

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND
PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friday, May 12, 2017
10:25 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

RESOLUTION 160904 - Resolution authorizing the
Committee on Public Safety and Committee on
Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to
hold joint hearings examining the lack of cell
phone connectivity throughout Fairmount Park,
which poses a safety risk to park visitors in
the event of serious health emergencies or
violent crime.

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COUNCILMAN JONES: Good morning, everyone.
(Good morning.)
COUNCILMAN JONES: This hearing is called to order. This is a joint public hearing of City Council's Committees on Public Safety and Parks and Recreation and Cultural Affairs. The purpose of this public hearing is to hear testimony on Resolution No. 160904.
I'm recognizing the attendance of Councilman Greenlee and Councilman Taubenberger.
Will the Clerk please read the title of the resolution being heard today.
THE CLERK: Resolution No. 160904, a resolution authorizing the Committee on Public Safety and Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to hold joint hearings examining the lack of cell phone connectivity throughout Fairmount Park, which poses a safety risk to park visitors in the event

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2 of serious health emergencies or violent
3 crime.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So on
5 occasion, every now and then, we can
6 identify an issue, create stakeholders,
7 put them in a room, and then actually
8 come up with solutions. On those rare
9 occasions, it is good to be a
10 Councilperson, when you can actually
11 figure out a problem and figure out
12 sensible solutions to it, and I think
13 this is one of those occasions.

14 We had an opportunity to travel
15 a lot our park land. We were not looking
16 for this issue. We were looking at the
17 beauty of our park system, one that is
18 arguably one of the better park systems
19 on the East Coast. Fortunately, a lot of
20 those acres are in the Fourth
21 Councilmanic District, and we enjoy -- I
22 had to quickly learn how to be a green
23 Councilman, and I realized there are
24 different shades of green.

25 And then the issue came up of

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2 use of a cell phone. I can only remember
3 at times, Councilman Greenlee, when I'm
4 coming to work and I'm speeding -- not
5 speeding. Traveling at a sensible --

6 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Watch
7 your language.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- pace.
9 You're right. A sensible pace coming to
10 work, only to remember that I forgot my
11 cell phone. That feeling of dread, that
12 feeling of disconnected, that the whole
13 world is happening without me is a
14 terrifying feeling, but even worse I can
15 only imagine, whether you are enjoying
16 the park as a hiker, enjoying the park as
17 a jogger, being a biker or an equestrian
18 in the park and something happens and you
19 fall off a horse or sprain an ankle or,
20 worse, see someone following you that is
21 suspicious, and your instant instinct
22 might be to grab that phone and call
23 someone, call 911, call for help, call
24 because you lost your keys at the parking
25 lot and need AAA and cannot reach anyone.

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2 I can only imagine the dread that I feel
3 when I don't have my cell phone connected
4 to me, but in a case and situation like
5 that, it might be horrifying.

6 So when this issue came up, to
7 my surprise, colleagues, a lot of the
8 folk in the industry were well prepared
9 to step up and look forward to kind of
10 making sure that dead zones don't happen
11 within our park so that always, to the
12 degree that we can, we can always reach
13 out to 911 or to our loved ones for
14 assistance.

15 So with that, we're going to
16 talk about some of the problems that my
17 custodians of the park have experienced
18 and then we're going to hear from the
19 City of Philadelphia and then the private
20 sector, which is a real nice stakeholders
21 combination, to come up with practical
22 solutions.

23 So, Ms. Williams, can you read
24 the first group in panel -- wait a
25 minute.

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2 Do my colleagues have something
3 to say? Because both of them represent
4 the entire park system. I represent 66
5 percent. They represent 100 percent.

6 Councilman.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
8 you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank
9 you and your leadership in having this
10 hearing. I think it's important, from my
11 perspective. I'm looking forward to what
12 the City Administration has to say, users
13 of the park, and anyone else that wants
14 to chime in.

15 I will say just on a personal
16 basis, I use the park a lot. I live near
17 the park in Fox Chase, Pennypack Park. I
18 fish in the park. And lately when I go
19 fishing, I do take my cell phone. I will
20 have to say at that location right off of
21 Tabor Road in Fairmount Park, Pennypack
22 Park, the cell phone works pretty good.

23 But I will also tell you at one
24 time it did not, and I actually years ago
25 ran into trouble. There were kids

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2 shooting BB guns, and I said, as a
3 responsible adult, I said, Hey, you know,
4 knock that off. You're not supposed to
5 be shooting BB guns. And then they
6 decided to try to shoot at me, and thank
7 God, they were bad shots, because I
8 wasn't running either. I thought, you
9 know what, they're going to hit me with a
10 BB gun. I know a little bit about the
11 outdoors. You're not going to kill me.
12 You're going to hurt me, but I'm not
13 running.

14 The cell phone did not work. I
15 did eventually call 911, because these
16 kind of things should be reported,
17 because kids are shooting at people with
18 BBs, it's not good. It didn't work. I
19 called from my house. The response was
20 way late, nothing ever came of it, but
21 the fact is that having connectivity in
22 today's world is essential more
23 particularly, Mr. Chairman, for safety.
24 I look forward to the hearings.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm so glad
3 you survived that attack in the park, but
4 I could imagine it could have been worse.
5 I can imagine that dread you feel now
6 that we are so connected and so dependent
7 upon our technology.

8 And speaking of technology, I
9 see Councilman Oh has joined us.

10 So anybody else with comments
11 about this?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: If not,
14 Ms. Williams, can you read the first
15 panel.

16 THE CLERK: The first panel is
17 Maura McCarthy, Bruce Wagner, Kris Soffa,
18 and Kevin Eikov.

19 (Witnesses approached witness
20 table.)

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Welcome, and
22 I want to say in advance thank you for
23 educating me on some of these challenges
24 that we are trying to tackle today and,
25 more importantly, thank you for the tour

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2 and your stewardship of parks in
3 Philadelphia, and you are -- and I don't
4 want to use the word parks and fierce,
5 but fierce stewardship is something that
6 comes to mind of protectors of our
7 outdoor experience and environment, and
8 we are grateful for it.

9 So with that, please state your
10 name for the record and begin your
11 testimony.

12 See, park people are just so
13 collegial.

14 MS. McCARTHY: Thank you,
15 Councilman, for this opportunity and for
16 bringing us together with the industry
17 representatives. This is a wonderful
18 opportunity for us, and we're sincerely
19 thankful.

20 My name is Maura McCarthy. I'm
21 the Executive Director of Friends of the
22 Wissahickon, and I'm speaking today to
23 express our support of an ecologically
24 friendly solution to the lack of cell
25 phone connectivity in all of

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2 Philadelphia's park and recreation lands.

3 For 93 years, FOW has been the
4 steward of Wissahickon Valley Park, a
5 beautiful forested gorge that is part of
6 Fairmount Park in the Northwest section
7 of the City. Our 2,000 members and 900
8 volunteers maintain and preserve trails
9 and historic structures, care for native
10 plant and animal species, and protect the
11 watershed. Each year our creek
12 contributes to the drinking water of
13 350,000 Philadelphians. Our trees
14 sequester an estimated 2,700 tons of CO2,
15 and our park welcomes 1.1 million
16 recreation visits.

17 The Wissahickon Valley serves
18 as a social and economic anchor for some
19 of Philadelphia's most stable and
20 beautiful neighborhoods - Roxborough,
21 Manayunk, East Falls, Germantown, Mt.
22 Airy, and Chestnut Hill.

23 Over the last several months,
24 FOW has collected dozens of statements
25 from park users about the lack of cell

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2 phone connectivity on our trails and how
3 it impacts their experience, health,
4 safety, and access to our park system.

5 I've included a copy of those statements
6 from the public, along with my own
7 remarks submitted to Council.

8 While there will always be
9 those who love being disconnected during
10 their walks in the woods, too many
11 citizens now avoid the park or consider
12 it unsafe because of our lack of
13 consistent connectivity. For park users
14 with chronic and acute medical
15 conditions, small children, older or
16 mobility impaired visitors, lack of
17 connectivity can mean a park that is
18 simply unusable.

19 This lack of connectivity also
20 affects our policing and enforcement in
21 the Wissahickon and reduces police
22 presence because officers are unable to
23 request backup in a timely fashion while
24 inside many parts of the park.

25 Friends of the Wissahickon is

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2 proud to partner with both Parks and
3 Recreation Park Ranger program and the
4 Philadelphia Police Department, and we
5 strongly encourage Council to give these
6 important departments and our citizens
7 the connectivity that they need in our
8 park system. We hope that the Council
9 will work with City departments and our
10 City's contractors to explore non-cell
11 tower alternatives which can be installed
12 throughout our natural lands and
13 watershed parks, with minimum damage to
14 our rare and beautiful urban forest
15 habitat and waterways.

16 Thank you so much again for
17 your attention to this matter.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: And thank
19 you for being able to take us in
20 Philadelphia's borders to a place that
21 makes us appreciate, first of all, our
22 parks, but you could close your eyes and
23 be in Vermont or some other green portion
24 of the world, and that outdoor experience
25 is probably what our park founders really

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2 wanted the average citizen to be able to
3 enjoy in the creation of the park system.
4 So we're thankful.

5 Pull the mic to you. Thank you
6 for coming. Good morning.

7 MR. EIKOV: Good morning.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: You got to
9 pull it to you and state your name.

10 MR. EIKOV: Yes. Good morning,
11 Councilman. My name is Kevin Eikov. I'm
12 one of the trail ambassadors with the
13 Friends of the Wissahickon, and I wanted
14 to read about four or actually it's about
15 seven comments that people made in
16 regards to this whole phone issue or cell
17 issue and non-receptivity, as well as my
18 own experience in the park.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Please
20 proceed.

21 MR. EIKOV: I was sitting at
22 one of the outreach tables in which we
23 basically provide information about
24 Friends of the Wissahickon to park users
25 and help them in any way we can while

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2 we're there, answering questions or
3 whatever. On this particular day, and we
4 were right in front of the Valley Green
5 Inn or right next to the Valley Green
6 Inn, a dog was found off the leash, no
7 owner, and we ended up taking the dog and
8 trying to secure some type of agency or
9 SPCA or someone to come down or the park
10 rangers to come down to get this dog. We
11 tried numerous times to use our cell
12 phone at that spot and were unable to.
13 Eventually one of the trail ambassadors
14 that was at this table went off and
15 walked in different directions trying to
16 find where he actually gained
17 connectivity, which was actually over the
18 bridge by Valley Green Inn, and he was
19 able to contact somebody.

