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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

PUBLIC HEARING

4

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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Room 401, City Hal
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, June 16, 1998
1:10 p.m.

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RESOLUTION 980215 - Resolution authorizing the
Committee on Public Safety to investigate and
conduct hearings examining recent security breaches
within the Philadelphia Prison System, (PPS) and
further calling on the Committee to issue
recommendations as to how the Prison's Security
System can be improved to ensure the safety of
Philadelphia's citizens.

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16 PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN ANGEL ORTIZ, Chairman
COUNCILWOMAN JOAN L. KRAJEWSKI, Vice Chair
COUNCILMAN FRANK DI CICCIO
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

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2 THE CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. This is
3 a hearing of the City Council Committee on Public
4 Safety, Michael Nutter being present, Frank DiCicco
5 being present, and Councilwoman Joan Krajewski on my
6 left being present, we have a quorum of the
7 Committee and we will have a hearing on resolution
8 980215, the resolution authorizing the Committee on
9 Public Safety to investigation and conduct hearings
10 examining recent security breaches within the
11 Philadelphia Prison System and further calling on
12 the Committee to issue recommendations as to how the
13 Prison's Security System can be improved to ensure
14 the safety of Philadelphia's citizens.

15 We have a group of citizens plus the
16 current commissioner of prison Mr. Thomas J.
17 Costello. Is he here?

18 Mr. Costello, will you please come
19 please? Mr. Costello, will you identify yourself
20 for the record and the individuals that are at the
21 table with you?

22 MR. THOMAS COSTELLO: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman. My my name is Thomas J. Costello, the
24 Commissioner of Prisons in Philadelphia. To my
25 left, your right, is Deputy Commissioner John Dawn,

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2 Deputy Commissioner for Administration. To my
3 right, your left, is Deputy Commissioner Press
4 Grooms, Deputy Commissioner for Operations. And
5 John Estech, Deputy Chief of Staff.

6 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner, you're
7 going to read this, or you're going to give us a
8 summary and your testimony will be put into the
9 record?

10 MR. COSTELLO: Mr. Chairman, I would
11 like to read excerpts from the testimony I think for
12 the record, and then you can stop me if there's any
13 -- at any time to summarize the area that I'm trying
14 to concentrate on.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: Like I said, it's quite
16 extensive, but if you summarize and put forward the
17 salient points that you want to make and then we
18 will include the complete testimony for the record.

19 MR. COSTELLO: All right, Mr. Chairman,
20 thank you.

21 The Philadelphia Prison System is a
22 county correctional program. We hold inmates for
23 trial, particularly those who cannot make bail.

24 THE CHAIRMAN: By the way, President
25 Street is not the Chairman of the Committee.

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2 MR. COSTELLO: Yes, sir, I understand
3 that.

4 We hold inmates for trial, particularly
5 those who cannot make bail. And we hold inmates for
6 trial particularly -- and we hold inmates who are
7 serving a county sentence which is a sentence of
8 less than two years.

9 During calendar year 1997, the
10 Philadelphia Prison System received over 25,000 new
11 inmates and maintained an average population of
12 about 5700 on a daily basis. Approximately 4,000 of
13 those 5700 inmates are being held in a pretrial
14 status. Those pretrial inmates are with us for an
15 average of 57 days. Sentenced inmates are held for
16 an average of 215 days.

17 The Philadelphia Prison System is larger
18 than prison systems in 17 states and offer services
19 and programs comparable to many state systems.
20 There is a continual influx of new inmates, and on a
21 daily basis an average of almost 70 new admissions
22 and discharges. In addition, the prison system
23 transport approximately 275 inmates to and from
24 various facilities.

25 Most of these inmates will return to our

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2 communities while they're in our custody. Part of
3 our mission is to give them appropriate opportunity
4 to change. We do this by providing or facilitating
5 educational programs, drug treatment programs,
6 religious programs, vocational programs, work
7 opportunities --

8 THE CHAIRMAN: Commissioner, if I may.
9 The hearing is about the security breaches. We
10 understand about the population and what you have.
11 What we would like you, and I know the community
12 residents who are here is that they're concern about
13 the recent security breaches that have happened in
14 the prison. And what I would like you to address
15 yourselves to is, one, why did they occur, how many
16 have occurred in the last year or two years, and if
17 they were because of personnel, lack of personnel,
18 lack of whatever it is that you have been able to
19 ascertain as to the reasons, what have you done in
20 order to begin securing and making sure that those
21 things don't happen again?

22 MR. COSTELLO: All right, Mr. Chairman.
23 I would like to skip then to the escapes portion of
24 the testimony which goes into detail. Although, I
25 think it's very important to City Council and

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2 Members of this Committee and for the community to
3 understand our program as described in the first
4 several pages.

5 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I do believe
6 that they understand what the program is,
7 Commissioner. As you are well aware that we have
8 met with Infield Holmesburg several times. As the
9 Councilman stated, we're more concerned about the
10 security of Holmesburg -- Curran Fromhold and what
11 has transpired since the last time that we had met
12 at the meeting with Infield Holmesburg's meeting.

13 Have you been in communication with the
14 civic associations?

15 MR. COSTELLO: Yes, I have.

16 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Do you want to
17 give us a general breakdown?

18 MR. COSTELLO: I'd like to actually read
19 from the last two pages which summarizes, not only
20 the events that occurred, but also what we've done
21 to address them.

22 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I have it.

23 MR. COSTELLO: Under escapes, I believe
24 our staff does an excellent job both in keeping
25 inmates locked in and helping people to achieve some

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2 measure of personal change and growth. When an
3 inmate escapes, whether or not he is a close custody
4 inmate or a trustee walking off prison grounds, we
5 will almost always point to staff negligence or
6 dereliction as a contributing factor. Make no
7 mistake about it, inmates will take advantage of
8 staff negligence or a lapse in carrying out proper
9 procedures, but escapes are always actions initiated
10 by inmates, carried out by inmates sometimes with
11 great planning.

12 Over the past 18 months from December
13 1st, 1996 through May 29, 1998, 12 inmates escaped
14 or walked away from facilities located in the
15 Philadelphia Prison System campus. Nine of the
16 twelve inmates were classified as low minimum --

17 THE CHAIRMAN: Did you say escape or
18 walked away?

19 MR. COSTELLO: That's correct.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: Could you explain that
21 phrase to me, walked away? How can a prisoner walk
22 away from a prison?

23 MR. COSTELLO: As described in the --

24 THE CHAIRMAN: He just walks out the
25 front door, goes to the bus stop and takes a bus?

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2 MR. COSTELLO: Some inmates are
3 classified as community or low minimum custody.
4 They are under supervision, but they are not in the
5 secure environment, either at a work or vocational
6 or educational program. They do not have the
7 barriers that, say, maximum, close, medium or even a
8 high minimum custody inmate would have as described
9 in the first several pages of my testimony. So
10 there is a difference between someone walking away
11 and someone escaping and breaching a perimeter.
12 That's basically the rule of thumb.

13 THE CHAIRMAN: So is the person who
14 walks away out of the prison already?

15 MR. COSTELLO: That's correct. They are
16 outside of the secure perimeter and they are under
17 supervision. Probably if someone's outside cutting
18 the grass, if there's a crew of 12 inmates who are
19 classified either as community or low minimum
20 custody and they're outside doing chores, the
21 correctional officer can't keep someone from
22 escaping and supervising this particular group.

23 THE CHAIRMAN: When you say they are
24 outside in a secured perimeter, how do you define
25 that aspect? What is a secure perimeter?

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2 MR. COSTELLO: Secure perimeter is a
3 fence or a wall which -- or the perimeter is
4 normally boundried by a fence or a wall which allows
5 entering and exiting with the supervision of a
6 correctional officer or surveillance equipment.

7 In the case of trustees, we call these
8 individuals trustees because they have a
9 trustee-type position. They are already on the
10 outside of the perimeter. So there's nothing
11 keeping them from running away. We use the term,
12 quote unquote, walk away. But in fact, when someone
13 wants to escape and they're a trustee, they
14 technically run away.

15 THE CHAIRMAN: How many of the 12 were
16 trustees?

17 MR. COSTELLO: There was a total of nine
18 that were -- nine of the twelve were classified as
19 low minimum or community custody.

20 THE CHAIRMAN: They were trustees?

21 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

22 THE CHAIRMAN: Then we have to get a
23 definition of the word. I don't think they're very
24 trustworthy. If nine of twelve trustees escape, I
25 don't think --

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2 MR. COSTELLO: It's a prison term.

3 THE CHAIRMAN: I know it's a prison
4 term. I'm just trying to clarify the record so we
5 can have a distinction between walk away and escape
6 and people understand the different phrases.

