

Committee on Parks, Recreation & Cultural Affairs
December 8, 2014

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, December 8, 2014
12:26 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS - CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTIONS: 140668

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good afternoon. This
3 hearing is called to order. This is a Public
4 Hearing of the City Council Committee on Parks,
5 Recreation and Cultural Affairs. And the purpose
6 of this Public Hearing is to take testimony
7 regarding the state of park and street trees as
8 authorized by Resolution No. 140668.

9 The Members of the Committee in attendance
10 are Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown and
11 Councilman Kenyatta Johnson. And does anyone
12 have any opening remarks?

13 (No response for remarks.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. All right. In
15 that case, why don't we have the clerk now read
16 the title of the resolution.

17 THE CLERK: Resolution No. 140668
18 entitled, Resolution authorizing City Council's
19 Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural
20 Affairs to hold public hearings regarding the
21 current state of park and street trees and their
22 continues maintenance.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And can we have
24 you -- have the clerk read the title or actually
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1 call up the first panel to testify.

2 THE CLERK: The first panel will consist
3 of Deputy Mayor Michael DiBerardinis.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you. Yes.
5 Good afternoon.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Good
7 afternoon.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Please state your name
9 for the test -- for the record and then proceed.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Mike
11 DiBerardinis, Deputy Mayor Commissioner of
12 Department of Parks and Recreation. With me
13 today are Mark Focht, First Deputy; Chris Palmer,
14 Head of Operations; and Joan Blaustein who is
15 our -- does all the natural resource and land
16 management and part of the tree work is under
17 her, particularly the tree Philly.

18 Chairwoman Bass and Committee Members, we
19 are pleased to be before you today on behalf of
20 the Department to testify in response to
21 Resolution 140668 regarding the current and
22 continued maintenance of park and street trees
23 within Philadelphia. Parks and Recreation is
24 honored to be the stewards of the City's urban
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1 forest and natural lands. We have held this
2 responsibility for many decades, and estimate
3 that there are approximately 130,000 street trees
4 and 2.2 million trees on public land.

5 According to Green Plant Philadelphia, our
6 neighborhoods range from less than 2 percent tree
7 cover to over 38 percent coverage. Green Plant
8 estimated -- established a goal of 30 percent
9 tree coverage in every neighborhood by 2025.

10 Greenworks, Mayor Nutter's sustainability plan,
11 is a guide to support this important work.

12 Currently, estimate -- we estimate that we've
13 planted 120,000 new trees with our partners over
14 the last four or five years.

15 There are three types of work related to
16 our urban trees: Planting, pruning and removal.
17 This work is undertaken by a Parks and Recreation
18 staff and contractors, and is funded by the
19 Department's operating and capital budgets as
20 well as grants received. Let me share some of
21 these numbers with you.

22 Approximately 30 Parks and Recreation
23 staff comprised of six crews across three
24 geographical boundaries address tree pruning and
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1 removal at Parks and Recreation facilities as
2 well as emergency responses. They are supported
3 by another seven inspectors and arborists. Those
4 staffing numbers have remained essentially flat
5 for a number of fiscal years. Parks and
6 Recreation staff annually removes about 5,000
7 trees. This work is supported by pruning and
8 removal contractors supervised by departmental
9 contract management staff. Over the last three
10 fiscal years, we have pruned or removed over
11 14,000 trees.

12 To provide some historical contexts, at
13 the height -- at its height during FY02 and
14 FY303, the Department's pruning and removal
15 budget was significant more than it is now.
16 Since then, these resources have been on a steady
17 decline.

18 In FY12, the Department's pruning and
19 removal budget was 623,000 with a grant of 56,000
20 and that pruned and removed -- or removed 3,333
21 trees.

22 In FY13, the Department's pruning and
23 removal budget was 814,000 with a grant of
24 126,000. And that pruned and removed
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1 approximately 2,930 trees.

2 In FY14, the Department's pruning and
3 removal budget was 774,000 with a grant of
4 17,000. And that pruned or removed 7,777 trees.

5 In addition, in our FY14 -- in FY14, the
6 Department utilized capital funding to both plant
7 and remove trees which helped increase our
8 capacity.

9 I'm happy to provide more detailed
10 information about each of the fiscal years at the
11 Committee's request. While these numbers show
12 good work done by the Department staff and our
13 partners, we face a series of challenges and
14 there are always more -- there is always more
15 work to do. Our current tree removal backlog is
16 3,161 trees. And our tree pruning backlog is
17 9,796 trees.

18 Storms and pests are a major challenge to
19 urban trees. The past several years have been
20 increasingly -- have been increasingly -- we have
21 had increasingly severe storms in Philadelphia
22 including hurricanes and Superstorm Sandy. In
23 addition, last year's 18 snowstorms greatly
24 impacted trees, down trees, blocked streets for
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1 emergency vehicles, disrupted power lines and
2 trapped citizens in their homes. Storm-related
3 tree damage is addressed by the Department staff
4 with our existing resources.

5 Another major challenge is the arrival of
6 the Emerald Ash Borer. The Emerald Ash Borer has
7 been found nearby in Bucks County in 2012 and in
8 Montgomery County in 2013. It is very likely
9 that it will arrive in the Greater Philadelphia
10 area in the summer of 2015. And that all ash
11 trees that are not treated with an insecticide
12 will be killed within three or four years. The
13 U.S. Forest Service recently performed an
14 inventory of Philadelphia's urban tree forest and
15 has determined that there are an estimated
16 207,000 ash trees within the City comprising
17 7 percent of the urban forest. And that ash tree
18 species are about one third of the common species
19 present.

20 I believe that more resources would help
21 us quick -- help us provide a quicker response,
22 times and address the tree pruning and removal at
23 Park and Recreation facilities as well as
24 emergency responses. We aim to provide better

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1 geographical coverage across the City. More
2 resources would preserve capital funding for tree
3 planting only, which will be vitally necessary to
4 replace the thousands of trees that will be
5 removed to preserve our current tree canopy
6 level.

7 I would like to thank the dedicated women
8 and men of the Department of Parks and Recreation
9 who care for our urban tree forest and our
10 natural areas every day. I would also like to
11 take this opportunity to highlight two programs
12 that have assisted the Department in our work.
13 TreeKeepers are our seasonal workforce
14 development program that trains a group -- trains
15 a crew comprised of young men and women, some of
16 whom are ex-offenders, to maintain trees and
17 green spaces across the City.

18 Since 2011, TreeKeepers have visited 160
19 sites city-wide pruning and mulching over 10,000
20 trees and removed hundreds -- have removed
21 hundreds of areas of invasive overgrowth. The
22 TreeKeepers have accomplished this work at parks,
23 recreation centers, playgrounds as well as
24 prisons, fire stations, schools and health
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1 centers. The program has grown in scope and size
2 building upon its successes and training its
3 workers to be prepared for the goal of future
4 full-time employment with the Department.

5 Also, in partnership with the Mayor's
6 Office of Civic Engagement and Volunteer Service,
7 we work with the PowerCorps of Philadelphia staff
8 and crews. They represent a diverse group of men
9 and women between the ages of 18 and 26 receiving
10 critical workforce development opportunities and
11 training on our land and with our employees.
12 They have worked 80 sites maintaining and pruning
13 trees.

14 In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge
15 and thank Councilman Squilla who recently
16 authorized expenditure of \$100,000 of NTI funds
17 and \$170,000 in his discretionary capital funds
18 for the removal of 200 and -- 320 dead and
19 dangerous trees in his councilmanic district.

20 I want to thank you and the Committee for
21 your interest in Parks and Recreation work to
22 sustain and increase the City's urban forest.
23 And we are happy to answer any questions at this
24 time.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you. Mark, did
2 you have something you wanted to add?

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: No.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Well, let me
5 first start by thanking -- thank you for your
6 testimony and also acknowledging Councilman David
7 Oh has joined us as well as Councilman Mark
8 Squilla.

9 And just a couple of questions that I
10 wanted to start off with. And then I know that
11 the other Committee members had a number of
12 questions. But I wanted to talk about what, you
13 know, seems to be, in my opinion at least, a
14 slight imbalance in terms of the number of trees
15 that we are putting in.

16 I know earlier in your testimony you said
17 there's about 125,000 new trees planted by Parks
18 and Recreation and our partners over the last
19 four to five-year period. And over the last
20 three years, there's been about 14,042 trees that
21 have been pruned and/or removed. So that means
22 that they have been -- in that number isn't just
23 what has been removed but those who have, you
24 know, had some maintenance applied to them, as
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1 well.

2 And further in here it was mentioned that
3 there is currently a tree removal backlog of
4 3,161 trees and a street tree pruning backlog in
5 terms of -- to the number of 9,796 trees. So
6 when you look at the 125,000 trees that have been
7 put in over the last three, excuse me, four or
8 five-year period, can you talk about how do we
9 strategically catch up? Because even though I
10 know that, you know, from the Greenworks Plan we
11 have a mission. We're trying to, you know, add
12 additional trees to every part of the City. And
13 that is a great thing. I want to be clear on
14 that. But at the same time as a District
15 Councilmember, I know that I have members of my
16 constituency who, you know, have some tree
17 issues. And we have worked with Joan and Chris
18 and they've done a fantastic job, I have to say,
19 over the years that we've been here in terms of
20 addressing those needs. But the need is still
21 quite significant.

22 And even to the point where I had one
23 young lady who was a new mother who actually
24 moved out of her house during a recent storm. I
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1 think it was Sandy a few years ago. But she
2 moved out of her house out of fear of this tree
3 that, you know, was leaning towards her house
4 and, you know, just very much afraid. She's not
5 an isolated, you know, situation. It's not
6 isolated. You know, I have heard of it before.

7 I was just wondering if you can talk to us
8 about that.

9 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Well, let's
10 talk about the 125,000 new trees, and then the
11 age of the current urban forest here in the City.

12 The new trees will not need any kind of
13 direct care for a long time. So it's not -- it's
14 not a pressing current or intermediate issue. I
15 do think -- and I think I will ask my staff to
16 help me here -- but the age of our current street
17 tree population is -- is been around a long time.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: What would you say the
19 average age is?

20 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I don't know.

21 MR. FOCHT: The average, it's very
22 difficult to get to an average age because
23 neighborhoods were planted at different times.
24 We certainly have neighborhoods on average where
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1 the trees are much older because you have large
2 London plants that could be 60 to 80 years old.
3 And then we have newer neighborhoods,
4 particularly in the northeast, where the average
5 age is probably more in the 30-year range. It's
6 probably somewhere in that, you know, 20-plus
7 years to maybe 40-plus years would be an average
8 across the City.

9 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: As the trees
10 age, they -- obviously, they become both a
11 pruning issue and a removal issue. So -- and
12 clearly, I think we're -- we're using our
13 existing resources to the best effect. We have
14 also added -- you know, we talk about the
15 PowerCorps and our Tree Tenders.

16 We have really sort of outside of our
17 operating budget have made a big effort to
18 address the question. But we are -- the facts
19 are we are behind. And, you know, our
20 conversations in between when you get constituent
21 requests, we're usually knowledgeable about the
22 tree. We have probably already inspected it and
23 put it in the out years to get removed. So but
24 you have -- the fact that we have so many trees,
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1 almost 10,000 pruning backlog and over 3,000 tree
2 removal, does create an issue for us.

3 We have addressed it through putting more
4 existing resources to the -- to work. We have
5 also used over the last few years our capital
6 program for removal and then planting. So if
7 we -- we can't -- we can only remove trees with
8 capital when we replace the tree that we've
9 removed. So we've over, I think, the last three
10 years have begun to use our capital money to
11 remove trees, as well.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

13 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: We've attached
14 the removal and the replanting of a tree into our
15 capital program. Even with all of those
16 additional resources, we have not been able to
17 catch up. So, you have made a good point about
18 the backlog and our -- the need for our continued
19 effort to address it.

