act 90, a
9 state legislation that's been very
10 helpful, as well as the Blight Court.
11 And I think L&I is trying to be more
12 proactive now and should be acknowledged
13 for doing so.

14 At the same time, we know we
15 still have great challenges in our
16 communities around vacant properties and
17 including many of these larger commercial
18 and industrial properties, which the most
19 recent calamity was involved with.

20 We believe that the bill and
21 the amendments before the Committee today
22 will provide additional measures and
23 incentives to hold owners of these
24 properties as well as the foreclosed
25 residential properties more accountable

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229
2 and will work to more effectively secure
3 these properties to avoid future
4 tragedies.

5 And in addition to securing or
6 obtaining possession or even demolition
7 of abandoned buildings by the City, we
8 strongly believe that any systemic
9 attempt to address the problems of
10 abandoned and blighted properties in the
11 City must be part of a larger effort to
12 reform the vacant property system. And
13 we know there's a lot of work underway
14 around that, whether it's the
15 Administration, whether it's additional
16 bills being put forward by City Council.
17 But that's essential. This can't be
18 handled in just a piecemeal approach
19 looking at one aspect at a time. It does
20 need to be more a global, holistic
21 approach to addressing this major issue.
22 And as part of that approach, we do think
23 it's not only logical but essential that
24 the City move forward a land bank to
25 really have a more effective way to

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2 facilitate the reuse of these vacant
3 properties to put them back into
4 productive use.

5 So in closing, I guess we
6 encourage the Committee to move this bill
7 forward with appropriate amendments, and
8 we look forward to working with City
9 Council, the Administration to both more
10 effectively address these problem
11 properties but also to have a more
12 comprehensive solution to put them back
13 into productive use.

14 Thanks.

15 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
16 you, Rick, and I look forward to that
17 conversation. And once we complete this
18 heavy lifting on this budget, we will get
19 to the land bank. Thank you so much for
20 the plug.

21 Christopher Sawyer.

22 MR. SAWYER: Councilwoman
23 Sanchez, Councilman Greenlee, thank you
24 for letting me come here to testify about
25 120229.

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2 I think Jeff, who was just
3 here, covered most everything that I was
4 about to say very eloquently. I have
5 reviewed the changes or the amendment to
6 Title 4, and one piece of it -- I am in
7 100 percent support of this bill.

8 One of the most important
9 takeaways that I've seen with vacant
10 properties, since I live in Kensington --
11 and you do as well, and we see these
12 properties outside of our homes -- is the
13 emphasis on not just the sealing of the
14 property at the ground level to keep
15 people from entering the structure, but
16 to delay the decay of a structure, and
17 usually that's accomplished through the
18 roof system. And in particular, the Buck
19 Hosier Building satellite photo that I
20 had obtained, I believe it was dated in
21 2008, 2009, that timeframe, the large
22 five-story structure that most people
23 identify as part of the complex -- I
24 think that was on the York Street side --
25 half of that roof was actually gone, and

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2 that was obtained from a flyover. You
3 could not see that from the ground.

4 But one thing with any kind of
5 property is, the first line of defense
6 against decay is the roof system. If you
7 are not able to remove the water from the
8 property, especially if it's running down
9 the side of the walls, it's attacking the
10 masonry. If it is collecting and pooling
11 on the roof, the freeze/thaw cycle will
12 further damage that structure, and once
13 it opens up from the roof level, then you
14 can pretty much say good-bye to
15 preserving the building for a future use
16 and repurposing it, which that's what the
17 state of the Buck Building was getting to
18 at that point.