7 MR. COSTELLO: That's why I wanted to
8 read the first several pages which describe exactly
9 what criteria is used in classifying an inmate to
10 that particular status within the system.

11 But the facts are that nine of these
12 were trustees. Two inmates escaped from a prison
13 bus were close custody, and an inmate who escaped
14 from the House of Correction gym was classified as a
15 medium custody inmate.

16 The medium custody inmate was Thomas
17 McGee, a medium custody inmate. John Seltzer and
18 Armondo Lopez, both minimum custody inmates have not
19 been apprehended. In other words, there are still
20 three that are still open absconders, they have not
21 been apprehend had yet.

22 To give you an idea of the number of
23 trustees that we have working outside on the grounds
24 and attending various programs, there are 142
25 outside worker positions and an additional 76

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2 inmates that work as maintenance assistants outside
3 of the perimeter. There is 108 other inmates
4 working in industry, training, and other PHILACOR
5 programs that take them out of the secure perimeter
6 of their facilities. Every day these inmates leave
7 the secure perimeter or their facilities to work at
8 a variety of location throughout the entire
9 northeast prison campus. These inmates do perform a
10 number of functions for the system including ground
11 maintenance, janitorial services, trash removal and
12 other general maintenance functions. Only inmates
13 classified as low minimum or community custody are
14 permitted to participate in the programs. Their
15 record is reviewed by the Inmate Placement Committee
16 prior to assignment to an outside program.

17 In accordance with J v H, our consent
18 decree overseeing the prison operations, we have to
19 maintain 1200 workers and 800 vocational training
20 slots. That is mandated by the courts. And I think
21 that's an important aspect of our operation to
22 understand. If they were not permitted to
23 participate in work, industry training, or
24 vocational training programs, we would fall to about
25 142 work positions and 283 vocational training

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2 positions short of the mandated requirements of the
3 Jackson Court.

4 Preventing escape is an overall system
5 function. It must be addressed at a system level as
6 part of our overall comprehensive program of
7 security, facility, and procedural upgrades. I am
8 aware of the concerns that have been expressed by
9 our neighbors in Northeast Philadelphia, as well as
10 concerns of City Council.

11 To this end, I have personally met with
12 our neighbors and our elected officials on numerous
13 occasions. We have established and will maintain
14 and operate a community alarm system and a
15 information system they can call when the alarm is
16 sounded.

17 THE CHAIRMAN: But you still haven't
18 answered my question. They escaped. You have
19 explained to me what the programs are. We know the
20 programs and we know we have a to maintain training
21 and other vocational aspects in terms of the prison
22 and what we need to keep them occupied and for us to
23 be able to comply with Jackson Hendrick.

24 What steps have you taken at the present
25 time to be able to assuage the fears of the

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2 community that these escapes are not going to
3 continue?

4 MR. COSTELLO: Well, every one -

5 THE CHAIRMAN: How have you secured the
6 perimeter? What is the difference between what you
7 were doing when the escapes occurred and what you
8 are doing now? What are these things that are
9 happening? What are the procedures that you have
10 put into place?

11 MR. COSTELLO: Deputy Commissioner
12 Grooms will address that.

13 MR. PRESS GROOMS: My name is Press
14 Grooms, Deputy Commissioner of Operations.
15 Certainly, our position is to try to maintain a
16 secure environment at all times. And in view of
17 what has happened in the recent months, what we have
18 done is we have looked at our entire security
19 program. And to address the particular issue about
20 inmates escaping from the prison system in terms of
21 transfers, these two inmates that escaped several
22 months ago, what we have done now is we have
23 established a transportation procedure wherein no
24 inmates will be transferred during the hours of
25 darkness.

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2 THE CHAIRMAN: What is that? I mean,
3 you have established a transportation procedure;
4 fair. What is that transportation procedure that
5 you have established? The transportation is this,
6 bam, bam, bam.

7 MR. GROOMS: That's what I'm getting to.
8 First of all, we identify the inmates that are going
9 to be transferred the day of the transfer the day
10 before. So that when they come on duty at 7 o'clock
11 in the morning, we know that morning who's going to
12 be transferred. The transfer lists are established,
13 the inmates are identified, and they are in
14 receiving room by 9 o'clock that morning.

15 We are searching all the inmates before
16 they leave the institution. We have a supervisor
17 that's in charge of making sure that they are
18 searched. The inmates are then shackled and placed
19 on the bus. There's the driver for the bus, there's
20 a security officer on the bus, and there's a vehicle
21 that follows the bus to the institution they're
22 being transferred to.

23 As I said, all these transfers have to
24 take place by 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Previous
25 to that, we were sending out transfers late in the

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2 evening, 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening. So that's
3 one thing that we have done.

4 The second thing that we have done is
5 the officers that are doing the transfers have been
6 retrained on how to search to make sure that the
7 equipment that the inmates are being secured in is
8 working properly and that they know how to work the
9 equipment.

10 We are just continuing to upgrade and
11 monitor, and we have supervisors at the middle
12 management level to check to make sure these things
13 happen on a regular basis.

14 THE CHAIRMAN: Councilman Rizzo, you
15 have a question?

16 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Commissioner, could
17 you describe for me the types of crimes that the
18 trusted inmates are in your facility for? Because
19 as far as I'm concerned, if I live in that community
20 anybody in that place is a bad guy.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So medium, close,
23 supervised, trusted, could you describe for me
24 crimes that those trusted inmates have committed?

25 MR. COSTELLO: Councilman Rizzo, let me

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2 describe what is the criteria for putting or placing
3 somebody in that particular status. Community level
4 inmates have a history of community stability, no
5 institutional misconduct, qualify for community
6 program by virtue of time served, constructive
7 behavior in acquired skills and job readiness. They
8 will not be supervised by prison staff during their
9 programming day, but during the evenings they will
10 be managed as if they were minimum custody.

11 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Commissioner, I'm not
12 concerned about their behavior once they got there,
13 I want to know what got them there.

14 (Applause.)

15 MR. COSTELLO: Normally, they are
16 non-personal crimes, they are crimes against
17 property. They are not a threat to the safety and
18 security of others. That's the type of crime that
19 they're charged with.

20 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: How does a person --
21 what is the criteria -- would you describe the
22 criteria of how an inmate that has bashed the
23 windows in on my car comes to your facility and now
24 is a trusted inmate? How did that occur? How did
25 he become a trusted inmate?

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2 MR. COSTELLO: An inmate basically would
3 be charged with -- is it burglary, was it auto
4 theft, vandalism, crimes to that nature. There's
5 other factors involved concerning their personal
6 history and any other criminal history that they've
7 had. They're also evaluated for stability as
8 whether or not they can be relied on to do anything
9 for any period of time outside in the community, and
10 that applies to their history within, that applies
11 to their capability of performing certain jobs
12 within the prison system. Normally, they're there,
13 they're incarcerated for a certain period of time,
14 they're evaluated by Social Service, by a
15 psychologists if necessary, and they go before a
16 placement committee who determines whether or not
17 they would be a threat to anyone outside working
18 outside in the case they were to abscond.

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So there's a lot of
20 judgment by a lot of people that puts a person in
21 this trusted category that has the ability to
22 basically to walk out of the facility?

23 MR. COSTELLO: Yes, sir. They could
24 walk, they're outside of the secure perimeter,
25 whether it's inside a lobby or outside on the

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2 grounds.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So they're some bad
4 people -- obviously they're there because they're
5 some bad people, that immediately -- and you didn't
6 tell me how long that process takes. That they've
7 committed a serious crime, in my opinion, and all of
8 a sudden they get to your facility they're nice
9 guys, they're trusted. How long does it take for a
10 person to get to the point where they're evaluated?

11 MR. COSTELLO: They're evaluated upon
12 admission. Within three weeks, they would be
13 eligible for a job. When they apply for the job,
14 that's when they would be considered whether or not
15 to take that job.

16 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Three weeks?

17 MR. COSTELLO: Three weeks to determine,
18 to make the determination. That doesn't mean that
19 they're going to get a trustee job.

20 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You also in your
21 remarks indicate that most cases it's staff
22 negligence that is responsible for these breaches of
23 security or dereliction of someone's duty. Are you
24 referring from the top down?

25 (Applause.)

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2 MR. COSTELLO: I'm referring to the line
3 staff. It's the responsibility of the
4 administration set the policies and procedures.
5 It's up to the line staff to follow those
6 procedures.

7 Let's take, for example, the
8 transportation unit escape. If you want to look at
9 the track record, Councilman, the transportation
10 unit has been transporting approximately 100,000
11 inmates a year over the last several years; as long
12 as I've been in the system, well over two million
13 inmates, and they've had one escape.

