

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON RULES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 16, 2012
10:13 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY, VICE CHAIR
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCIO
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS-BROWN

BILLS NO.: 120214

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good morning,
3 everyone. This is a Committee on the Rules.
4 For the record, we have a quorum -- everybody's
5 attention, please. Very hard to hear.

6 For the record, we have a quorum with -- we
7 have can Councilman Kenney the Vice Chair of the
8 Committee, Councilman Green, Councilman Goode
9 and Councilwoman Tasco.

10 Ms. Marconi, would you please read the
11 title of the Bill before us today.

12 THE CLERK: Bill No. 120214, an Ordinance
13 to amend the Philadelphia Zoning Maps by
14 changing the zoning designation of certain areas
15 of land located within an area bounded by York
16 Street, Front Street, Second Street and Berks
17 Street.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Before we
19 proceed, I want to recognize Councilwoman
20 Sanchez in just a minute. I just like to set a
21 few just very brief ground rules. I know this
22 bill has generated a little bit of controversy.
23 I respectfully ask everyone when they speak to
24 the bill, to speak just specifically about the

1 Bill. That Bill, as will be explained, is
2 changing an area of land from R10 to R10A.
3 Please refrain from any kind of personal attacks
4 from anyone to anyone, because all that does is
5 lead to others. It really has no effect on this
6 Committee in their deliberations.

7 In that same vein, I would ask that we --
8 that no one can interrupt another speaker
9 because all this is being recorded. We can only
10 have one person speaking at a time.

11 Then finally, I ask speakers to -- we want
12 everybody to get their point across. But we
13 have something close to 20 witnesses of people
14 that would like to speak. So, we don't want to
15 set a strict time limit, but we do feel that a
16 person can communicate their feelings in three
17 to four minutes. That's plenty of time. So, we
18 reserve the right to ask you to wrap up your
19 comments if you are going on long or being
20 repetitive with what somebody else said.

21 If anybody has written testimony, you can
22 put that in for the record. And when you come
23 up, you can just summarize your statements. But
24 any written testimony will be made part of the

1 record.

2 With that, if the Committee has no
3 questions, first one I recognize is Councilwoman
4 Sanchez the sponsor of this Bill.

5 Councilwoman.

6 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chair. I am a Norris Square resident for 16
8 years. I moved to Norris Square 16 years ago
9 because of the great work that Norris Square
10 Civic Association, Norris Square Project and
11 others were doing and the common belief that we
12 should have a neighborhood with mixed income
13 families. I love my neighborhood. I chose that
14 neighborhood to raise my family.

15 As a member of the Housing Trust Fund,
16 Vacant Land Task Force, a principal in the Land
17 Bank Legislation, I completely understand the
18 value of affordable and accessible housing.
19 Every day in Council I work at supporting,
20 funding leveraging opportunities to create more
21 opportunities not only in my district but
22 throughout the city.

23 My neighborhood is rich in culture,
24 diversity, social economic status and with just

1 great people. In fact, everyone here today
2 agrees that we love our neighborhood and we want
3 to do everything to protect long term residents,
4 allow for redevelopment that is complimentary
5 with community decision making and increase
6 public safety. We all agree with that. We have
7 a minor disagreement about how we get there.

8 The concerns that will be raised by my
9 neighbors are valid. And this legislation is
10 one remedy, not the entire fix, to address these
11 concerns. This rezoning from R10 to R10A is
12 both common and logical for neighborhoods with
13 characteristics like Norris Square, traditional
14 row house blocks. If you look at the City
15 Zoning Map, neighborhoods that are right
16 adjacent to Norris Square have already done
17 their remapping including Fishtown to the east
18 and Northern Liberties to the south. Almost all
19 of South Philly has been remapped into single
20 family.

21 Unfortunately for too long, Philadelphia
22 has had an outdated zoning code that did not
23 reflect existing uses or affirmative city and
24 community planning. We are excited to finally

1 transition to our new modernize zoning code, but
2 remapping will not happen for some time after
3 the new more Liberal Use Categories go into
4 effect starting this August 2012.

5 Councilman Green, having participated in
6 the three-year long process, can also weigh in
7 on the merits of this legislation. I introduced
8 this Bill in response to growing development,
9 parking pressure and the need to protect the
10 character of the neighborhood until the
11 comprehensive planning and remapping takes
12 place. We are currently conducting a survey at
13 the request of parents around transit controls
14 in this area and blocks like the 1900 block of
15 Howard have requested parking permits in their
16 area in response to some of the congestion.

17 The Planning Commission will confirm that
18 RA10 matches the zoning designation that will be
19 recommended for the area when it remaps.
20 Without such protections, once the zoning code
21 automatically converts the neighborhood zoning
22 to RM1, a wide range of uses can be locked in.
23 This Bill will keep developers from invading the
24 intended effect of a new comprehensive plan and

1 zoning code. Working with the new zoning code,
2 this Bill will also better ensure community
3 input into large development projects, something
4 that has been a consistent problem in
5 neighborhood planning.

6 Starting in August there will be an
7 improved and more transparent process for
8 communities to weigh in on zoning and
9 development issues. Registered community
10 organizations will have to adopt written rules,
11 advertise their meetings and coordinate with
12 other groups that also represent the community
13 voice in the area. No developer will be allowed
14 to also act as an RCO to provide community input
15 on their own project.

16 Significant misinformation has been spread
17 around the community about the effects of this
18 Legislation. Of course, all legal existing uses
19 will remain legal, and families and roommates
20 will still be able to live together and share
21 expenses. My office over the course of the last
22 few weeks and during this debate has received
23 many calls from residents and neighbors. And we
24 are working with them to bring them to legal

1 compliance.

2 I have held one community meeting, and have
3 a second one scheduled before the final vote
4 will be taken on this Bill to provide a forum
5 for discussion and to provide an opportunity for
6 the Planning Commission Staff to give accurate
7 information and answer any questions my
8 neighbors may have. I have mailed and hand
9 delivered information to each household in the
10 area covered by the Legislation. We perceived
11 return surveys, and many of my neighbors have
12 personally come to my house when they have had
13 questions.

14 Residents have welcomed the chance to
15 participate in this broader discussion of our
16 vision for the neighborhood's future. I
17 strongly support preserving the diversity of my
18 community and ensuring the availability of
19 affordable housing for both homeowners and
20 renters for the long term. It is essential that
21 decisions about where to place high density
22 multifamily developments can be made
23 strategically and with the input of the Planning
24 Commission and the Community.

1 I ask you to support this Bill which brings
2 Norris Square into alignment with modern zoning
3 and similar neighborhoods throughout the City so
4 that we can stop being the target of developers
5 who want to come in because of the lax zoning
6 code and convert properties to rent out to
7 people who no longer -- who don't live in Norris
8 Square.

9 Thank you. I ask for your Committee's
10 support and consideration. And again, want to
11 just highlight the fact that everyone here today
12 cares for our neighborhood. Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you,
14 Councilwoman. Any questions or comments from
15 the Committee?

16 Seeing none, our first witness will be
17 Mr. Kramer from the Planning Commission.

18 MR. KRAMER: Good morning, Councilman
19 Greenlee. Members of the Rules Committee, I'm
20 William Kramer, Director of Development Division
21 of the Philadelphia Planning Commission. I am
22 here today to testify on Bill No. 120214, which
23 was introduced in City Council, March 15, 2012.

24 Bill No. 120214 will amend the Philadelphia

1 Zoning Maps by remapping the area bounded by
2 York Street, Front Street, Second Street and
3 Berks Street. Specifically, Bill No. 120214
4 will rezone the properties in this area that are
5 currently zoned R10 residential and change their
6 zoning designation to R10A residential.

7 This would, in effect, limit the number of
8 multifamily conversions in the area. There are
9 a large number of properties that have been
10 converted to apartment buildings with and
11 without the benefit of permits. This Bill would
12 require any new conversions to obtain an
13 approval from the Zoning Board of Adjustment
14 while permitting existing legal multifamily
15 dwellings to continue as preexisting
16 nonconforming units.

17 Requiring new multifamily conversions to
18 obtain Zoning Board of Adjustment Approval, will
19 permit community and councilmatic input into the
20 permitting process for future development
21 proposals. This Legislation will not impede the
22 development of any property which has already
23 obtained zoning permits provided the applicants
24 executes the permit or maintains it as active.

1 The proposed zoning change is consistent with
2 remapping principles that have been used
3 throughout the City for many years in most row
4 house area of the City.

5 The R10 designation allows for multifamily
6 use under certain terms and conditions. As a
7 single family residents, there is a requirement
8 for 144 square feet of open space in the rear
9 yard. This requirement is raised by 100 square
10 feet for each unit over the first one. So, for
11 example, a three-family dwelling would require
12 344 square feet of open space in the rear yard.
13 The R10A designation would only permit a single
14 family dwelling in an individual building as a
15 matter of right.

16 There was a meeting with community
17 residents that was facilitated by Councilwoman
18 Sanchez. As she mentioned, there is a second
19 one scheduled. Additionally, the residents were
20 in attendance at the April 17 meeting of the
21 Philadelphia City Planning Commission. The
22 Commission allowed all parties to present their
23 concerns and issues. The Philadelphia City
24 Planning Commission in its meeting of April 17,

1 2012 recommended that Bill No. 120214 be
2 approved.

3 I'd be happy to answer any questions that
4 you may have.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you,
6 Mr. Kramer. Any questions from the Members of
7 the Committee?

8 Seeing none, thank you very much. Thank
9 you for your time. I'm going to start calling
10 people who I have on the list here. I know a
11 lot of people have called in and the
12 Councilwoman has given us some names.
13 Mr. Gonzales has given us a number of names. If
14 you do not think your name is on the list, if
15 you can see Ms. Marconi over here who read the
16 title of the Bill and just check with her so we
17 will have you down.

18 Our first -- next witness I have on the
19 record is Victor Negron. Is Victor here? I
20 don't think I see him. I will apologize ahead
21 of time for any names I might mess up here.

22 How about Adan Mairena. Yes. Good
23 morning, sir. If you can just identify yourself
24 for the record and proceed.

1 REVEREND MAIRENA: My name is Reverend Adan
2 Mairena. I'm the pastor of the West Kensington
3 Ministry of Norris Square, corner of Hancock and
4 Susquehanna. I am here as a neighbor, as a
5 resident and as the Pastor of the church on
6 Hancock and Susquehanna.