20 I don't know if that's direct enough, but
21 that's the best I can do.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Somewhat. But I guess
23 my question is, you know, how do we catch up? Is
24 there a plan to catch us up in the works?

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1 You know, as we -- have we thought about,
2 you know, sort of like the liability issues that
3 can be associated with, you know, a tree falling
4 on someone or someone's property or, you know, it
5 can really be significant. And so, I think that
6 if we are not thinking ahead about, you know,
7 these are 3,161, you know, potentially, you know,
8 deadly occurrences, you know, that could happen
9 or thinking of it in terms of, you know, what
10 could happen if we don't do something more
11 immediate.

12 How do we get there?

13 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Again, I think
14 given the current resources that we have and
15 working with some Councilmanic districts with
16 NTI, which isn't -- I'm not -- I'm just giving
17 you our current approach. That's about as best
18 we're going to do right now. The additional work
19 with the TreeKeepers, PowerCorps, use of capital
20 dollars, use of NTI. That does not constitute a
21 plan, but it is our best efforts to respond to
22 the backlog.

23 Do we, obviously, need to do more? I
24 think it is. I think we have to. But given
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1 where we are now with our budget and with our
2 removal budget, our capital budget, we are
3 doing -- I think we're doing a good job with what
4 we have. But, obviously, to catch up, we'd have
5 to add more resources.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I mean, I think we're
7 doing a decent job. But I do think if you asked
8 someone who has a tree leaning towards their
9 property, they feel very, very differently. And
10 so, you know, we can obviously be slightly
11 improved there.

12 But I know as you mentioned that, you
13 know, Councilman Squilla had provided about
14 270,000 in capital and NTI funds to remove about
15 320 dead and dangerous trees. And I think that
16 that's something that as a district member,
17 again, if I had that information in terms of what
18 I would be able to do, if I am able to provide
19 some resources, it could be very, very helpful.

20 And so, I don't know if you had thought
21 about maybe providing a list to each district
22 member of, you know, what they're backlog is and
23 how we can catch that up with the resources that
24 that member has in place.

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1 MR. FOCHT: Councilwoman, we certainly
2 can. This was initiated by Councilman Squilla,
3 reached to us to ask us about the possibility if
4 NTI funds could be used for tree removal. And
5 after doing some investigation with legal, we
6 determined it was available.

7 Of course, there's boundaries in which the
8 NTI funding can be spent. Those are subzones
9 within each of your councilmanic districts. We
10 can certainly get for each District Councilmember
11 a list of the current removals that we have in
12 our system both if you have NTI boundaries within
13 your NTI boundaries and then in your larger
14 district. We can do that.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That would be very,
16 very helpful, I think. And okay. So, I'm going
17 to open it up for some additional questions.

18 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Good
20 afternoon, gentleman.

21 MR. FOCHT: Afternoon.

22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I'd like to
23 turn the discussion to the business side of what
24 you're doing, specifically detail about the
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1 contracts.

2 Do you have any information on you
3 currently with regards to who though -- who those
4 contractors are that are funded by the
5 Department's operating capital budgets?

6 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Good afternoon. I'm Joan
7 Blaustein, Director of Urban Forestry and
8 Ecosystem Management.

9 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Could you
10 speak louder please and into the mic.

11 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Joan Blaustein, Director
12 of Urban Forestry and Ecosystem Management.

13 Currently, we only use capital funds for
14 planting, and that planting is done by M&M
15 Landscaping. That's our tree planting
16 contractor. In terms of pruning and removal, we
17 have a number of contractors because we divide
18 the City into five districts. So we have --
19 there are probably eight altogether contractors
20 that we use for pruning and removal.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Is
22 Greenspace con -- Greenspace Landscaping
23 Contractor one of those companies?

24 MS. BLAUSTEIN: No. Not any -- no.
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1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Shades of
2 Green.

3 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Yeah. Shades of Green,
4 right.

5 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: So help me
6 understand how a Bristol-based company wins a
7 Philadelphia contract?

8 MR. FOCHT: It's procurement -- it's a
9 process done by Procurement. They are the lowest
10 successful bidder.

11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Sorry?

12 MR. FOCHT: Excuse me?

13 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Repeat that,
14 please.

15 MR. FOCHT: It was done by Procurement
16 Department just like any professional services
17 contract led by the City of Philadelphia. So
18 it's made available to anyone who wants to bid on
19 it. And they were the lowest responsible bidder
20 for that particular work.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Is
22 Philadelphia Tree Service and Lawn Service one of
23 the contractors?

24 MS. BLAUSTEIN: No.
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1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: What is the
2 role of this department once Procurement makes
3 those recommendations or whatever, what
4 consideration, if any, is given to local
5 landscaping companies?

6 MR. FOCHT: Well, we develop the specs for
7 the work.

8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Sorry?

9 MR. FOCHT: We develop the specifications
10 for the work, and then it's released by
11 Procurement. There is not a requirement that it
12 be a Philadelphia business. Frankly, there's not
13 enough businesses in the City of Philadelphia to
14 do this work historically.

15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: That's
16 probably debatable.

17 MR. FOCHT: So, we would have a
18 preference, but it's not in the bid requirements.

19 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: But your
20 department develops the specs, correct?

21 MR. FOCHT: Correct.

22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I need you
23 to submit to the Chair of this Committee what
24 those specs are.

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1 MR. FOCHT: Okay.

2 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: And either
3 you or I could convey to Procurement a listing of
4 all contractors for this fiscal year indicating
5 the county where they reside. And I think that's
6 it for now.

7 MR. FOCHT: Okay. Will do, certainly.

8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: How soon can
9 we expect that?

10 MR. FOCHT: Well, we can turn around the
11 bid specs very quickly. We'll have to make the
12 request to Procurement for the information on
13 location. I would say probably within a week to
14 ten days.

15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Is that the
16 common practice across departments that the
17 department with the need stipulates the specs
18 which then get moved over to Procurement who
19 seeks to find those contractors that meet the
20 specifications of the department head?

21 MR. FOCHT: Each department develops
22 specifications. They are vetted by Procurement
23 to make sure they meet all obligations in the
24 Charter and any other legislation that applies.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

2 MR. FOCHT: So, Procurement doesn't just
3 automatically implement whatever the department
4 sends them. Procurement vets and makes sure it's
5 compliant with every regulation.

6 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Does the
7 department head or the designated professional in
8 that department triple check to make sure that
9 the local bidding preference is factored into the
10 award of the contracts?

11 MR. FOCHT: We check to make sure that
12 Procurement -- again, Procurement makes
13 recommendations for the awarding of the
14 contracts. So, our assumption is and we check
15 with Procurement, that the local preference was
16 taken into consideration. But they literally
17 send us the list and here is the bid breakdowns,
18 one, two, three, four, whatever it is, however
19 any bids we receive and all the documentation
20 that supports that.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay. All
22 right. Then I'll look forward towards that
23 information. And when can I expect that? When
24 can the Chair expect that?

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1 MR. FOCHT: A week to ten days.

2 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Very well.

3 Thank you very much.

4 Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

5 MR. FOCHT: Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
7 Councilwoman.

8 Councilman Squilla.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you, Madam
10 Chair. And thank you. I did remember meeting
11 with you to try to get some more help with the
12 trees and we used some NTI and capital dollars.
13 You know how I feel as far as maintenance and
14 with our buildings and things like that. And the
15 fear is, especially if this disease does come
16 into the City next year, we will have maybe
17 triple the amount of trees that we have to remove
18 within the next three to four years. And I
19 understand the resources that we get and the
20 budget process that comes through the
21 Administration.

22 It seems like -- I don't know if every
23 Councilmember has NTI dollars available or
24 capital dollars available to do this. But can we
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1 in any way work with -- I know you're in
2 Administration, but the Budget Office to say
3 understanding the need that we have, I believe
4 that the -- and I'm sure you're not going to say
5 anything to this effect -- but the actual budget
6 needs to be increased for the maintenance of
7 trees coming into next year. And if it's not,
8 we're going to constantly fall into a deeper and
9 deeper hole.

10 Is the Administration, the Budget Office
11 aware of our current needs at this time?

12 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I will speak
13 for -- I don't know if my staff has any
14 conversation with him. But I have not spoken to
15 anybody in the Budget Office about our -- either
16 our capital or tree removal budget and pruning as
17 it relates to these two backlogs. I haven't.
18 But we're really at the beginning of the budget
19 process, so we have not had at least for this
20 budget cycle that we're coming into, we have had
21 no detailed discussions to date.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Because I know in the
23 past that we have been able to get a moderate or
24 a little bit of money added to the budget for
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1 other things, and maintenance was always a big
2 part of it. But this could -- this could really
3 hamper the department and resources needed from
4 other places, especially with the storms that
5 we're having.

6 It seems like we're getting higher wind
7 storms and things like that. When the trees
8 aren't pruned, they are more likely to have
9 damage to them and the older limbs that are
10 there. And so, what we're going to be is chasing
11 our tail. We're constantly just going to be
12 trying to get to the things that are immediate,
13 not keeping up with backlog.

14 I think we really need to talk to
15 Administration saying, guys, we need a major
16 increase this year in funding for our maintenance
17 project especially for trees. And then after
18 that, you know, maybe some Council -- District
19 Councilmembers could also help with additional
20 dollars. But we're filling in now because we
21 have a major hole and -- but I think the
22 Administration will really need to see that
23 budget increase.

24 MR. FOCHT: Councilman, I did want to add
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1 to the Deputy Mayor's comments. While we haven't
2 had conversation on the operating budget side,
3 because again we're not in that process yet, we
4 have had that conversation on the capital budget
5 side. So in our capital budget request, we asked
6 for an additional \$250,000 to address Emerald Ash
7 Borer issue as an initial payment and have it
8 extend out over multiple fiscal years.

9 We had our operating budget, excuse me,
10 capital budget meeting last week and it was
11 discussed. So, it's there. It's in the mix
12 being considered. Don't know where it will come
13 out at the end of the capital budget process.
14 But that was specifically for removals of ash
15 trees as it relates to Emerald Ash Borer.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But that wasn't to
17 talk about the back -- the current backlog.

18 MR. FOCHT: No. No. That's, again, I
19 guess in part, responding to Councilwoman Bass'
20 question about being proactive and thinking
21 forward, we now had this inventory done by the
22 U.S. Forest Service. We have a good handle on
23 what it is, how much it might cost us, how many
24 years it might take to get it. So trying to be
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1 proactive there. But you're correct, not
2 addressing the backlog.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Is it, I guess,
4 normal for Council to -- I mean, we always ask
5 for additional dollars when we see there's a
6 shortfall and need it. But is it normal for
7 Council to say, we would like you to ask for
8 additional dollars? I mean, because I think we
9 really need it.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Well, as we
11 get into the budget process, all the departments
12 make their list of priorities. So, there's a
13 process. And we will uniformly -- I think all
14 departments uniformly ask for certain priorities
15 to be funded and sometimes at a higher level.
16 So, that process -- and sometimes it works. You
17 know, it actually works. At least the Mayor's
18 budget comes in and it reflects those interest
19 and concerns of the department. Again, it
20 depends on available resources and how tax
21 revenues are coming in.

22 But it -- the process works. You know, I
23 think in this year's process, it is safe to say
24 we will have a request in for some additional

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1 dollars for tree care.

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And also, I know the
3 Chairwoman -- I'm sorry. Did you want to add
4 something?

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You know, in terms of
6 thinking about priorities -- sorry, not to
7 interject.