14 The policies and procedures concerning
15 the transporting of those two inmates were in tack,
16 but they were not followed to the T, so the staff
17 was negligent. Their negligence as far as not
18 following the policy and procedures were the direct
19 cause for that escape.

20 It's up to the administration to ensure
21 that the policies and procedures are there.

22 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I have two final
23 things. The policies, the physical plant of your
24 institution, we're talking about staff negligence,
25 dereliction of duty. The facility itself, are there

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2 weaknesses that you don't like about it that you
3 would like to change to make it a more secure
4 facility that you're not able to get accomplished
5 because of budgetary problems? Are there weakness
6 at all in your facility that you need fixed?

7 MR. COSTELLO: There are no weakness in
8 our facilities at this time. The entire security
9 system for this department has been under scrutiny
10 for a number of years by not only myself, but
11 several other administrators within our department
12 and with the consultation of outside consultants,
13 experts in corrections who have evaluated our entire
14 prison system. All of the secured perimeters within
15 our system are adequate and meet our needs.

16 However, again, I must emphasize the
17 fact that having a secure perimeter and having
18 policies and procedures does not eliminate the fact
19 that people are going to be negligent from time to
20 time. They need to follow those procedures. If
21 they do it 364 days a year and did not do it that
22 one day a year, that's not acceptable. But if that
23 happens, we have to take the proper action against
24 those individuals and exam all the aspects, for
25 example, with the transportation unit, the escape

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2 from the bus. We examine all those aspects from top
3 to bottom. And had nothing to do with an outside
4 perimeter; had to do with a secure bus and how we
5 transport prisoners.

6 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: But there is a
7 problem. You feel it's part of the management
8 supervision, proper supervision or what?

9 MR. COSTELLO: In every one of these
10 cases, Councilwoman, in every single one of them, it
11 was evaluated whether or not there was some
12 negligence, and none of the negligence from these
13 cases stem from supervision or management. It stems
14 from line officers.

15 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: It happened,
16 Commissioner. It happened.

17 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Can we see that
19 in the future?

20 MR. COSTELLO: You're going to see --

21 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: When someone
22 takes a walk, the residents don't know whether
23 they're a trustee, whether they're this or whether
24 they're that.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: All they know
3 is that they're free to roam the neighborhood,
4 that's all they know. And I think the people from
5 Holmesburg Infield have been more than patient.
6 I've been in Council 19 years. I lived in
7 Holmesburg 30 some years. And I know what the
8 programs, and I think they've been more than
9 patient. I don't have the answers. You're the one
10 has to have the answers. I feel there must be --
11 evidently there's a problem with management within
12 the prisons. There has to be.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Commissioner, my
15 final point is that I do know a lot of police
16 officers, police officers that work in the district
17 that cover your facility. They are amazed, they
18 scratch their heads sometimes when you're having a
19 problem at the facility.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I mean, they're
22 absolutely amazed that you're having a problem at
23 the facility or there's an escape and they're parked
24 outside the facility and don't know what's going on.

25 (Applause.)

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Do you have a policy?

3 Do you call 911? I mean, it amazes me. A police
4 officers told me a bad guy walked by the police car
5 and no one on the street had a clue that something
6 was going on for hours inside the facility.

7 (Applause.)

8 MR. COSTELLO: Anytime there's an
9 escape, Councilman, we notify the police
10 immediately. We notify the police department
11 immediately. The first call is made to our
12 transportation unit who are on the grounds
13 transporting and patrolling inmates. The second
14 call is made to the police department, and they have
15 to dispatch that as quickly as possible. In any
16 type of an escape situation, that's what occurs.
17 And those procedures are in place. If somebody
18 drops the ball as far as not responding or not
19 carrying out that communication, I can't account for
20 -- once the call is made to the department, I don't
21 know who is responsible for getting that word out to
22 the district cars, but we make that call as quickly
23 as possible.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Is that a matter of
25 record? Is that a logged call?

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2 MR. COSTELLO: That is a logged call.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So you could produce
4 a document that shows that after an incident is
5 reported, a report of an escape or someone walking
6 away, that that occurs at 10 o'clock, that once it's
7 determined that persons's not accounted for, that at
8 10:15 there's a call to 911?

9 Well, you know what I would suggest,
10 Commissioner, knowing a little bit about the police
11 department, rather than just hoping that they get
12 the information that maybe we ought to be sure that
13 that's a Priority One job.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Number 2,
16 automatically a supervisor from the police
17 department, the lieutenant, sergeant on the street
18 should come right to the facility to start
19 coordinating activities with your people.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I mean, just to hope
22 that the police got the message, let me tell you,
23 Commissioner, that's sad.

24 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Why was the
25 decision made to go into silence mode of testing the

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2 alarm system?

3 MR. COSTELLO: The decision was made
4 after a meeting with Infield Association and because
5 there was a Catholic school nearby who were bringing
6 their children in every time there was a test of the
7 alarm system, it was alerting them unnecessarily.
8 We had not planned to do audible tests forever. We
9 had planned to do it the first year or the first six
10 months to make sure that it worked. That's why
11 we're doing a silent test.

12 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, we'll
13 hear from Infield Civic Association and also
14 Holmesburg to answer that as well.

15 Councilman DiCicco.

16 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Thank you.
17 Commissioner, you answered one of my questions, the
18 volume of people that are transported, about 100,000
19 a year you said, right?

20 MR. COSTELLO: Yes, sir.

21 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Do we have the
22 times the most recent escapes occurred? Was that in
23 the daytime or in the evening?

24 MR. COSTELLO: That was on the 3 to 11
25 shift. The transportation escape, it was on the 3

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2 to 11 on both, the transportation and escape in the
3 House of Correction gym.

4 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: So 3 to 11. So
5 what the deputy pointed out as to the new policy
6 would prevent -- I mean, those weren't happening
7 during the day, that's what I'm getting at. So the
8 corrective measures you're taking about should
9 eliminate some of those problems.

10 MR. COSTELLO: It should eliminate the
11 problem, and including one other thing, we have an
12 escort vehicle with all transport bus transports.
13 That escape with two prisoners was from a bus, from
14 a transportation bus which is now also escorted in
15 addition to doing the transports during the daylight
16 hours. We feel it's a safer mode to do that and
17 that's our goal to transport only during the day.

18 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: So it should
19 tighten things up considerably?

20 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

21 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: One of the
22 questions that my colleague asked about the calling
23 of the police department when an escape occurs, you
24 looked like you were about to go a little further
25 with that; were you? Did you have any other further

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2 response to that? Is it just a 911 call, or is
3 there a direct --

4 MR. COSTELLO: It's a direct call and a
5 911. It's faster. The procedures, and correct me
6 if I'm wrong, but I think the procedures are using
7 911 and calling the district directly, Northeast
8 District.

9 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: So they kind of
10 happen almost simultaneously?

11 MR. COSTELLO: Right. What I was going
12 to say is that it's a standard procedure to do that.
13 It's not something that is done ad hoc. It is
14 standard policy and procedure to notify the police
15 as soon as there's a escape or major disturbance.

16 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, what
17 about a hotline? I'm sorry.

18 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Councilwoman
19 Krajewski was about to ask a similar question. Does
20 it go to the captain's office? Does it go to
21 whomever.

22 MR. COSTELLO: No, there is not a direct
23 line.

24 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: But direct to the
25 District?

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2 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

3 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Thank you. I have
4 no further questions.

5 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, I believe
6 the community did ask for a hotline. Are you doing
7 to rectify that?

8 MR. COSTELLO: For a hot line to? To
9 the 8th District?

10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: To the 8th
11 District to the 15th District.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. COSTELLO: We have not installed
14 anything like that, but we can certainly look at
15 that. If that's going to improve -- we have not
16 taken an action.

17 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Because the
18 police are the ones who took the brunt of that, with
19 the escapee.

20 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: If I may, I see
21 the Deputy Manager Director Joe Martz shaking his
22 head yes, maybe it's a good time for you to come
23 forward.

24 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, actually,
25 I think that the Commissioner should have had that

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2 answer.

3 MR. JOE MARTZ: Councilwoman, I hadn't
4 had that request, but I will tell you that we will
5 put hot lines in. You have my word on it. I didn't
6 realize, but it's something that we can obviously
7 do.

8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: You know, the
9 community has been promised so much, and I can
10 attest to it. They had requested it, and as I said
11 earlier, they've been very patient. Nothing's
12 happening.