20 That's just -- I mean, it
21 wasn't really a serious emergency
22 problem, but it could have been, and this
23 is right at the Valley Green Inn, which
24 there's lots of traffic there. Lots of
25 people are there. There's weddings and

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2 all kinds of things that go on there, and
3 it's kind of unsafe not to have some
4 level of connectivity there.

5 These other comments are from
6 people that just wrote in. The first one
7 is from Cher Kiefer. She said, I'm a
8 juvenile diabetic. I was on the trail
9 one day and my blood sugar started to
10 crash. I took out my cell phone and
11 found no coverage at all. I was alone.
12 No one was around. I pulled out my
13 snacks that I carry and I took them. I
14 started to head back to my car. I had no
15 help and no way to call for help. I
16 thought there were call boxes, but didn't
17 see any. I no longer walk in the park,
18 which I miss so much.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Wow.

20 MR. EIKOV: This next comment
21 is from Stephanie Witzman. My mom broke
22 her ankle by the red-covered bridge and
23 had to wait for someone to find help and
24 get a ranger. Her foot was in really bad
25 shape. She tripped on the ice. The

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2 coverage is so very bad on the west side
3 of the bridge and by the path of Chestnut
4 Hill Avenue. Thank you so very much.

5 This is a great help for everyone,
6 especially women, to have this type of
7 coverage brought into the park.

8 This next comment by Kelly
9 Anne. My car was broken into, but I
10 couldn't find anyone to call from the
11 parking lot to gain help or solve this
12 issue.

13 This next comment comes from
14 Lisa Jamil. I had to help a biker who
15 had hurt himself coming down from the
16 trail down by the covered bridge and
17 could not call for aid. It's a little
18 dangerous in this area and there was no
19 cell coverage of any kind when I tried to
20 call and we had to have people go down by
21 foot and actually -- because he broke his
22 bike as well. And so they had to go down
23 and try to secure someone to come down
24 and pick up the bike and also help this
25 man out of the park.

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2 And I believe that was it.

3 Thank you so very much, Councilman, for
4 hearing it.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
6 for sharing that. You just gave me a
7 recollection. In another life I was a
8 high school girls' track and cross
9 country coach. My daughter was also on
10 the team. So we would let them off at
11 the top of Valley Green and pick them up
12 at the main street exit. So we always
13 made sure one of the children had a cell
14 phone just in case someone hurt
15 themselves, sprained an ankle or
16 something like that and we could then,
17 the adults, go up and try to look for
18 them. It never dawned on me that there
19 are spots in the park, until now, that we
20 wouldn't have been able to -- fortunately
21 they were pretty fast. They would have
22 ran down and told us, but it could have
23 been a problem.

24 MR. WAGNER: Thank you, Council
25 President Clarke and members of the City

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2 Council, for this opportunity to appear
3 before you this morning. My name is
4 Bruce Wagner and I am pleased to present
5 comments as a trained trail ambassador
6 volunteer for Friends of the Wissahickon.

7 As an ambassador, I've spent
8 over 6,000 hours hiking and guiding in
9 the Wissahickon Valley Park over the past
10 eight years. As trail ambassadors, our
11 duties are to serve as outdoor docents
12 and friendly, knowledgeable guides
13 helping visitors in the park for the FOW
14 on trails, on pathways, and sites of the
15 many icons throughout the park.

16 There are sections of the 1,800
17 miles of public trails where cell phones
18 don't work. That's 1,800 acres. Pardon
19 me. It would be nice if we had 1,800
20 miles, but we don't.

21 The steep 700-foot Wissahickon
22 gorge and usual geologic formations and
23 the delightfully wild forest of the
24 valley may be causing these blackout
25 areas. I have led visitor groups and

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2 encountered individuals who have become
3 disoriented or injured on the trails and
4 they're not able to help themselves, nor
5 have I been able to call for emergency
6 responders. Happily, I have not
7 encountered life-threatening situations,
8 but we have cyclists sometimes racing
9 down steep, rocky trails, elderly park
10 visitors discovering that the trails or
11 rocks or weather conditions are
12 presenting more challenge than they
13 expected. Young children are on the
14 trails. They're a delight to see, but
15 there are also big rocks or narrow trails
16 in the park and they present the
17 potential for falls.

18 Beyond that, we live in an age
19 when flip-flops are often thought to be
20 just fine for walking over sharp terrain.
21 I fixed that a few times. Beyond that,
22 we live in an age -- I have provided
23 Band-Aids for souvenirs to visitors who
24 just might have learned that a different
25 choice in footcare might be better for

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2 next time.

3 With all these invitations to
4 significant injury, the absence of
5 effective cell service could lead to
6 injuries, complicated by the extended
7 time required for first responders to
8 reach the victims. Frequently there is
9 at least a half mile between the
10 potential injury site and an open area to
11 call 911 and wait for help. That's at
12 least ten minutes walk before calling for
13 help, then waiting, and then returning to
14 the site at least an additional ten
15 minutes. That's a long time for
16 bleeding. It's a long time for aching.

17 In addition, dead cell areas
18 make it impossible for trail ambassadors
19 to register our tours with City park
20 rangers. They're supposed to know where
21 we are. There are public safety risks
22 here which we're grateful that you're
23 addressing.

24 Many times over these past
25 eight years, I've had problems with cell

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2 connectivity in the park. Valley Green
3 Inn is a popular historic inn located in
4 the center of the valley and there's a
5 cell blackout inside the inn. Workers
6 there know that they're not going to be
7 able to receive calls while they're
8 working and they've got to go out
9 somewhere in the parking lot or over the
10 bridge if they're going to be able to
11 reach anybody.

12 And then the outside of the inn
13 there's almost mystical uncertainty in
14 that park area, a parking lot, a frequent
15 visitor meeting place, one of the most
16 likely places for unfamiliar park
17 visitors to become confused or
18 frustrated. It's a difficult time for
19 mystery.

20 Do we know if there are
21 visually discreet and environmentally
22 sound processes to provide coverage?
23 Naturally it would be our earnest wish
24 that before any broadcasting or delay
25 towers were constructed -- can you

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2 imagine how those towers would reflect
3 the wildness of the valley? At any rate,
4 before that, it would be good for there
5 to be a thorough vetting process
6 involving best practices. This would
7 include monitoring EMF exposure as well
8 as aesthetic considerations, maintenance,
9 proper lighting to prevent unnecessary
10 bird migration, death, and remediation of
11 the footprint under any possible tower
12 with native species, stormwater runoff,
13 and trail enhancement.

14 I thank you for engaging in
15 this thoughtful process for the public
16 good. I'm happy to take any questions.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Also we've
18 been joined by my colleague Councilman
19 Squilla, who represents his share of the
20 park as well.

21 Are there any questions for
22 this panel?

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We have
24 one more.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh, one

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2 more. My constituent. My apologies.

3 MS. SOFFA: Apology accepted.

4 My name is Kris Soffa and I want to thank
5 you, Councilman Jones, for your ongoing
6 leadership not only in safety but for the
7 environment, and we're very grateful to
8 you for holding this hearing. And I want
9 to thank the Public Safety Committee and
10 also the Parks and Rec Committee.

11 So my comments. First I wanted
12 to read testimony from the Director of
13 the Wissahickon Environmental Center,
14 also known as the Tree House.

15 My name is Trish Fries and I'm
16 the Environmental Education Program
17 Specialist at Philadelphia Parks and
18 Recreation's Wissahickon Environmental
19 Center. We serve over 5,000 children and
20 2,000 adults annually with our
21 programming offered at the Center. In
22 addition, we have countless others using
23 our trails in this area on their own.
24 While we generally have cell phone
25 reception at the building itself, we have

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2 spotty coverage in areas away from the
3 building and specifically at the
4 Forbidden Drive entrance at Northwestern
5 Avenue, which I want to note is a quarter
6 mile steep gravel road, which some of you
7 are familiar with, and that this is the
8 entrance where we would meet emergency
9 personnel if there was a medical
10 emergency. We need to be able to
11 communicate to emergency vehicles where
12 to proceed to find our building or to
13 find an injured visitor.

14 Being in the park and at the
15 border between two municipalities,
16 Philadelphia and Whitemarsh, and two
17 Philadelphia police districts, it is
18 challenging to get our location known to
19 emergency response personnel. Relaying
20 information from that entrance is
21 imperative, and cell phone coverage needs
22 to be reliable.

23 This is also where we often
24 meet school groups. We ask the teachers
25 to contact us on our cell phones when

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2 they are delayed. In addition to
3 programming in our immediate area of the
4 Center, we also take our summer camp
5 programs hiking or biking along Forbidden
6 Drive and need to communicate with each
7 other for meeting locations, times, flat
8 tires, and medical issues. As others
9 will testify, coverage in the valley is
10 very poor and messages are often delayed.

11 On a related topic, the police
12 do not have radio coverage in our area.
13 For their own safety, they do not patrol
14 this area without being able to
15 communicate for backup.

16 Thank you for considering this
17 very important safety issue. Sincerely,
18 Trish Fries.

19 So I met yesterday with the
20 Fifth District Police Advisory Council
21 and I learned -- and I also spoke to the
22 Marine Division, and I am a member of the
23 PDAC there in the Fifth District. And
24 the police tell me that -- and the park
25 patrols say that they don't -- that they

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2 actually use their cell phones because
3 their radios don't work. So when they
4 respond to try to find victims, the
5 people in trouble use the cell phone.
6 Someone stays with the victim and goes
7 out and brings the police in. So it's
8 very complicated, as you've said, and
9 dangerous for everyone.

10 And Devil's Pool has no
11 coverage, and as you may know, that is a
12 very, very dangerous area with a lot of
13 injuries and accidents. So, of course,
14 the cell companies would do a thorough
15 mapping probably about where exactly
16 there's blackouts for each of the
17 companies. But the police were saying
18 that below Valley Green Inn there's some
19 coverage. Above it, from the Valley
20 Green Inn to the covered bridge, there's
21 spotty coverage. Above the covered
22 bridge to the northern boundary of the
23 park there's almost no coverage, and then
24 at Wissahickon Environmental Center and
25 all those trails there's no coverage.