8 You know, again, if we were thinking about
9 the fact that there are 3,000 dead or dangerous
10 trees in Philadelphia -- if there were, you know,
11 3,000-plus, you know, robberies or, you know, God
12 forbid murders or even fires or something that
13 could possibly cause a loss of life and/or
14 property, then I think that we would take a much
15 stronger stance and, you know, be a little more
16 aggressive. Not that you haven't, but I think we
17 need to be a little more thoughtful about it.
18 And planning has to be a part of it for next
19 year's budget, which is around the corner.

20 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Yeah.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Also, Madam Chair,
22 the program with the cameras that we've -- that
23 has come up through Councilwoman Bass initiative,
24 there was capital dollars used from each
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1 Councilmember to help move that forward. And
2 hopefully, we can -- there's a certain timeline.

3 Has that been moving forward or going
4 forward at this point?

5 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Again, at my
6 last briefing, yes. I don't have the details
7 with me. But we're pleased with working with
8 Public Property and Capital Unit and trying to
9 create a schedule and meet a schedule. So, we
10 can get you the details. I don't have them with
11 me. But I can certainly forward the progress we
12 have made. And over the last year, it's been --
13 I think we picked up the pace.

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I think Council has
15 been very fair in working with Parks and Rec.
16 And we really understand the need and how
17 important it is. And, you know, we are willing
18 to use our capital dollars for those things and
19 work with us. But I think also the
20 Administration has to realize they need to look
21 at the big picture and the long term picture of
22 maintenance and -- and security and need to put
23 that into dollars and cents and how much that's
24 really going to mean.

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1 And I'm not trying to put the pressure on
2 you to ask for another \$3 million, but it's
3 important that they know that, you know, we are
4 going to be in trouble maybe not next year but
5 the year after and the year after that if this
6 thing happens.

7 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: So, we're
8 never shy about asking for more money.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay, good. Thank
10 you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you. Thank you,
12 Councilman.

13 Couple other questions. In terms of just
14 where we stand as a City, just to compare us to
15 other, you know, similar -- similar cities, what
16 would you say is our wait time versus a
17 reasonable wait time versus what other cities do?

18 You know, where are we on the curve? Are
19 we ahead of the curve or pretty much on par with
20 where everybody else is or are we way behind?

21 MS. BLAUSTEIN: We are significantly
22 behind the national standard for pruning which is
23 a five to six-year cycle. We're at about a
24 ten-year cycle now. We get to every tree about
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1 that often, which is twice as long as it should
2 be. It creates problems because we are not
3 getting to trees in a timely manner, so branches
4 are falling.

5 So, you know, every city -- we talk to a
6 lot of our colleagues, struggles with the same
7 types of funding issues. But we are
8 significantly behind many of them.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And what sort
10 of -- do you have a calculation in terms of what,
11 you know -- what you would need to have in your
12 budget to be able to, you know, get -- if not up
13 to speed, but to cut that in half at least? Like
14 if we were -- what would, you know, 5 million do
15 or 10 million?

16 Give us an idea.

17 MS. BLAUSTEIN: I don't know what each of
18 those numbers would do. But I do know that we
19 don't have a firm enough grasp on what the total
20 need is. I mean, the numbers that we have are
21 based on reports that we get from people: My
22 tree needs to be pruned, my tree needs to be
23 removed or what our inspectors see. But we have
24 not done a citywide inspection to really

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1 understand how many trees need to be treated and
2 do that in a systematic way, which is what we're
3 trying to do in the next year. Because without a
4 solid plan and understanding the scope, yeah,
5 it's difficult. We can take care of what we know
6 about, but that's not sufficient.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So, help me to
8 understand then. If we haven't done a citywide
9 plan and we haven't -- like we don't have an
10 idea -- we really don't have an idea of the scope
11 of the problem, then how can we, you know,
12 continue planting at such a fast and furious pace
13 without addressing the other side of the
14 equation?

15 MR. FOCHT: I would say that we don't a --
16 we've not had the resources to do a comprehensive
17 survey because part of the challenge is it's very
18 intensive. It's very labor intensive.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

20 MR. FOCHT: Over the years we have made a
21 management decision to allocate more resources to
22 actually tree maintenance, prunings and removals
23 and plantings than inventorying what's out there.

24 However, we do know through Greenworks and
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1 Green Plan, again, the different -- 18 different
2 neighborhoods in the City, what the current tree
3 canopy is in each of those 18 neighborhoods, so
4 we know where we need to target our planning
5 efforts.

6 For example, South Philadelphia and West
7 Philadelphia, excuse me, and near North
8 Philadelphia are each about 2 to 3 percent
9 coverage as opposed to Roxborough, Manayunk,
10 Chestnut Hill which are already over 30 percent
11 coverage. So their our challenge is maintaining
12 our existing tree canopy as opposed to
13 establishing it. So, we have good data to target
14 plantings.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

16 MR. FOCHT: We know exact -- even within
17 those neighborhoods, we know by smaller sections
18 of the neighborhoods where to target plantings.
19 And largely, we go where we have strong partners.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

21 MR. FOCHT: We have very good data on
22 where to plant. What we don't have is good data
23 on what needs to be removed because a tree can
24 die from almost any condition. So, we could do a
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1 survey this year and it could be very different
2 next year if we have a certain storm. I will
3 just give you one example.

4 Three years ago we had major summer storm
5 come through South Philadelphia, what was called
6 straight line winds, a weather phenomenon we had
7 never really seen before in Philadelphia. It
8 took down hundreds of trees. If we would have
9 surveyed before that, we wouldn't have targeted
10 that neighborhood for tree removal because it
11 wouldn't have needed it. But after one
12 particular weather event, we had to allocate a
13 lot of resources into that neighborhood.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

15 MR. FOCHT: So, plantings and prunings are
16 much easier to get a handle on as far as long
17 term planning than removals are.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So just to go back
19 then. So if we have the good data on where to
20 plant, you know, how are we using this data
21 strategically? Because if we are using this
22 information and we know, okay, well -- you know,
23 Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill, you know, there are a
24 lot of trees here. And in North Philadelphia,
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1 there's a lack of trees.

2 So, does that also mean that we are using
3 that information to say, okay, well we're going
4 to do -- we know we need to do more pruning in
5 Mt. Airy and Chestnut Hill and those areas?

6 MR. FOCHT: Yes.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That is a part of
8 the -- of the plan?

9 MR. FOCHT: Yup.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And so, for the 9,796
11 trees that are in the pruning backlog, that's a
12 part of that?

13 MR. FOCHT: Correct.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. I'm sorry.
15 Commissioner.

16 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I mean, I
17 think the point that you're making is we do not
18 have a comprehensive plan. We are -- we sort of
19 have sets of plans and sets of data, but there's
20 nothing that's -- when you put them together,
21 they're not complete.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Right.

23 MR. FOCHT: We'll own that. We do work on
24 data -- database responses, but I don't think
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1 we've -- we have not taken the time or found the
2 resources to sort of collect that data, put it
3 together, analyze it, what's missing, go out and
4 get the data that's missing, bring that back and
5 say here's what we should do over the next, you
6 know, decade or, you know, some reasonable time
7 frame.

8 So, the point you're sort of have begged a
9 little bit here is not lost on us.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: You know, I
12 think we'll have to sort of take these ideas.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Because I'm glad you
14 get the point, but I'm hoping for a plan at
15 the --

16 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: No.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: At the end.

18 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I mean, again,
19 there's some -- there begs an immediate response.
20 But it also strongly suggests that we extend our
21 planning out so we can have a more complete, at
22 least, possibility smart responses that are
23 complete and have some durability and depth to
24 them. I get that.

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1 MS. BLAUSTEIN: I just wanted to add that
2 you're right. We have been planting a lot more
3 trees than we have been maintaining, but that is
4 really a function of the resources that the
5 Administration made available to us through our
6 capital budget. We had a huge influx over the
7 last five years of capital money that can be used
8 to plant trees.

9 As the Commissioner said, we've been able
10 to remove some trees with that with the
11 understanding that they were replaced. But that
12 was where we had the most resources. We know
13 that there's a significant need for new trees, so
14 we took advantage of that and have been making
15 use of that resource.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And so -- and I
17 hear you. You know, you work with what you have,
18 right? And so, I can appreciate that because we
19 are all struggling with limited resources in City
20 government. So if you are given these resources
21 and, you know, charged with, you know, planting
22 125,000 trees over the last five years -- what's
23 the total number?

24 What's your total goal? If you reach, you
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1 know, 38 percent coverage throughout the City of
2 Philadelphia, how many trees would that be; do
3 you know?

4 MS. BLAUSTEIN: It's about 800,000 trees.

5 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: That's a very
6 long term --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

8 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: You know, more
9 than a decade I think.

10 MR. FOCHT: 2025.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: 2025.

12 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: That's the
13 long term goal. We're working on sort of the
14 Administration the -- this Administration's. I
15 think, Greenworks was issued a year and a half
16 into the Administration.

17 MS. BLAUSTEIN: 2009.

18 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: 2009, spring
19 of 2009. And we're trying to respond to the
20 intermediate goal which we won't reach which is
21 300,000 by the end of the Administration. We
22 made a good run at this given our resources. But
23 we are not going to get to the 300,000.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
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1 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: We will get,
2 you know, halfway, a little better than halfway
3 which I'm very proud. But sort of the -- the
4 long term goal is 800,000.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. But it looks
6 like you're ahead of schedule, would you say?

7 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Well, no.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I mean, if you sort of
9 like looked at this incrementally, it came out in
10 2009. Now we're -- you know, the end goal point
11 is 2025. And you know, I don't know how many
12 years that is. And you divide that by 125,000.
13 It looks like you're probably ahead of --

14 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: That's a good
15 way of looking at it.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yeah. I kind of think
17 so.

18 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I like that.

19 MR. FOCHT: We like your math. Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yeah. I could, you
21 know, work a calculator. But the idea here is
22 that if we are somewhat ahead of the curve, then
23 we could, you know, theoretically slow down just
24 a little bit and, you know, advise that, you
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1 know, this is not where the need is even though
2 someone else who wrote the report, you know, did
3 a very good job. You know, thought this was a
4 smart and bright and best thing to do. That
5 those who are on the ground which is you all and
6 us, that you can inform them that there is a
7 significant need elsewhere.

8 MR. FOCHT: One fact, Councilwoman, our
9 planting is slowing down because our capital
10 budget had been increased from 350,000 to 2.5 in
11 the first year, then went to 2 million, then 1,
12 and this year it's a half a million. It will be
13 a half a million again, but then go back up to a
14 million in 17.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I see.

16 MR. FOCHT: It has slowed down because
17 there was a large influx of money. We were
18 playing catch up for a while. We're catching up
19 to planting along with the flow of money. But
20 the amount of money in our capital budget is
21 decreased. And now, ideally, we'll stabilize at
22 a million dollars a year.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Okay. Can you
24 explain the process -- what's the formal process
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1 if someone calls and says they need a tree
2 removed or pruned?

3 You know, we'll get a call or I will see
4 someone in the street and, you know, they'll give
5 me a holler. I got a few on my cell phone right
6 now. But for folks who have, you know, trees
7 that are leaning, trees that are dead or dying or
8 whatever, what's the formal process?

9 MS. BLAUSTEIN: There are many avenues
10 into our -- our database. The one most people
11 use is 311. And that's a really easy way for
12 people to call and give the information. 311
13 conveys those requests to us. I mean, we see
14 that database every day.

15 But our -- our contract management office
16 in Wissahickon Hall takes dozen of calls every
17 day as well as does my office, as well. People
18 call any number of different ways even through
19 our -- our Tree Philly line people will call and
20 have street tree requests. There are people
21 forms as well that people can submit. So, we --
22 we try to make every avenue available for people.