13 MR. MARTZ: Councilwoman, I didn't know
14 of that particular request.

15 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: They had
16 requested that hotline. I'm sure that when the two
17 civic associations --

18 MR. MARTZ: I appreciate that. I'm just
19 saying that I just heard it for the first time and I
20 was nodding because I know that we're capable of
21 doing it, that's all.

22 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: It was the 8th,
23 the 2nd, the 15th, as I stated that the police took
24 a lot of that when it was a federal problem. They
25 didn't know anything about it.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Commissioner, could
3 you describe for me the sequence of events and what
4 I understand sometime is extreme caution in alerting
5 911 of an escape. How much time do you take to
6 analyze, investigate, before, even if the person
7 lost within the institution, how do you determine
8 whether or not you have a person outside the wall,
9 outside the institution? Tell me how much time that
10 takes your staff to start reacting, once you
11 determine, once you have a feeling that there's
12 something wrong?

13 MR. COSTELLO: If there is an observable
14 escape, obviously things flow immediately. Actions
15 are taken immediately. And again, the first call if
16 it's an escape, if it's the breach of perimeter the
17 first call goes to the transportation unit because
18 they are on site and they can investigate
19 immediately. The second call would go to the police
20 department, and the third call would go to the other
21 institutions for assistance. It takes a matter of
22 seconds or less than a minute probably to get at
23 least two of the first calls out.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: That's not what I'm
25 talking about. Forgive me for not knowing the exact

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2 language. You have a head count?

3 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: You come up with two
5 short.

6 MR. COSTELLO: If we come up with two
7 short --

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Now, that's what I
9 want to know, how long after you come up with two
10 short, do you hunt through the prison an hour, an
11 hour and a half, two hours before you do something.

12 MR. COSTELLO: Number 1, it is not
13 unusual to have a miscount on a head count the first
14 time around. Unless there is something observed or
15 something, some evidence of escape or something
16 visible, the procedure is to do a re-count on the
17 head count. If it is still not accurate then they
18 do an arm band count. Everyone returns to their
19 areas and all the arm bands are checked. This takes
20 probably an hour to do. So again, unless there's
21 evidence that there's been a breach of the perimeter
22 or an observable escape, we're not going to be able
23 to get the jump on it, on somebody who manages to
24 get away, which is unusual but occurs occasionally
25 once in a great while.

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2 If it's an observable escape, that's a
3 different story altogether. Or somebody comes
4 across a breach of the perimeter, then automatically
5 we would go into an arm band count. After we
6 ascertained that everyone's there. But if you look
7 at our facilities and you look at the numbers
8 involved, the number of inmates that have to be
9 checked, it takes several minutes to get everyone
10 back into the areas, in their housing areas and then
11 several minutes to check their arm bands and then
12 find out who is missing. I mean, that's the nature
13 of the operations of large facilities.

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: What's the arm band?
15 Would you explain that?

16 MR. COSTELLO: Each inmate has an arm
17 band with their photo on it and information about
18 that individual. And that's what's checked as far
19 as identification to make sure that is the person.

20 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Commissioner, talking
21 about -- I asked you about your plant, your
22 facility. Are there any electronics. We monitor
23 prisoners that are in house arrests, and I know
24 that's not a flawless process. Is there any
25 technology that could be utilized that your

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2 operation center could keep track of prisoners
3 electronically while they're under your custody? Is
4 there anything out there that could make this
5 process -- because it concerns me that if you have a
6 head count that's too short that you have to take an
7 hour just to verify whether you have somebody
8 walking away -- and I've heard, with no disrespect,
9 that sometimes it takes longer than that before
10 you're even aware of the situation that you're
11 dealing with. Tell me about technology, and if it's
12 available, have you asked for it?

13 MR. COSTELLO: Well, there is technology
14 available, but there isn't any really reliable
15 technology. The problem with trying to track
16 prisoners is that there are many ways to get around
17 the technology and to get around the software and to
18 abscond by, again, basically flaws in the
19 technology. If there's any kind of weaknesses in
20 whatever technologies I've seen, they will be
21 capitalized upon. For example, and we've seen it on
22 TV and on a number of programs and it works great on
23 TV, but in the real world applying that type of
24 technology has a lot of flaws because it can be
25 violated very easily and it's more problematic to

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2 try to maintain it than it is to utilize it.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Commissioner, could
4 you provide to the Chair -- this is an area I'm
5 interested in. Could you identify institutions
6 throughout the United States that use some type of
7 internal tracking of prisoners. And you mentioned
8 that it's not full proof, but I'd be curious to know
9 and I'd be willing to work with Mr. Communication
10 back ther, Joe Martz, to see if there's technology
11 that's working someplace. Because if you're keeping
12 track of the people inside the institution and you
13 know there's a compromise of your facility, I think
14 that would make the community feel a lot better
15 knowing that they wouldn't have to wait two hours to
16 be aware that someone's gotten out the gate. So I'm
17 sure your inner circle of people that do what you do
18 you must know somebody throughout this big country
19 that's using a system that works. And I would
20 personally like to find out if something like that
21 would work here because, let me tell you, I'm a guy
22 that the earlier you know you've got a problem, the
23 better you can deal with it and the better the
24 community, I'm sure, would feel if this mix of
25 technology and professional correctional officers

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2 would work well. So could you do that?

3 MR. COSTELLO: I'll get that information
4 to you, Councilman.

5 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Get it to the
6 Chair.

7 One question I want to ask regarding the
8 trailers at the old cannery.

9 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: How many
11 trailers are there? I understand that -- I've heard
12 from neighbors that they see an increase in the
13 population of those trailers. And if so, how come I
14 was never notified or the community?

15 You know, I don't want it to become a
16 trailer park, and that's what it looks like now.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Torresdale
19 Avenue, believe me I can walk to Torresdale and
20 Rhawn, State Road and Rhawn. I believe we have had
21 it. And there's no reason to constantly putting
22 trailers in the old cannery, Commissioner. Now, if
23 that's the truth, I want to know why I was not told.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I don't know

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2 who it is, Public Property, whoever it may be that's
3 putting trailers in there and not notifying me. I
4 don't want to hear it from my constituents. I want
5 to know what's going on when it comes to those
6 trailers as well.

7 How many are there?

8 MR. COSTELLO: I believe there's six and
9 one bathroom trailer. I think there's seven
10 trailers all together.

11 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Seven?

12 MR. COSTELLO: Yes.

13 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: And give me the
14 time element they were put there, from when until
15 when?

16 MR. COSTELLO: I believe there was three
17 trailers that were added, three living trailers that
18 were added about a year ago. About a year ago last
19 summer, the end of last summer.

20 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I'm told there
21 are more. Are you saying there are only seven
22 trailers there? Seven to me is like 700.

23 MR. COSTELLO: There's always been four
24 in the front. They were built there ten years ago.
25 And then there's three more added in the back and a

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2 bathroom trailer.

3 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: When were they
4 added?

5 MR. COSTELLO: They were added last
6 August.

7 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: How come I
8 wasn't notified so I can notify the constituents?

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: You know,
11 Commissioner, I have been patient as well with you.
12 You know that. I try to work along with the
13 administration, but I had it up to here, too. It
14 just seems that we have a lack of communication what
15 goes on in Holmesburg and Infield. It's just a lack
16 of communication or it may be a lack of respect.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: And as I stated
19 I want to work with you, I work with the community.
20 They know how long I've been working with you and
21 commissioners long before you. Well, I don't want
22 to hear one more complaint because what is going to
23 happen, it's not just going to be little hearings
24 sitting here and listening to it, there's going to
25 be a lot of action taken if anything more is put

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2 into that neighborhood.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: First, I would
5 like to -- because it's getting late and they do
6 have a bus, I would MaryEllen Auman up and Jeanette
7 who are the civic leaders of Holmesburg and Infield
8 Civic Association.

9 One moment before you speak.

10 Commissioner, may I ask one question? Do you have
11 to go to L & I to get permits for these trailers?

12 MR. COSTELLO: I believe we did use
13 L & I for permits.

14 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Has it been
15 posted?

16 MR. COSTELLO: I'm not sure,
17 Councilwoman. I have to get back to you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, would you
19 get back to me, Commissioner, on that about how you
20 got the permits and what the procedure is in order
21 to put that those trailer there?

22 MR. COSTELLO: Yes, I will.

23 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.