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2 So there's three police
3 districts. Do you have in your -- do you
4 have a copy -- I think you do -- of the
5 three police districts with maps in your
6 notes that Sam handed you, if you just
7 want to look at that for a second.

8 So it is complicated because
9 of -- what do we have? The 5th, 39th,
10 and 14th District all serve the park, you
11 can see there, and plus there's two --
12 that's the map. Thank you. Plus two
13 city municipalities.

14 So in the olden days, we had 24
15 dedicated park rangers, 20 of them on
16 horseback, four on foot, and they worked
17 in two shifts. Those days are gone, and
18 now everyone relies on their cell phones,
19 right? We have a completely different
20 situation, different challenges. But
21 with improved cell connectivity, there
22 will be better outcomes for the public
23 and the police.

24 What did I want to say about
25 the map? If you take a look at the map

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2 on the back of -- there you go. If you
3 haven't been to Valley Green -- is there
4 anyone who hasn't been in that park?
5 Councilman Oh, you've been out there,
6 right? Yeah. So you're very familiar.
7 But it just illustrates very dramatically
8 that we -- it's like the Grand Canyon of
9 Philadelphia. It's a deep, deep gorge
10 that was cut through rocks, and that's
11 why it's beautiful and that's why we want
12 to protect it. It's really a miniature
13 alpine gorge. And we're proud of the
14 work that the City does with Parks and
15 Recreation and the Water Department and
16 Streets Department, along with the army
17 of volunteers from groups like the
18 Friends of the Wissahickon and others who
19 love their park, and we all work together
20 to make the City better. And we've heard
21 a lot of clever ideas recently, like
22 hanging signal relay equipment, which
23 apparently isn't really a real technical
24 term, on the bottom of the Walnut Lane
25 Bridge or the Henry Avenue Bridge or

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2 bearing a conduit along Forbidden Drive
3 all the way to put in maybe solar power,
4 putting it on the street lights. We're
5 going to leave this up to the experts
6 that come up with a good idea. And then
7 people are mentioning, where are the call
8 boxes? Why don't we bring back the call
9 boxes like they have in universities?
10 Except the vandals would love to
11 dismantle them, but that might work too.
12 But we're very open to whatever might
13 work, but I guess respectfully we want to
14 request that the outcome of this hearing
15 would lead to some environmentally
16 sensitive non-tower alternatives for this
17 park, especially since, as you may be
18 aware, this park was one of the first
19 places in the United States to be
20 designated for its scenic beauty as a
21 natural national landmark, and taking the
22 time and care to research and design a
23 smart solution will help make it better
24 for all of us.

25 And thank you, and we look

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2 forward to being part of this cell
3 connectivity conversation. And I just
4 want to formally invite everyone in the
5 room to come out at any time for a tour.
6 We have a lot of people here who are very
7 well trained in every aspect of the park
8 and all of its mysteries. So we'd be
9 welcomed to have you.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

12 And thank you for teaching me about the
13 bobolink.

14 MS. SOFFA: The bobolinks have
15 returned.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: They have
17 returned?

18 So only in my district there
19 are 300 or so species of birds that fly
20 over us every day, from the 21st Ward
21 reservoir to the 33rd Street reservoir
22 all the way down to Heinz Preserve.
23 These birds fly over and nest with us all
24 the time, and one of them, the bobolink,
25 only in my district that I know of.

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2 MS. SOFFA: This is our
3 environmental Councilman right here.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So they have
5 groups up there that do things like toad
6 protection. So there's a time of the
7 year where the toads come across the
8 road, and my neighbors and constituents
9 stand out there to make sure --

10 MS. SOFFA: The toad detour.
11 Look it up. We're good. And we
12 appreciate all of the help that you've
13 given us.

14 To mention the bobolink, the
15 bobolink migrates at night by the stars
16 and they've just arrived from South
17 America, and they need a grassland
18 habitat that you provided with
19 environmental protection that was
20 landmark, and we're grateful to you for
21 that.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Well, I
23 learned from you guys.

24 So in those areas, particularly
25 what is a challenge for us to solve, is

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2 I've experienced people and one time on
3 Main Street where we dialed 911 and it
4 went to a county, and they said, How may
5 we help you? And we discovered we were
6 in the wrong town, and they quickly
7 referred us and switched us over, but
8 those connective and being able to, I
9 guess, triangulate where you are to where
10 you are trying to get to is essential.
11 In our case we were just talking about
12 somebody who was dumping trash, but --
13 you were -- it was a trash dumper?

14 COUNCILMAN OH: In Delaware
15 County.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: In Delaware
17 County, Whitemarsh or other places. This
18 is critical if you're trying to prevent a
19 violent crime, those transfers, those
20 minutes matter. And so we want to try to
21 figure this out.

22 Does anybody have any other
23 questions?

24 Councilman.

25 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank

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2 you and, Mr. Chairman, I did not know
3 that you were such an avid bird watcher.
4 So I will love to take the opportunity
5 some time to watch with you.

6 And, Ms. Soffa, I wasn't going
7 to lead off with the first question, but
8 I always like to learn about nature
9 myself, as I have a degree in
10 agriculture. I also was co-sponsor,
11 along with Councilman Jones, on this
12 bill. As I mentioned earlier, I use
13 Pennypack Creek a lot, because it's very
14 close to my home.

15 MS. SOFFA: We have rainbow
16 trout waiting for you in the Wissahickon,
17 12-inch and brown trout.

18 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
19 That's pretty impressive. I actually
20 caught two rainbows on Opening Day, but I
21 look forward to fishing on the
22 Wissahickon, and actually I have years
23 ago. And it was kind of interesting, and
24 I raise this point just in conversation.
25 I went fishing there. It has to be 20

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2 years ago. Cell phones were new, and the
3 guy across from me was fishing. I was
4 doing quite well. He was doing pretty
5 well. But he was also taking calls from
6 his office. And I eventually told him
7 across the creek, I said, Do you ever cut
8 this off? Why don't you go away or leave
9 that phone?

10 My point is, that obviously
11 connectivity at that point was there. I
12 don't know if he was reporting in to his
13 wife that he had enough fish for dinner
14 or not, but he might have been. But what
15 I wanted to mention to you is, is there a
16 sense within the Wissahickon, because
17 you've done some conversation on this,
18 that sort of mapped where cell phone is
19 working and where it is not?

20 MS. SOFFA: We have information
21 about that, but we didn't split it up
22 with the different providers. So they
23 would have to do their own mapping. I
24 mean, the police have their information,
25 but it's all anecdotal. So I think it's

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2 like can you hear me now? You need
3 equipment. Am I right? I don't want to
4 speak for the people that provide the
5 service. I don't know how to do it. I
6 forgot to go to engineering school.

7 MR. WAGNER: My experience is
8 that in the same place at one day I'll
9 have one bar. Another day I'll have
10 three. Maybe later the first day I might
11 get a second. Maybe later the other day
12 I might lose the three that I had. It's
13 amazingly inconsistent, which, again,
14 means if you want to rely on it, it's not
15 a reliable instrument.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: In
17 today's -- in fact, Mr. Wagner, you raise
18 a very good point in my own collective
19 memory. Years ago before cell phones
20 were as freely available as they are now,
21 a very dear friend of mine who was a
22 veteran of World War II in the European
23 Theatre was walking along for a daily
24 walk. He was hit by a bicyclist, who did
25 not have the common courtesy of stopping.

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2 He just kept going. Later he was
3 apprehended, but that's another story.
4 But my point is, he's laying there. He
5 knows he has broken at least a leg or
6 ankle or something. He cannot move, and
7 he's laying there thinking, I've survived
8 the battles of Europe and I'm going to
9 die here within feet of my home. And,
10 you know, it's very sad. He didn't have
11 the option of a cell phone, but the fact
12 is, if he did today and it didn't work,
13 that could be critical. And many times
14 in situations like that, seconds really
15 do matter.

16 So I am very supportive of
17 this. I look forward to talking to the
18 industry to see what can be done to
19 remedy this, because we need to have
20 confidence in this. When you walk in the
21 woods and enjoy the day, you need to know
22 that, you know what, even though you're
23 all alone, you're safe. You can call
24 someone.

25 Ms. Soffa, back to your

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2 testimony, I made a note that you had
3 said at some places the police radio
4 doesn't work, so they use cell phones.

5 MS. SOFFA: Yeah. This is what
6 we're told.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
8 if the cell phones don't work, then
9 you're really alone.

10 MS. SOFFA: That's what we're
11 saying.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
13 mean --

14 MS. SOFFA: It's anecdotal. I
15 don't want to get anybody in trouble.
16 This is what we're told.

17 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: No
18 one will get anybody in trouble.

19 MS. SOFFA: It's mystical how
20 it works. It's magic. My husband is in
21 that industry, and it's all magic. It's
22 all done with math and who knows what,
23 but you're right.

24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
25 think it's important to have that --

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2 MS. SOFFA: And yet we do not
3 actually support having this magnificent
4 canyon lined with towers. So there's --
5 you know, nor drones. I don't know.
6 Maybe there's a way to figure it out.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
8 think in today's technology there must be
9 a way.

10 MS. SOFFA: That's what we're
11 hoping.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I'd
13 love to work with you on that.

14 I will take you up on the tour.
15 I would like to -- and if you have a
16 moment where you could show me a
17 bobolink, I don't want to have Councilman
18 Jones be the only person here, the only
19 Councilmember that has ever seen a
20 bobolink.

21 MS. SOFFA: It's quite a rare
22 feat and he's a good --

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Oh,
24 it is a rare bird?

25 MS. SOFFA: It's a very rare

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2 bird, but we have them in Manatawna.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.

4 Well, that's --

5 MS. SOFFA: Thanks to

6 Councilman Jones.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Where the

8 deer and the antelope also play.

9 MS. SOFFA: That's right.

10 Actually, we have coyotes now. We have

11 bear, as you know. Black bear in the

12 park, right?

13 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: You

14 have a bear in the park?

15 MS. MCCARTHY: We have had

16 bears. Actually, a singular bear. It's

17 unusual. Coyote.