23 It's important for people to know how to
24 do that. And I very often get calls of people
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1 say I wasn't sure the best way to contact
2 somebody. So, we need to make sure that people
3 understand that 311 is really the best way to do
4 it.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Do you have
6 those forms available? I don't know that I've
7 ever seen one.

8 MS. BLAUSTEIN: I can -- yes. I can make
9 them available to you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It might be helpful
11 for all of the District offices to be able to
12 have that information to, you know, put in
13 someone's hand who might not have internet
14 access.

15 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Correct, yeah.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Question for you. So
17 school District -- trees that are on School
18 District property, is the School District
19 responsible?

20 MR. FOCHT: Yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's not you?

22 MR. FOCHT: Right.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Now with the 125,000
24 trees that we've planted, has there been any sort
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1 of strategic approach to work with the School
2 District? Are those properties included?
3 Because as you know most of our school landscape
4 is concrete.

5 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Sure.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It would be nice to
7 have some green space in there.

8 MR. FOCHT: Yes. We have worked with the
9 School District on planting street trees. These
10 are perimeters around the school properties, so
11 in the public right-of-way. We cannot expend our
12 money, City Capital money on -- within the school
13 site itself because the schools are not a
14 City-owned asset. And you can only use City
15 Capital money on City-owned ground.

16 So, the public right-of-way is controlled
17 by the City. We worked -- several years ago we
18 had a relationship with the Eagles and we have
19 done a number of different planting initiatives
20 over the years that involved the School District
21 and greening of perimeters of school sites, but
22 the perimeter only.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And so, how do
24 we handle a tree that's on a -- that's not on
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1 City-owned ground? And so, that may be --
2 besides the School District.

3 That may be a house that has, you know,
4 one of those weed trees that's grown up and is
5 now leaning and threatening, you know, a
6 neighbor's house or it could be a tree that was
7 in someone's back yard, you know, no one lives
8 there anymore. The house has been abandoned.
9 You know, again, another situation where a tree
10 is leaning towards someone's property.

11 How is that handled?

12 MR. FOCHT: Well, anything that's on
13 private property is the responsibility of the
14 property owner to remove.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: In case you can't find
16 that property owner.

17 MR. FOCHT: Well, then -- you want to talk
18 about L&I?

19 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Yeah. We often work with
20 L&I when there are these cases, these City-owned
21 property or property that's vacant and the owner
22 isn't available. We generally send our inspector
23 to evaluate what needs to be done and then advise
24 L&I because they have access to the same
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1 contractors that we do. It's a City-wide
2 contract for them. The contractor decide whether
3 it's actually a danger and needs to be dealt
4 with, and then they take care of it. On
5 occasion, we have helped with our crews as well
6 when it's a situation that seems dire.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

8 MR. FOCHT: And if it is a property where
9 the owner cannot be tracked down, then L&I will
10 do the process Joan just described. And then
11 it's up to them if they file a lien against the
12 property if they can ever track down the owner,
13 but then it's recorded as a lien against the
14 property if the property is ever sold.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure. Okay. Very
16 good. Very good.

17 One other question. You said that you
18 have about 30 parks and recreation staff who
19 address tree pruning and removals at park and rec
20 centers and emergency responses. And can you
21 give us an idea, are you at capacity with those
22 staff members?

23 MR. FOCHT: We're currently fully staff.

24 All the positions we have are employed. Yes.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All right. But you
2 could use additional staff?

3 MR. FOCHT: Never hurt.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Could never hurt. All
5 right. Okay. Well, thank you very much for your
6 testimony.

7 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Thank you.

8 MR. FOCHT: Thank you, Councilwoman.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh, I'm sorry.
10 Councilwoman Brown.

11 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Yes. Where
12 is the linkage or connection or intersection with
13 City planning and all that you all have to do
14 around tree planting?

15 MR. FOCHT: Well, on the -- I'll address
16 the capital side. On the capital budget, the
17 capital budget which again funds our tree
18 planting, Capital budget is managed by the
19 Planning Commission staff.

20 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

21 MR. FOCHT: So, they generate the capital
22 budget. And the meeting I referenced that we had
23 last week was with the Planning Commission
24 staff --

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1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

2 MR. FOCHT: -- around our capital budget.

3 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: What about
4 the Philadelphia Horticultural Society. What is
5 the linkage with them and what they bring to this
6 initiative.

7 MR. FOCHT: We work closely with the Tree
8 Tenders Program. In fact, there is
9 representatives here in the audience from Tree
10 Tenders at PHS around planting and prunings and
11 removals.

12 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay. And
13 so, we have Saul, JB Saul. It is JB Saul, isn't
14 it? WB Saul.

15 MR. FOCHT: WB Saul.

16 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Accuracy is
17 important. And I think that might be it, the one
18 educational institution that cares, fosters or
19 teaches this type of experience. Any linkage
20 with them?

21 MR. FOCHT: Yes. In fact, our Director of
22 Operations Chris Palmer is a graduate of Saul and
23 he's on their advisory board and is very involved
24 with them. He oversees all of our in-house tree
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1 operations, our staff -- our certified arborists
2 that work on our trees.

3 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay. So
4 then young people are somewhere in this pipeline?

5 MR. FOCHT: Why don't you come up.

6 MR. PALMER: Good afternoon. Chris
7 Palmer.

8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Good
9 afternoon.

10 MR. PALMER: We do actively work with Saul
11 High School encouraging young people to get jobs
12 with us seasonally. So, we have a number of
13 positions filled by juniors and seniors of Saul
14 High School as well as Lincoln High School. They
15 still have a horticultural program there. Many
16 of our entry-level jobs are filled by graduates
17 of Saul High School.

18 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Is that
19 right?

20 MR. PALMER: Much of our senior management
21 team, my senior management team on operations are
22 graduates of Saul High School.

23 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Years ago
24 during my first term here in City Council, there
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1 was a lot of conversation and dialogue about
2 connecting the work that this department does
3 with the ex-offenders that are being released.

4 Where is that idea? Did it ever take
5 legs?

6 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Right. We
7 have -- I mentioned TreeKeepers Program as well
8 as PowerCorps. In both instances, significant
9 members of the crews which help with this tree
10 care and have built our capacity are -- have been
11 adjudicated and are now in the process of
12 outworking, getting a paycheck and being trained.
13 And for us trying to move them to some kind of
14 permanent employment.

15 In fact we are taking -- we're really
16 trying to understand all that we do. So, we have
17 18 to 24 year olds. We have almost 300, 18 to 24
18 year olds who work for the Department not on a
19 summer basis but for anywhere between six and
20 nine months a year.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: I see.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: The best
23 example of trying to understand that connection
24 to -- to a job.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Yes.

2 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: That work that
3 they do for us --

4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Creating a
5 pipeline.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Supporting our
7 work here in the City but to -- also to try to
8 figure out what is the next step, and can we
9 extend that work to some sort of job readiness
10 pipeline to work. And the most advanced work
11 that we're doing right now in that sphere is with
12 the TreeKeepers and with the PowerCorps.

13 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

14 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: We learn from
15 that. And we're trying to figure out how do we
16 do a better job not only in the arborist or tree
17 care, but broadly in the department how do we
18 connect kids to jobs. That -- use this time
19 they're working for us to elevate their chances
20 to get work, their skill sets, and their
21 opportunities.

22 So, it's interesting you asked. This --
23 these are the vanguard -- these two programs are
24 the vanguard of that thinking in the Department
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1 right now.

2 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: So, and now
3 this is purely off the topic ahead. I worked
4 earlier in my career in Philadelphia at OIC. And
5 more recently, meaning the last 20 years how when
6 there was discussion about Philadelphia Visitors
7 and Conventions Center, the new convention
8 center, linking it with Philadelphia OIC who is
9 in the business of training young people for the
10 hospitality careers.

11 Can you imagine then taking what you're
12 doing, who handles the training? Is that
13 in-house?

14 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Yes. If you
15 need --

16 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Are Tree
17 Tenders -- tree vendors.

18 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: There are a
19 few folks here about -- the training is, as I
20 understand it and I'm not super close, is
21 in-house; is that correct?

22 MR. PALMER: Yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

24 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Skill-based
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1 training.

2 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

3 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Not all the
4 readiness pieces.

5 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Sure. Sure.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: But the
7 skill-based stuff is within the agency.

8 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

9 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: So, we're
10 trying to figure out what else do we need to do
11 around job readiness beyond the hard skills and
12 how do we kind of create -- provide the capital,
13 you know, sort of the social capital --

14 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Yes.

15 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: -- and the
16 connection to an institution or a business line
17 that we can begin to, on a small level at least
18 the beginning on a pilot level, around three or
19 four types of work, take those experiences and
20 say, you know, our goal is to get these young
21 people connected to a full-time job.

22 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: So consider,
23 imagine a circumstance where if you want to do
24 business with the City of Philadelphia and we
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1 have -- we're trying to address our poverty rate
2 which is 25/28 percent depending upon who you're
3 speaking with, and the City is serious about
4 indeed creating a pipeline for anyone principally
5 low skilled who want to ultimately have a j-o-b,
6 if you want to do business, then you have to be
7 willing to do X, Y, Z with folks that we trained
8 for the work that you do in landscaping and the
9 like.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I wouldn't
11 argue against it.

12 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: To be
13 continued.

14 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Thank you
16 very much. Thank you very much.

17 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Thank you,
19 Madam Chairwoman.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

21 You know what just a couple other
22 questions really quickly that I thought of.

23 So first, what is the plan to address the
24 Emerald Ash Borer? Because I see here it says
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1 that trees that are not treated with insecticide
2 will be killed within three to four years. And
3 so, I'm assuming that we are treating those trees
4 now or planning to treat those trees?

5 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Yeah. We have completed a
6 study to identify where the ash trees are that
7 are most likely to be hazard along streets,
8 pathways, park areas where they could -- anything
9 within a hundred foot buffer area of anyplace
10 that people live, work or walk. We have
11 identified there's about 8,000 of those trees
12 alone. We have been -- we began our first grant
13 of removing those trees that are hazard.

14 We also identified about a thousand trees
15 that are in good condition or in a location that
16 we would like to preserve them. And so, we have
17 applied for a grant from the State of
18 Pennsylvania to -- for matching funds to do
19 treatment of those thousand trees over the next
20 two years. The funding is for two-year cycle.
21 There are about a thousand trees we will hope to
22 save.

23 There are other trees in the center of the
24 forest that will live or die and fall in place so
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1 we don't have to remove or treat every single
2 tree that -- that we have. But we have
3 identified all 8,000 that are in critical areas.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So, but what -- from
5 what you said, there's about a thousand trees
6 that we hope to save? Is that what you said?

7 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Correct.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Out of 207,000?

9 MS. BLAUSTEIN: That's right. Literally,
10 that's all we can afford to save.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh, okay. So the
12 grant -- the grant that was applied for through
13 the state, how -- how large is that grant?

14 MS. BLAUSTEIN: It's \$85,000 that will
15 have to be matched with 85,000 from the City.
16 And that will enable us to treat a thousand
17 trees. It's a two-year cycle. It will allow us
18 to treat those for two years.

19 The thing with -- with diseases like that,
20 the reason that we don't treat or remove every
21 tree in the forest is because there may be some
22 trees that survive. It's important to understand
23 that genetic stalk in the future to see why those
24 trees lived and died. So, we want to be able to

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1 participate in that kind of experimentation going
2 forward to understand why some trees -- like with
3 every disease that goes through there, some that
4 do --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

6 MS. BLAUSTEIN: -- survive regardless.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I just think it's --
8 well, it's odd to me that we do so much planning
9 and sustainability issues and, you know, we're
10 planting 125,000 trees with a goal of -- let's
11 see, what was our goal -- 800,000 trees. But
12 we're willing to just -- not willing, but we
13 really don't have a strategy to address, you
14 know, the -- just, you know, what's going to
15 happen with about, you know, let's say just all.
16 Because I'm not even going to say a thousand,
17 we're going to save a thousand trees. Let's say
18 all of the Emerald Ash trees.