24 Good afternoon.

25 MS. JEANETTE MALISZEWSKI: Good

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2 afternoon Joan, and others.
3 THE CHAIRMAN: Please state your name
4 for the record.
5 MS. MALISZEWSKI: My name is Jeanette
6 Maliszewski.
7 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: You better
8 spell that, Jeanette.
9 MS. MALISZEWSKI: M-a-l-i-s-z-e-w-s-k-i.
10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Go ahead
11 MaryEllen.
12 MS. AUMAN: My name is MaryEllen Auman,
13 A-u-m-a-n. I represent the Infield Civic
14 Association in Holmesburg. Go ahead.
15 MS. MALISZEWSKI: I'll go first because
16 MaryEllen is much more diligent with her paperwork
17 and I just have small testimony.
18 As I said, my name is Jeanette
19 Maliszewski. I am with the Holmesburg Civic
20 Association. I live 4227 Rhawn Street which is
21 directly up the street from the current Fromhold
22 Correctional Facility. I share my home with my
23 husband and our four children. They are why I am
24 here.
25 One morning in late fall of last year --

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2 or early fall of last year, I'm sorry, I was
3 standing on my front porch. I was talking to a
4 neighbor and we were both surprised to see several
5 corrections officers walking past our home. They
6 were obviously on a mission. And one of them had a
7 rifle on his shoulder. That was completely
8 unsettling to us. They were looking all around and
9 even stopped a SEPTA bus and searched it.

10 I made several phone calls to find out
11 what was taking place. There had been an escape. I
12 was not able to find this out officially for several
13 hours after the escape actually took place, even
14 though we have a community alert system in place.

15 This last paragraph is just one example
16 of the many stories that neighbors have to tell.
17 They are not nice stories, and after each incident,
18 we are given assurances of big improvements that
19 will take place.

20 Well, here we are again. We have once
21 again gathered as neighbors from the Holmesburg
22 community, we are again discussing our inability to
23 feel safe in our homes and streets because there is
24 something lacking in the management of the prison
25 system that is unfortunately located in our area.

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2 At least 150 people came together on an
3 evening in March and informed the prison
4 commissioner that they were displeased with events
5 that take place near their homes because prison
6 administration doesn't seem to be able to keep the
7 inmates in custody. That evening turned out to be
8 yet another evening of idle talk.

9 When will the talk be done and when will
10 we see someone in this city who actually cares to do
11 something besides talk to us? I have no more spare
12 time for talking, it's time for actions and changes.

13 (Applause.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you. Are
15 there any questions?

16 MaryEllen.

17 MS. AUMAN: Thank you Councilwoman
18 Krajewski. Before I begin my formal remarks which
19 are very brief in order to give our good neighbors
20 more time to tell Council what it feels like when
21 these breaches occur. It is my honor and privilege
22 to introduce to you -- do not place blame on
23 Commissioner Costello, this is not his remarks, he's
24 very well aware of what I'm about to say.

25 In the recent past a certain Deputy

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2 Mayor who is not here with us today, and we will
3 deal with him later, was very proud to say at a
4 prison ceremony to name call the good and decent
5 people in Holmesburg. It is my honor, it is my
6 privilege to introduce to everyone in this room the
7 wonderful neighbors from Infield Civic and
8 Holmesburg Civic who have traveled here today, who
9 are also known in the mind-set of a certain Deputy
10 Mayor, and Mayor Rendell has been very well advised,
11 as the street corner folks who are trying to run the
12 Philadelphia Prison System. Please acknowledge our
13 good neighbors.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. AUMAN: Thank you. Good faith, good
16 citizenship, and a rock solid belief in our right to
17 speak out when the public safety in our Holmesburg
18 neighborhood is compromised bring us back again
19 today before the Members of the Committee on Public
20 Safety.

21 We thank all of you for the attention
22 you continue to give to our concerns. We would like
23 to extend our appreciation to Mr. Bob Eskind who is
24 the Public Information Officer of the Philadelphia
25 Prison System who against great odds continues to

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2 give us his ongoing courtesy.

3 We are here today to deal specifically
4 with the breaches of security that occurred within
5 the approximate time frame between September 1997
6 and March 1998 at the various institutions within
7 the Philadelphia Prison System. We extend special
8 thanks to our good neighbors who have managed to
9 shift their responsibilities in order to give you a
10 firsthand account of what it is like when an escape
11 or walkaway occurs in our neighborhood.

12 The relationship between our community
13 and the Philadelphia Prison System seems to pivot
14 somewhere between chaos and understanding. Chaos
15 when an inmate breaches security, understanding when
16 a small break through in communication occurs, chaos
17 again when it is suggested to us we should not speak
18 so freely to the press.

19 In recent months the Infield membership
20 has been at the receiving end of some very poor
21 behavior from those who administer the daily
22 operation of the Philadelphia Prison System and from
23 several others who represent Mayor Rendell. The
24 pressure we have brought against the Philadelphia
25 Prison System seems to have created an atmosphere of

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2 denial that anything is wrong.

3 One example of this is the recent
4 unilateral decision to move into a silent mode of
5 testing the alarm system. Despite what the
6 Commissioner has just testified to, we cannot in
7 good conscience agree totally with what he just told
8 this Council. The Philadelphia Prison System never
9 sent letters to our schools in the area after many
10 requests by both organizations in order that the
11 principals would have good solid knowledge of what
12 was going on. Yes, that may have contributed to his
13 decision. However, our impression at the meeting,
14 the board meeting with Infield, was that the alarm
15 had created so much confusion in our neighborhood it
16 would be a more prudent way to go to utilize a
17 silent mode.

18 Neighbors here are justifiably upset
19 about this. Our question now becomes, how will we
20 know? Are we now reverting to a judgment call as to
21 when the audible alarm will be utilized? Will this
22 be satellite transmission from deep in space, some
23 sort of laser beam method, or will it simply be yet
24 another exercise in the standard smoke and mirror
25 system?

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2 Ladies and gentlemen, we live in
3 Holmesburg 24 hours a day. Our neighbors are fed up
4 at the protracted struggle we continue to endure
5 regarding safety issues. We have not asked for
6 much. The right to feel safe, the right to truthful
7 answers, the right to be treated decently.

8 If walkaways from the Philadelphia
9 Prison System are the norm, don't expend your
10 energies in covering it up. Tell us, that's all we
11 ask, then we will know what we are dealing with.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. AUMAN: If inmates are permitted
14 certain latitudes in our neighborhood, we have a
15 right to know. The Infield community has always
16 acknowledged the formidable responsibilities of
17 operating such a large correctional system. We have
18 never acted in a irresponsible manner regarding
19 prison issues.

20 Administrators boast proudly that they
21 are regarded as a model throughout the world, China
22 I believe is their most recent claim. I'm afraid we
23 have to reel you back in, gentlemen. This not
24 China, this is Holmesburg. You are most certainly
25 not considered a success in your own backyard.

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2 Prison administrators have traditionally
3 discounted the value of a solid, trustful working
4 relationship with our surrounding communities.
5 Unless and until a serious attitude adjustment
6 occurs in this regard, the Infield community in
7 particular holds out very little hope that positive
8 change can occur. We are tired of wasting our time.

9 Thank you. I would be very glad to
10 answer questions.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: MaryEllen, tell
13 me exactly what is the problem between the community
14 and the administration of the prison? What is it
15 they're not doing or giving any answers to? Are
16 they meeting with you? Are they promising you --

17 MS. AUMAN: Joan, we have for many years
18 many, many promises that have never been brought to
19 reality, and that's fine. We're still seeking an
20 answer to that question. It's a very difficult
21 question to answer. We're not asking for much. The
22 attitude that's been displayed recently and in the
23 past is one that the surrounding community truly
24 doesn't have the right to intrude into prison
25 activities.

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2 Now, we recently -- Infield had recently
3 requested a policy be written into the policy and
4 procedures in the Philadelphia Prison System, and I
5 do give Commissioner Costello a great applause in
6 doing that very, very swiftly. He did that, it is
7 now written in, and we do appreciate it and thank
8 him and have thanked him previously. Beyond that,
9 we feel we're continually seeking solutions. We're
10 so frustrated that at this level we are just so
11 appreciative to this legislative body, but we are so
12 frustrated and so intent in restoring peace that we
13 are considering kicking our concerns over to the
14 state level. We're at our wit's end. I cannot
15 answer that question.

16 MS. MALISZEWSKI: I can give you, if I
17 might.

18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Jeanette.

19 MS. MALISZEWSKI: A quick example is the
20 community alert system that we were working with the
21 prison administration on establishing has many kinks
22 yet to be worked out. We would respond, for
23 instance, we were asked to several different sounds
24 that they would like to use as far as alarms were
25 concerned and to give our opinions as to what one

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2 would be the best one to alert the community. I was
3 doing that for a period of time and then all of a
4 sudden that stopped. Most of my neighbors voted on
5 one that isn't even being used. It's a different
6 one that we did tell them is not consistently heard
7 every time it's sounded. Suddenly we now have
8 inaudible alarms when we weren't yet through working
9 out the kinks.