7 As the Councilwoman said, we are -- we live
8 together in this community. We love each other.
9 We struggle. And we're all trying to do the
10 best we can with what we have. The system is
11 broken. Poverty has reared its ugly head in our
12 community for years. And movements that have
13 started off for social change and transformation
14 have become institutions, institutions that now
15 have to work towards maintaining themselves, up
16 keeping themselves. The church is included in
17 that. And what that does, in my opinion, is it
18 changes the focus of what we intend to do, which
19 is make our community a good place to live.

20 Right now I feel that there are enough
21 multi-unit apartments structures in our
22 neighborhood. I feel that there is a lot of
23 people there. I feel that we can work in the
24 process to keep coming to a solution together in

1 a responsible way where all voices are heard.
2 It's a difficult thing because as the church, we
3 must listen to all sides, but yet we need to
4 take a stand.

5 And it is my opinion, my belief, that this
6 process has been questionable. It is my belief
7 that we need to take a closer look at what's
8 happening. It is my belief that once the
9 organization -- I am not just talking about one
10 organization. It's when a lot of organizations
11 in our communities now, nonprofits, depend on
12 millions of dollars to do their work and they in
13 turn has changed what the original intention of
14 the organizations were. Communities suffer.

15 I am not opposed to families living in
16 multi-unit homes. What I desire is
17 homeownership. I mean, there is evidence of
18 homeownership changing communities. And I am
19 confused in the process, and in the -- what the
20 intended outcome is. I don't understand how one
21 can live in a place and it's called
22 homeownership, but yet the deed and the trust
23 will not be in the hands of the homeowner.

24 So, I am in favor of the Councilwoman's

1 proposal.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir. Any
3 questions from Members of the Committee? Thank
4 you very much.

5 The next witness is Father Bruce Smith from
6 Visitation. And after Father Smith will be
7 Patricia DeCarlo. Father Smith.

8 Father? Father Bruce, is that right?

9 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: That's wrong. But
10 that's all right. I'll correct it.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Well,
12 actually, you might with it was Smith. Okay.
13 All right.

14 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: My name is Father
15 Bruce Lewandowski.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's close to
17 Smith.

18 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: Lewandowski is Polish
19 for Smith.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Please
21 proceed.

22 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: Thank you for the
23 opportunity to speak with you this morning.
24 Again, I'm Father Bruce Lewandowski. I am

1 former pastor at St. Boniface Church at Hancock
2 and Diamond and Visitation BVM Parish at B and
3 Lehigh. I lived in the neighborhood there for
4 seven years. And many of the Norris Square
5 residents were my parishioners. And today they
6 continue to be my friends. A little bit of
7 context before I get into the heart of the
8 matter.

9 December of 2005, I received results of a
10 study of the church building at St. Boniface.
11 The study was requested by the Redemptorist
12 Fathers who owned the property and was conducted
13 by a professional firm. Sadly, the firm
14 recommended that the church building not be
15 used. There were urgent and necessary repairs
16 they were estimated to cost millions of dollars.
17 The Redemptorist together with the Arch Diocese
18 of Philadelphia made the decision to close St.
19 Boniface Church after 130 years of service in
20 that neighborhood. It was, as you can imagine,
21 an emotionally charged and heart wrenching
22 moment in the lives of many of the Norris Square
23 people who considered St. Boniface Church and
24 school their home.

1 At that time, parishioners were invited to
2 become members of Visitation Parish at Lehigh
3 Avenue. The property in 2006 was set on the
4 market and a number of buyers were interested in
5 the property. The Redemptorist made the
6 decision to sell the St. Boniface campus to
7 Norris Square Civic Association. That decision
8 was made for key reasons. Norris Square Civic
9 Association is well known and trusted in the
10 neighborhood. They have a proven track record
11 of implementing projects that improve the
12 quality of life of neighborhood residents. And
13 they involve the community residents from start
14 to finish in their projects. I have experienced
15 that personally. And there is a wonderful
16 spirit of collaboration and cooperation in the
17 Norris Square Civic Association.

18 Given that track record, the property was
19 sold to Norris Square. And our hope and our
20 trust at that time was that the 130-year legacy
21 of St. Boniface would continue. To this point,
22 it has with the daycare center, the job training
23 center, with the alternative education center.
24 Much needed services in our neighborhood. The

1 Redemptorist expectations have been met and far
2 beyond. I am bringing this up because I fear
3 that rezoning will interfere with a key
4 component of the Norris Square Civic
5 Associations plans for St. Boniface campus.

6 The housing that is proposed there is a key
7 element to the project. There is need for
8 affordable housing in our neighborhood at Norris
9 Square and it needs to go forward. From the
10 start, residents of Norris Square have been
11 involved in the planning process. They have
12 been involved every step of the way. When
13 Norris Square even considered buying the
14 property, they came to residents in the Square
15 and said do you want us to do this? What do you
16 want us to do with this property if we get it?
17 What is your hope, what is your dream for that
18 property for your neighborhood for your
19 families.

20 I want to say 30 years ago over a thousand
21 students in St. Boniface Elementary School and
22 business school, over a thousand students
23 attended there. I look forward to seeing those
24 buildings hustling and bustling again with

1 hundreds of people. My fear is that rezoning
2 could somehow interfere with that block that
3 prohibit that.

4 I am here today because I am concerned also
5 about my neighbors in Norris Square. Many of my
6 neighbors do not know what is happening. And I
7 know that the Councilwoman has said there have
8 been a number of meetings. There have even been
9 fliers passed around, but the community needs to
10 be better informed. Norris Square residents
11 have not had sufficient opportunity through
12 public venue to determine whether or not they
13 will be affected by the proposed rezoning. The
14 meetings have been at best chaotic, disruptive,
15 problematic, unfortunately.

16 Do residents know what even it means to say
17 their property zone R10 or the possibility of
18 R10A? Do they know what a variance is? Do they
19 understand the complicated and costly process of
20 possibly obtaining a variance? Will rezoning to
21 a rating of R10A set in motion a process for
22 Norris Square residents that could involve them
23 in a tangle of costly legal fees or architects
24 fee? Will rezoning require costly renovations

1 or reconstruction? Will rezoning make them
2 vulnerable to real estate poachers? Will they
3 be put in a position of having to sell their
4 homes because the financial burden of compliance
5 with new zoning regulations will be beyond their
6 financial means? Questions that a lot of people
7 have that need to be answered.

8 Will long time Norris Square residents be
9 displaced? Will families that have called
10 Norris Square their home for generations be
11 bought out, sold out or priced out? Will
12 rezoning destabilize our already happy and
13 stable neighborhood for the financial gain of
14 outside investors or developers? Will Norris
15 Square become the next Northern Liberties? I
16 hope not.

17 These questions need to be answered in a
18 community forum. People need in their own
19 language even, Spanish, people need to ask their
20 questions and have them answered. No one has
21 taken sufficient time to help the residents of
22 Norris Square to understand adequately the
23 ramification of rezoning from R10 to R10A.

24 In conclusion, the Norris Square Civic

1 Association St. Boniface Project is good for
2 Norris Square and its residents. And further,
3 we need to give time for the present conflict
4 and turmoil to settle before any decisions are
5 made. Roll out any new zoning in Norris Square
6 at the same time that the rest of the city will
7 receive new zoning. In this way, there will be
8 more time to inform Norris Square residents of
9 the proposed rezoning and we will be able to
10 answer their questions.

11 There is no need to act quickly. There is
12 no need to push through rezoning so hastily in
13 the case of Norris Square. Let us have the same
14 privileges and opportunities as the rest of the
15 City.

16 Thank you for your time and your thoughtful
17 consideration of this most important matter.
18 And I do have copies to be submitted.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. If you want to
20 distribute -- we'll make sure that's part of the
21 full record. Thank you, Father. Father stay
22 there for a second.

23 Councilwoman Sanchez.

24 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yeah, I wanted the

1 Planning Commission to come back to the witness
2 table and address some of the concerns. Father
3 Bruce is a very good friend and spiritual
4 adviser to me. And I highly respect him and
5 want to make sure that he leaves here with some
6 of the questions that we can quickly answer
7 today. I wrote some of them down.

8 One of the issues for the Planning
9 Commission around timing is what -- for the
10 Planning Commission is in August, what would
11 happen to Norris Square if we don't remap?

12 MR. KRAMER: The provisions of the new
13 zoning code will allow an easier conversion
14 where you would be allowed more units under
15 the -- what will -- the August Code or the new
16 code would allow for more conversion to happen
17 easier than it is under the current set of
18 circumstances. If that answers what you're --

19 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Father Bruce also
20 asked about pricing people out.

21 Does this ruling make it harder for people
22 to come in and target the purchase of Norris
23 Square houses for conversions? Does it make it
24 harder or easier?

1 MR. KRAMER: I don't think it has much
2 bearing on what you can do. In the sense that
3 your use is a single family dwelling, there are
4 some schools of thought that would say that they
5 are worth more money. Others would say that if
6 you can have a multifamily dwelling, you can get
7 more of your return. It depends on your
8 perspective as an investor as to which school of
9 thought you want to charge in with.

10 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: I would just like to
11 interject. My intention was not to change this
12 into a community meeting. I know that this is a
13 meeting of the Committee On rules, and I don't
14 want to take up any more time. My thinking is
15 that what is happening right now should have
16 happened in the Norris Square neighborhood and
17 it doesn't need to happen here necessarily.

18 (Applause)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Father, if I could
20 just interrupt, though, I think in fairness
21 there were questions raised. I think because
22 actually I was going to ask the same thing
23 Councilwoman was going to do. Just so the
24 record is clear and people are clear here when

1 they come up. So what is going on here is kind
2 of a usual occurrence. That when questions are
3 raised by a witness, that a -- then come up and
4 try to at least explain some of the things that
5 were said and maybe answer some issues that were
6 brought up.

7 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: Sure. They are
8 questions of the community and questions of many
9 people who are not here.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I understand. We can
11 only address people that are here to get it on
12 the record.

13 Before you continue, Councilman Green.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENE: Thank you. Yeah, I
15 just -- I basically, Councilman Greenlee,
16 Chairman Greenlee said exactly what I was going
17 to say. We have to make the decision as the
18 Committee of Rules. And so when you say things
19 that based on my personal relationship with
20 Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez I don't believe to
21 be true -- like, there was a community
22 engagement. Because I know how involved she is
23 in her community, et cetera, then, you know, I
24 naturally would have questions about that.