19 MR. FOCHT: Councilwoman, I would say I do
20 believe we do have a strategy. I think the plan
21 we put together is probably the most progressive
22 in the State of Pennsylvania. In fact, we think
23 we're one of the only municipalities that's even
24 eligible to receive this early funding from the
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1 state for the -- what's the word I'm thinking of?

2 MS. BLAUSTEIN: The insecticide?

3 MR. FOCHT: The insecticide, yeah. But
4 having said that, this is a very, very
5 significant undertaking. This is potentially
6 millions of dollars that would need to be spent
7 over the next decade to conceive of even
8 retaining 200-plus thousand trees.

9 So, we're starting small. We're starting
10 in a way that we got an early -- we did the
11 study. We know where they are. We have an early
12 removal contract to remove the ones before they
13 die that could be most dangerous to citizens,
14 again, adjacent to roads, adjacent to paths. And
15 then we're being an applicant for these \$85,000
16 grant for the --

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yeah.

18 MR. FOCHT: -- vaccine.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I hear you. It just
20 feels to me like we do what's easy versus what
21 is, you know, prudent, I would say. It feels as
22 if -- you know, like we sort of -- when I see say
23 "we," you know, I'm not blaming you. But I'm
24 just saying, you were work with the resources
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1 that you have.

2 But if we're -- we're talking about
3 Philadelphia being like the greenest city, you
4 know, one of the greenest cities up and down the
5 east coast, we're talking about all the
6 initiatives that we have in place like green
7 roofs and bike lanes. All these things that come
8 together and combine to make us a city that
9 reduces our carbon footprint. You know, all of
10 these things that are really wonderful for the
11 environment.

12 And then when it comes to, you know, these
13 trees, you know, we just kind of, well, you know,
14 it's expensive. We can't really do too much
15 about it. But what we can do is, you know, we're
16 going to kind of keep planting on the other side.
17 Which -- because it's easier to plant a tree than
18 to do the work to, I guess, these save trees.

19 MR. FOCHT: We -- Councilwoman, we don't
20 want to see 200,000 ash trees die.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I don't think you do.
22 Let me be clear. I don't think that you do.

23 MR. FOCHT: We have -- again, you have
24 acknowledged we have very limited resources.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

2 MR. FOCHT: We prioritize within those
3 limited resources to do the study to do the
4 removals, the first removals we've spoken of, to
5 identify the fundings through both cash and staff
6 time for the match for this grant to the state.
7 I think we're being very aggressive in how we are
8 addressing these early times of Emerald Ash
9 Borer. It has not yet arrived in the City of
10 Philadelphia, but we're out there removing trees
11 already in anticipation it will arrive. I think
12 we're being aggressive.

13 Could we do more if we had more resources?
14 We could do more. We're already allocating a
15 significant component of our resources to this
16 threat that's not yet arrived.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: But that is where, I
18 guess, I would go back to, you know, the powers
19 to be to say, you know, listen, we appreciate all
20 these trees that we can stick in the ground. But
21 at the same time, we have an urgent need right
22 now right here. And the need is not as strong, I
23 would suggest, for the brand new trees as it is
24 to maintaining some of the trees that we have
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1 that are, you know, falling to disease of this
2 particular insect or some of the other things
3 that may be a problem for our trees and tree
4 stock in Philadelphia.

5 MR. FOCHT: Well, that's why I mentioned
6 in response to Councilman Squilla's question, in
7 our capital budget this year we requested an
8 additional \$250,000 just to address Emerald Ash
9 Borer.

10 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Just to
11 address what?

12 MR. FOCHT: The Emerald Ash Borer.

13 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.

14 MR. FOCHT: To address it specifically
15 through removals and remediation. So when we had
16 that meeting last week, and it's in the cycle and
17 it's being considered, but that would be
18 additional resources to the Department through
19 our capital budget to address Emerald Ash Borer.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So for these
21 particular ash trees, how many of them would you
22 say are, you know, dangerous or dead and need to
23 come down anyway?

24 MR. FOCHT: We don't know right now.
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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Say you did a study?

2 No?

3 MS. BLAUSTEIN: About 8,000.

4 MR. FOCHT: Oh, okay. Of the 207,000, a
5 very small number.

6 MS. BLAUSTEIN: Correct. Are hazardous.
7 In places where they can be hazardous.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

9 MR. FOCHT: So generally, a tree dies in
10 the woods like the Wissahickon --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

12 MR. FOCHT: -- or the Pennypack, often
13 times a dead tree can provide additional habitat
14 benefits. So, we generally don't go in and
15 remove dead trees in the middle of the forest
16 unless they create a public safety hazard. So
17 where we have emera -- where we have ash trees if
18 they die from Emerald Ash Borer in the forest,
19 it's not something we would invest resources to
20 remove. Because as long as it's not a public
21 safety, they create additional habitat.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

23 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: And it's hard
24 to predict the movement of these -- of this pest.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure. Sure.

2 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Again, when I
3 was up in DCNR for the Hemlock, there's this
4 Woolly Adelgid. And we were -- it was moving
5 through the forest, but you never know the
6 direction it's going to take and what it's impact
7 is. So, it's hard to predict the movement and
8 the destruction that such a pest could cause.

9 I think -- I get what you're saying. And
10 I don't think we reject it -- I would not reject
11 any of the planning questions that you guys
12 raised today. It's really important for us. And
13 also, that we have to figure out how to
14 better resource our pruning and dead tree
15 removal.

16 But I do think we're ahead of the Emerald
17 Ash Borer. And with trying to sort of build
18 capital funds that would move us forward as well
19 as understanding the nature of our -- of that
20 stand of tree of that species in the City and
21 begin already to invest hundreds of thousands --
22 hopefully, hundreds of thousands of dollars in
23 managing this oncoming, which I think it's
24 oncoming, pest.

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1 I don't know if there's -- I don't know
2 how we get ahead of it not understanding even
3 generally where and how much impact it's going to
4 have in the City. I mean, it will. But we don't
5 have enough data to say, okay, here's what we're
6 going to need and here's when we're going to need
7 it.

8 But we're clear enough that it will have
9 an impact that we're trying to understand that as
10 best we can now. And then, you know, put some
11 resources on the ground. At least, have the
12 ability to put some resources on the ground to
13 deal with it.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

15 MS. BLAUSTEIN: If I can just add.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

17 MS. BLAUSTEIN: The advantage we've had by
18 being proactive and being years ahead of when the
19 pest actually arrives is that private industry is
20 really stepping up its game and providing
21 different approaches for treating trees and to
22 keep them alive. I mean, just in the period of
23 two years, we've been working on this. Treatment
24 has gone from having to do it every year to every
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1 other year. And it's reduced in cost almost at
2 half from what it was originally.

3 So, we are relying on industry to continue
4 to refine what we can do to preserve trees.
5 Because, obviously, that's our hope, particularly
6 large stance that we have in the forest. And
7 we're hoping that that will become the most
8 affordable way for us to deal with this much more
9 than removals.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Councilwoman
11 Blondell Reynolds Brown.

12 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Yes. The
13 local bidding preference question. So help
14 Procurement understand that I actually want to
15 see by way of a grid not only the location of
16 those companies, but where the local bidding
17 preference was applied to the non-Philadelphia
18 companies who did not get the contracts. I don't
19 want to get information and then have to circle
20 back because I didn't make myself clear.

21 And totally separate matter, not to go
22 into detail here, but for you to submit to the
23 Chair, I've gotten mixed information regarding
24 the accessibility of rec centers on weekends.

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1 And I don't know what the -- what the answers are
2 to these questions I've gotten. So, if you can
3 forward to the Chair, are rec centers open?
4 Those that are, those that are not. Is it
5 universal across the system for those who get the
6 lucky chance to be open and have children from
7 that neighborhood off the streets? Why them
8 versus why not others?

9 Just in general, summary information about
10 accessibility of rec centers on weekends.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: I can
12 generally answer that. We run six days. We're
13 not -- generally, our staff facilities, and there
14 might be an exception here and there. But
15 generally, our staff facilities are open Monday
16 through Saturday. Sunday we are not staffed.
17 So, that's the general rule.

18 Now you -- we may be part-time staff in a
19 smaller place that we may not open on a Saturday
20 because it's a -- I don't know.

21 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Sure.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: There's --
23 there's --

24 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: The nuances.
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1 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Yeah. There
2 is little differences in operations. But we can
3 get you that by facility.

4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: Okay.
5 That's fine.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: We can send
7 you over to the Chair every facility and its
8 hours of operation.

9 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS BROWN: That would
10 be helpful that I'm accurate as I address these
11 questions. Thank you all. Thank you very much.

12 DEPUTY MAYOR DIBERARDINIS: Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 MR. FOCHT: Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Can we have the
17 clerk call up the next panel.

18 THE CLERK: Will the next panel consisting
19 of Ms. Sarah Low please come forward.

20 MS. LOW: Good afternoon.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good afternoon.
22 Please state your name and begin your testimony.

23 MS. LOW: Sarah Low. I'm with the USDA
24 Forest Service, the Philadelphia Field Station.
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1 I'm the field station coordinator and a
2 biological scientist.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Wonderful.

4 MS. LOW: In 2015, the Forest Service
5 conducted an urban forest assessment called
6 i-Tree, which used data collected from plots
7 throughout the City to determine the ecosystem
8 benefits of Philadelphia's urban forest. And
9 that includes everything from the street trees to
10 natural areas. The report, which looked at
11 street trees, yard trees and park trees, is
12 anticipated to be published in early 2015.

13 As a result of the i-Tree analysis, we
14 estimate that Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has
15 approximately 2.9 million trees with tree canopy
16 that covers 20 percent of the City. Trees in
17 Philadelphia currently store about 702,000 tons
18 of carbon, 2.6 million tons of carbon dioxide
19 valued at approximately \$50 million.

20 In addition, these trees remove about
21 27,000 tons of atmospheric carbon per year, which
22 is equivalent to 99,000 tons of carbon dioxide
23 per year or \$1.9 million per year and about 513
24 tons of air pollution per year, \$19 million per
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1 year.

2 Philadelphia's urban forest is estimated
3 to reduce annual residential energy cost by \$6.9
4 million per year. The compensatory value of the
5 tree is estimated at \$1.7 billion. The City's
6 park lands which constitute 9.3 percent of the
7 total land area have an estimate of 1.1 million
8 trees, 64 percent canopy cover and contributes
9 substantially to urban forest ecosystem services.
10 And the point of all that data is really that our
11 urban forest has a tremendous economic value.

12 The i-Tree analysis also revealed that Ash
13 trees are the third most common species in the
14 City with an estimated 206,996 trees representing
15 7.1 of the City's trees. That includes seedlings
16 and mature trees and everything in between. The
17 majority of the Ash are in wooded areas, mostly
18 parks. And some of that is also private
19 property.

20 Trees, large trees, large Ash trees are
21 mostly at risk when they are near people and
22 property, which can be located near trails or
23 streets. The concern would be that if Emerald
24 Ash Borer comes in, which is a significant threat
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1 throughout the northeast and MidAtlantic, that
2 those trees would die. Emerald Ash Borer has
3 been rapidly spreading, resulting in over
4 1 million tree deaths in the United States. As a
5 result of Emerald Ash Borer, communities
6 throughout the northeast and midwest, have
7 conducted large scale tree removals to prevent
8 potential liability associated with
9 large-standing dead trees and street
10 right-of-ways. Again, Emerald -- Ash trees are
11 extremely prolific. So, not all those trees
12 are -- would be old mature and in need of
13 removal.