10 At the town meeting that we had there
11 were several people who suggested that maybe one
12 alarm right there on that building is not a good
13 idea because it's right up against the people's home
14 and that possibly two of them back along the prison
15 corridor would be a better idea. We've heard
16 nothing more. We've been told we will discuss that
17 at a later date. These are things we would like
18 work out with you. It's never happened.

19 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I want to hear
20 that answer now. Commissioner, would you please
21 come up?

22 COUNCILMAN DI CICCIO: Ma'am, when were
23 those requests made?

24 MS. MALISZEWSKI: At our town meeting in
25 March.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Yes,
3 Commissioner?

4 MR. COSTELLO: We are looking at the
5 alarm system as it is operating today trying to get
6 whatever capability as far as the audible sound, the
7 volume as much as possible. The problem is that
8 putting another alarm system is going to be somewhat
9 costly, but we'll look at that. We'll still look at
10 whether or not that would be feasible to put another
11 alarm somewhere else inside the community.

12 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Do you have a
13 meeting with MaryEllen and Jeanette occasionally
14 just to see how things are working out and what the
15 problems may be? Do you three meet?

16 MR. COSTELLO: We've met fairly
17 recently. I'm certainly available to meet with them
18 whenever they feel a meeting is necessary.

19 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Could I add to
20 that, with your permission? And I know Councilwoman
21 has been very active in what's going on up there.
22 But I think therein lies one of the bigger problems.
23 I keep hearing about this communication thing. Why
24 couldn't you structure it so there is a regular
25 monthly meeting or bi-monthly meeting, you all

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2 decide how frequently you think you need to meet and
3 be more proactive than reactive before these things
4 occur. I mean, I asked a question when the meeting
5 was in March and you're saying you're looking into
6 it, but maybe if you told them in April what you had
7 found as of April, it may not be everything that the
8 community wanted but at least they know something is
9 still going on. I think the impression is that they
10 ask, they hear no response, so they assume, "Well, I
11 guess we're forgotten."

12 And I hear you saying, Commissioner,
13 that they're not forgotten. So I think it's really
14 a question of communication. I've been through two
15 marriages so I know the problems with communication,
16 so I've learned that I have to communicate a little
17 bit better and I would pass that on to you. I don't
18 mean to make light of the situation. It's very
19 serious. I think if you would do a regular periodic
20 meeting -- I don't know what the civic associations
21 do. Do you meet regularly, do you meet monthly?
22 And maybe you could coordinate that with the civic
23 association. Have either yourself or a
24 representative from the prison attended the regular
25 community meetings so that someone is there even if

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2 there's nothing that concerns the community, but
3 they hear what's going on and maybe you can add
4 something to that. Really become part of the
5 community, because you're there. A lot of people
6 would like for you to go away, but it's not going to
7 happen. You're there and they're there and we want
8 to keep these people there. We don't want people to
9 move from that community. I think if you really
10 partnership with them and just be a part of this,
11 you are neighbors. Whether we like our neighbors or
12 not sometimes, you are our neighbors. And I think
13 that that may go a long way in at least addressing
14 some of these problems. You may not be able to get
15 all the solutions that we want or all the answers to
16 all the problems that we have, but at least we
17 understand the issues and maybe come up with some
18 solutions.

19 MR. COSTELLO: I'm certainly amenable to
20 meet with the community.

21 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Or if you can't
22 make their meetings, a representative who can speak
23 for you.

24 MR. COSTELLO: I actually try to meet
25 with them personally whenever they want a meeting,

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2 and that would be still my priority to meet with
3 them.

4 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: But Commissioner,
5 I think -- not to interrupt you, but normally that's
6 probably after something happens.

7 MR. COSTELLO: No.

8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Why don't the
9 of three of you set a date before we leave here when
10 the three of you are going to meet?

11 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: And establish a
12 regular date or month, the date of the month or
13 every other month, whatever you decide that's
14 comfortable with all of you and just have those
15 meetings.

16 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: And they don't
17 want to be placated, Commissioner. They want
18 answers.

19 MS. AUMAN: Councilman DiCicco, you made
20 a very, very good point. I'm very sorry to tell you
21 Councilwoman Krajewski has recently requested that
22 we restructure our Criminal Justice Advisory Board,
23 and that board was formed in 1992 by Councilwoman
24 Krajewski and consisted of dedicated leaders
25 throughout the northeast, and it's my sad task to

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2 report Public Safety Committee that because of the
3 poor manner in which we've been treated --

4 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: They just fell
5 apart.

6 MS. AUMAN: I'm too much of a lady to
7 tell you honestly what I've been told on the phone
8 by community leaders up and down the board.

9 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Mary, I suggest
10 that you and Jeanette pick from the business
11 community yourself six, seven members and form one.
12 I absolutely believe you should form it, an
13 advisory, that you do need meet occasionally with
14 the prison.

15 COUNCILMAN DI CICCIO: But I think you
16 need something more on a local level.

17 MS. AUMAN: In that regard, Joan, I do
18 have a brief letter, if I may, before we bring our
19 good neighbors up. This is a letter from a business
20 man who has serious concerns. Can I quickly enter
21 this into the record? May I read it?

22 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Yes.

23 MS. AUMAN: Thank you. This is from
24 Gina's Day Care. Gina's Day Care is located more
25 within the boundaries of the Holmesburg Civic

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2 Organization. The man writing this letter tried
3 desperately to be here today. Since he has such a
4 solid investment in our community, he and his wife
5 own a day care center. He also is an investment
6 counselor and he could not be here. It is entered
7 into the record. I can provide the Commissioner
8 with a copy.

9 Addressed to the City Council of
10 Philadelphia, prison break-outs and community
11 safety. My wife and I operate a day care center in
12 the Holmesburg area, and naturally, any break-outs
13 from the prison poses serious danger to the
14 community and especially to our children. The
15 community must know about any break-outs right away
16 if it is necessary to take precautions with the
17 children.

18 The prison has a responsibility to let
19 us know. Doing away with the community warning
20 system could endanger our children. Please do not
21 do this. I ask you to think of the children first.

22 Furthermore, inmates should not be
23 walking away from the prison at all. To keep our
24 children safe, there must be a zero tolerance for
25 break-outs and walk-walkaways. Do whatever it takes

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2 to stop the walkaways and break-outs. Our children
3 are counting on you. Sincerely, Michael J. Craig.

4 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you. Is
5 there anyone else to testify? Please come forward.
6 The three of you can come up. Thank you.

7 Please state your name for the record.

8 MS. PATRICIA SHEASLEY: My name is
9 Patricia Sheasley. That's S-h-e-a-s-l-e-y. I live
10 at 4219 Meridian Street. I live within walking
11 distance to the prison, and I've been there for 38
12 years. My problem here is with escapes, yes, that's
13 a problem, a big problem. I have a problem with
14 walkaways. I have a problem with people being left
15 out because of a mistake. I mean, excuse me, a
16 mistake? I mean, this person walks away, they have
17 no money. Where are they going to go? How are they
18 going to get money to go where they want to go or to
19 make a phone call? People are let out day and night
20 because they're being released into our community,
21 which I feel they should be taken somewhere else.
22 It's bad enough we have the prison.

23 Now, the other thing is we have 6,000
24 beds in the prisons at the present. Now that one
25 has to be replaced, and I agree with that/, they

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2 want to add 2,000 more beds, and this is my big
3 concern. We have 6,000. Okay, 2,000 more, what's
4 the difference? It's prisoners' row. Holmesburg
5 don't deserve any respect. We just have to pay our
6 tax that go up, up and up. And our neighborhood is
7 going down, down, down. And part of it is the
8 prison system. Now, you figure 6,000 people, if
9 they get two visitors, that's 12,000 other people
10 that influx our neighborhood. Now, 2,000 more,
11 that's 8,000. That's 16,000 people coming and going
12 through our neighborhood. I don't feel that that's
13 acceptable. And I don't think we should have to
14 accept anymore beds in anymore prisons.

15 We have neighborhoods that need to be
16 rehabilitated. What's the difference if they get a
17 prison? We have blocks that are like nothing. Put
18 a prison there. The Commissioner Costello says he
19 has no problem with being commissioner if the
20 prisons are not all in one spot. Is that ever
21 looked into? I think not. Prisons are there, keep
22 adding, adding, adding. It's not fair to our
23 children.