18 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,

19 coyotes are now everywhere. In fact,

20 there's a really good picture of a coyote

21 running around in downtown Manhattan

22 between the taxies.

23 MS. MCCARTHY: Absolutely.

24 Foxes, bald eagles. We have some amazing

25 wildlife in the park, and we just want

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2 more people to be able to enjoy it and
3 really see it. This is an amazing birth
4 rate for Philadelphians. We want to make
5 sure they all get a chance to see it.

6 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
7 I look forward to seeing all the animals
8 you mentioned, with the exception of a
9 bear. I'm really not in a mood to see a
10 bear. That might be a problem if you got
11 too many bears.

12 MS. MCCARTHY: He's a lot more
13 afraid of you than you are of him.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
15 And I also wanted to thank you very, very
16 much for all your fine work,
17 Ms. McCarthy, because I heard from
18 Mr. Wetzel, I had a meeting with him, and
19 I'm excited to meet up with you and
20 possibly --

21 MS. MCCARTHY: I hope we'll see
22 you at our annual meeting in June, is my
23 I hope.

24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: When
25 is that? So I can put that on my

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2 calendar.

3 MS. MCCARTHY: June 6th.

4 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: June

5 6th. I will make every effort to be

6 there. I'll get back to you or

7 Mr. Wetzel on my availability.

8 MS. MCCARTHY: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank

10 you.

11 And, Chairman, thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

13 Councilman.

14 Councilman Oh.

15 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very

16 much.

17 Well, I'd just like to say that

18 I happen to have discovered that

19 Councilman Jones is not just a track

20 coach, but really a track coach who has

21 coached some young people to

22 championships, national championships,

23 state championships. He's actually a

24 very significant person. He always goes

25 to the Penn Relays. So he's quite an

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2 accomplished coach.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: We're going
4 to stay on subject now.

5 MS. SOFFA: May I just respond
6 to that, please. I'm happy to know that
7 you're a track coach, and on the same
8 topic, one of the tragic things that
9 happened in the park was one of my
10 daughter's friends was attacked by the
11 man who they thought was the Fairmount
12 Park rapist a couple years ago. It turns
13 out this young lady was a state-ranked
14 track star. So not only was she, luckily
15 was, able to fight the guy off, but then
16 she took off and he couldn't catch her.
17 She ran down to the main part of the park
18 where there was a fisherman. And no one
19 could really help her. The guy ran away,
20 though. Because there was no cell
21 coverage. So being a track star comes in
22 handy.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Those are
24 the situations we dread. It's one thing
25 to break an ankle and suffer a little

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2 bit, but it can get worse and we want to
3 make it better, and that's why we're here
4 today.

5 MS. SOFFA: Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN OH: I will say that
7 is in line with kind of my questions or
8 comments. So I do very much appreciate
9 the hearing. Unfortunately, many times
10 criminals target particularly abducting
11 children or women. They do it along the
12 edge of a park. And even though there
13 may be people or cars somewhere over
14 there, they just drag them into, you
15 know, the park area. And I live in
16 Southwest Philadelphia across from Cobbs
17 Creek Park. It's probably when I call
18 911 --

19 MS. SOFFA: It's a beautiful
20 park.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: -- I get
22 Delaware County.

23 Unfortunately at Whitby Avenue,
24 the facilities are not well maintained.
25 There used to be a tennis court. That's

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2 pretty much gone. Basketball court,
3 other things. But there have been
4 murders in the park, and unfortunately
5 with the crack epidemic came neighborhood
6 prostitution and other types of things.
7 I think it is very important that we have
8 connectivity for those purposes, for
9 lifesaving and other types of law
10 enforcement purposes.

11 I do have a question, however.
12 Once we're kind of deep into the woods --
13 and this has come up before -- I kind of
14 explored this topic, and I will be having
15 a demonstration at some point in time,
16 and that is about drones. So I do
17 support the connectivity. I just wonder
18 with today's technology just this massive
19 area and the capability of drones to see
20 in the dark, to have thermal, to
21 basically provide -- unfortunately, we
22 just don't -- you raised a wonderful
23 thing. I wish we could just say we have
24 more mounted and police and rangers.
25 We're all very tight on money. It just

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2 seems like the technology would be able
3 to provide for a lot of coverage and even
4 some preventative influence if criminals
5 particularly know that there is something
6 overhead patrolling.

7 We do run into some issues
8 about that. I think that's what we need
9 to explore. But do you have some ideas
10 on how to get the connectivity in an
11 environmentally friendly way, and what do
12 you think about like the drone patrol or
13 things like that?

14 MS. SOFFA: To answer your
15 question about the drones, when I said I
16 don't approve of drones, that's my
17 opinion, and I only meant in terms of
18 every kid can buy a drone for \$100 and
19 people have been starting to fly the
20 drones in our beautiful pristine
21 wilderness park.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: I agree with
23 you.

24 MS. SOFFA: And my --

25 COUNCILMAN OH: I agree, it has

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2 to be regulated.

3 MS. SOFFA: They went out in
4 the park. The drone came. The guy was
5 standing in the parking lot observing
6 them, taking a movie of them. This is
7 wrong. So that's a whole different
8 conversation and hopefully maybe another
9 hearing. I don't mean for law
10 enforcement --

11 COUNCILMAN OH: This
12 conversation is about law enforcement,
13 medical, that type of thing.

14 MS. SOFFA: I'd support that.
15 Absolutely. That's technology that I'm
16 sure we're going to all use. And they --
17 the Fifth District used that recently on
18 River Road in a sad incident where they
19 protected their officers by sending the
20 drone in through the window to see that
21 the suspect had killed himself, but
22 instead of sending the officer in, they
23 used a drone. So it's a perfect example
24 how drones are great, and we thank the
25 engineers that invented them, right? But

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2 I mean for personal recreational drone
3 use, you know, the major cities in the
4 country don't permit them in the public
5 places, New York, San Diego.

6 COUNCILMAN OH: And do you have
7 any ideas or have you seen anything about
8 how to create this connectivity or cell
9 phone, the wireless that is eco-friendly?

10 MS. SOFFA: I haven't. That
11 may be Maura.

12 MS. MCCARTHY: I have done a
13 little bit of research with other parks
14 alliance groups across the country. They
15 have used a number of different
16 strategies, but I think in this case
17 rather than us making suggestions, we're
18 really excited to hear from the industry
19 representatives here what they think the
20 best solutions are.

21 The problem when comparing our
22 park to other parks is, its topography is
23 really unique because it's a gorge. So
24 something that works beautifully even in
25 Pennypack may not be a good solution for

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2 the Wissahickon, and I think that that's
3 one of the things the industry
4 representatives are keenly aware of, is
5 that every site is unique and needs a
6 unique answer.

7 So we're just very excited and
8 receptive to hear what solutions they can
9 suggest to us and work together with all
10 of you and with them to find out the
11 right fit for each unique park location.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

13 Thank you very much.

14 Thank you, Chairman.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Councilman.

17 Are there any other questions
18 for this panel?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing none,
21 we'd like you to stay so that we can hear
22 from the industry experts and maybe
23 interact.

24 Who is the next group,
25 Ms. Williams?

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2 THE CLERK: Panel No. 2 will be
3 Aparna Palantino and Captain Francis
4 Healy.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
8 We appreciate you guys. Usually we let
9 the City of Philadelphia make a statement
10 first, but I wanted you to hear from the
11 stakeholders in the park area to kind of
12 crystallize what their concerns and
13 objectives for this hearing are.

14 Thank you once again, and
15 either of you may begin your testimony.
16 Thank you so much. State your name for
17 the record.

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PALANTINO:
19 Aparna Palantino.

20 Good morning, Chairman Jones
21 and Committee members. My name is Aparna
22 Palantino and I am the Deputy
23 Commissioner of Capital Infrastructure
24 and Natural Lands Management with
25 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation. I

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2 appear before you today on behalf of the
3 Department concerning Resolution No.
4 160904 introduced by Councilman Jones,
5 which examines the lack of cell phone
6 connectivity throughout Fairmount Park.

7 Public safety and quality of
8 life issues have always been a top
9 priority for Philadelphia Parks and
10 Recreation. As such, we have installed
11 security cameras and sonic devices at
12 more than 100 sites throughout the City.
13 We've also installed locator signs and
14 mile markers along trails, and work to
15 ensure this information is readily
16 available to both the Philadelphia Police
17 Department and Emergency Management
18 Services.

19 The mission of PPR is to
20 advance the prosperity of the City and
21 the progress of Philadelphians, their
22 intentional and sustained stewardship of
23 public land and waterways, as well as
24 through safe, stimulating recreation,
25 environmental, and cultural centers. Our

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2 facilities and park infrastructure is
3 changing more rapidly than at any
4 previous time in history. We are happy
5 to explore ways to improve cell
6 connectivity throughout our system while
7 also ensuring that any improvement will
8 not destroy natural lands and ecosystems.

9 We are grateful to Councilman
10 Jones for introducing this resolution and
11 for calling attention to the potential
12 safety risks to park users. PPR will
13 continue working with the Philadelphia
14 Police Department, members of Council,
15 constituents, and stakeholders to address
16 these issues of cellular connectivity and
17 public safety in parks.

18 Thank you for your time, and
19 I'm happy to answer any questions that
20 you may have.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: And for the
22 record, thank you for your receptiveness
23 to a changing condition that probably our
24 founding park fathers would have never,
25 could have never conceived of, but as we

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2 evolve, as technology evolves, we have to
3 respond to those needs, and you are open
4 to it and we are thankful for it.

5 CAPTAIN HEALY: Good morning,
6 Councilman Jones and other members of the
7 Committees on Public Safety and Parks and
8 Recreation and Cultural Affairs. My name
9 is Captain Francis Healy and I'm the
10 Special Advisor to Commissioner Ross. On
11 behalf of the Commissioner, thank you for
12 allowing the Police Department to testify
13 on the issue of cell phone access
14 throughout the Philadelphia Park System.