1 Certainly, you know, she needs to raise these
2 issues.

3 I'm not sure I understand -- I understand
4 why it's good for a community to have
5 multifamily and increased density there as
6 opposed to maintaining the character of the
7 neighborhood and having single family residences
8 there. It's a lovely area, you know, and single
9 family residences don't impose the same parking
10 problems. They don't -- it's a very different
11 feel on Norris Square if you do that. The
12 Norris Square you run as pastor was single
13 family residences and not a lot of multifamily.
14 You are essentially saying, you know, I want it
15 to look different than the neighborhood I just
16 described and loved.

17 You know, I'm weighing all that. I just
18 wanted to put that on the record. Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Councilwoman, you had
20 other questions?

21 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: No. I will again
22 just reiterate that we do have an additional
23 Community Meeting planned on May 22 at 6:30.
24 And I invite Father Bruce to come. In fact, he

1 can mediate it and maybe that way it won't be as
2 disruptive. And the information can get out and
3 the questions can get answered. So, I invite
4 you for that meeting.

5 FATHER LEWANDOWSKI: I'll be glad to be
6 there.

7 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You won't get called
9 by the wrong name.

10 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I just call him
11 Father Bruce.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: One other thing that
13 was raised by Father Bruce, though. He
14 mentioned the St. Boniface site specifically.
15 My understanding, are there permits out for that
16 site already?

17 MR. KRAMER: Yes, sir. My office checked
18 with the Department of License and Inspections,
19 zoning permits have been issued for that site.
20 It's my understanding, that my staff advised me
21 this morning, they were in just yesterday
22 amending that original application, making that
23 application as of yesterday. It will be
24 considered as if it is still zoned R10.

1 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: This Bill will not
2 affect that site as long as they execute the
3 permits properly?

4 MR. KRAMER: Correct. Yes, sir.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Any other
6 questions? Thank you both. I guess Mr. Kramer,
7 you better stay around just in case we have
8 other questions.

9 MR. KRAMER: I intended to.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Patricia
11 DeCarlo. Looks like you got some handouts
12 there.

13 MS. DECARLO: In keeping my testimony
14 short --

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you can speak into
16 the microphone. And just identify. We all know
17 you, but just identify yourself for the record.

18 MS. DECARLO: Yes. My name is Patricia
19 DeCarlo. I'm the Executive Director of Norris
20 Square Civic association. Thank you for having
21 this meeting. It is of critical importance to
22 clarify.

23 I come to you today to testify in
24 opposition to Bill 120214, a bill intending to

1 rezone a piece of the Norris Square
2 neighborhood. The Bill is an attempt by
3 Councilwoman Quinones to block the progress of
4 the Norris Square Civic Housing Development
5 known as St. Boni's while impacting housing
6 alternatives to current homeowners of large
7 residential properties in a section of the
8 Norris Square neighborhood.

9 So for your information currently,
10 properties around Norris Square are huge
11 Victorian properties that have been changed to
12 apartments in the past 20, 30 years not
13 necessarily with permits, et cetera, but that's
14 the reality of Norris Square. They are huge old
15 Victorian houses. The process followed to
16 introduce and improve this piece of legislation
17 is an example of a breakdown in the democratic
18 process intended to be followed by our elected
19 official in passing legislation that impacts its
20 citizens.

21 Our City Councilwoman has had an issue with
22 the development of housing on the southern end
23 of the Norris Square Park known as St. Boni's
24 which encompasses a school, community center,

1 rectory, and prior to its demolition, church and
2 convent. NSCA acquired this property in 2007,
3 conducted a series of neighborhood planning
4 process, surveys and annual meetings that
5 identified housing as a priority. NSCA
6 therefore decided to devote a substantial
7 portion of our parcel to affordable housing
8 including families and senior housing. We
9 financed the purchase of the parcel. And within
10 a year, had the school in operation.

11 We have worked hard to identify and raise
12 the funds necessary not only for the housing,
13 but also for the rehabilitation of the other
14 buildings, particularly the Community Center and
15 Rectory which need new systems and an upgrade to
16 the envelope of the buildings. As you heard,
17 they are 130 years old.

18 At this point, we have a \$5 million grant
19 to rehabilitate the Community Center and
20 Rectory. And another 4 million plus in NSB 2
21 funds designated for the development of 15 units
22 of cooperative mixed income family housing. A
23 co-op is a homeownership kind of property. It's
24 not rental. It's homeownership. There is

1 confusion on that. The Councilwoman has not
2 been in support of the project because she
3 believes it lacks parking, creates too much
4 density, over utilization, and it doesn't fit
5 her vision. It also happens to be across from
6 her house. We've attempted to accommodate her
7 and negotiate with her by moving out the family
8 units away from her home across to the park side
9 and the opposite street. We have lowered the
10 number of units from 25 to 15 units. Sometime
11 it seems that the issue is too many activities
12 for the amount of parking density, other times
13 it's lack of vision.

14 There has always been a tone of you haven't
15 convinced me yet, but it's not clear what it
16 takes to convince her. In the meantime, the
17 site plan has been developed by the Community
18 Design Collaborative, which is a professional
19 group of planners, the architectural design,
20 construction drawings and water management
21 systems are at their final stage. NSCA has had
22 to move expeditiously throughout this process as
23 our NSB 2 funding comes with a strict time frame
24 for development, February 2013.

1 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Let me just interrupt
2 you for one second. This is the same site that
3 Father Bruce listed?

4 MS. DECARLO: Yes.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You do understand if
6 the permits are out and executed, this bill will
7 not stop that. We understand that?

8 MS. DECARLO: Right. We will get there
9 because so now what happens to the community
10 center? Is that building going to be a single
11 family house?

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Is that a separate --

13 MS. DECARLO: It's the St. Boniface parcel.
14 It has a school, a community center, a rectory
15 that we are turning into our offices. And then
16 where the church and the convent stood which got
17 demolished, that is where we are planning the 50
18 units of co-op. But now if you do all that
19 single family, what do I do with the community
20 center? It can't be single family.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So, the community
22 center is not part of an application yet?

23 MS. DECARLO: No.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. I just wanted

1 to be clear whatever has been applied for, if
2 those permits have been executed.

3 MS. DECARLO: Just the housing.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All right. Go ahead
5 please.

6 MS. DECARLO: Suddenly, we found out that
7 the Planning Commission Staff was doing a survey
8 of the neighborhood at the behest of the
9 Councilwoman. And that she had introduced an
10 Ordinance on March 15 to change the zoning and a
11 piece of the neighborhood from R10 to R10A,
12 which would allow only single family dwellings
13 and put all the buildings and uses on St.
14 Boniface illegal. I mean, what do we do?

15 On April 2, all of us residents received a
16 letter from the Councilwoman informing us for
17 the first time she was hosting a meeting on
18 April 9 to discuss a rezoning of the
19 neighborhood. In an e-mail to NSCA responding
20 to a request for a meeting, she informed Norris
21 Square that she wanted us to present the project
22 at that meeting on April 9. The meeting where
23 the rezoning was to be explained, first time the
24 neighborhood hears this April 9, was not

1 explained. People wanted to know why are you
2 changing the zoning? Who asked for the change?
3 What will be the impact? How will it affect us?
4 There are no answers. It was a very contentious
5 meeting. NSCA did not have the opportunity to
6 present the project as requested, but
7 Councilwoman committed to the community to host
8 the meeting in two weeks to answer all the
9 questions and concerns. She didn't say that on
10 the following Tuesday, April 15, rezoning was to
11 be presented to the Planning Board for approval.

12 At that meeting, community residents
13 testified how the change was being made without
14 explanations to the community as to its need or
15 its impact. Although two members of a Planning
16 Board voted against the approval citing the
17 clear confusion of residents and lack of
18 information, the majority voted for it on the
19 basis that says NSCA already had a zoning permit
20 and it didn't affect their project, the Planning
21 Commission could just vote yes since their vote
22 was only advisory, and let you City Council
23 decide the issue.

24 This vote taken by the Planning Commission

1 was another disappointment in how our democratic
2 government process operates. A neighborhood has
3 a zoning designation changed which seriously
4 limits those property use with one week's notice
5 and a process that generally takes months and a
6 professional entity such as the Planning
7 Commission kicks it down the road to City
8 Council because their vote is advisory and
9 because Norris Square Civic already had its
10 permit. It ignored the neighborhood and the
11 impact which is overwhelming on them.

12 (Applause)

13 So now the ball is in your court. Will you
14 vote this out of committee today knowing that
15 residents still don't understand the impact this
16 will have on their property and the
17 neighborhood. They have all kinds of questions.
18 None have been answered. This Ordinance will
19 also complicate the development of St. Boniface
20 campus. What will be the impact on the
21 community center and rectory offices if they are
22 now designated for single family dwelling? What
23 other delays, expenses will we incur before we
24 can start the repairs and rehabilitation of the

1 outside envelope of the community center to stop
2 its deterioration? This is the 5 million
3 wrapping state funds goes to do this.

4 Just last Thursday the neighborhood
5 received another letter from the Councilwoman
6 stating that she would host the community
7 meeting on rezoning on May 22. My understanding
8 is that if you vote this proposed ordinance out
9 of committee today, the effect of the ordinance
10 kicks in. Be clear, those most affected by the
11 change in the ordinance are residents with
12 limited income. They will have to hire
13 architects to draw up the plans for conversion.
14 They will probably need to hire attorneys to
15 represent them at the hearing. All those
16 residents who own large homes, and I'm telling
17 you they are huge, who had either changed the
18 them into apartments or could have changed them
19 into multifamily, will now have to deal with
20 L&I.

21 Who holds the burden of proof that a
22 property is grandfathered in? The homeowner or
23 L&I? So if I did it illegally, i.e., without
24 permits not knowing I needed permits, there are

1 a hundred variations, is L&I going to give them
2 a pass or are they going to get a citation?

3 Why can't we slow down the process, do an
4 actual remapping that identifies all the
5 properties that have been converted into
6 multifamily, provide full explanation of the
7 zoning change, it's impact, the procedures to be
8 followed by property owners given the change?
9 Isn't this a taking of property without due
10 process? Is the rule of law less important when
11 it comes to a poor neighborhood? Shouldn't it
12 be the other way around? Don't we have a higher
13 duty, a higher burden to assure that families
14 truly understand what the impact of government
15 action will be on their property.

16 A community meeting to explain the zoning
17 is now scheduled for May 22 as the Councilwoman
18 stated. Make that meeting an example of what
19 the true remapping rezoning is supposed to be.
20 A series of meetings that engages the
21 neighborhood and explains and answers all their
22 questions by a group of professionals from
23 Planning, L&I and the Zoning Board of
24 Adjustment. I urge you to vote to not approve

1 this Bill out of committee today. If you do,
2 the community meeting might be a moot point.
3 Make democracy work. Make government abide by
4 the rules it develops to empower and protect
5 citizens. I urge you to vote no on the Bill.