24 The last prison is how many years old?
25 The new prison, nobody knew anything about it, boom,

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2 signed, sealed, and delivered, we got it. We were
3 promised a community center. We need a playground
4 desperately. We don't have anything. We don't even
5 get the grass cut. This is where our kids live and
6 we pay taxes and we get prisons. Now, I think
7 something else has to be done. Mayor Rendell has to
8 look into this. We are a community that has taken
9 care of our community and are considerate to
10 everybody else. I think we went a long way. And
11 now we want a little respect here. We want to be
12 safe, we want an alarms system, and we don't want to
13 hear about what goes on in the prison because that's
14 not important to us. But if a person is not
15 accounted for, how many times do they take a head
16 count in a day? I mean, when you're in school, you
17 have to have a head count in the morning, at lunch,
18 and sometimes when you're leaving. I mean, I just
19 don't understand this walk away and these people
20 being released into our community at any hour of the
21 day and night. I think it's time for a definite
22 change with respect to the people who live there and
23 pay taxes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.

25 (Applause.)

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2 MR. RICHARD BOETTINGER: My name is
3 Richard Boettinger, B-o-e-t-t-i-n-g-e-r. I live at
4 4640 Wilbrock Street in Holmesburg. I've been a
5 resident there about 23 years when the old
6 Holmesburg used to be open. I've gone over -- I've
7 seen quite a few escapes from the old prison. And
8 one afternoon, I think it was eight or nine guys
9 come over the front wall with the prison guard
10 supposed to be in the tower, it still happened.

11 The new prison was supposed to be an
12 up-to-date, state-of-the-art unit. As we found out
13 today, there's been 12 escapes so far this year.
14 Nine of them have been walkaways. I've talked to
15 Warden Costello a couple times, one time in the
16 prison when we were there visiting, and to me, I'm
17 an avid hunter, I like to duck hunt, and water runs
18 off a duck's back. When I talked to him, walkaways,
19 to me it seems like water just running off his back.
20 To me, he really doesn't care about walkaways.

21 The prison system should be -- the
22 outside, the walkaways or the outside people should
23 be able to take care of these individuals that are
24 out there on these work details. I've also talked
25 to Warden Costello about K9 units. I believe he

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2 said that they had K9 units before, but they bit the
3 prisoners too much, or something like that. Well,
4 if the prisoners deserved it, that's a shame. It's
5 hard, it's difficult to run from a dog. You might
6 be able to run from a prison guard, but a K9 unit,
7 it's hard to do that.

8 Many years ago getting, back to the
9 walkaways again, many years ago on Crater Street
10 there was a break-in in a young lady's house. The
11 walkaway raped this young lady in front of her two
12 kids. And it's just to me -

13 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: When did that
14 happen? Two years ago?

15 MR. BOETTINGER: No, I think it was like
16 four or five years ago.

17 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Since the new
18 one has been built?

19 MR. BOETTINGER: Since the new one has
20 been built.

21 My problem with this is now. The old
22 prison, individuals are thinking about restoring
23 that. You cannot handle -- well, I understand, I
24 mean, it's on record. They can't handle the
25 prisoners that they have now. What are they going

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2 to do if they open the old Holmesburg Prison once
3 again?

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. BOETTINGER: I have grandchildren in
6 the neighborhood and I have my wife and my daughters
7 plus the neighbors. What happens if another
8 walkaway walks or runs away and he decides to rape
9 another woman?

10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.

11 Anyone else?

12 MS. MARYBETH MARZULLI: My name is
13 Marybeth Marzulli, and I live 8340 Walker Street.

14 Approximately two years ago, I was in my
15 breakfast room looking out of the deck and I saw a
16 head running by the deck. I went outside and there
17 was a young black man in his underwear running
18 through my yard, ran onto my barn, and I said, "What
19 are you doing?" And he said, "They're chasing me."

20 He jumped on top of my barn, jumped over
21 the fence and disappeared. Shortly thereafter, I
22 had police cars come down the street. I happen to
23 live a private street and my yard ends in Pennypack
24 Park itself. And the police came and they searched,
25 they were after one of the trustees who walked away

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2 and discarded his orange jumpsuit so he would not be
3 quite as obvious.

4 Approximately one year ago when I was
5 out feeding my horses, I saw a man jogging down the
6 bike path, and you know how sometimes you just
7 discern that there's something wrong there. And
8 this man looked like he was running from something.
9 He had navy work pants, a light blue work shirt, and
10 he was running and then he'd slow down to catch his
11 breath, and he started running really fast again,
12 and he'd slow down to catch his breath, run again.
13 He had a little arm bracelet on that looked like you
14 had been admitted to the hospital emergency room or
15 something and had just come home, and he left. And
16 I told my son, I said, "You mark my word, this is
17 another prison escape."

18 Fifteen minutes later we heard the
19 alarm, and 15 minutes after that I saw one
20 correction officer walking down the bike path. I
21 stopped him and said, "Are you by any chance looking
22 for a prisoner?" And he said yes. I said, "Well,
23 you missed him, he's gone, he left about 30 minutes
24 ago, probably on the bus to Frankford Avenue."

25 I'm very concerned by the attitude that

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2 the Northeast Holmesburg area needs another prison.
3 And so when I got notice of the town meeting, I was
4 very glad to see that other people were as upset as
5 I was.

6 I went to the town meeting, had the
7 opportunity to express my views and what occurred in
8 my house which was published in the Daily News. And
9 then Commissioner Costello graciously offered for
10 the community to go on prison tour, which I
11 gradually accepted. At the end of that tour as we
12 were speaking with the Commissioner, he was talking
13 to some of the members of the community and stated
14 that -- was very irate at the fact that the Daily
15 News had been at the meeting without his knowledge.
16 My contention is if you have nothing to hide, what
17 does it matter what news media is present?

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. MARZULLI: He also stated that he
20 was very concerned that they reported unfounded
21 statements, and not knowing who I was, he proceeded
22 to tell the community people there that the
23 statements that I had made at the town meeting were
24 unfounded and not true. Needless to say, I was very
25 irate that my integrity was questioned. I had

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2 witnesses to both incidents. And unfortunately for
3 Holmesburg, walkaways are common. You know, I am
4 concerned at the attitude is they have been deemed
5 psychologically not dangerous to our community, and
6 I think all of us know psychologists who are
7 probably dangerous to our community that have
8 allowed murderers, rapists, you name it, to be
9 released. I don't want prisoners in my yard.

10 (Applause.)

11 MR. MARZULLI: I'm also concerned with
12 the fact that the park is very quick access to both
13 prisons, and that park is filled with, not just
14 young children, but older adults, people walking
15 thinking that they should have the freedom in their
16 community to take a nice walk in the park. The park
17 is a direct access that a lot of these prisoners go
18 down the bike path, into the woods, straight to
19 Frankford Avenue in order to get away from the
20 prisons.

21 My concern also is the fact that about
22 three years ago whenever there was an escape, I used
23 to see a lot of police, and I have had police on my
24 street and in my barn all hours of the night before
25 looking for escaped prisoners. I don't see the

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2 police anymore. I see one correction officer. I
3 think that it's time that Council and the Mayor
4 realize that our community has a right to be safe.
5 And I think before they make any plans for any other
6 prisons they need to make sure that our community --

7 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, that's
8 one of the reasons that we're here and that's one of
9 reasons that the Infield and Holmesburg have been
10 holding their meetings, and that's why we're here.
11 Hopefully, when the Commissioner meets with Jeanette
12 and MaryEllen something will -- more communication
13 lines will be open.

14 We are running late. Councilman DiCicco
15 has to leave here very shortly. So I would like to
16 all people.

17 Yes, sir.

18 MR. FRED MOORE: My name is Fred Moore,
19 4103 Stanwood Street in Holmesburg. My concern is
20 the transportation, transporting these prisoners on
21 State Road. Heaven forbid that the old Holmesburg
22 ever opens up again and now they'll have to be
23 transported on Torresdale.

24 Why can't a road be built behind the
25 prison? There's plenty of property back there. I

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2 know it's going to cost money. We got to come up
3 with it. A road built behind the prison for
4 transport within the facilities.

5 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, there are
6 people from the Administration here, and hopefully
7 some of those questions can be answered. Mr. Martz,
8 did you hear that?

9 MR. MARTZ: Yes.

10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: You're taking
11 notes, I hope, gentlemen.

12 MS. PEG BISIRRI: My name is Peg
13 Bisirri, B-i-s-i-r-r-i. I live at 4600 Emerson
14 Street. My husband and I operate a greenhouse
15 business. What I'm very concerned about is we have
16 greenhouses, and these prisoners that get out, we
17 never know for sure if they jump the fence and get
18 in our property. Also we were not aware -- I was
19 not aware that they had stopped and made a silent
20 alarm. That at least forewarned us. Every time I
21 heard the alarm, I could go outside, warn my husband
22 to make sure that at least he would come in the
23 house to be safe. After all, he's 74 years old, and
24 I do want him to be protected.