15 As we all know, the
16 Philadelphia Police Department is tasked
17 with responding to all crimes and calls
18 for service throughout the City, which
19 includes the vast park system within the
20 City. While I am personally aware that
21 Pennypack Park has implemented a mile
22 marker system for visitors to better
23 identify their actual location in the
24 park, the Police Department does
25 recognize that cell phone connectivity

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2 and marker systems are critical to
3 effectively responding to criminal
4 activity, but equally important when
5 responding to medical emergencies.

6 Having personally worked in the
7 police district that encompasses a large
8 portion of the park, I can confirm the
9 frustration and angst of responding
10 officers when the call to police is
11 either delayed or we simply cannot find
12 the exact location of the victim.

13 To express the context and
14 importance of this issue, I was asked to
15 provide some data. So I reached out to
16 our Mapping and Analysis Unit to compile
17 some statistics to include the crime
18 classifications for the last three years
19 from January to approximately this date.
20 Now, these numbers include not just the
21 park system but the recreation systems.
22 So don't get confused. This is not all
23 in the Pennypack and Fairmount Park.
24 It's much broader.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

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2 CAPTAIN HEALY: I chose this
3 time period so we could actually be
4 comparable.

5 So January 1 through May 9th
6 for 2015, '16, and '17, the Police
7 Department -- in 2015, there were 1,755
8 reported incidents in and around the
9 parks and recreation systems. In 2016,
10 there were 1,804 incidents. And this
11 year, 2017, for the same time period,
12 there has been 1,667 reported incidents.
13 While this represents a 7.5 percent
14 reduction from 2016, I believe these
15 statistics demonstrate the obvious need
16 and importance of cell phone connectivity
17 and marker systems within the park
18 systems.

19 That being said, the
20 Philadelphia Police Department
21 appreciates the recognition and future
22 efforts of City Council to address this
23 issue and to identify possible solutions
24 that would enhance the safety for all
25 park visitors.

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2 This concludes my testimony.

3 I'd be happy to answer any questions.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: And I

5 appreciate you guys coming forward.

6 Sometimes when we look at a problem, I

7 want you to know we don't do it from a

8 "gotcha" moment. It is, let's get it and

9 let's get it fixed opportunity, and

10 you've always been that way, and I

11 appreciate that.

12 CAPTAIN HEALY: Thank you, sir.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: To your

14 knowledge -- recognizing also the

15 presence of Councilman Green, who also

16 represents all of the park and uses it.

17 All right.

18 So in those instances, in the

19 parks that you can codify and segregate

20 that, have we had instances where people

21 cited that they could not call 911?

22 CAPTAIN HEALY: I have

23 anecdotal. I don't have statistical

24 data, but, yes.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'll take

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2 anecdotal.

3 CAPTAIN HEALY: Yes. I have
4 heard anecdotally that people have a
5 difficult time in the park, especially
6 Fairmount Park. I believe the dynamics
7 of Pennypack Park make it a little better
8 in the fact that it's much narrower, so
9 there's access to towers on either side
10 of them from Northeast Philadelphia. And
11 I'm actually in Pennypack Park almost
12 every Saturday, so I understand the
13 problem. I've seen it evolve very
14 positively. The mile marker system in
15 Pennypack Park was incredibly important.

16 I worked in the 8th District
17 for quite a few years, and it was very
18 problematic when we would get a call for
19 service. Trying to locate somebody in
20 the park was incredibly difficult. They
21 would say they went in off the one road
22 and they actually walked a mile, and the
23 accessibility of finding out where they
24 were was very difficult. So I'm very
25 thankful for the mile marker system that

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2 has been installed, and it has helped the
3 police officer.

4 Our job is to get there as
5 quickly and safely as possible, but
6 sometimes we'll walk down a park. You
7 don't know whether to turn right or left.
8 So having that type of information is a
9 big enhancement in the park, and I'm very
10 much appreciative from the Police
11 Department's perspective that it's there.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: It's kind of
13 easy to get turned around when all trees
14 start to look alike to you. And for our
15 super park participants, that's not the
16 case. They know the moss grows on the
17 north side of the tree and all that
18 Daniel Boone stuff, but for folk like me,
19 without this cell phone, you know, to GPS
20 my way out of it, it might become
21 difficult.

22 Let me ask the hard question of
23 how many of those are assaults and
24 violent crimes?

25 CAPTAIN HEALY: I can get you

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2 that data if you want. I didn't break it
3 down. I just got the basic numbers,
4 because that's what I thought you wanted,
5 but I can break it down and I can
6 actually narrow it down to actually
7 what's in the park per se as opposed to
8 the rec centers so you have a better
9 picture, and I can get you that data.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: If you can
11 provide that to me, I'll share that with
12 members of the Committee.

13 So that is not our emphasis
14 today. Our emphasis is how to make sure
15 going forward that we are a safer park
16 system.

17 Are you aware of the problem
18 when people call 911 receiving Delaware
19 and Whitemarsh and other places like
20 that?

21 CAPTAIN HEALY: That happens on
22 all borders. It depends where you bounce
23 your cell phone tower off of. So even if
24 you're in Philadelphia, if the closest
25 tower may be a Delaware County tower,

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2 that's where your call would go to, and
3 then all our 911 systems, they speak to
4 each other, quite frankly, and they
5 bounce the calls rather quickly.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: So they
7 transfer it quickly?

8 CAPTAIN HEALY: Correct.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm glad
10 about that, but is there, I guess, in our
11 next panel a question of how we can
12 narrow that down so that that shaves that
13 response time off of that. So I don't
14 need you to answer it, but I'm hoping
15 that we will get some answers.

16 Any other questions by members
17 of the panel?

18 Councilman.

19 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
20 Captain, are you aware of any places in
21 the park citywide where traditional
22 police radio doesn't work?

23 CAPTAIN HEALY: I'll be very
24 honest with you. Personally, no. But
25 I'm not saying that we haven't had issues

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2 or spotty issues. I actually have an
3 e-mail into my radio commander right now
4 asking if he's aware of any permanent and
5 continual problems. As soon as I get you
6 an answer on that, I'd be happy to report
7 back.

8 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
9 you. Because what was described by Ms.
10 Soffa earlier in testimony was that
11 sometimes police use cell phones.

12 CAPTAIN HEALY: Correct.

13 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
14 if cell phones aren't working and police
15 radio doesn't work, it could be a real
16 problem.

17 CAPTAIN HEALY: Radio access
18 for our officers is -- officer safety is
19 paramount concern. So I will look
20 into -- I know sometimes there is spotty
21 issues due to the terrain. I knew it can
22 be an issue. I'm not going to say it's
23 not, but I don't know if it's a pervasive
24 issue that -- if it were, I'm sure it
25 would have reached the Commissioner's

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2 level.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
4 mean, there would be a protocol, I guess,
5 in place that in the regular part of the
6 City if police radio did not work for
7 whatever reason --

8 CAPTAIN HEALY: Correct.

9 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: --
10 you'd be on it pretty quickly.

11 CAPTAIN HEALY: When the radio
12 goes down, I do believe they
13 automatically put officers double team in
14 cars. It's two officers to a car rather
15 than one.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: But I
17 mean also to resolve the problem --

18 CAPTAIN HEALY: Oh, absolutely.
19 Yes. Yes. We would reach -- not me, but
20 the radio command staff would immediately
21 reach out to a contractor and work on the
22 patches or how to fix whatever problems
23 we have.

24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Are
25 there any places in the City of

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2 Philadelphia where Philadelphia Police
3 are on regular patrol in the park at all?

4 CAPTAIN HEALY: Each district,
5 each police district, is responsible for
6 its portion of the park that falls within
7 their geographical boundaries. So I'm
8 aware that, yes, the captains in these
9 districts do in fact provide motorcycle,
10 dirt bike patrols, as well as the bicycle
11 patrols will be mixed in as a part of
12 their overall prevention and
13 crime-fighting strategies, yes.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
15 Because the very known fact that police
16 officers are in the park at any given
17 time just showing the flag by going
18 through I think sometimes stifles crime.

19 CAPTAIN HEALY: And I don't
20 know if this is good or bad, but I've
21 been around long enough to remember this,
22 but when the dirt bike program was
23 initiated, it was initiated due to the
24 fact that the vast park systems that we
25 had and our inability to access a lot of

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2 those areas via car. That is in fact why
3 the dirt bikes were actually implemented
4 into a lot of the districts that border
5 these parks. And we have a pretty robust
6 system.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Is
8 there a protocol in place, for example,
9 if everything does work, somebody has a
10 problem -- for example, the scenario I
11 outlined where the fellow got hit with a
12 bike and the bicycle just kept going, but
13 say he would have had a cell phone and if
14 he would have called and said, Look, I
15 just got run over, I believe I may have
16 broken my leg, is there sort of a
17 protocol for somebody to be able to find
18 that person?

19 CAPTAIN HEALY: 911. The issue
20 is we're trying to identify exactly where
21 he is. I don't think we have -- we can't
22 pinpoint his location from police radio,
23 but nonetheless having the mile marker
24 systems in the park and knowing where
25 they came in the park is usually a

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2 benefit. So, yeah, we'll access them as
3 soon as possible.

4 We have enough officers that
5 can get into the park nowadays to assist
6 and render aid. So that type of concern
7 is not -- like I'm not afraid I can't get
8 into the park, because, you know, the
9 barriers for the other vehicles can't get
10 in, they block us as well. That's why we
11 have to have alternate methods to get in,
12 the bicycles, we have the motorcycles.
13 We have a lot of other accesses into the
14 park.

15 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
16 mean, is that kind of reviewed from time
17 to time that if an incident were to
18 happen in whatever place in one of the --
19 that the officers have an understanding
20 of getting into that park? What you just
21 said is absolutely true. It could be
22 preventative to police as well.

23 CAPTAIN HEALY: I can tell you
24 from experience. I worked right around
25 Pennypack Park, and we knew the access

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2 point. I knew how to get in, I knew
3 where I could get in, and how far I could
4 get with my car. I'll be honest with
5 you, I'd have my police car deeper into
6 Pennypack Park than I really want to
7 admit right now, but we've been able to
8 get in there when I've needed to get in
9 there, and the officers that work those
10 areas are intimately aware of what they
11 can do.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: So
13 the officers you think are trained?
14 Because not everyone has that intimate
15 knowledge as you that growing up in that
16 area.