6 (Applause)

7 These are copies of our testimony and all
8 the information and correspondence back and
9 forth with the Councilwoman and all the letters
10 and petitions of support for the project and
11 against the Ordinance.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: They will all be made
13 part of the record, Ms. DeCarlo.

14 MS. DECARLO: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Henri Marcial. You
16 can come. Councilwoman Tasco has a -- pardon
17 me. Ms. DeCarlo, could you come back up please.
18 I'm sorry. I should have asked if there were
19 questions. Sorry.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Hi, how are you?

21 MS. DECARLO: Fine. How are you,
22 Councilwoman.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I just -- I am
24 confused here. Are we talking about just this

1 St. Boniface project? Is that the -- your
2 testimony was -- discussed the housing community
3 center offices on the site where the church is.

4 Is that your testimony?

5 MS. DECARLO: Right. There is a parcel
6 that is almost a block.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASCIO: Right.

8 MS. DECARLO: On that parcel, known as
9 St. Boniface Parish, used to sit the church and
10 a convent, which have now been demolished, a
11 which is still there, a school and a community
12 center. That parcel is within the section of
13 the neighborhood that is being rezoned R10A.
14 Therefore, that parcel will be zoned for single
15 family residential.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Except if you are
17 putting permits.

18 MS. DECARLO: No. No. The permits that we
19 have put in is for the development of the
20 housing.

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASCIO: On the site.

22 MS. DECARLO: On the site.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes.

24 MS. DECARLO: So on this parcel, this piece

1 over here is for the housing.

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASCIO: Right.

3 MS. DECARLO: But it leaves these buildings
4 here, right, which have been there for 130 years
5 which will now be zoned R10A. Part of our
6 testimony is this, I understand that we would go
7 to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and I
8 understand that we would have community
9 meetings. We have always done that. We
10 fortunately have the resources to do that.

11 But the rest of the neighborhood, the
12 people who own these large homes that are still
13 need to testify, don't have the resources that
14 we have. And so that's where the real impact
15 comes in. And I feel bad that because of a
16 project that Norris Square has been planning now
17 for several years, it triggers an ordinance that
18 basically impacts on the families in the
19 neighborhoods with large homes because of a
20 project that we've been planning and proposing.
21 It doesn't seem fair.

22 There hasn't been a process where people
23 understand what is going on and what the impact
24 is. And so in all due respect, since Norris

1 Square has zoning permit, I would ask, what's
2 the urgency.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, my question is
4 everyone keeps talking about this site, so I
5 wanted to be clear on if we are talking about
6 just a site, or are we talking about the larger
7 homes and the rest of the community?

8 MS. DECARLO: The zoning would go from York
9 Street to Berks Street.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Are the residents who
11 live in these larger homes in that community, do
12 they live there or do they rent those
13 properties?

14 MS. DECARLO: There is a combination. They
15 live there. Some rent there. Some rent their
16 space, but there is a combination. There are
17 people here who are willing and want to testify
18 about the impact on their property. So there is
19 a substantial impact on residents and their
20 properties. Clearly -- and that's a shame of
21 it.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, I think it's a
23 matter of opinion. So, in terms of the ability
24 to convert from single family to multifamily, I

1 have that same problem in my district. But we
2 looked at the -- I'm not going to get into that.
3 But there are a lot of issues around that that
4 even the homeowners should be concerned about.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Any other
7 questions or comments?

8 Seeing none, thank you, Ms. DeCarlo.

9 Mr. Marcial. We have your copy of your written
10 testimony made part of the record if you'd just
11 like to --

12 MR. MARCIAL: I will do a summation.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you would like to
14 summarize, I would appreciate it because we
15 still have a lot of people that want to speak.
16 Thank you, sir. Please identify yourself for
17 the record and proceed.

18 MR. MARCIAL: My name is Henri Marcial.
19 I'm a Board Member from Norris Square Civic
20 Association. I am here to testify in opposition
21 to the proposed Ordinance No. 120214. The bulk
22 of my testimony addresses the criticisms or
23 comments raised by Councilwoman Quinones with
24 regard to Norris Square and its management of

1 projects in general and the St. Boniface Project
2 in particular.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, just speak a
4 little more in the microphone so we can all hear
5 you.

6 MR. MARCIAL: Sorry. Can you hear better
7 now?

8 As I said, my comments address primarily
9 past comments raised in the community meeting
10 and at the Planning Commission Meeting with
11 regard to criticisms leveled against Norris
12 Square Civic Association as far as its
13 management of its projects, its finances, the
14 St. Boni's Project in general and its
15 interaction within the community.

16 I wish to redirect the focus of this
17 hearing to determine the appropriateness of both
18 in terms of legislative procedure and a
19 substantive need of the proposed legislation,
20 and to give the residents of the community that
21 will be directly impacted by the ordinance an
22 opportunity to register their approval or
23 disapproval of the same.

24 This ordinance is to change the zoning

1 designations of residential properties in the
2 neighborhood. It's the core of the community
3 and family interests, the home. The same home
4 most members of the community are struggling to
5 provide for their families whether they are
6 homeowners or renters. Norris Square Civic
7 Association at 501-C3 Community Development
8 Corporation and NAC participant whose focus for
9 the past 25 years have been to empower the poor
10 and disenfranchised members of the community in
11 the area of the city that it serves.

12 The most recent census track data shows
13 that this is not only one of the poorest areas
14 of the city, but also the country.

15 In short, the Councilwoman's presentation
16 and the reasons for her sole determination that
17 this ordinance is necessary have presented
18 nothing more than speculative and irrelevant
19 commentary, much of it incorrect and
20 specifically designed to distract the common
21 listener from the focus of this hearing, which
22 is to show whether the proposed ordinance was,
23 one, properly conceived; two, properly supported
24 by real verifiable data; three, properly

1 presented to the community; and most
2 importantly, whether it has a majority of the
3 community members support. The answer to all
4 four of these points is no.

5 In the past the Councilwoman has stated
6 that the support, for her information, was to
7 have Planning Commission employees drive the
8 neighborhood. This is not an empirical study
9 and does not provide the information data
10 necessary to support this legislation. The
11 process itself has been flawed. This process
12 was designed with legislation first an attempted
13 meeting with the community to meet the bare
14 minimum requirements of procedure that was
15 nothing more than a comment to the community as
16 to here is a new order, not requesting
17 communities input and data and feeling with
18 regard to their properties.

19 There has also been a suggestion that
20 Norris Square needs to be monitored because it
21 uses tax dollars to fund its operations. Again,
22 this is a Red Herring and without weight.
23 Norris Square Civic Association has an annual
24 budget in excess of \$10 million. Norris Square

1 files audited financial statements every year.
2 In addition, the individual funders of the
3 various programs provided by or administered by
4 Norris Square each conduct ongoing financial
5 reviews and monitoring to ensure the proper use
6 and allocation of funding regardless of whether
7 it's a development project, a child care project
8 or an educational project.

9 The Councilwoman has also indicated to us
10 that she believes there are better projects or
11 uses for our money or in this case the
12 community's money because this is money that we
13 solicited independently and brought to the
14 community to help the community. However,
15 projects such as this can not turn on a dime or
16 on a whim. They are the culmination of years of
17 community surveys, planning, property
18 acquisition and funding development. Projects
19 are built where we have legal title to the land.
20 Funding sources have use time, limits and
21 restrictions.

22 The Councilwoman has suggested there are
23 thousands of other properties we can possibly
24 use. But in truth, in the service areas that we

1 address, the traditional Norris Square service
2 boundaries, there are probably only 90 to 100.
3 And they are not her properties to give us. The
4 property acquisition process takes 18 months or
5 longer for a single property and is expensive
6 and may cause much more, much longer when you
7 have to converge multiple lots.

8 Finally, the Councilwoman ignores the
9 economic reality of the neighborhood in the
10 current global economic condition. By
11 implementing this ordinance, a clear message is
12 being sent to the working poor and those with
13 limited means. Thank you for fighting to make
14 the neighborhood tolerable, not leave. In hard
15 economic times, one source of income is to rent
16 a portion of your building. That will be taken
17 away because the same homeowners cannot afford
18 the zoning variance process that will be
19 required under the ordinance. In addition, for
20 those unable to purchase a home, there will be
21 fewer rental options.

22 In conjunction with the pending property
23 tax reassessments, this will ultimately price
24 many longstanding residents out of the

1 neighborhood and do nothing more than speed the
2 gentrification that we are being told this is
3 meant to prevent. This will change the
4 character of the neighborhood and will no longer
5 be as diverse either ethically or economically.

6 In summary, there is no justification for
7 this ordinance. The failure to engage the
8 community leaves one with a sense that our local
9 government is no longer representative but more
10 autocratic and paternalistic. The only
11 motivation for this has been a personal desire
12 and not community benefit. Therefore, it should
13 be voted down. Planning Commission has a
14 remapping procedure in place. It is designed to
15 solicit community participation and input.
16 There is no need for this when that process is
17 pending in the coming year.

18 Thank you very much.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. If you
20 can wait there.

21 Councilman Kenney.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry. And I
23 apologize if I seem -- I am just really confused
24 about all of this. Because on one hand, we

1 normally deal with issues in this Body on
2 rezoning in order to kind of keep multifamily
3 development from happening without going through
4 a zoning process. If you look at Temple
5 University, for example, and what is going on
6 there now, there were no controls or
7 protections. So multifamily dwellings are
8 popping up all over the place there in formerly
9 single family lots. And the neighbors are going
10 crazy and understandably so.

11 So I don't understand why you would want to
12 risk the possibility of someone acquiring one of
13 these large -- buying it off the current owner
14 at R10 and then stuffing six apartments in there
15 without any community input at all. If it stays
16 R10, there is no community input. It just
17 happens. So, I mean, I am confused because we
18 are normally on the other side of the issue
19 trying to protect the community from R10A, which
20 we have done in South Philly and other
21 neighborhoods to keep that from happening. So
22 why --

23 MR. MARCIAL: This is not South Philly.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Why is untethered

1 development of single family conversions to
2 multifamily dwellings without any zoning
3 process, why is that safer for the neighborhood?
4 I just don't understand it.

5 MR. MARCIAL: This is not untethered
6 multifamily zoning.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: R10 is by right.

8 MR. MARCIAL: R10 has limits and
9 restrictions. The characterization that R10 is
10 just going to throw in a lot of large apartment
11 buildings or a lot of large units is incorrect.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Well, it's happening
13 all over the city.