25 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you very

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2 much.

3 MS. MARGARET KETT: My name is Margaret
4 Kett. I live 4633 Wilbrock Street, and I just have
5 one quick point to make. I think it would be very
6 interesting to have a comparison of the log from the
7 calls that the prison supposedly made to 911 and the
8 district compared with the log of the calls actually
9 received. I have on more than one occasion come
10 from home from work between 7:30 and 8:00 in the
11 morning and found out from KYW that there was a
12 prison escape the day before.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. KETT: I had been awake and in the
15 yard and did not hear an alarm. I really think it
16 might be to the Council's best interest to compare
17 the logs to make sure that these calls are actually
18 being made.

19 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, I can get
20 that.

21 MS. KETT: Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I will get that
23 and get it to MaryEllen.

24 MR. ED JACKSON: Good afternoon. My
25 name is Ed Jackson, I live at 8053 Irving Street.

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2 My concern is the position that the prison system
3 has in designating a prisoner as a trustee.
4 Something needs to be done in that respect to do a
5 better evaluation in regard to this particular
6 individual becoming a trustee. He's there because
7 he has violated his rights as a citizen --

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. JACKSON: -- to start with. And
10 he's going to use every advantage to get to that
11 position of a trustee in order to escape from that
12 facility. And if he's using all his ability and all
13 his conniving expertise to gain that position, at
14 the first opportunity he's going make a break. And
15 this is putting the community, himself, and the
16 whole City in jeopardy. You said now he can do this
17 by threats to the staff, he could do this by
18 intimidation and do this by monetary passing. And
19 this is being done in order for him to gain that
20 status. And until something is done in that
21 respect, I suggest that every prisoner in there
22 ought to be under maximum security at all times.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.

25 MS. RUBY ADAMS: Ruby Adams, 8332

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2 Torresdale Avenue. I wanted to more or less ask Mr.
3 Costello about this silent alarm. Is that supposed
4 to be like a dog whistle? Do I have to watch my
5 dog? Do I get an antenna? How do we know?

6 And also I'd like to know whether or not
7 within the last six weeks was there an escape from
8 the cannery? They either went out the kitchen
9 window or the bathroom window and no alarm went off.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. ADAMS: Am I right, sir?

12 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Just a moment.
13 We're wrap it up with you, Commissioner.

14 MS. ADAMS: Pressi's (ph) Bar there, he
15 also said there was an escape and everything there,
16 and I've heard it and I'm not going to give my
17 source out that there was an escape, but not one
18 alarm went off. And I think even if they're at the
19 cannery, no matter what they did, if they walk out a
20 window, they go out any window, if he didn't give
21 them permission to leave, that's an escape. We
22 should know.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: All right.

25 Bob.

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2 MR. ROBERT SMITH: Good afternoon, Joan.
3 I'll try to be brief. My name is Robert Smith. I'm
4 at 8017 Walker Street. Coming down here today, I
5 was explaining to my daughter the purpose of this
6 meeting, and on the way down she wanted to know if
7 she could speak. And I thought a lot of what goes
8 on affect the children of the community, so if
9 Council doesn't mind I'd like her to say a few words
10 first.

11 MS. MARISSA SMITH: My name is Marissa
12 Smith. When I hear the prison siren go off, I get
13 scared and lock the doors because it's scary because
14 when the prisoners break out they go through
15 Pennypack Park which is behind our backyard. In the
16 last prison escape, we couldn't go outside in school
17 and we had to stay inside.

18 If you decide to make Holmesburg Prison
19 a prison again, think about the safety of the people
20 in their neighborhood. They will be very scared.
21 So give the Holmesburg Prison to the community so we
22 can make a recreational center or something good for
23 the community.

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Very good, very

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2 good.

3 MR. SMITH: A few comments and points.

4 I'm really concerned because our civic association
5 gets calls from prison guards leaving messages on
6 our machine, because we don't always answer, saying
7 different problems that are going down the prison.
8 These guards need a way to be able to vent what's
9 not being handled properly, whatever rules are not
10 being done. There has to be a way that they can do
11 this without worrying about being penalized for it
12 because the guards seem to get the blame no matter
13 what happens down at the prison. Generally when
14 things aren't working right, they change the
15 manager, not the team.

16 The gentleman said that the vehicles
17 when they leave now prisoners are to have a vehicle
18 following the bus. I always thought that was
19 procedures that before that just wasn't followed.
20 That may or may not be correct, I don't know but
21 from what I understood, that was supposed to happen
22 all along.

23 It's just getting to a point now where
24 we have a fire house right around the corner and we
25 seem to hear the prison siren more than we hear the

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2 fire siren.

3 I grew up in Tacony and Holmesburg all
4 my life, and for all these years, maybe 35 years, I
5 only heard rarely someone escaping from the prisons.
6 Now, this last two years we have 12.

7 By putting more prisons in our
8 neighborhood, it just gives us more of a chance to
9 have more of these problems in our community, makes
10 it more of an unsafe neighborhood for us. We were
11 concerned when current Fromhold was built. Now
12 there's talk of more prisons being built. We want
13 no more prisons in Holmesburg.

14 There was a meeting held in March, and
15 as far as I'm concerned, to me, it was a dog and
16 pony show. There was a bus brought up and people
17 put in shackles and told how things were going to
18 work and we had a lot of promises of a lot of things
19 people asked for, and the Commissioner promised that
20 we could look into a lot of things. I hear today we
21 can look into a lot of these things. I don't know
22 how many things we're looking into are actually
23 being addressed.

24 (Applause.)

25 MR. SMITH: Promises don't cut it. We

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2 need some results.

3 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I want
4 specifics. Specifics when you meet with the
5 Commissioner.

6 MR. SMITH: I'm glad Councilman DiCicco
7 mentioned that. I thought that was a great idea.

8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: You have to
9 have specifics.

10 MR. SMITH: Thank you for your time.

11 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you, Bob.
12 Commissioner, just for one moment
13 please. Is there anything you have to say?

14 MR. COSTELLO: Thank you, Councilwoman.
15 I would just like to say that I listened to everyone
16 here today, and I will certainly meet with the
17 community and address any of the concerns that they
18 have. I have always been available to meet with
19 them. I'm sorry that one of the neighbors feel that
20 the meeting was a dog and pony show. To me, it was
21 an opportunity to educate the community on how we
22 transport prisoners and why this happened and what
23 we're doing to prevent it in the future. And I will
24 continue to do that. I will continue to do whatever
25 I can to communicate with the community and to

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2 educate them on prison procedures, and I hope that
3 it will be helpful to us.

4 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: It's only two
5 people, Commissioner, that you have to meet with,
6 Holmesburg and Infield. It's not like you're
7 meeting every day in the week or you're
8 communicating and you have to pick up the phone
9 every day of the week. You have two people that
10 they can go back and tell their people exactly
11 what's going on.

12 Is that fair enough?

13 MS. AUMAN: Yes.

14 MS. MALISZEWSKI: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: And that's what
16 you have to do.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: They don't want
19 promises. They want action. I want action.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: So what I'm
22 going to do, I will stay in touch with the Public
23 Safety Committee here, Councilman Rizzo, Councilman
24 DiCicco, and others, and they are very, very
25 interested as well as I am to know what transpires.

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2 That is that right, Councilman.

3 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Absolutely. I
4 know that the facility is within Councilwoman
5 Krajewski's district, but if there's anything I can
6 lend aside from my role in this Committee, I'd be
7 more than glad to help in any way I can.

8 Again, I really think that just by the
9 fact that you establish an agenda, a time for
10 meetings specific, a date certain, I think that will
11 go a long way in at least getting that information
12 out. Again, we may not have all the answers to the
13 questions and it may not be satisfactory to
14 everyone, but going forward, I think we can avoid
15 some of the anxiety that is out there because I hear
16 a lot of anxiety out there. It's justified, there's
17 no question about it.

18 (Applause.)

19 COUNCILMAN DI CICC0: Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you very
21 much. I want to thank all of you for taking time
22 out to spend a couple hours down here at City
23 Council.

24 Mary and Jeanette, I'll be in touch with
25 you.

1 COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY - RES. 980215

2 Thank you all very much. That ends the
3 resolution on Public Safety.

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5 (Adjourned at 2:45 p.m.)

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

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of June 16, 1998, were reported fully
and accurately by me, and that this is a correct
transcript of the same.

RE: COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Lisa C. Bradley, RPR
and Notary Public