17 CAPTAIN HEALY: I will say
18 they're not officially trained, but when
19 you come to that district, that's your
20 sector -- I'm sorry; that's your PSA.
21 You're going to know and learn those
22 access points, because that's critical to
23 your job, because we need to be able to
24 respond there. That would be one of the
25 first things that I know that officers

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2 will look to find out.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.

4 Thank you very much.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

6 Councilman.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Mr.

8 Chairman, thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is there a

10 reason you would map connectivity at all?

11 Is that just something you live with or

12 is it something you know or can map and

13 say if I go into this section, I'm going

14 to be off my cell phone?

15 CAPTAIN HEALY: I don't know.

16 I'll be very honest. I don't really know

17 that answer. We do have maps of the park

18 in our police districts, so the officers

19 are aware of the structure of the park,

20 but the mile marker system that's been

21 put in place is actually probably the

22 most important thing I think that's been

23 put in the park, because, like I said,

24 people you walk in -- people walk in one

25 road and they'll run two miles or three

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2 miles down, but it winds all over. So
3 that's not the -- that may not be the
4 quickest way to access the park. So you
5 say I entered from, let's say, Pine Road,
6 but you've already run up to Willits
7 Road. I mean, at that point, you're four
8 miles away. The officers need to know a
9 better way to get to you quicker, and
10 they do.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: So if I have
12 a cell phone tower that I can connect to,
13 I'm going to push my GPS, push home and
14 Siri is going to tell me how to get
15 there. I think solutions technologically
16 might be at hand.

17 CAPTAIN HEALY: I've been in
18 the park. The problem is when you do
19 that, you'll come up and it would be a
20 green mass on the AT&T maps, but, I mean,
21 that will be something --

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: So there's
23 no street to turn left on.

24 CAPTAIN HEALY: Hey, listen, I
25 think there's an opportunity for someone

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2 to come up with a very creative app to
3 figure that out, because there is some
4 very detailed maps of the pathways and
5 the walkways in the park, but when you go
6 on your cell phone, you'll just see a
7 green dot -- I'm sorry; your dot will be
8 on overall green park area. It won't see
9 exactly where you're at in the park.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: So my final
11 question would be, is there pole
12 electrical outlet infrastructure to
13 support some of the solutions that I
14 believe are going to be proposed?

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PALANTINO:
16 I suppose it would depend on the exact
17 solution that's determined. There is
18 infrastructure going to a lot of areas.
19 The capacity would have to be determined
20 based on the solution.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: And we're
22 going to hear from them next, but I'm
23 wondering if you have an electrical
24 outlet pole that is feeding a wire or the
25 Cobra lighting system that we have in

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2 some parts of the park, is that
3 compatible with what the technology that
4 is being proposed? And I guess we're
5 going to find that out.

6 Do we have any other questions
7 for this panel?

8 CAPTAIN HEALY: To answer that
9 one question, one thing in other parks
10 that I've seen from around the country, I
11 know -- I don't know if they're here
12 personally, but the use of cellular --
13 not cellular; solar technology for
14 lighting and those kind of things. So it
15 avoids having to run those wires and
16 disrupt the ecosystem of the park.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I'm not a
18 geek. I'm going to listen to the geeks
19 to tell me what the technological
20 solution is. I mean, they're cool geeks
21 now. Geeks aren't what they used to be.

22 So does anybody have any other
23 questions?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing none,

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2 bring on the geeks.

3 Who is the next panel?

4 THE CLERK: The next panel is

5 Doug Smith, Andrew Peterson, Joseph

6 Divis, and Vilma Sneed.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: And a

8 good-looking group of geeks they are. I

9 don't know, Doug. You don't look like a

10 geek. I know you're smart, but you don't

11 look quite the part.

12 (Witnesses approached witness

13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: You can pull

15 a chair up.

16 Thank you guys for your

17 patience and thank you for listening to

18 the testimony before you in order to give

19 us some options and possibilities.

20 So state your name. Pull the

21 mic close to you and state your name for

22 the record and begin your testimony.

23 MR. SMITH: Great. Good

24 morning, Councilmembers. Thank you very

25 much for the opportunity to talk about

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2 cell signal coverage in Fairmount Park.

3 For the record, my name is Doug Smith,

4 Vice President, State Government Affairs

5 for Verizon, and joining me today is

6 Andrew Peterson, a professional engineer

7 and contract employee to Verizon, works

8 in our wireless organization specifically

9 in Philadelphia. He'll be able to answer

10 any very technical questions that we

11 might get into.

12 But as, Councilman Jones, you

13 may recall back in the fall, you and I

14 talked a little bit about the Fairmount

15 Park cell signal issues, and I produced a

16 map. That map displays Verizon's cell

17 coverage in Fairmount Park, and we have a

18 blowup of that map here today.

19 Now, in Verizon Wireless world,

20 when we do a cell signal map, we color

21 code it, and the color code of green is

22 good. And if you will notice, that map

23 is blanketed in green. So we're very

24 pleased with that, and we understand that

25 it satisfies all of the park. We believe

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2 it's over 99 percent coverage of the
3 Verizon cell signals. And to add to
4 that, we are adding yet another tower
5 that should be online in 2018, which will
6 add, as I like to call it, another lane
7 to an already three-lane super highway.
8 So we're adding yet another tower again
9 coming online in 2018.

10 Now, what we did here earlier
11 was a little bit about dead spots. And
12 while the map shows that we have 99
13 percent coverage throughout Fairmount
14 Park, clearly there's going to be spots,
15 maybe at the bottom of a gorge next to a
16 30-foot rock outcropping, where your
17 Verizon signal may drop.

18 There's a two-part solution to
19 that. The first is, we need to know
20 where that happens. So when your
21 constituency comes to you, I need your
22 staff to reach to me so we can work to
23 solve that problem.

24 But to solve that problem and
25 to be environmentally sensitive, we have

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2 an opportunity to partner with City
3 Council. Right now the zoning for
4 Fairmount Park precludes, prevents
5 wireless facilities from being
6 constructed there. If we're going to
7 find and resolve those dead spots, I need
8 the ability to put small cells somewhere
9 in that park, whether it's light
10 standards or monopoles to take care of
11 those pockets that I just described.
12 Again, we don't have many in the Verizon
13 network, but where they exist, I need the
14 zoning flexibility. So I need that
15 ordinance to be examined, opened, and
16 revised for Fairmount Park. Be happy to
17 work with my peers, the Friends of the
18 Wissahickon, as well as your staff to see
19 if we can get that ordinance revised.

20 Again, we're not talking about
21 180-foot towers here. We're talking
22 about opportunities for small cells to
23 sit on top of traffic lights to fill in
24 voids because of the topography.

25 Again, environmentally

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2 sensitive would be the goal. We'd work
3 very closely with the Friends of
4 Wissahickon and others as well as your
5 staff.

6 So at this time, we don't have
7 any formal remarks beyond that, and I'd
8 be happy to turn it over to my friends in
9 the industry, starting with Joe Divis.

10 MR. DIVIS: Good morning,
11 Mr. Chairman and members of Council. My
12 name is Joe Divis, Assistant Vice
13 President, External Affairs for AT&T.
14 Thanks for having us here today,
15 Mr. Chairman. We appreciate the
16 opportunity to discuss this important
17 issue.

18 One of the things I wanted to
19 do coming into this hearing -- and I've
20 taken some pretty copious notes -- is to
21 hear from folks that are in the park
22 system all the time, particularly the
23 Wissahickon Valley area.

24 One of the things that we take,
25 as Doug said, one of the important

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2 metrics that we use for improving and
3 enhancing our networks is customer input,
4 both anecdotal and formal, along with all
5 the other measurements that our technical
6 people, our engineers do. So this is
7 very helpful, and we actually had a lot
8 of dialogue before the hearing started
9 that I think is throwing some ideas
10 around and making us more sensitive to
11 what some of the experiences are. So
12 that's very important, and we thank you
13 for that.

14 One of the things I wanted to
15 talk about just very briefly is in
16 addition to the coverage that you talk
17 about, one of the dynamics that we've
18 seen throughout the industry over the
19 last several years is the huge use of
20 bandwidth and data-intensive activity on
21 our networks. For AT&T alone, since
22 2007, we've seen a 250,000 percent
23 increase in data traffic on our network,
24 250,000 percent increase. And that's
25 only going to go up.

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2 Industry folks that study this
3 information say that by 2020, mobile data
4 traffic all across the board is expected
5 to be six times the volume of the entire
6 U.S. Internet from 2005. So it's just
7 exploding, and a number of those
8 applications, some of them are for --
9 they're video streaming, they're
10 entertainment, but a lot of
11 mission-critical things that are
12 data-intensive and data hungry are going
13 through our networks. Firefighters who
14 need building plans when they're going to
15 fight a fire, that's got to go through to
16 their tablets and things like that.
17 Paramedics that are dealing with a sick
18 patient, sending information or getting
19 information from hospitals, that's all
20 data intensive.

21 We talked about drones and the
22 visual capacity of drones. That is data
23 intensive, and those drones generally
24 work off of the mobile network. So we're
25 seeing that is just coming at us like

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2 floods. And you see when we have
3 activities on the Parkway, like the papal
4 visit, the Draft, where you have all of
5 that intense gathering of folks, we got
6 to make sure that we have coverages.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: You put up
8 boosters.

9 MR. DIVIS: We did. We
10 actually worked collaboratively to put an
11 outdoor distributed antenna system, which
12 I think if you go up and down the park,
13 you would never notice it unless you
14 actually tried to look for it. That was
15 a huge bit of progress that we all made
16 in working together to look at something
17 that really we think benefits the City
18 and benefits the experience of people who
19 are using -- visiting and even the
20 commerce of the City.

21 One of the things that I did
22 want to mention as well is that in the
23 last three years, AT&T has invested \$450
24 million in our networks in the
25 Philadelphia area to address all of the

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2 concerns and all of the needs that our
3 customers have where there's coverage
4 capacity, and that is a never-ending
5 endeavor, never-ending. So as much
6 progress as we've made, we continue to
7 work to look at all of the needs of our
8 customers in the City of Philadelphia, in
9 the surrounding suburban region, and
10 really across the country.