14 MR. MARCIAL: These property owners.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Right.

16 MR. MARCIAL: Have an expectation to earn a
17 little bit of their earnings. They don't earn
18 much. We are dealing with the poor. From being
19 able to rent to other people who are unable to
20 even purchase a property. The community has
21 said they do not mind multiunit housing in the
22 area. The majority of these houses would not
23 qualify just based on the regular dimensional
24 requirements to add a second unit. But there

1 are some units that would be able to be
2 modified. Very few of them would be able to be
3 modified to six, the maximum would probably be
4 four.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: What happens if somehow
6 this community gets hot? And these guys from
7 New York decide, pretty hot down there now.
8 Let's buy up all the properties. And you go to
9 a poor person and say we are going to give you
10 X-amount of dollars for this big house. They
11 are going to have a tough time turning it down
12 because of their economic circumstances. Then
13 you are going to have people from out of town
14 come in and develop crazy. And say, we don't
15 have to go to the Zoning Board because it's R10.

16 I think the more -- look, the zoning
17 process is cumbersome and annoying. It's not
18 that insanely expensive to go through it. If
19 you have community support and you have Council
20 support and you have a reasonable project, you
21 are getting through. It's not -- you are not
22 going to be tied up in court for years.

23 I just don't -- what is your role in this?
24 Do you own property there.

1 MR. MARCIAL: I'm a board member of Norris
2 Square Civic Association.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you live in the
4 neighborhood?

5 MR. MARCIAL: No. I live in Philadelphia,
6 though. I don't --

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I am just asking what
8 your connection to the --

9 MR. MARCIAL: I am a board member of Norris
10 Square Civic Association, have been for years.
11 Work in the neighborhood every day.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you own property in
13 the neighborhood?

14 MR. MARCIAL: Not in the neighborhood.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay. I don't mean to
16 be sarcastic. I don't get it.

17 MR. MARCIAL: That's fine. I am a renter
18 myself. I see the availability of rental
19 properties as an issue also as a renter myself.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It doesn't remove the
21 possibility of multifamily conversions. It just
22 puts in a protection that the right project gets
23 done with community approval.

24 MR. MARCIAL: The idea here is that the

1 community gets to wade through and discuss that
2 versus having it imposed upon them. There are
3 quite a few members of the community that are
4 very happy with the current structure.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: That's between you and
6 the Councilwoman. All I am saying is an at
7 large member of Council, I have been here for 20
8 years, R10A is the protection for crazy
9 development in the neighborhoods throughout the
10 city. That's just my experience. If you want
11 to argue differently, certainly it's an open
12 forum and you have the right to argue that.
13 Process and information all that is between you
14 guys.

15 But from a City-wide perspective, R10A has
16 always been a protection for communities not
17 being over developed or developed in a crazy
18 way. That's all.

19 MR. MARCIAL: We are not asking for change
20 in the residential designation, but what the
21 current designation is. We are asking for
22 status quo.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Which could be
24 dangerous.

1 MR. MARCIAL: I understand your position.

2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Ask the people at
3 Strawberry Mansion. It's a little dangerous.

4 MR. MARCIAL: This community is what they
5 are asking for.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I think if you go
7 back in history, maybe some other people here
8 were relatives or originally from that area. I
9 think if you look at the Spring Garden community
10 years ago, which I am very familiar with because
11 I live very close to there, what Councilman
12 Kenney described happened. And it moved out a
13 lot of people from that community when that area
14 became hot.

15 I understand what you're saying, but there
16 are arguments both ways on this. All right.
17 Thank you. Any other questions or comments.
18 Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Marcial.

19 MR. MARCIAL: Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Joe Santiago, is he
21 here?

22 MR. SANTIAGO: Still good morning.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good morning, sir.

24 Please identify yourself for the record and

1 proceed. If I can I tell everybody, please, we
2 still have a lot of people. If you can be as
3 brief as possible and stick to the subject, we'd
4 appreciate it. Thank you very much.

5 MR. SANTIAGO: Good morning. My name is
6 Joe Santiago. I live at 2032 North Hancock
7 Street. I lived there with my wife for a long
8 time as a resident of Norris Square. I am a to
9 little skeptical here because makes me nervous
10 to come up here and listen to all this stuff
11 going on in my community.

12 We have three children. We support this
13 rezoning bill. We love raising our family in
14 the neighborhood because there is a lot of
15 strong engaged community in the neighborhood.
16 Reverend Adan is right down the street with West
17 Kensington Ministry. Captain Kram, which is a
18 very good captain at the 26th District. And his
19 officers really care about that community. You
20 can see them all over the place.

21 This problem here -- Raphael is always in
22 the park cleaning. You know, he's another
23 member of the community which always takes care
24 of cleaning the park in the neighborhood. We

1 feel strongly that the residents need to have a
2 safe and large development that would directly
3 impact our community and quality of life. I am
4 concerned about many development projects that
5 are currently being planned including one
6 directly across the street from my house. That
7 we never contacted about -- we were never
8 contacted about this project. I worry about the
9 park and the increase trash. This is a great
10 neighborhood, and it's growing. But we need to
11 protect our strength and stability as the
12 Council people were saying earlier about this
13 process.

14 I support the rezoning Bill because it
15 would allow me and the rest of the community to
16 be involved in deciding where high density
17 development makes sense, and to have a voice in
18 shaping those projects so that they preserve
19 parking, open space and character in the
20 community where I live and my family.

21 Thank you very much.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you,
23 Mr. Santiago. Any questions or comments?

24 Seeing none, thank you, sir.

1 Diana Quinones. After that, I saw
2 Mr. Negron come in. Negron, you will be next,
3 okay.

4 Good morning. Please identify yourself for
5 the record and proceed.

6 MS. QUINONES: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
7 distinguished Members of the Rules Committee.
8 My name is Diana Quinones. I am a resident, a
9 homeowner at the 1900 block of Howard Street in
10 the Norris Square Community. I speak today on
11 behalf of myself as a resident and a homeowner,
12 as a mother, and on behalf of another Norris
13 Square Neighborhood Alliance and in opposition
14 to Bill 120214. Some of us are in attendance
15 today. We are also part of the over 200
16 signatures of community residents, primarily
17 homeowners, that Vote No and are opposed to this
18 bill.

19 I am not going to address the technical
20 dimensions of Councilmember Maria Quinones
21 rezoning proposal, but rather the process or
22 lack thereof surrounding the Council members
23 proposal. The City Initiated Rezoning Plan in
24 addition to making certain areas attractive to

1 investors, is primarily to intended to preserve
2 the character of the neighborhood and restrain
3 the rash of oversized development. However,
4 many residents feel the need to expand the
5 opportunities for affordable housing, which also
6 comes in the form of homeownership, for the
7 hundreds of families on waiting list throughout
8 the city and in our neighborhood.

9 The City's Commission on Zoning originally
10 stated the rezoning process should also seek to
11 engage citizens in the process determining their
12 own needs by helping them to preserve and
13 reshape their own neighborhoods. We believe
14 that great things have been accomplished by
15 local residents in terms of creating a diverse
16 and healthy community that protects and supports
17 long time residents while also welcoming new
18 ones such as myself. This has been due to
19 activism of the local people working in
20 productive partnerships with government agencies
21 and elected officials. This is a great way to
22 ensure the diverse opinions are aired and
23 divergent proposals reconciled and that there is
24 transparency and accountability in those

1 processes. But good faith on all of our behalf
2 is also very important.

3 Therefore, this particular piece of
4 legislation should be driven by some public
5 policy, a real perceived need and the desire to
6 make lives better for people not by hidden
7 political agendas. In that context, I believe
8 that local residents should be the primary
9 beneficiaries of the neighborhood's development
10 not its victims. So changing the zoning laws in
11 some neighborhoods where you are seeing a lot of
12 development activity may no longer have some
13 value. However, in the Norris Square
14 neighborhood rezoning proposal is seen as a
15 punitive measure, a legislative maneuver,
16 targeted at one specific group without any
17 regard for the impact it may have on the larger
18 group, in this case the entire community.

19 In our view, the rezoning proposal is a
20 clear example of selective targeting because the
21 Councilwoman has not imposed any plans in other
22 neighborhoods that are part of her district.
23 Only in the Norris Square area.

24 (Applause)

1 This is now a blatant abuse of legislative
2 prerogatives and an unnecessary expense for us,
3 too, who are taxpayers. Although we fail to see
4 the need and advantages of the Councilwoman's
5 rezoning proposal. If there was any good aspect
6 in the horizon, it has been completely
7 overshadowed by the attempts at disregard and
8 minimize of public input. The Councilwoman's
9 public statements that the proposed mixed income
10 housing sponsored by Norris Square Civic
11 Association was the impetus behind her plan to
12 rezone the neighborhood, weakens the credibility
13 of this rezoning resolution as her real
14 intention behind pushing this resolution.

15 (Applause)

16 The problem of -- my mom gave me this.
17 Excuse me.

18 The problem of conversion has been used by
19 Councilwoman as the primary basis of the
20 imperative to rezone our neighborhood. But to
21 date, has not demonstrated with solid data that
22 conversions is the main problem correcting
23 density. In other words, approving the rezoning
24 now would be the equivalent of really fixing

1 something that is not broken. As a matter of
2 fact, when a staffer of the City's Planning
3 Commission was questioned about the growing
4 problem with the conversions, he admitted to the
5 Commission members that he could not quantify
6 the problem and the analysis of the Planning
7 Commissions efforts was limited to random visits
8 to properties looking at mailboxes for
9 conversion.

10 I submit that there is an issue of
11 conversion, it may be attributed to the lack of
12 education on our part as many property owners
13 don't know that they can or cannot build and
14 lack after enforcement of the Park and City
15 Inspectors. I submit that the resolution before
16 you today is not intended to address a problem
17 but instead creates an artificial problem to
18 justify blocking an organization whose primary
19 mission is to produce affordable housing like
20 the kind of housing I benefitted from before I
21 became a homeowner and now a Federal Employee.

22 I am not here to talk about the mixed
23 income development of the Norris Square Civic
24 Association, but I am here to ask you to Vote No

1 on this resolution because the rezoning proposal
2 was formulated without the input of a
3 significant segment of community residents
4 because the resolution does not support the
5 majority of the community residents and because
6 the rezoning is not really needed.

7 To many of us, this proposal has not been
8 the by-product of discussion amongst residents
9 who have met to discuss the pros and cons and
10 explore the alternative options. The various
11 city neighborhoods that have been engaged in the
12 process of remapping have all received advanced
13 notice and the opportunity to formulate their
14 own proposals. Our residents have not.