14 The International Society of Arboriculture
15 defines an arborist as an individual trained in
16 the art and science of planting, caring for and
17 maintaining individual trees. And in a paper by
18 Michael Mortimer and Brian Kane published in
19 Urban Forestry & Urban Greening, the authors state
20 that "risk of legal liability for tree owners has
21 been steadily increasing in many jurisdictions in
22 the United States." And the authors recommend
23 "the prudent or responsible tree owners should be
24 encouraged and willing to have a professional

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1 assessment of the subject, particularly in high
2 target settings."

3 In this study, target refers to houses,
4 cars, outdoor decks and, of course, people. In
5 other words, trees dying in woods away from
6 trails or other targets would not be considered
7 hazardous trees by an arborist. But trees are a
8 valuable resource. And in order to retain and
9 maximize the benefits they provide, it is
10 necessary to provide adequate management. In
11 many cases, wise management can involve treating
12 and protecting potential hazards to retain the
13 benefits that trees provide, avoid costly
14 removals and minimize the hazard.

15 And that is all I was going to say. But I
16 would really be happy to answer some questions.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I want to thank you
18 for your testimony. And I do agree with you very
19 strongly that, you know, if we say that trees are
20 a valuable resource and we want to make sure that
21 we get the benefits that those resource -- that
22 exist within those resources, that it really
23 just, you know, makes a whole lot of sense that
24 we pay much more attention. You know, but really
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1 that, you know, we put the resources in the right
2 places. And you know, it just -- your testimony
3 is very, very interesting. I really want to
4 thank you for that.

5 Councilman, any questions?

6 Councilman Oh.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: No. Just thank you for
8 all the data you provide. It's very helpful. I
9 like all the information. It's very helpful.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And, you know, one
12 last question.

13 So, you said that your research that says
14 that Ash trees are the third most common species
15 in the City of Philadelphia. Is that going to be
16 in that 2015 report?

17 MS. LOW: It will be, yes.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So, it's going to be
19 released early next year, you said?

20 MS. LOW: That's the expectation, yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Can we get a
22 early copy of it today? No?

23 MS. LOW: Actually, no, I think we could.
24 I think I can give that to you.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Oh, okay. All right.
2 Very good. Well, thank you so much. You have to
3 ask, right?

4 MS. LOW: Yes, that's true.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you very much.
6 Whatever information you have would really,
7 really be helpful.

8 MS. LOW: No problem.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And you know what, can
10 you just go over for me in terms of the -- the
11 value. You said -- just in terms of how you
12 break this down in terms of what the, you know,
13 value is based on the number of trees in the
14 City.

15 MS. LOW: Well, the value -- just to give
16 a little background. The I-Tree is a model, so
17 it uses a great deal of research in order to spit
18 those values out. So when we did our survey, we
19 went through and found all these -- we went to
20 200 plots throughout the City and identified how
21 many trees and what types of trees, the size of
22 trees and then used these models to help figure
23 out what that means in economic and environmental
24 ecosystem benefits basically.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Very good. All
2 right. Well, thank you very much. I don't have
3 any additional questions. Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 MS. LOW: Sure.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very helpful.

7 MS. LOW: Happy to provide anything else.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

9 And can we have the clerk call up the next
10 panel, please.

11 THE CLERK: Will the next panel consisting
12 of Ms. Sarah Anton, Ms. Cynthia Kishinchand, and
13 Ms. Mindy Maslin, please come forward.

14 (Panel approaches Witness Table.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good afternoon. Okay.
16 And if you can please state your name for the
17 record and begin your testimony. We'll start
18 with Sarah.

19 MS. ANTON: My name is Sarah Anton. I am
20 a Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, PHS, Tree
21 Tender. A member of the Advisory Committee for
22 my local park Capitolo Playground. I'm the
23 beautification co-chair for the Passyunk Square
24 Civic Association where I help organize street
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1 tree plantings and tree care events in the
2 neighborhood. These activities lead me to keep a
3 special eye on the trees in the city parks and on
4 Philadelphia streets.

5 Programs like Philadelphia Parks and
6 Recreation Tree Philly and PHS' Plant One
7 Million, are doing an amazing job transforming
8 our city into a more lush and beautiful place to
9 live and work. The benefit of urban trees are
10 well documented. And you only need to stroll
11 down a tree-lined street versus a barren sidewalk
12 to experience these benefits first hand.

13 Through the efforts of the Department of
14 Parks and Recreation and the Pennsylvania
15 Horticultural Society, there are fewer and fewer
16 city blocks left unadorned. Our tree-filled
17 parks are well used resources for residents and
18 universally acknowledged assets that add to the
19 quality of urban life we enjoy in Philadelphia.
20 My neighborhood association has been planting
21 trees for over ten years. And the overwhelming
22 sentiment among neighbors I've encountered is
23 that street trees are important to the beauty of
24 city scape.

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1 Residents understand the value of the role
2 that tree play improving the quality of air and
3 water in our environment. Where there is
4 resistance to adding trees to the neighborhood,
5 it's typically due to a concern that the trees
6 will be planted but not maintained. The City has
7 a good system in place to evaluate sites for tree
8 plantings and ensure that trees and sites are
9 appropriately matched to ensure that maintenance
10 needs are kept to a minimum.

11 For example, planting shorter trees under
12 streets with overhead wires. However, trees are
13 living organisms and will always require
14 maintenance. The City is also a harsh
15 environment for trees. And no matter how well
16 cared for these trees are, some will not make it.

17 Our neighborhood has an extremely active
18 volunteer base who help plant and maintain trees
19 both on city streets and in our area parks.
20 Neighbors with the help of PHS enthusiastically
21 do as much as they can, but there will always be
22 additional large scale work that requires a
23 professional team. Volunteers who do their part
24 need to be assured that their commitment will be

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1 met with the City's commitment to prompt removal
2 of hazardous dead trees and attention to larger
3 scale prunings of street trees and in trees in
4 city parks.

5 The structure is there to get the work
6 done efficiently. I've been able to watch the
7 process of 311 reports for removal of dead trees
8 from start to finish. You can see the most dire
9 reports take precedence. But additional removals
10 go unattended for years until they actually
11 become a hazard. This mode of operation
12 decreases neighbor confidence, makes the City
13 feel uncared for and creates situations where
14 trees can cause damage.

15 Programs like the Department of Parks and
16 Recreation's TreeKeepers work very effectively
17 with area neighborhood and friends groups to
18 handle prunings and maintenance projects in City
19 parks that are beyond the scope of what these
20 groups can handle. Having a specialized team
21 come to prune and shape trees gives the trees a
22 good basic structure that allows the trees to
23 require smaller scale maintenance in an
24 intervening year.

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1 Our neighborhood has been fortunate to
2 receive visits from the TreeKeepers at Columbus
3 Square and Capitolo. And as I visit other City
4 parks that haven't received this professional
5 check on the basic structure of the landscape,
6 you can see how much additional work is created
7 simply because there has been no regular
8 maintenance. I encourage you to fully fund the
9 tree care and removal programs at the Department
10 of Parks and Recreation for all these reasons.

11 It is gratifying to live in a City that
12 understands benefits of planting trees and to be
13 part of a community that is committed to taking
14 care of them. To see the City step up to fully
15 do its part will be a wonderful signal of how we
16 value our surroundings.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

19 MS. KISHINCHAND: Good afternoon. My name
20 is Cynthia Kishinchand. I'm the coordinator of
21 East Falls Tree Tenders. I'm also a member of
22 the PHS Tree Committee and member of Friends of
23 Inn Yard Park and Friends of McMonagle Park.

24 On behalf of East Falls Tree Tenders, I
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1 thank you for this opportunity to testify in
2 support of Resolution No. 140668. I also thank
3 Councilmembers Bass and Squilla for introducing
4 the resolution and President Clarke and
5 Councilmembers Quinones-Sanchez, Jones, Reynolds
6 Brown, Johnson, Kenney, Oh, Tasco, O'Neill and
7 Blackwell for joining them in sponsoring the
8 resolution.

9 According to a March 8, 1997 article in
10 the New York Times, dead trees are waiti -- are
11 accidents waiting to happen. Two days earlier in
12 Queens, New York, 12 year-old Krisin Washington
13 and three ten-year-olds including her sister
14 Kimberly, Olivia Warren and Kia Satterfield were
15 riding in a van en route to school. They never
16 reached school. They died from a dead tree that
17 fell on the vehicle.

18 Two months later in Wallingford,
19 Pennsylvania a ten-year-old Jessica McEntee was
20 riding her bicycle on Highland Avenue. Although
21 she was wearing a helmet, she died at Children's
22 Hospital after a tree limb fell across the road
23 and hit her on the head -- her head.

24 Although there is a backlog of 3,100
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1 requests for tree removals and 9,000 requests for
2 tree pruning, to date no such tragedies have
3 occurred in Philadelphia despite the heroic
4 effort of the staff of the Department of Parks
5 and Recreation and the funding provided by the
6 passage of Bill 960829 in May 1997 -- and I
7 testified about that bill then -- the City has
8 been unable to fill the citizens' request in a
9 timely fashion.

10 The industry standard for pruning is five
11 years. Here in Philadelphia, it is eight to ten
12 years. In addition to putting pedestrians,
13 cyclists and vehicle passengers at risk, dead
14 trees and falling tree limbs damage property and
15 power lines.

16 You may have heard of the Pennsylvania
17 Horticultural Society's pruning clubs. Beginning
18 in 2013, train tree tenders such as the
19 volunteers involved with East Falls Tree Tenders
20 venture out four to five times a year with a
21 certified arborist to prune street trees. Last
22 summer, nine tree tender groups pruned 535 trees.
23 For safety reasons, we do not climb ladders or
24 stepping stools to reach overhanging branches;
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1 thus, we can only reach a limited number of low
2 hanging branches. Our impact is and always will
3 be limited.

4 Let's go back to the City's finances. On
5 occasion, various levies have been suggested to
6 raise money. There is also always the
7 possibility taxes on sugar-based drinks and
8 cigarettes or change to the Real Estate Abatement
9 Program may generate additional funds in the
10 future. In the meantime, however, you and the
11 Mayor share a grave responsibility to protect the
12 well being of your constituents, all one and a
13 half million of us. I am confident you will
14 allot the necessary funds now in the future.

15 Since 1997, East Falls Tree Tenders have
16 been inviting 180 elementary students from three
17 local schools to an Arbor Celebration on Inn Yard
18 Park on Ridge Avenue. 140 of them usually walk
19 to the event. We notified the 38th Police
20 District so an officer is there to make sure the
21 youngsters will safely cross the streets. We
22 cannot notify the trees along the route not to
23 fall or to drop any limbs. But at present, there
24 are no large trees, so the route seems without

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1 peril.

2 East Falls Tree Tenders will continue to
3 monitor the status of current street trees
4 throughout the community and report dead and/or
5 hazardous trees to P&R. By passing Resolution
6 140668, you will ensure the safety of children
7 and adults throughout the City not just East
8 Falls.

9 In closing, I would like to mention
10 April 24 when East Falls Tree Tenders will be
11 celebrating Arbor Day at Inn Yard Park and the
12 next day, April 25, when we will be planting
13 street trees. You are cordially invited to these
14 happy occasions.

15 I would just like to expand a little bit
16 about the impact. One of the things is
17 TreeKeepers, we've worked with them for Arbor
18 Day. That project I feel is a wonderful project
19 for both the recipients and the participants.
20 Philadelphia U, since 2005, their students have
21 been helping us to plant trees including the
22 trees we planted in November. We sort of adopted
23 Mifflin School, which is a Title One school. And
24 over the years, we've planted -- had 22 trees
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1 planted. And I've been able to get a
2 Philadelphia Activities Grant and a grant from
3 Community Council to sponsor nature trips. I am
4 being a little bit selfish there. I always say,
5 a child who learns to enjoy and appreciate a tree
6 will never harm a tree.