19 What infuriates me is that
20 during the time that the property owner
21 held it, there were, I believe, at
22 least -- there was at least one attempt
23 by another interested party to purchase
24 the property and seeking to develop it
25 other than the Lichtensteins. And the

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2 Lichtensteins had originally came forward
3 with a premise of that we want to turn
4 this into an apartment building, and once
5 they hit the skids, then it turned into
6 property squatting. And most of their
7 other properties that they hold -- they
8 held this LV SIP, and on top of that,
9 most the other properties, with exception
10 to an occupied property that's sitting at
11 1728 Market Street, just a few blocks
12 away from us, a lot of the other
13 properties that they held were houses of
14 repair versus -- well, it was in a range
15 of habitable to impossible to live in.
16 And the City had actually -- when I
17 reviewed some of the houses on -- and my
18 activism is focused squarely around
19 property issues for some very good
20 reasons. When I looked at the
21 Lichtensteins' other properties, and
22 they're indicative of this bill, they're
23 in a horrible state. They're in a
24 horrible state.

25 With the Bob Coyle properties,

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2 I encountered a homeowner who is living
3 adjacent to a Bob Coyle property and her
4 walls are now shifting, and she has no
5 homeowners insurance to help take care of
6 the problem. She's eventually going to
7 lose her home, not because she can't make
8 payments, not for any other reason that
9 she's in control of, is that her house
10 will eventually collapse as the property
11 that is next door to her will.

12 Property issues, the reason why
13 my activism centers around it is, it's a
14 topic that Philadelphia has ignored for a
15 very long time. The bills that you are
16 proposing and Councilman Henon and
17 Councilman Greenlee are proposing, these
18 are items that should have been in the
19 Philadelphia City Code 40 years ago. We
20 would have a much different Philadelphia
21 today if we had those measures then than
22 what we are sitting here crafting now.
23 It amazes me. It really does.

24 If we go after vacant
25 properties and nuisance properties, it

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2 has a huge positive effect for the City,
3 and the biggest positive effect is crime.
4 I'm also Vice President of River Wards
5 Crime Watch. I see a lot of issues where
6 drug dealing, drug abuse, people who OD,
7 they're doing it inside vacant and
8 abandoned structures. They're causing a
9 massive disturbance for people who live
10 immediately close by to those properties,
11 and if the City had actually taken
12 enforcement action commiserate to, let's
13 say, another city where vacant property
14 is dealt with faster, let's say within a
15 year or two versus the way we deal with
16 it, we wouldn't have to worry about
17 having to find all these resources to
18 devote to the Police Department, to
19 devote to all these other special
20 programs, versus if we had looked at the
21 source of the issue, which is nuisances
22 that are based around human activity,
23 such as drug use, some of these folks
24 have to have a bed to go to at night and
25 they do it inside vacant and abandoned

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2 property.

3 So I absolutely support this
4 bill. The only suggestion that I have is
5 that for roof systems, there probably --
6 with the doors and windows, there's the
7 \$300 ordinance that's commiserate with
8 Act 90. That probably should be extended
9 specifically to target roof structures
10 that have failed or are in the process of
11 failing for LV SIPs. That would have
12 huge positive benefits for the community,
13 and I know it would have an immediate
14 impact if that was done or if that would
15 be done to the property immediately next
16 door to the Hosiery, which is 2301 North
17 Front Street. That's a five-story
18 masonry structure. It sits inches away
19 from the Market-Frankford El platform at
20 the York-Dauphin Station. If the wind
21 had not been blowing the correct
22 direction that night, you wouldn't have
23 the Market El -- Market-Frankford El
24 running right now and you would be
25 dealing with a crisis much larger than

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2 the one that occurred two weeks ago.

3 So I thank the Council and
4 Councilwoman for her time, and if there's
5 any questions.

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
7 you so very much. I think what you
8 mentioned around roof and the reason
9 Sandy and Rick were shaking their head,
10 when we talk about housing preservation,
11 that's the first strategy. I can assure
12 you that despite the fact that we've
13 gutted the L&I budget over the years, we
14 are trying to be as efficient and
15 effective. As Chair of L&I, it's always
16 very hard for me to try to get them to do
17 more when I know that the financial
18 condition of the department impedes their
19 ability to do this better. I think as
20 Rick mentioned, as we work on the land
21 bank and other measures, I think you're
22 going to see over the course of the next
23 three or four years us get more proactive
24 in dealing with this. It's a serious
25 quality of life issue and one that, for

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2 those of you who know me, I've been
3 working on since day one that I've gotten
4 here, and I'm not planning to go anywhere
5 until this stuff gets done. But I thank
6 you for your activism, and we can't do
7 this alone. The City cannot do this
8 alone.