15 We deserve the opportunity to make the
16 recommendations that respond to the particular
17 dynamics of our neighborhood before any action
18 is taken by this Committee. It is also
19 important that you will aware that the lecture
20 inviting residents to the April 9 Community
21 meeting was dated March of 2012 giving Norris
22 Square residents only one week's notice to
23 learn, such as myself, and react to this
24 rezoning proposal. Which as you may know, can

1 be highly technical and abstract. The April 9,
2 meeting was held 24 days after Councilwoman had
3 submitted her rezoning resolution to the full
4 City Council, which was on March 15.

5 Why is it that at the Community Meeting on
6 April 9 the Councilwoman agreed to hold a second
7 meeting within two weeks after that date and
8 that meeting has been scheduled for a week after
9 today? Within -- this renders a discussion
10 useless and a waste of more money for the city
11 and for the many working people who took the day
12 off to be here today. If the Councilwoman wants
13 to protect our neighborhood, why not identify
14 and reach out to those individuals with illegal
15 conversions and assist them in being compliant?
16 Why not develop an initiative to encourage
17 property owners who have done illegal
18 conversions o voluntarily register with the city
19 free of penalties if they register before a
20 certain date? Why not try to document the
21 actual number of conversions done in the area to
22 demonstrate the imperative for rezoning?

23 Why not allocate funds or redeploy
24 inspectors from the Department of License and

1 Inspections to canvas the neighborhood to
2 quantify the real extent of the alleged problem.
3 Why is it that to this date the City's
4 Transportation Department has not produced the
5 study that the Councilwoman said she
6 commissioned regarding the traffic congestion in
7 our neighborhood, a problem she attributes to
8 increased density. Why not come up with a
9 proposal to protect or exempt property owners
10 living on fixed incomes who may have the most
11 difficulty covering the cost of secure rezoning
12 variances.

13 Once the rezoning go into effect, these are
14 critical questions we will need answered.
15 Decisions on the rezoning of an area which has a
16 long term impact in our neighborhood for decades
17 to come must be grounded on facts, not
18 misinformation. Moreover, the legislative
19 prerogatives and duties of an elected official
20 should not be abused and used as a weapon to
21 block a not for profit from building affordable
22 housing irrespective of their differences.

23 (Applause)

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ms. Quinones, if I

1 could as you to wrap up please.

2 MS. QUINONES: I'm almost done.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

4 MS. QUINONES: Given the insufficient
5 notice given to the residents, the strategy of
6 rapping through fast track legislation and
7 deliberately designed -- is deliberately
8 designed to minimize public discussion with lack
9 of hard data. To justify the need for the
10 change in the rezoning designation we humbly ask
11 you to Vote No on Resolution 120214.

12 There is absolutely no need for an
13 emergency or fast track rezoning ordinance at
14 this time when rezoning can be taken up as part
15 of the Citywide remapping plan. That is why
16 this hearing as important as it may be should
17 have been scheduled after a real and
18 comprehensive discussion involving residents and
19 the Councilwoman could have taken place. Now,
20 disregarding any -- and undermining the process
21 of public participation creates and exacerbates
22 public distrust of government and elected
23 officials particularly when you selectively and
24 deliberately use the instruments of democratic

1 government to undermine democracy itself. For
2 City Council's whose majority is considered
3 progressive, it's a contradiction to have one of
4 its own so openly reduced the very government
5 that is the material expression of the
6 principles embodied in the Bill of Rights and
7 the Constitution.

8 Thank you.

9 (Applause)

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Any questions?

11 Seeing none, thank you.

12 Mr. Victor Negron.

13 MS. QUINONES: Do you not wish for copies?

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you have copies,
15 give them. We will have them distributed and
16 your statement will be made part of the record.

17 Good morning, nice to see you. Please
18 identify yourself for the record and proceed.

19 MR. NEGRON: Certainly. My name is Victor
20 Negron. I am a resident at 2115 North Howard,
21 which happens to be on Norris Square Park. I
22 want to first of all thank the Committee for
23 performing the appropriate due diligence through
24 transparency. It's pretty evident as Councilman

1 Kenney has seen, there is not a lot of
2 transparency happening. This is the first
3 opportunity for real transparency.

4 I am a member of the Kensington West
5 Neighbors Association. I am also a member of
6 the Norris Square Civic Association. For me,
7 this Bill is about -- although, I have issues
8 with the project being discussed, it has to do
9 with three and a half years ago neighbors
10 beginning to take a property at 119 West
11 Susquehanna that turned into eight apartments
12 and became one of our highest volume criminal
13 activity properties. The property is owned by a
14 gentleman that lives out in the Northeast. He
15 took it upon himself to turn a three-bedroom
16 apartment building into an eight-bedroom
17 apartment unit. And he even created addresses
18 on the North Howard Street side of the park.

19 And that's exactly why we are interested in
20 adding the A, because we have properties on
21 Howard Street that are multifamily units that we
22 don't have any problems with. And I don't think
23 L&I is going to have any problems with them. In
24 real world, no one is going to call about units

1 that are not a problem. It's the problematic
2 properties that are an issue. Again, for me it
3 has to do with 119 West Susquehanna which is
4 blatant.

5 I would ask and recommend that the
6 Committee approve the legislation and allow true
7 transparency and opportunities because rules and
8 regulations are engaged in this community
9 because, as you heard today, there is Norris
10 Square Civic Association. There is Norris
11 Square NAC. There is Kensington West Neighbors
12 Association. And we have a new association for
13 that same community called Norris Square
14 Neighborhood Alliance. Obviously, transparency
15 and the use of the rules are necessary in order
16 to prevent our community from going away and
17 disappearing.

18 Because you are right Councilman Kenney, if
19 it gets hot -- people have never seen hot until
20 a guy shows up with \$500,000 to a low income
21 person, and just buys it and does whatever the
22 heck they want.

23 Thank you for the opportunity.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir.

1 Thank you very much. Any questions?

2 Seeing none. Let the record reflect, I
3 should have said this earlier, we have also have
4 Committee Members Councilwoman Bass and
5 Councilwoman Reynolds-Brown here.

6 And, let's see. How about Jose Hernandez,
7 is he here? Next will be Gary Summerfield. Is
8 he here?

9 MR. HERNANDEZ: I can sum up pretty
10 quickly.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just speak into the
12 microphone. Identify yourself for the record.

13 MR. HERNANDEZ: I am Jose Hernandez. First
14 paragraph, basically, I have my family. My
15 sisters, my mother, and my family, uncles and
16 aunts all live in that zone. I am opposed to
17 this because basically we don't know exactly
18 what is going on and what the major impact is
19 going to be to the community. Been there 40
20 years. Voter. And my family also is very
21 involved in the community.

22 Now if you have any questions, basically
23 this is the testimony I am going to make.
24 Again, this -- what we are discussing hasn't

1 really impacted or been able to -- told to the
2 community what is going on. A lot of people
3 don't understand it. A lot of people don't
4 speak English, only speak Spanish. And still a
5 lot of people do not know how this is going to
6 impact the community. And that is what bothers
7 me about the entire change. Okay.

8 I know that what you're saying \$5,000 can
9 be given to a person. Maybe they do want to
10 sell, maybe they don't. But it's a personal
11 opinion of that person on selling and buying. I
12 don't -- I understand your concerns about that;
13 but again, I don't think it's a widespread thing
14 in the zone. It's not necessary. For 40 years
15 I've lived there, okay. It's not necessary this
16 entire change. All right.

17 Any questions? I would like to speak to
18 you about it.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just want -- in your
20 testimony, you do use the words spot zoning.

21 MR. HERNANDEZ: Yes. It is a spot zoning.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Huh?

23 MR. HERNANDEZ: It is a spot zoning.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Legally, sir, in all

1 fairness, it is not. Because it covers an area.
2 I think it's about like four blocks north/south
3 from Berks to -- what is it -- Berks to York,
4 right? That is at least four blocks north. One
5 block east/west. That is not spot zoning. That
6 is a large enough area. Spot zoning is very
7 sort of debatable term. And there are times
8 where her.

9 MR. HERNANDEZ: Well, it's a debatable
10 term. I'd rather go with that.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I don't think anybody
12 would qualify it -- you can disagree with the
13 proposal, I understand that, but it's not spot
14 zoning. In all fairness.

15 MR. HERNANDEZ: Any other questions?

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: No. Thank you, sir.

17 MR. HERNANDEZ: I am trying to make it a
18 little easier, little quicker for you. I know
19 you have a lot of people.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. We need
21 more of that. Thank you.

22 Gary Summerfield, I called that name, is he
23 here? Please. After that will be Rosa Paz? Is
24 she here? Okay.

1 Mr. Summerfield, please identify yourself
2 for the record and proceed.

3 MR. SUMMERFIELD: My name is Gary
4 Summerfield, 2031 North Master Street.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Little closer to the
6 microphone, please, so everybody can hear you.

7 MR. SUMMERFIELD: Gary Summerfield, 2031
8 North Master Street.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

10 MR. SUMMERFIELD: I am here. There is a
11 lot of confusion. I admit that. The confusion
12 is not the Council's fault. It's not the
13 neighbor's fault. I kind of blame this on our
14 representation in the community. Norris Square
15 Civic Association, CDC, ROC, ZBA whatever they
16 are, with all that funding and all that support
17 they have, they should make sure that the
18 correct information is out to the people.

19 Now, on R10A, I just feel that R10A -- this
20 is my personal opinion on it, this is a liberal
21 tool of zoning that allows community to have the
22 input on direction of how it is developed, i.e,
23 it keeps out absentee landlords with bad track
24 records, with taxes, code issues. It would be

1 hard -- they would be hard pressed to convince a
2 true community under R10A that they are building
3 in the community's best interest when they have
4 a bad track record that is public and in a
5 meeting for the community to decide. The true
6 community, not the virtual community. Not a
7 selective few, not a group interest but true
8 community meetings on these.

9 There are overwhelming number of
10 conversions in this small area here by right.
11 Not by community wish, not by will but -- or by
12 choice but by the choice of a select few. R10A
13 won't stop conversion, but it will make new
14 conversions think about where their fellow
15 neighbors and the use of their property stands.

16 Concerned people think that like supporting
17 R10A -- I think that people that have concerns
18 with R10A are being fed voodoo. This R10A
19 actually gives the community more power and more
20 say in what goes in their neighborhood than R10.
21 R10, anybody -- anybody. If somebody comes in
22 and offers me or my sister \$500,000 for my
23 property, I am going to sell it. I don't care
24 what she puts in it. R10A lets the people

1 behind me leave with my money have a say on what
2 that person does. That is what R10A does.