7 And then finally, you were asked --
8 someone asked how people learned about how to
9 report trees. We're fortunate. We have a
10 monthly free newspaper. I have an article in
11 there every month. And at the end it tells
12 people how to report a dead or a tree that needs
13 pruning.

14 So thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you very much
16 for your testimony.

17 Okay. You may begin.

18 MS. MASLIN: Hi. Good morning. My name
19 is Mindy Maslin. I'm Tree Tenders Project
20 Manager for the Pennsylvania Horticultural
21 Society. I thank you Councilwoman Bass for the
22 opportunity to speak today on a favorite topic
23 for the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and
24 me.

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1 PHS started the Tree Tenders Program 22
2 years ago. Today there are tree tender groups in
3 over 50 Philadelphia neighborhoods who boast
4 4,000 graduates from our nine-hour training
5 program with well over half of those being from
6 the City. This year, tree tenders planted over a
7 thousand street trees in Philadelphia. Annually,
8 these volunteers check on and care for the young
9 trees with tree checker groups and pruning clubs.

10 The PHS Tree Trenders Program along with
11 Philadelphia Parks and Rec Tree Philly Program is
12 part of a multi-state Plant One Million Campaign.
13 Tree tenders has held this model copied statewide
14 by DCNR's TreeVitalize program nationally through
15 Keep America Beautiful. Our funding for tree
16 planting and care comes from the private sector
17 foundations and the state.

18 Research has created a body of knowledge
19 on the benefit of trees in urban areas that is
20 astounding. Trees help us breathe and protect us
21 from excessive stormwater runoff, very important
22 with our combined sewer overflow problems. They
23 save energy, increase neighborhood desirability
24 and safety. Where there are trees in the

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1 neighborhoods, there are more neighbors on their
2 stoops providing more eyes and ears on the
3 streets.

4 But most compelling is the new research on
5 the effects of trees -- on trees and green space
6 on our youth. The number one reason urban kids
7 end up in the hospital is asthma. Neighbors with
8 trees have lower rates of respiratory disease.
9 Kids with attention deficit disorder pay
10 attention for longer, retain more and feel calmer
11 after exposure to trees, an important factor in
12 reducing our devastatingly high, high school
13 dropout rate.

14 Finally, some studies show that childhood
15 obesity in the City is incredibly high with the
16 highest rates in neighborhoods with lowest tree
17 coverage. The effect of having green space in
18 neighborhoods helps kids to spend more time
19 outside and helps them overall to avoid that
20 catastrophe.

21 What does this have to do with a
22 resolution requiring current and continued
23 maintenance of park and street trees? Makes
24 compelling arguments on a few different fronts.

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1 One, Philadelphia needs street trees.
2 They are not just a luxury. Mayor Nutter
3 fortunately understand this. We applaud his
4 leadership in setting a 30 percent tree canopy
5 goal for every number.

6 Two, the problems like in Emerald Ash
7 Borer will be nipping at our trunks in the next
8 few years. And with that will be an increasing
9 number, as we heard, of trees that will become
10 hazards.

11 And three, the public is willing to go out
12 on a limb to acquire and keep these trees that
13 they care for.

14 Philadelphians love their street trees and
15 they understand the value of trees. Yet after a
16 winter like last year and with pending problems
17 from Emerald Ash Borer, some are rightfully
18 afraid. Unmaintained trees can go from a
19 positive asset to a liability overnight. Trees
20 must be viewed as part of the City's
21 infrastructure with funding available to keep
22 them healthy and safe and to prevent hazards and
23 tragic accidents. Tree Tender volunteers can
24 plant and care for trees while they are young,
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1 but mature trees need professional attention.

2 And that means an investment -- continued

3 investment from the City.

4 Thank you again to City Council and to

5 Councilwoman Bass for your leadership in

6 initiating this resolution. I'm happy to answer

7 any questions.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank you. I

9 want to actually thank all three of you for your

10 testimony.

11 Because I think sometimes that people feel

12 that, you know, why are we having a hearing on

13 trees? Why is this important? There are so many

14 other pressing issues, there are so many other

15 things happening. And while there are a lot of

16 things happening in the world, when a tree slams

17 down on your car or on your house or, God forbid,

18 someone that you love or yourself, you know, it's

19 no joke. It's no laughing matter.

20 And so, I think that people need to

21 understand that, you know, these threats are real

22 and they do happen. And I want to thank you in

23 particular Ms. Kish --

24 MS. KISHINCHAND: Kishinchand.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Kishinchand, I didn't
2 want to mess it up.

3 Ms. Kishinchand, because, you know, you
4 mention in your opening remarks a story from the
5 New York Times in which three young people, three
6 children lost their lives just driving in a van,
7 riding in a van going to school. And, you know,
8 shortly after that a ten-year-old right here in
9 Pennsylvania riding her bicycle, you know, with a
10 helmet. You don't stand a chance with a helmet
11 on versus a tree that's falling down on you.

12 And so, again I just think that a lot of
13 times people don't get it and say, oh, that's a
14 waste of time and that's something that's not
15 really important. Well, it's not really
16 important until it happens to you like so many
17 other things.

18 And so, the sooner we can, you know, not
19 only protect and preserve our trees but protect
20 ourselves, you know, I think we'll be in a whole
21 lot better shape; and long term, saving the City
22 of Philadelphia resources financially. Because
23 when those City trees hit, that's a liability,
24 you know, that's someone's case.

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1 And so, as much as we can do to be in
2 front of it, I think it's very much important to
3 do. So, I want to thank you all for being here
4 today. Thank you.

5 Can we have the clerk call up the next
6 panel.

7 THE CLERK: The last panel consisting of
8 Mr. Bernard Curtis and Mr. Kevin Farley please
9 come forward.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And is there anyone
11 else here to testify today? Anyone?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

14 Good afternoon.

15 (Panel: "Good afternoon.")

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Will you please state
17 your name for the record and begin your
18 testimony. We'll start with Mr. Curtis.

19 MR. CURTIS: Yes. Bernard Curtis.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

21 MR. CURTIS: First, I'd like to thank you
22 for the opportunity to be here to speak on behalf
23 of, as I refer to it, as tree removal. I'd like
24 to read a statement.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

2 MR. FOCHT: Thank you for the opportunity
3 to speak before you on the topic of tree removal.
4 I have lived in my home for 34 years. I have
5 always maintained my property to a high standard.
6 Unfortunately, several years ago I had to replace
7 two of the cement blocks in front of my house
8 because they had been pushed up. It was not
9 apparent at that time that the tree planted at
10 the curb was a factor.

11 Some years later, several of the side --
12 sidewalk blocks became raised. And it was
13 apparent that the tree roots were to blame. It
14 would not do -- it would not do any good to
15 repave because the roots are too high. Not only
16 has it become an eyesore and a danger to foot
17 traffic, it was necessary to close it from foot
18 traffic.

19 I was informed that Parks and Recreation
20 was responsible for the trees planted on my
21 street. I contacted Parks and Recreation in mid
22 February of 2011. And an inspector came out to
23 survey the situation. On February 28, 2011, I
24 received a letter from Parks and Recreation
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1 stating that the tree at my curbside does need to
2 be removed and the stone removed also. After
3 three years of waiting and no action, I continued
4 to call. And again, another inspector came out
5 to survey the condition. I received another
6 letter dated June 9 of 2014 stating that the tree
7 does need to be removed.

8 A great concern for me is that the roots
9 were growing far into my yard and toward my
10 sanitary lines and storm lines. We began to
11 experience plumbing problems over that period of
12 time between 2011 and 2014. After several
13 attempts to speak to a person at Parks and
14 Recreation, I could only get an automated
15 response. I then contacted my City Councilman's
16 office in hope that they might be able to assist
17 me with this problem.

18 Through Councilman Johnson's legislative
19 assistant Peter Elliott, he was able to make
20 contacts that I could not. I realized that my
21 name goes on a list and healthy trees may not be
22 a priority for removal. But when a tree or trees
23 create an unsafe condition or eye sores, we must
24 take in consideration the property owner. I have
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1 a great appreciation for the environment and the
2 role trees play, but I also have a great
3 appreciation for my property and my commitment to
4 maintaining it in a pleasing to the eye
5 condition.

6 Again, I thank you for the opportunity to
7 speak here today. But I would also like to add
8 that as I sit here this morning and I listened to
9 other testimonies and those from Parks and
10 Recreation speaking of, I understand their
11 situation. Budget is a problem with everyone.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

13 MR. CURTIS: But during the testimony I
14 heard, they talked about the dangers -- there are
15 dangers of trees above ground falling, creating
16 damage, branches falling, creating damage. But
17 there is a greater hidden damage below ground.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

19 MR. CURTIS: Because I have experienced
20 it. I have -- may I submit pictures that you can
21 look at that?

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Certainly.

23 MR. CURTIS: That you would be able to
24 understand what I'm saying.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

2 MR. CURTIS: These pictures represent the
3 damage that this tree in front of my house has
4 created to my property. My -- it's my
5 responsibility. It has -- these pictures are
6 recent.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Uh-huh.

8 MR. CURTIS: Number of years ago I had to
9 replace the sidewalk because the roots were
10 creating damage to it. But it is gone beyond
11 that point that I can do it again until the tree
12 is removed. Now when they first came out and
13 surveyed the situation, they told me it generally
14 takes about two years for them to get out to do
15 something. Well, this is 2014. I'm still
16 waiting.

17 Now, I understand that I could pay to have
18 the tree cut down. But to be honest with you, I
19 am on a fixed income. And I don't have \$1,800
20 sitting in the drawer.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure. Sure.

22 MR. CURTIS: Recently, just about a month
23 ago, I had to replace my storm drain and sewer
24 lines to the amount of \$4,470 that it cost me.

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1 But I do thank the City, that they have a program
2 called HELP, Homeowners Emergency Loan Program.
3 They paid for the work to be done and I have to
4 pay them back, but I was able to get it done.
5 When they dug up the ground, there were roots
6 there. Not saying that was the total problem,
7 but it contributed to the problem.

8 So, trees are valuable, but they can be a
9 danger in the wrong situation. The type of tree
10 that I have on my curbside -- I know something
11 about trees. And it is not the proper tree to
12 plant at a curb. If you look at that tree and
13 you can see the reason that it's bulging the way
14 it is because it does not have room to grow.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Right.

16 MR. CURTIS: And we created the problem by
17 putting the wrong kind of tree there. I thank
18 you for the opportunity to come here today
19 because a lot of times when you have -- you want
20 to express yourself, but you can't get to the
21 right forum. And I'm hoping by being here today,
22 that this hearing is about, hopefully, making
23 things better in the future.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.
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1 MR. CURTIS: Because I need something done
2 because my property when I moved there, it's
3 still nice. It was beautiful when I moved there,
4 and I've always maintained it that way. But
5 there are certain things that is causing problems
6 that I just cannot rectify.

7 I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you for the
9 testimony and thank you for the pictures, also,
10 because it's really important. But before we
11 move on to you, sir, if you don't mind waiting
12 for just a moment. I'm so sorry we didn't get to
13 you earlier when the Commissioner was here. I
14 see Mark is in the back.

15 Do you mind coming up for a few moments
16 and answering some questions? And, Joan, if you
17 are available as well. Because -- and I'd like
18 for you to take a look at these pictures, also.
19 And, you know, can we go back to, you know, a
20 situation like this. So if a homeowner has gone
21 through the process and, you know, has a tree
22 that is clearly the wrong tree. And we recognize
23 now that we planted a whole bunch of trees in the
24 wrong places along sidewalks, along curbs. They
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1 push up the sidewalk. They push up the curb.