9 MR. SAWYER: There's one small
10 item that I'd like to add to my
11 testimony, and that has to do with the
12 code enforcement process, and that's not
13 really focused towards L&I. That is with
14 the City Law Department.

15 As I research vacant properties
16 or any type of nuisance property,
17 unfortunately one horrible thing that I
18 discovered is that the City is well aware
19 of many of the properties that it deals
20 with with -- there's litany of code
21 enforcement complaints. I go into
22 Municipal Court dockets. I review the
23 evidence that's in there, and it's
24 just -- it's very disheartening how many
25 times I see code enforcement complaints

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2 dismissed without prejudice because of no
3 service, and then nothing is done
4 afterwards.

5 That is a reform within the Law
6 Department that needs to be taken. It's
7 very distressing to me that L&I does
8 this -- works tremendous amounts of
9 effort toward and with the limited budget
10 it has, then it goes over to court, only
11 for the issue -- just the ball gets
12 dropped in the courtroom. It's very
13 distressing, and it doesn't serve
14 Philadelphia, it doesn't serve the
15 Council, it doesn't serve the residents
16 and the taxpayers at all if we continue
17 to do that.

18 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Right.
19 I think that's why our Blight Court is a
20 mechanism for us to begin to get better
21 at that and having Judge Moss work with
22 us on that side, so that you're coming
23 before a judge that's sympathetic to the
24 issues, just like our foreclosure court.
25 So I think we're getting more proactive.

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2 I think the results so far have been very
3 positive, and I think this Council and
4 the Administration will continue to
5 support those efforts. By no means we're
6 going to -- we need to get better, and I
7 think we are.

8 So thank you very much.

9 (Thank you.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: We're
11 going to close the hearing of the
12 Committee on License and Inspection. We
13 will now go into the meeting part of our
14 meeting.

15 I'm going to ask Councilman
16 Henon for a motion on Bill 120137.

17 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair. I make a motion that Bill
19 No. 120137 be voted out with a favorable
20 recommendation, with a suspension of the
21 rules as to be read at the next Council
22 session.

23 (Duly seconded.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: All in
25 favor?

1 4/27/12 - L&I - BILLS 120137 and 120229

2 (Aye.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Any

4 opposition?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Let it

7 be noted that Bill 120137 will be moved

8 out of Committee with a favorable

9 recommendation and the rules of Council

10 will be suspended to allow first hearing

11 at our next public session.

12 I'm going to ask Councilman

13 Greenlee for a motion on the amendment to

14 Bill 120229.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

16 you, Madam Chair. I move that the

17 amendment to Bill No. 120229 be approved.

18 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Can I

19 get a second?

20 (Duly seconded.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: All in

22 favor?

23 (Aye.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Any

25 oppositions?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: There
4 being none, Councilman Greenlee, can I
5 get a motion on the amended bill.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
7 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
8 120229, as amended, be reported out of
9 this Committee with a favorable
10 recommendation and that the rules of
11 Council be suspended to allow for first
12 reading at our next session of Council.

13 (Duly seconded.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: All in
15 favor?

16 (Aye.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Any
18 opposition?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: There
21 being none, Bill No. 120229 will be moved
22 out of Committee with a favorable
23 recommendation and the rules -- as
24 amended, with rules suspension to allow
25 first reading at our next public session.

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2 Thank you, everyone, for coming
3 this afternoon, and this concludes the
4 Committee on Licenses and Inspection.

5 Thank you.

6 (Committee on Licenses and
7 Inspections concluded at 12:35 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter on April 27, 2012, and that
this is a true and correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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