3 R10A is a protector. It's not some evil,
4 made up creation, concocted situation. I
5 respect Council's decision on this. I think
6 Council has taken an educated and a very, very
7 hard line for her to take on this matter. It's
8 not easy to upset your constituents, but I think
9 that this is being done for the benefit of their
10 constituents, not to upset them.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, sir.
12 Thank you for your testimony. Any questions?
13 Seeing none.

14 Rosa Paz, is she here? No?

15 Louis Emilio Garcia Castro. Sir, if you
16 can identify yourself for the record and please
17 proceed.

18 MR. CASTRO: Good morning, ladies and
19 gentlemen. I am Louis Emilio Castro. I have --
20 I bought a seven-unit apartment building about
21 13 years ago. It was a barber shop, six
22 apartments. It was scary looking when I first
23 got it. I am not renting it at this time
24 because it does need some work. It needs

1 renovation, needs to be brought up to code. All
2 those things will be done.

3 I am asking you to Vote No because if you
4 pass this, and I will -- when I come -- it comes
5 time for me to renovate and pull permits and all
6 that, I may not be able to afford it. It's
7 going to hinder my ability to support myself and
8 my family. I still have a family with pretty
9 young children.

10 Another thing that I would like to point
11 out is I have mother, sister-in-law,
12 mother-in-law, I have other people that live in
13 the area that would like to, in the future,
14 develop their properties because they have
15 vacant lots. If you pass this, it's just going
16 to make it more expensive for them in the
17 future. To the Councilman, what was his name,
18 Kenney, he says that it's not going to be that
19 expensive. But if you don't have to 5 to 10,000
20 dollars for a lawyer and an architect, then you
21 can't get your development moved ahead.

22 Now, as far as Norris Square is concerned,
23 Norris Square provides programs for young people
24 as well as housing for the poor. One of those

1 programs is located -- is going to be located in
2 that community center. I don't know if you have
3 come to North Philadelphia or Norris Square, but
4 there is a lot of young people that wind up
5 right there on Dauphin Street and on Hancock
6 selling drugs. They don't go to school. If
7 there was -- Norris Square provides these
8 programs. And it gives a number of them an
9 opportunity to see that there are other avenues.
10 That they don't have to sell drugs, that they
11 can finish school. There is activities for
12 them. They can play table tennis or billiard or
13 whatever it is, but at least they are not
14 sitting on Dauphin Street. If you don't believe
15 me, come. I will give you the grand tour.

16 If you pass this and Norris Square is not
17 able to develop their community center, then
18 where are these kids going to go? And I'm going
19 to stop there.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Thank you,
21 sir.

22 (Applause)

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Any questions?

24 Seeing none, thank you.

1 Next, Inez Ramos. She here? No.

2 Jeanette Delgado Garcia. And after her
3 will be Tara Colon if she's here. Okay. If you
4 can identify yourself for the record and
5 proceed.

6 MS. GARCIA: Yes. My name is Jeanette
7 Delgado Garcia. I've been there for 51 years.
8 She cannot tell me how that community has
9 changed. My husband bought a property. As he
10 said, we are trying to fix it. We have two kids
11 in college. Now, if this Bill passed, we cannot
12 get no one to rent a six-unit house, and this is
13 a six-unit house. Huge. Okay.

14 All these houses around Norris Square are
15 multi. There is not that many single, so I
16 don't see this benefitting the homeowner. I see
17 it benefitting her agenda, okay. And I am one
18 that I am happy with what Norris Square
19 partially has done with the St. Boniface. And I
20 wanted to help the kids that are on drugs, the
21 kids that are on alcoholism, the kids that are
22 robbing. These kids don't have any place to go.
23 There is no community center near us, and this
24 will help them. And I think it's wrong to nilly

1 willy our kids.

2 I've been there 51 years. Okay. And I'm
3 not the only one. My sister lived there. My
4 other sister lives there, all my aunts and
5 uncles. When we came from Puerto Rico, that is
6 where we established. Most of us been there,
7 me, 51. Most of my family, 70 years. And this
8 will effect us because my mother rents. This
9 strength -- my mother won't be able to rent her
10 property or my mother-in-law, you know.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Let me just ask you.
12 Is the place occupied at all?

13 MS. GARCIA: No. With me, my husband and
14 my daughters.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You live there
16 yourselves.

17 MS. GARCIA: That's it. Because my
18 husband's been laid off for over three years.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You've had the house
20 for 13 years you said?

21 MS. GARCIA: Fourteen.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Thank you.
23 Any other questions.

24 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: I have a

1 question.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Oh, Councilwoman
3 Reynolds-Brown.

4 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Please tell
5 me what Councilwoman Sanchez' agenda is as you
6 see it.

7 MS. GARCIA: As I see it is, not allowing
8 me to rent in the near future. Because I can't
9 afford to rent it right now because it's gutted.
10 My husband has gutted it, okay. There is only
11 one bedroom completely done. It's for my one
12 daughter. My other daughter staying with my
13 mother while my husband fix the other bedroom.
14 We live in the basement. Okay.

15 When in the near future as he's fixing it,
16 we will rent the third floor. There are two
17 units in the third floor that we can rent. Now
18 when we're by ourselves, then we can rent the
19 second floor. Two units there, too, okay. We
20 can't afford to fix it all in -- because we
21 don't have the money, and he don't have a job,
22 you know. Any money that we get, it's to pay
23 our -- tuitions for my college daughters.

24 COUNCILWOMAN REYNOLDS-BROWN: Okay. Thank

1 you for your testimony.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you.

3 Tara Colon. And after Tara will be Cheri
4 Honkala.

5 Good morning. Please identify yourself for
6 the record and proceed.

7 MS. COLON: My name is Tara Colon. I live
8 at 144 West Norris. My main concern is those of
9 us who rent in the neighborhood, the biggest
10 fear I have is being displaced. The reality is,
11 when a landlord has costs, who does those costs
12 go onto? The renter. If he has to pay more for
13 whatever, whether it's a license or whether it's
14 for, you know, the architects, whatever it is,
15 he has to pay for. In the end, who is paying
16 for it? It's the renter.

17 And I think that I don't understand if this
18 is going to impact my rent in the community, my
19 ability to stay in a community that I've been in
20 for years and my kids were born in. No, I don't
21 have the ability right now to own a property.
22 Maybe I will in the future. But if I do or I
23 don't, I am just as much as part of the
24 community as a renter, as someone that owns the

1 property. Because most renters in our
2 neighborhood, we been there forever renting.
3 Most of our parents have rented forever. Okay.

4 In our particular neighborhood, the
5 overwhelming majority of people who live there
6 are renters. So I need to know that if this
7 zoning is going to be passed, that the costs is
8 not going to be passed onto me. And I'm going
9 to be told, now, get up and move out of the
10 neighborhood.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, let me ask you
12 a question. In your particular situation where
13 you live, do you know is it zoned legally for
14 how you -- where you live?

15 MS. COLON: Where I am particularly living
16 right now, yes.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It's zoned legally?

18 MS. COLON: Yes. It's zoned legally. But
19 if I move, I would want to say maybe a block and
20 a half which I've done. I've probably lived at
21 a property no more than probably like two or
22 three years within that same neighborhood going
23 from renting to renting. So if I tomorrow have
24 to move -- I live -- the house that I live in is

1 three floors. I rented the whole thing. But if
2 I have to tomorrow because I can't afford to be
3 there, I would move into a little tiny place.
4 Am I going to be able to afford it? Right now
5 if you go into our area, we're already paying
6 for, I want to say, not even a one bedroom.
7 You're paying 700 -- 6 to 700 dollars for a one
8 bedroom for two, three bedrooms. You are
9 already paying to 8 to 900 dollars and you're
10 stilling living in the neighborhood we live in.

11 So, is this going to bring the rent up even
12 higher like in South Philly, like in Fairmount,
13 okay. People already paying out there, you
14 know, over a thousand dollars. I need to know,
15 I need to be guaranteed any zoning that happens
16 that my rent is not going to go up as a direct
17 cause of that zoning. And needs to be explained
18 to me.

19 I'll be honest, I don't fully understand
20 the new zoning laws. But there is nowhere to go
21 to say can give me the explanation. I need to
22 understand. Is this going to effect renters in
23 the neighborhood.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Well, if a place is

1 legal now to have -- to rent units, it will stay
2 legal. This does not change that. As far as
3 controlling what a landlord will charge, this
4 Bill doesn't effect that one way or the other.
5 There is no rent control in the city. Maybe
6 some people think there should be, but there's
7 not. So, as far as guaranteeing that your rent
8 will not go up, I mean, obviously we can't do
9 that.

10 MS. COLON: But is the cost to the owner of
11 the home going to go up? Because let's be real,
12 his costs go up, he's going to charge it to the
13 renter. He's not going to charge it to anybody
14 else.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If the place is legal
16 now, Ms. Colon, it should not be any further.

17 MS. COLON: Tomorrow, I need to move down
18 the street so you're going to tell me that the
19 rent in the neighborhood in general is going to
20 stay the same after this rezoning? That is what
21 you need to make clear to us is, is the rent for
22 everybody in the neighborhood going to start to
23 go up if this rezoning happens? If the cost to
24 the landlord is going to go up for them to have

1 the properties, then, I'm sorry, the answer must
2 be yes. Because a landlord is not going to go I
3 am just going to incur call the cost and not
4 give it onto my tenants. If tomorrow he has got
5 to do whatever needs to be done for that
6 particular zoning, that is what we need to know.

7 We need to have meetings. And we need to
8 be told exactly what is this rezoning going to
9 do and effect especially the renters in the
10 neighborhood who are the majority that live
11 there.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Councilwoman
13 Tasco.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Zoning is going to
15 protect your neighborhood, bottom line.

16 MS. COLON: Well, then that needs to be
17 explained. How so? How so? Let me know,
18 because I haven't been let known.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Well, at the end of
20 the day, whatever the zoning is it doesn't stop
21 people from coming into the neighborhood
22 re-gentrifying the neighborhood. And at the end
23 of the day, all of you will be gone.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Any other questions?

1 Thank you.

2 Cheri Honkala. Please identify yourself
3 and proceed. And after Ms. Honkala, we have
4 Gladys Delgado. Is she here? Okay. And then
5 the last name I have on the list is Gladys
6 Garcia -- oh, you're the same person. All
7 right. Fine. Okay.