2 And so, once we identify that this tree is
3 a problem, does it move up on the priority list?
4 Is there any sort of way that someone wouldn't
5 have to wait for three whole years and have a
6 additional potential damage done not only to
7 their sidewalk but to the pipes underground and
8 to, you know, the sewer system. And, you know,
9 is there any way we can do anything once a
10 homeowner or once whoever reaches out to us and
11 let's us know that this is a problem. And we
12 also agree as a City that this is a problem tree.

13 How do we move that up to prevent it from
14 causing more damage in the future?

15 MR. FOCHT: What we do when it's
16 documented when it goes into the system, as the
17 gentleman mentioned, our inspectors come out and
18 look at it. They obviously determined the tree
19 to be removed. I don't know the specifics as to
20 why this particular tree was not removed in the
21 last three years. But I can guess that what
22 generally happens is we have a finite number of
23 trees that can be removed on our budget. So we
24 contract this work. And we have a finite amount
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1 of money that can be spent.

2 Different size trees cost different amount
3 of money to be removed. It's a bigger tree,
4 more; smaller tree, less. Oftentimes emergencies
5 bump trees further down. So something can be on
6 the list, like this tree is undoubtedly on the
7 list, but it keeps getting bumped further down as
8 emergencies happen, dead trees that fall, things
9 that we need to have addressed by our contractors
10 and they get paid out of the same finite amount
11 of money.

12 So, we experience this not regularly but
13 occasionally where a tree has been on the list
14 for more than a year or two. And the likelihood
15 of it is, is that it keeps getting bumped down
16 the list. We'll make sure this tree is
17 addressed.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. What's the
19 process of getting back to someone like this
20 gentleman if they have tree, they've reached out
21 to you, you know, certified that it is dead or
22 dying and needs to be removed?

23 You know, do -- is there any sort of
24 follow up so that we let the constituent know,
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1 the taxpayer know that, you know, your tree is on
2 the list and, you know, in January 2011, you
3 know, you're six months out? And then
4 January 2012 or 2013 or whatever, you know,
5 you're now eight months out because Hurricane
6 Sandy hit or, you know. But is there any sort of
7 response that's given so that people have some
8 idea in terms of where they stand?

9 MR. FOCHT: We don't automatically reach
10 out to folks to update them periodically.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Can we?

12 MR. FOCHT: If the request comes in
13 through 311, it has a tracking number. And that
14 tracking number can be referenced back to our
15 database. So if the citizen hasn't heard from us
16 and expects that we would have gotten out there
17 in six months or a year, if it came in through
18 311, they can call back through 311, give them
19 the tracking number and we can give the
20 information back to them.

21 If it doesn't come in, because I see this
22 gentleman has a forms. When our staff goes out,
23 we leave the forms with the homeowner, the two
24 forms you referenced that said we determined the
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1 trees to be removed. And when the contractor
2 comes out to remove the tree, before they remove
3 the tree they post -- generally, they have to
4 post the streets for no parking in order to
5 remove the tree. So, there is some advanced
6 notice. It maybe 24, 48, 72 hours immediately
7 before they are coming out to do the work.
8 That's how we notify the property owner
9 immediately before that.

10 But as far as what's on the list or what's
11 off the list at any moment, that would be a
12 constant update process back to the citizens. So
13 the way we managed it historically is that if the
14 citizens reach out to us, we can give them an
15 update on if it's on the current contract list
16 and the deadline for that current contract list,
17 excuse me, which would generally be the end of
18 the fiscal year. Or if they're not on the
19 current contract list, they are on the contract
20 list for the next fiscal year which can give
21 them, you know, 12 to 16 month window where it
22 might be.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Because
24 sometimes I think, you know, as a City if we were
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1 to put ourselves in, you know, the shoes of the
2 person who needs the help. So if, you know, you
3 put yourself in this gentleman's shoes and, you
4 know, he's got this tree. It's causing all kinds
5 of damage as you can see from the pictures. And
6 to have someone come out and then three years go
7 by and you haven't heard a word, you know, it
8 may -- I would think that you may want to
9 reevaluate the way things are done.

10 And so, if folks call 311 -- I certainly
11 do push everyone to go through 311 just because
12 you can get that tracking number.

13 MR. FOCHT: Absolutely.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: But 311 is still
15 relatively new in Philadelphia. A lot of people
16 are used to doing it in a different way. For
17 those folks, we need to make sure that we get
18 back to them. So, you know, I think that that
19 might be something that needs to be developed
20 within Parks and Recreation.

21 MR. FOCHT: I would absolutely agree with
22 you and say that this gentleman's experience is
23 not acceptable to us and is not the standard to
24 which we ascribe.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very good. Thank you.
2 Also, is there any means to reimburse, you now,
3 someone who has had any kind of damage as a
4 result of a tree that's been in for this amount
5 of time?

6 MR. FOCHT: You can file a claim for --
7 through Risk Management.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. So, he could
9 file a claim.

10 MR. FOCHT: Correct.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. All right.
12 Great.

13 MR. FOCHT: Sir, we can get you all that
14 paperwork.

15 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

16 MR. FOCHT: I can't guarantee. That's not
17 our call. Parks and Rec doesn't make --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I understand. But
19 there is a process in place.

20 MR. FOCHT: Correct. The City is
21 self-insured. And so if there are damages that
22 result from a tree, the private property owner
23 can submit a claim request through Risk
24 Management.

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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very good.

2 MR. CURTIS: Aside from that, can there be
3 consideration for reassessing the period of time
4 I've been waiting so we can get the tree out.

5 MR. FOCHT: Your tree will be removed.

6 MR. CURTIS: Doesn't do good to be
7 reimbursed. I've already put the new plumbing
8 in. The tree is still going to create the same
9 damage as before.

10 MR. FOCHT: The tree will be removed.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: He said he's going to
12 remove it.

13 MR. CURTIS: Okay. I thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you so much. We
15 appreciate it.

16 MR. FOCHT: You're very welcome.

17 MR. CURTIS: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Mr. Farley, how
19 are you? Thank you for your patience.

20 MR. FARLEY: Good afternoon.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good afternoon.

22 Before he begins, is there anyone else here to
23 testify?

24 (No response.)
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1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. You can begin.

2 MR. FARLEY: I'm Kevin Farley. I'm here
3 to share my experience with the City of
4 Philadelphia in regards to removal of tree
5 outside my home in the Mt. Airy section of
6 Philadelphia.

7 So, I guess in late spring of 2013, I
8 noticed there was a large, I want to say,
9 Sycamore tree outside of my home in between the
10 sidewalk and the street. It appeared dead and
11 was leaning over street. And having a young
12 family and parking my car right in front of the
13 tree, I called 311 to report my concern that I
14 thought the tree would fall and cause damage.

15 At the time, I was told that the City
16 department would come out and inspect the tree
17 and decide whether to -- to prune or remove the
18 tree, but that there could be a wait as long as
19 24 months. So, about a year had gone by. So 12
20 months later, I put another call in just to check
21 on the status at that time. Their records showed
22 that I had called. And that the goal was by the
23 end of the calendar year 2014 that they would
24 remove the tree.

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1 A few weeks later, we had a severe storm
2 that went through the neighborhood. Dead limbs
3 had fallen off the tree into the street. And
4 again, concern for my neighbor's property and
5 bodily harm that could be caused if the tree fell
6 down, I decided to escalate the matter by
7 contacting Councilwoman Bass. Thank you --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You're welcome.

9 MR. FARLEY: -- for taking my email to see
10 if you can expedite the removal. And then a few
11 weeks later in July, the tree was removed without
12 incident. I think the City did a good job
13 removing the tree. While they were there, they
14 noticed the tree next door in front of my
15 neighbor's home had some issues. It was dead.
16 So we made sure that we also followed up with you
17 about that. And I think while the City was there
18 moving my tree, they sort of noticed that that
19 tree had to be -- neighboring tree had to be put
20 on a list, and that was removed in November.

21 So, just here to really share my
22 experience and thank you personally for your
23 help.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Absolutely. Well,
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1 thank you so much for coming to share that.

2 That's really, Joan, I do remember that case in
3 particular.

4 MR. FARLEY: Right.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Over in east Mt. Airy,
6 if I'm correct.

7 MR. FARLEY: That's correct.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All right. So, you
9 know, thanks kudos really to Joan Blaustein for
10 making that happen and for being responsive. And
11 so, we want your experience to be everyone's
12 experience --

13 MR. FARLEY: Yes, it was --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: -- when these kinds of
15 things happen.

16 MR. FARLEY: There was some follow up, but
17 everyone clearly informed us it was going to be
18 24 months. And then by following up with your
19 involvement, the tree was removed without
20 incident.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very good. Well,
22 thank you so much for sharing that.

23 MR. FARLEY: Okay. Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Greatly appreciate it.
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1 And so, unless there's anyone else to testify, I
2 do have a statement to be read into the record
3 from Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez who is a
4 member of the Committee and unable to attend
5 today.

6 Her statement is: "Although, I commend
7 the work that has been done to green our City,
8 there are issues with our tree maintenance
9 system. As a Councilwoman for the Seventh
10 Councilmanic District, I have received hundreds
11 of calls to my office regarding tree issues
12 including requests to remove or -- remove a tree
13 or regarding a tree needing to be pruned. Many
14 of my constituents have been put in a situation
15 of hardship due to old or diseased trees in front
16 of their properties.

17 As many of you may know, the removal and
18 pruning of a large tree can cost upwards of a
19 thousand dollars, an amount that many seniors and
20 low income cannot afford. We must make the
21 planting of new trees attractive to those very
22 populations. Although trees provide shade,
23 produce the oxygen we breath and make our
24 neighborhoods beautiful for residents, the cost

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1 of each of those trees can seem to outweigh the
2 benefits.

3 Many constituents feel that the trees are
4 hazards especially after storms and during the
5 winter season where many trees and branches fall
6 either on houses, cars or in front of a
7 constituents' property. We have also frequently
8 heard concerns that park trees can hide and
9 therefore facilitate criminal activity.

10 We as a City need to change our current
11 system of maintenance in order to make tree
12 planting attractive to those populations that
13 feel these trees are simply hazards to our
14 community by creating assistance or exemptions
15 for low income and elderly people for tree
16 removal and pruning.

17 Additionally, if not done so yet, the
18 department must review tree species that were
19 planted that are no longer suitable for certain
20 streets, Sycamore and other large tree species.
21 I would also request that the Department and/or
22 311 provide a semiannual list to Council
23 including before each year's budget process of
24 tree related complaints received by Council

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1 District.

2 I look forward to the discussions on how
3 we can make our City greener by creating more
4 sustainable maintenance systems."

5 And again, that's from Councilman Maria
6 Quinones-Sanchez. A very good suggestion there
7 that the number of tree-related complaints
8 received by each Council District is provided to
9 that Councilmember. Is very important
10 information so that as we're making decisions, we
11 can take into account what else is happening out
12 there.

13 And so, if there is no one else to testify
14 on this resolution, okay. And seeing that there
15 is no one else here to testify regarding
16 Resolution No. 140668 and there being no further
17 business before the Committee on Parks,
18 Recreation and Cultural Affairs today, the Public
19 Hearing on Resolution No. 140668 is recessed
20 until the call of the chair.

21 And thank you very much everyone for
22 attending.

23 (Public Hearing recessed at 2:16 p.m.)

24
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, hereby certify that the proceedings and evidence noted are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me in the foregoing matter, and that this is a correct transcript of the same.

ANGELA M. KING, RPR
Court Reporter - Notary Public

(The foregoing certification of this transcript does not apply to any reproduction of the same by any means, unless under the direct control and/or supervision of the certifying reporter.)

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