11 So I look forward to continuing
12 this dialogue as we go forward with the
13 stakeholders from the park, with the City
14 and see what we can do. It's a
15 challenging -- it is, as was stated by
16 previous witnesses, very, very
17 challenging topography and terrain, very
18 environmentally sensitive. So there's
19 not -- there's some work to do and
20 conversations to have.

21 Thank you very much.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: So is your
23 map synonymous, the two maps, by way of
24 connectivity over that park land?

25 MR. DIVIS: I haven't seen his

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2 map and I don't think Doug has seen my
3 map. We are competitors, so we try not
4 to -- we do --

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: No
6 commingling of maps.

7 MR. SMITH: That's why I put my
8 map here, so he couldn't see it.

9 MR. DIVIS: I will tell you
10 that we do a lot of co-location on our
11 cell sites where you may see a tower or a
12 building and you'll see multiple antenna
13 arrays. So that is something we do, but
14 beyond that, we are competitors and we --

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we'd like
16 to know connectivity-wise, there's always
17 been a marketing piece that -- what's the
18 difference in one percent. Well, in the
19 park, what is the percent difference?

20 MR. DIVIS: I'd have to go and
21 investigate that. I wouldn't know.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Doug is
23 sitting there pretty confident.

24 MR. DIVIS: Oh, I know he is.
25 That's okay.

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2 MR. SMITH: That's a style
3 thing.

4 MR. DIVIS: It's also, I think,
5 important as we discuss this that it is
6 radio, and radio has certain
7 characteristics of how it reacts to huge
8 buildings like of granite and how it
9 penetrates, as well as that deep, deep
10 valleys and heavily wooded areas. It's
11 line of sight. That's what the device --
12 the wireless part is from the device to
13 the antennas. And any time you have
14 things that can get in the way of that
15 signal, it can inhibit.

16 Capacity at a cell site can
17 also inhibit the signal strength or can
18 affect whether in one day you may have
19 three bars and the other day you may have
20 one bar. There's a lot of different
21 elements to running a network in addition
22 to the different spectrum bands that we
23 have to utilize that have different
24 propagation characteristics. So it's a
25 very complicated effort that our

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2 engineers and technical folks do.

3 We try to make it as seamless
4 as possible obviously for our customers
5 and cover every area that we can with
6 enough bandwidth and capacity to serve
7 those areas, but it's a continuing
8 endeavor. It never ends. And I think
9 the words of Vince Lombardi perhaps are
10 good here: We strive for perfection and
11 we achieve excellence. That's kind of
12 how we try to do it.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: That was a
14 very interesting response.

15 So let me simplify. If I'm
16 with one provider versus another, there
17 may be different receptions, drops
18 depending on where your infrastructure is
19 located versus his, correct?

20 MR. DIVIS: Yes, sir.

21 MR. PETERSON: Councilman, if I
22 may.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: You got to
24 turn that mic on. Just push the button.

25 You can sit down.

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2 MR. PETERSON: Thank you for
3 the opportunity. I just wanted to say as
4 an independent radio frequency design
5 engineer, I see the networks from both of
6 these providers as well as --

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you
8 state your name for the record.

9 MR. PETERSON: Andrew Peterson.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

11 MR. PETERSON: I see the
12 networks of these providers as well as
13 some of the others in the area, and to
14 the point that was just made, even if
15 these providers are on the same exact
16 structures in an area like this, which
17 I'm not saying they are, but even if they
18 were, their antennas would be at
19 different heights. They're operating
20 with slightly different parameters,
21 slightly different equipment, slightly
22 different antennas, et cetera. So even
23 in a scenario where we have the exact
24 same co-located facilities surrounding,
25 you're going to have different coverage,

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2 and then that coverage is affected by a
3 lot of variables, seasonality, whether
4 the leaves are on the trees or they're
5 off the trees, what type of capacity
6 demand is on the network at any given
7 moment and --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: So those
9 streamings that are talked about, that
10 250,000 increase impacts drops?

11 MR. PETERSON: Absolutely. As
12 capacity demand continues to grow and the
13 networks continue to load as they have,
14 we do what we can with the resources and
15 the technological advancements to keep
16 up, which has accommodated that 250,000
17 percent increase over the last decade,
18 but as the network loads, the signal
19 quality degrades. That's just a matter
20 of how the technology works, which
21 actually shrinks coverage footprints.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm going to
23 dive in here, and bear with me on
24 terminology. Is it a question of
25 infrastructure and antenna placement or

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2 bandwidth and capacity?

3 MR. PETERSON: Yes. If we seek
4 to provide service into the park that
5 is -- the example was made earlier of
6 someone who is going to sit on a rock and
7 stream Netflix at a low elevation point
8 in the park. If that's the robust data
9 service that we seek to provide, we will
10 have to add resources into the park in
11 terms of whatever those look and feel
12 like from an environmentally sensitive
13 perspective, but we will have to have
14 additional resources in the park. You
15 can't provide that type of service from
16 an outside-in type of design.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: So if I'm --
18 two different scenarios. If I'm sitting
19 at a different location and a group of
20 ducks meander down the stream and I want
21 to FaceTime that live, is that a
22 different experience than if I want to
23 call 911?

24 MR. PETERSON: Absolutely.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: So which one

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2 is more reliable and which one may fade?

3 MR. PETERSON: The voice call
4 is going to require a less robust radio
5 channel. So that will have a higher
6 probability of going through regardless
7 of your environment. If we're talking
8 about a FaceTime call versus a typical
9 voice call, a 911 call, that will have a
10 higher probability. Depending on where
11 you are, they may both go through with --

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: So our
13 priority, at least my priority -- I'm not
14 speaking for my colleagues -- is the
15 voice call, is the emergency access, and
16 those things -- I want everybody to
17 experience live streaming and the
18 environmental projection of what's going
19 on around you, but if you need an
20 ambulance, that is our priority.

21 So one of the things that I'm
22 beginning to hear is that there needs to
23 be a three-sided discussion between our
24 stewards of the park, between our actual
25 commissioners and stewards within

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2 government, and the tech people within
3 the industry to compromise on how much
4 aesthetics, how much environmental are we
5 willing to -- so for me aesthetically --
6 and no disrespect to you guys -- I hate
7 those towers, phone towers, that are
8 disguised as trees. They're not fooling
9 anyone. They are not fooling the birds,
10 the bees or me. But if you're talking
11 about smaller towers that might be on top
12 of a light pole, those solutions might be
13 more acceptable to our environmentalists.

14 MR. SMITH: That's the
15 conversation that we need to have with
16 the Friends of the Wissahickon, your
17 staff, and the City so that we can get
18 the zoning ordinance addressed.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Councilman
20 Green.

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chair.

23 With the newer technology that
24 you have before cell phone operations,
25 I'm curious in reference to -- because

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2 I've seen some of the smaller -- and I
3 think you made reference to the -- I
4 don't want to call it the tower, but
5 they're the smaller cell phone --

6 MR. SMITH: Small cells.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Small cells,
8 which can be placed. I mean, how many
9 would you need to place within Fairmount
10 Park? I know you haven't done an
11 assessment, but I'm just trying to think
12 of the type of those small cells that
13 could be brought into the park without
14 having an overly negative impact on the
15 aesthetic of the park. How would you
16 balance the two?

17 This is for anyone on the
18 panel.

19 MR. PETERSON: I've done some
20 back-of-the-envelope type calculations
21 for that. Best I can figure, the
22 southern portion of the park, it's about
23 4,000 acres. The northern, I think I
24 heard earlier testimony that that was
25 about 2,000 acres. Each small cell --

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2 now, this would depend on a lot of
3 factors, so you can't hold me to this
4 number, but under ideal conditions, small
5 cell can cover about 72 acres. So if we
6 were to blanket the park, blanket the
7 park with that robust data service, if
8 that was the goal, so beyond voice
9 service at least from Verizon's
10 perspective is already pretty good, 99
11 percent coverage or so, but if the goal
12 is to blanket the park with that robust
13 data service, we would be on the order of
14 100 nodes. So 100 of those small cells,
15 which is a lot. If the goal was let's
16 just fill in some of those dead spots,
17 then that's a completely different
18 conversation, and I don't know that that
19 was the question.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Yeah. That
21 gives me a little perspective, because, I
22 mean, 100 is --

23 MR. PETERSON: It's a lot.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That's a
25 lot.

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2 MR. PETERSON: It's a lot of
3 infrastructure.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And I'm also
5 curious in other parks, I'm thinking
6 of -- I'm in DC a lot, like Rock Creek
7 Park or other parks around the country.
8 What other type of telecommunication
9 infrastructure have been used to provide
10 coverage in other parks that are heavily
11 used by pedestrians where you don't
12 have -- well, not just pedestrians, but
13 people walking, entertaining and you
14 don't have cell coverage? Is that
15 something you may know or people on the
16 panel may know?

17 MR. DIVIS: I think the other
18 thing to throw into this conversation is
19 the infrastructure that is needed to
20 support any new cell sites. You need
21 electric. You need backhaul. Once the,
22 whatever, whether it's the voice call or
23 the data, goes from your handset to the
24 cell site, it then has to get transmitted
25 to wherever it's going to go. So you

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2 need a lot of infrastructure along with
3 the radios and the antennas that go with
4 all that.

5 So I think in the -- it's easy
6 to kind of say in the abstract, you do
7 this or that, but then it gets real
8 complicated as to how you then engineer
9 something like that, as well as then
10 working with all the other wireless
11 providers and where their signal is and
12 how -- so it's a very complicated
13 endeavor, and I think what at least from
14 my standpoint with today, we're kind of
15 starting the conversation with the
16 stakeholders and with the industry,
17 because it's a complex problem because
18 the area is so challenging, and it's
19 going to take, I think, a lot of
20 creativity that's going to have to adapt
21 to the realities of the network as well
22 as the sensitivities of the area.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I mean, I
24 understand that, but I'm curious from
25 what's been the experience in other

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2 parts. Are there any other comparable
3 locations where cell towers were used to
4 provide coverage?

5 MS. SNEED: If I can chime in.
6 My name is Vilma Sneed. I'm actually a
7 Government --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you pull
9 that over.