8 Please identify yourself and proceed.

9 MS. HONKALA: My name is Cheri Honkala.
10 And I've been doing housing stuff for over 25
11 years in Philadelphia. So, I know what really
12 works and then also what is on the law -- on law
13 books. And those two, a lot of the time, have
14 nothing to do with each other.

15 I also want to say that I am the Head of
16 the Poor People's Economic Human Rights
17 Campaign. That I received no money from Norris
18 Square Civic Association. I don't receive any
19 money from any investors or developers in any
20 campaign that I have run. And that my
21 organization does not receive any money from
22 Councilwoman Maria Quinones Sanchez. And I
23 think that's important when we look at the
24 different people testifying today.

1 I have lived and worked in the Kensington
2 area for over 20 years. And I'm also a member
3 of West Kensington Ministry. I am also one of
4 the founders of the Housing Trust Fund and one
5 of the founders of Take Back Vacant Land.

6 I am here as a long time neighborhood
7 resident who has -- who is very disturbed that
8 these zoning changes were made in my
9 neighborhood without me or my neighbors' input.
10 I received information that was hand delivered
11 to my home two days ago. The form passed out to
12 all of my neighbors states that this new zoning
13 doesn't promote gentrification and actually
14 blocks big developers.

15 But where is the proof? Where is the
16 documentation? If so, why haven't we had
17 several community meetings about this? Why only
18 a small section of the district? Why then have
19 haven't we rezoned for the larger community and
20 the larger district?

21 I have watched displacement. I have
22 watched it in my neighborhood, and I've watched
23 it on my own block. And it hasn't been caused
24 by the effects to develop affordable housing in

1 the neighborhood. It's -- displacement has
2 happened in my neighborhood as a result of
3 sneaky developers in collusion with politicians
4 and speculators. Please, in the interest of
5 democracy, stop this zoning.

6 I've been involved in that housing fight
7 for over 20 years, and I'm way too old to just
8 believe something because somebody told me to
9 believe it. We demand to have hearings in our
10 neighborhood. We demand a democratic process.
11 I've watched the gentrification in the Fishtown
12 area. I've watched it in the Northern Liberties
13 area. And I'm not going to watch it happen in
14 my own neighborhood.

15 (Applause)

16 I have a 9-year-old Puerto Rican son. I've
17 been living in this community because I think
18 it's important that he's exposed to and around
19 the Puerto Rican community. The census track is
20 now showing that Puerto Ricans are being run
21 from the West Kensington neighborhood. I beg
22 you to stop the fast tracking rezoning in one of
23 the poorest areas in the city and perhaps the
24 country.

1 Thank you.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you. Any
3 questions or comments?

4 Seeing none. Gladys Delgado --

5 MS. GARCED: Garced.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Garced. I'm sorry.
7 I was given two separate names. I thought it
8 was two separate people.

9 MS. GARCED: I noticed.

10 (We have two last names.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. I didn't know
12 that, sir.

13 Before you start, is there anyone else here
14 that wants to testify? Seeing none, okay. All
15 right. After this, you will be the last
16 witness. Thank you, ma'am.

17 Please identify yourself for the record.

18 MS. GARCED: Hi. My name is Gladys Delgado
19 Garced. I wrote my speech down to make it easy
20 for myself.

21 Hello. My name is Gladys Delgado Garced.
22 My house has been in my family since 1949. I
23 live at 133 West Susquehanna Avenue. I came
24 back to Norris Square in 2007 and purchased my

1 family estate. I am opposed to the rezoning
2 because I or my husband were never informed
3 about legislation to change the zoning here.
4 May 12, we got a letter in our door that
5 legislation had been introduced to City Council.

6 How could this happen without any community
7 meetings, votes or opinions by the very people
8 that would be affected by this rezoning. I am
9 very upset that due process has not taken place
10 here. Norris Square has always been a place
11 where there are more apartments which, by the
12 way I live on the Square. And I can count on my
13 hands how many homes are single family
14 dwellings. They are all apartments.

15 My uncle bought this house in 1949. And
16 when he bought it, it was already three
17 apartments. We spent recently over \$10,000
18 hiring an architect and contractors and permits
19 and things of that nature just to turn it from a
20 three-apartment unit to a two-family dwelling so
21 that we could have the first and second floor.

22 Norris Square has always been a place where
23 there are more apartments than single home, so
24 why this rezoning for so-called homeownership or

1 accessible parking for residents when we do not
2 have a problem with parking. The only time
3 parking is a problem is when local businesses,
4 government offices, a day care on the Square,
5 the hospital and a meth clinic are all open for
6 business. But once these are closed for the day
7 with the exception of the hospital, there is
8 plenty of parking.

9 This is a neighborhood -- this neighborhood
10 has a diverse group of residents and from
11 different economic backgrounds. We have been
12 able to coexist fine. Homeownership should be
13 within the reach of the low income so that they
14 too can be have a piece of the American dream.
15 We want this bill removed for legislation. We
16 have the right to be informed, given proof of
17 the reasons why we may benefit from change, have
18 community input and not be forced to accept
19 change that we have no say so or input. That is
20 not a democracy.

21 Also, I have a vacant lot at 135 West
22 Susquehanna Avenue. And in the future, would
23 like to develop it into an apartment building
24 with this zoning -- will this zoning hurt that

1 for me and my family as we get older and may
2 need that extra income to supplement our lives.
3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you, ma'am.
5 Any questions or comments? Seeing none, that
6 conclude's the Public Hearing of the Rules
7 Committee. And momentarily, we will go into the
8 Public Meeting. Thank you.

9 (Momentary recess.)

10 I'm sorry. While we are waiting for a
11 quorum on the Public Meeting, I am just going go
12 back into the Public Hearing for a minute. I
13 neglected -- Councilwoman Sanchez wanted to add
14 one other thing.

15 Councilwoman.

16 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I wanted to thank
17 the Rules Committee and thank all of my
18 neighbors who came to the May 22 meeting. Many
19 whom at that point expressed some discontent and
20 many people who, unfortunately, did not get an
21 opportunity to weigh in. Democracy in the
22 process does work. People got an opportunity to
23 at the Planning Commission Meeting to weigh in.
24 They are here today exercising their democracy.

1 And on May 22 I will have another Community
2 Meeting to clarify what this zoning change means
3 to folks in the community. I completely agree
4 with them that we want folks to have clarity and
5 information. And I'm hopeful that at the May 22
6 meeting, unlike the previous meeting that I had,
7 that both the Planning Commission and myself
8 have an opportunity to share the data and the
9 request that have been asked here: Data around
10 the large number of conversions, which some of
11 the folks has testified can attest to; data
12 around what are the City's best practices as it
13 relates to the zoning; data around from the
14 experts that talk about how the zoning change
15 protects neighborhoods.

16 All of those things will be again said and
17 clarified. In the mailings that folks have
18 received, my neighbors have received both in
19 English and in Spanish, I have tried to in a
20 very succinct way by the Planning Commission
21 clarify the questions that folks have had. And
22 will continue to do so as many times as I
23 possibly can. We will continue to work with the
24 Planning Commission on those nonconforming uses

1 that exist before our final vote. We will
2 continue to work with my neighbors who come to
3 me, who want to come to legal compliance. And
4 we will continue to help and facilitate any
5 future conversions.

6 What I intend to do with this remapping
7 today is ensure what everybody here wants, an
8 opportunity to weigh in. An opportunity to
9 weigh in about what happens in their home and
10 what happens in their neighborhood. So, I think
11 in that regard, none of what was said today is
12 in conflict with what residents want both -- on
13 both sides of this particular issue.

14 I think it's -- it would be important and
15 we will try to do that at the meeting to clarify
16 around individuals getting variances, about
17 clarifying when lawyers are necessary, which in
18 most cases are not necessary, and any
19 architectural and L&I questions that we have.
20 One of the things around timing with this is
21 that in August as been stated by the Planning
22 Commission, there will be more liberal nuisances
23 under this designation. So, the timing issue is
24 not one of my making but one of the reality of

1 our zoning commission and what has to happen.

2 And I also want to clarify a very
3 important, for the record, that I do support
4 Norris Square Civic Association. That is why
5 this City paid \$500,000 for the demolition of
6 the church. That is why through my role in the
7 Housing Trust Fund we allocated \$1.5 million for
8 their project. That is why my office continues
9 to assemble properties so that they can use this
10 NSP money to provide homeownership opportunities
11 and the list goes on. And I will continue to
12 work with them as the Neighborhood Civic
13 Association and developer as I worked with
14 anybody in Norris Square Project, which we have
15 now completed a full land assembly for them for
16 green space to protect our other work that is
17 being done by the Norris Square Community
18 project.

19 I will continue, not just as a neighbor,
20 but as the elected official to do what I have to
21 do to represent the constituents. People are
22 entitled to their opinions, but they are not
23 entitled to the facts. And I think the facts
24 will speak for themselves in this. I will

1 continue to have community discussion. As we
2 weigh in on the AVI discussion, this is one of
3 those neighborhoods that we want to protect.
4 And my colleagues here know that every day for
5 the last few months, we have talked about AVI.
6 We have talked about homestead protection. We
7 have talked about gentrifying neighborhoods like
8 Norris Square and protecting these folks. So,
9 while we may not agree today, I can and the
10 facts will always bear out that I have worked in
11 the best interest of Norris Square like I have
12 done with the rest of my district where we have
13 done remapping, rezoning and sometimes spot
14 zoning so that we can get certain developments
15 in.

16 We have to use the legislative process. I
17 think it works. And sometimes we don't get the
18 ends that we want. But again, we will have
19 another Community Meeting. So I invite folks to
20 come to May 22. I want to thank the folks for
21 not being disruptive here.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So do I.

23 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: And ask them not to
24 be disruptive there. And I truly appreciate and

1 I ask that my colleagues who have this
2 experience on these issues to support my bill
3 and move it out of the Committee with a
4 suspension of the rules.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's conclude's the
7 Public Hearing.

8 We will now go into the Public Meeting.

9 And the Chair recognizes Councilman Goode.

10 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
11 move that Bill No. 120214 be reported out of
12 Committee with favorable recommendation. And
13 Rules of Council be suspended so as to permit
14 first reading at our next Council session.

15 (Second.)

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It's been moved and
17 seconded. All in favor, please say ayes.

18 (Ayes.)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Those opposed?
20 Hearing none, Bill No. 120214 has been reported
21 out of this Committee with a favorable
22 recommendation. And the Rules of Council
23 suspended to allow for first reading at our next
24 session of Council.

1 Being no further business before this
2 Committee, that concludes the meeting for today.
3 Thank you all for very much.

4 (Committee On Rules ended at 12:02 p.m.)

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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, Notary Public

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