10 MS. SNEED: My name is Vilma
11 Sneed. I'm a Government Relations
12 Manager for Mobilitie, and actually
13 unlike my panel colleagues here, our
14 company is not a wireless carrier. We
15 actually provide the wireless
16 infrastructure across the United States.
17 So we work with all of the major carriers
18 to deploy their networks. We do DAS
19 systems. We do WiFi. And most recently
20 we worked actually with Sprint, who is
21 one of our partners, installing small
22 cells and transport networks across the
23 United States.

24 So the challenging thing that
25 we have seen that Mr. Smith has already

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2 pointed out is some zoning issues. So
3 even in areas where we would want to
4 deploy infrastructure, we run into zoning
5 concerns from the municipalities that
6 frankly prevents us from installing our
7 infrastructure. And here in
8 Philadelphia, we actually do work with
9 the City. We work with the Streets
10 Department deploying small cell network
11 for Sprint and we work with PECO to
12 actually attach small cells to PECO
13 structures and to City-owned structures.
14 So that is something that we would
15 propose to the City for the park, would
16 be to install small cells.

17 But as my colleagues have
18 mentioned, there's some concerns about
19 getting power to the site or locating it
20 in the type of environment. And one of
21 the big concerns, as you mentioned,
22 Councilman, as far as putting it in other
23 parks, a lot of parks across the country
24 don't allow us to install infrastructure,
25 and that's just because they have kind of

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2 antiquated zoning regulations that pretty
3 much do not allow wireless infrastructure
4 in those parks. So that's something that
5 if you guys would be willing to work with
6 the carriers and with us, obviously we
7 can remedy that situation and install
8 infrastructure in the park, where
9 possible.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I guess the
11 concern is, I mean, if you did
12 legislation to rezone, that could
13 possibly open things up in a broader
14 perspective going forward. Although as a
15 person who has done zoning for a number
16 of years as an attorney, I'm not a fan of
17 doing variances, but this seems like it's
18 something that's more aligned to a
19 variance where you're just allowing a
20 smaller use without changing the zoning
21 of part of the park, which could possibly
22 open things up in a much broader
23 perspective.

24 When I think like, for example,
25 the park and specifically I'm thinking of

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2 the parking lot at Bells Mill Road,
3 Valley Green and other locations where
4 you could have small like cell towers in
5 areas that are not going to be as
6 disruptive to the park. They probably
7 wouldn't give you full coverage, but if
8 you think that location, Valley Green,
9 the former -- I guess that was when the
10 Police Department had that property, it
11 used to be District 92, that location,
12 which -- I mean, there's a way you could
13 provide additional coverage without
14 impacting the beauty and antiquity of the
15 park.

16 MS. SNEED: Absolutely. And I
17 think some of the concerns we have seen
18 from the local governments across the
19 country is, of course, aesthetics, and
20 we're very aware of that, and I provided
21 Councilman with a presentation with kind
22 of an example of small cells that we have
23 deployed across the country. So they can
24 be attached to light poles. They can be
25 attached to new poles that are kind of

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2 blended with the environment that are
3 painted. The equipment can be painted.
4 There's shrouding options.

5 So as far as the aesthetical
6 concerns of the park -- and we've heard
7 some other panelists discuss their
8 concerns about that -- I'm sure all the
9 carriers and infrastructure providers,
10 that is something that can be worked on.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And just one
12 last question. I kind of think that the
13 balance is how do you balance the
14 magistry of the park. I mean, when I
15 run in Valley Green, which I do somewhat
16 regularly, I like the fact that I can't
17 be reached by cell phone but for -- I
18 mean --

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is that
20 why --

21 COUNCILMAN GREEN: No. I mean,
22 my son is 16. So I remember when he was
23 very young, my wife and I would walk
24 there on Saturday mornings or like
25 Sundays after church with my son and my

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2 dog, and we couldn't get any coverage,
3 and that was, you know -- it was
4 basically our oasis, and that's one of
5 the benefits of the park. It's kind of
6 an oasis within the City, away from all
7 of the technology and life, but at the
8 same point, if I was running and I've had
9 friends who have had a heart condition,
10 if you have a heart attack or something
11 like that and if you're doing it at a
12 time like early, early in the morning --
13 I tend to run at like quarter of 5:00 in
14 the morning -- and if someone is not
15 there or from a public safety perspective
16 for both men and women if they're running
17 late at night, especially in the
18 summertime when it's warm at night, that
19 provides other concerns.

20 So the ultimate question is how
21 do we balance between the aesthetics of
22 the park and also public safety for
23 citizens in the City.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
25 Councilman.

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2 So I think a couple of things
3 we've gathered, that there's a
4 willingness to figure this out. I think
5 that's very important. I think we have
6 the stakeholders to figure it out, the
7 City representatives, the friends of the
8 park, and the technical providers, that
9 we can create a balance that allows for
10 environmentally sensitive technology to
11 cover the dead zones without taking away
12 from the aesthetics.

13 I think also that -- and I
14 guess this is a technical question. Do
15 you guys kind of share some of the
16 infrastructure as well? So if you're on
17 a pole and you own the technology, you'll
18 work it out in some type of easement or
19 cooperative agreement on providing that
20 service; is that correct?

21 MS. SNEED: Yes.

22 MR. SMITH: Yes.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: So you're
24 working together already. So this is not
25 an uncommon concept.

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2 So what I'd like to do, if it
3 pleases the members of this Committee, is
4 to give us, I'm going to say, six months
5 to figure it all out. Maybe not that
6 long. Let's go with September to figure
7 it out and reconvene to see what creative
8 solutions you guys have come up with.

9 I will say that we have one
10 other area where this type of public
11 safety and technology merge is with the
12 kiosks. Superman can no longer change in
13 a phone booth because there are no phone
14 booths, but what New York has done -- and
15 that's a subject for another hearing --
16 is created these kiosks for charging, for
17 data use, and for emergency calls,
18 similar to the ones that you see near
19 hospitals and/or college campuses that
20 are provided for the convenience of the
21 students and protection of the staff and
22 students.

23 So what I'd like to do is give
24 you some time to figure this out. I like
25 your green map, but there are different

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2 shades of green that we can probably get
3 a little more out of, and then convene
4 with our colleagues to see how that
5 works, particularly in areas not just in
6 Valley Green but in Pennypack, in Cobbs
7 Creek, in other areas so that we get a
8 bigger picture view. Also in light of
9 what we might provide for solutions by
10 way of emergency calls that don't bump
11 into Delaware County or Whitemarsh and if
12 there is a tweaking that can happen with
13 that to give us added safety protections.

14 MR. DIVIS: Councilman, on
15 that, we continue to tweak the network on
16 that, and sometimes I think, as discussed
17 earlier, when you're at the border like
18 that of the municipalities, the radio
19 waves don't -- they don't understand
20 Montgomery County, Delaware County,
21 Philadelphia County, and if the cell site
22 that you're closest to for whatever
23 reason is in the other county, that's
24 where -- the phone looks for the
25 strongest signal. If a cell is at

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2 capacity and the call needs to get
3 completed, it may bounce to some other
4 one.

5 So I think we all as carriers
6 continue to work and make sure that the
7 sectors are directed and the translations
8 are done in a way that if a call is made
9 from Philadelphia, it's going to go to
10 Philadelphia, Delaware County, vice
11 versa, but you just do have those
12 instances, and I think that's just the
13 nature of radio and how radio will act in
14 finding the strongest signal or when a
15 cell site is at capacity and it has to
16 bounce to another to make sure the call
17 gets completed, because that's
18 essentially the most important thing,
19 make sure that call gets to somebody who
20 can then act on it.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we agree
22 that the perfect should not be the enemy
23 of the good, but we can always strive to
24 get better.

25 MR. DIVIS: Absolutely.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we want
3 to be able to say can you hear me now
4 and, by doing that, safeguard our
5 citizens and provide a better service to
6 your customers.

7 So if there are no other
8 questions -- Councilman.

9 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Not
10 questions, but closing comments. And,
11 Mr. Chairman, I agree with you and I
12 think there should be a follow-up maybe
13 some time in September or so, and maybe
14 even the Committee can write a letter to
15 you with our concerns just to memorialize
16 what we just talked about, because I
17 thought we had a very good meeting here,
18 very good hearing. We got ideas and
19 thoughts that are actually new to me, and
20 I'm a park user.

21 And I would have to agree with
22 my colleague Councilman Green that
23 sometimes it's great not to have that
24 cell phone ringing, but I would like to
25 have that option of the person turning

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2 their cell phone off, that when they
3 really needed it, that that cell phone
4 was really there for their use.

5 I mean, there's a lot of power
6 here. The computer power in these phones
7 is more than all of the computers that
8 sent John Glenn into space, just one of
9 these. It's amazing. So here I got two
10 phones and I got double.

11 So I think the ability to use
12 them are very, very important in our day
13 and particularly as we go forward. And
14 I'm going to take up Ms. Soffa on that
15 tour. And it's kind of interesting,
16 gentlemen. I have a Verizon phone and I
17 have an AT&T phone. I'll do my own
18 little study. I'm going -- I might even
19 be calling you. I'm going to call
20 somebody to see if the system really
21 works, because our lives really truly
22 depend on it. And as human beings, I
23 think the ability to use the park in
24 safety in an urban setting is very, very
25 important.

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2 We in Philadelphia really with
3 our park system have a unique gift that
4 no other major city has. I mean, we have
5 areas -- for example, Ms. Soffa said an
6 alpine gorge. Well, heck, you want an
7 alpine gorge, you got to go to Colorado
8 or to the Swiss Alps. Here we can go to
9 Wissahickon. I think it's a great thing
10 for Philadelphians to be able to use
11 their park system in safety.

12 And one last thing. I didn't
13 realize -- and I think Mr. Peterson said
14 that sometimes leaves affect the
15 transmission. These are things I did not
16 know, and we need to know about that.
17 But the overall goal is safety, so when
18 someone walks in that park, they know
19 that if they need help, they can just
20 dial and someone will respond.

21 So thank you.

22 Thank you, Chairman.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

24 Councilman Green, is that it?

25 This Committee will now stand

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2 at recess to the call of the Chair. Our
3 estimated time will be September to try
4 to get the stakeholders together to come
5 up with some practical, aesthetically
6 pleasing solutions to our public safety
7 concerns.

8 Thank you all.

9 (Applause.)

10 (Committee on Public Safety and
11 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
12 recessed at 12:00 p.m.)

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