

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEES ON LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT
AND PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, May 15, 2017
10:15 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

RESOLUTION 170043 - Resolution authorizing
Council's Committees on Legislative Oversight
and Public Health and Human Services to hold
hearings examining the incidence of raccoon
infestation in the City of Philadelphia and
administrative solutions for the public health
concerns posed thereby.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Good
3 morning, everyone. This hearing is
4 called to order. This is a joint public
5 hearing of the City Council Legislative
6 Oversight Committee and Committee on
7 Public Health and Human Services. The
8 purpose of this public hearing is to hear
9 testimony on Resolution No. 170043.

10 I am Councilman Kenyatta
11 Johnson. I am the Chair of the Council
12 Legislative Oversight Committee.

13 Will the Clerk please read the
14 title of the resolution.

15 THE CLERK: Resolution 170043,
16 resolution authorizing Council's
17 Committees on Legislative Oversight and
18 Public Health and Human Services to hold
19 hearings examining the incidence of
20 raccoon infestation in the City of
21 Philadelphia and administrative solutions
22 for the public health concerns posed
23 thereby.

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I want to
25 start off by reading an opening

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2 statement, and I want to thank my
3 colleague Councilman Al Taubenberger for
4 being here today as well.

5 So the purpose of bringing
6 together this particular hearing is based
7 upon my work as a Councilman over the
8 past six years and addressing the issue
9 of the quality of life of our
10 neighborhood but, most significantly,
11 over the last summer and the beginning of
12 this summer, we've been having a
13 significant amount of calls from
14 constituents regarding the issue of the
15 infestation of raccoons throughout Grays
16 Ferry, Point Breeze, Southwest
17 Philadelphia, and parts of the Graduate
18 Hospital area neighborhoods.

19 This issue is particularly
20 important because raccoons are not
21 just -- in some cases they can be looked
22 at as a nuisance but, most importantly, a
23 public health threat. They not only
24 terrorize residents and cause sanitation
25 problems, but also cause injury and

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2 transmit diseases, including rabies.

3 I know firsthand from the work
4 I've done and doing tours throughout my
5 councilmanic district and listening to my
6 constituents that this is an issue of
7 vital concern. You know, over the past
8 weekend, I had some folks who thought
9 that me hosting this hearing, my time
10 could be better utilized focusing on
11 other issues of, from their perspective,
12 of importance, but I recognize that being
13 an individual who lives in the
14 neighborhood, particularly Point Breeze,
15 understand that making sure we improve
16 the quality of life of our neighborhoods
17 is just as important as any other public
18 policy issue that we address here in the
19 City of Philadelphia. And, most
20 importantly, as taxpayers, my
21 constituents have a right to get
22 questions from our city to see what are
23 we doing to address this particular
24 issue.

25 And so I want to thank everyone

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2 for being here today. I want to also
3 thank my colleague Councilwoman Helen Gym
4 for joining me here today as well.

5 I want to start off by reading
6 two statements from some constituents
7 that was submitted to my office. And
8 also just this morning while I was
9 walking my dog down the street, a
10 constituent pulled over, got out of her
11 car, thanked me for hosting the hearing
12 but, most importantly, talked about how
13 she cannot come outside in her backyard,
14 enjoy herself. Her daughter cannot come
15 outside in her backyard and her daughter
16 enjoy herself, as well as how the
17 raccoons are pretty much been terrorizing
18 her backyard, tearing up her plants. And
19 her last comment was, if these raccoons
20 get inside my house, I'm moving.

21 And so this is an issue that I
22 do not minimize. This is an issue that I
23 think that should deserve the same type
24 of response from the City as all the
25 other major issues that we address.

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2 So I want to start off by
3 reading a letter from a constituent who
4 lives in the Point Breeze section of
5 South Philadelphia.

6 To whom it may concern, I live
7 in the Point Breeze section of
8 Philadelphia, who are having a very large
9 problem with rats, raccoons, and possums.
10 I would like for you to help remove them
11 from the area, hopefully with no harm to
12 them. A lot of people in and around
13 Point Breeze are having this problem. If
14 you can please help us. We have small
15 children and elderly people who can't
16 outrun them. It would be very sad if
17 someone is bitten.

18 That's from a constituent who
19 lives in Point Breeze, and the letter is
20 dated May the 10th, 2017.

21 This is from another
22 constituent from Southwest Philadelphia.
23 I'm not going to use her name for the --
24 her name is Marsha Wall and -- my name is
25 Marsha Wall and I have been an active

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2 member of my community in Southwest
3 Philadelphia for many years, most
4 recently as the Director of Empowerment
5 Community Development Corporation. I'd
6 like to begin by thanking you for the
7 opportunity to submit written testimony
8 about the ongoing issues that my
9 neighbors and I are experiencing with
10 raccoons here in Lower Kingsessing and
11 across Southwest Philadelphia.

12 As a longtime resident of the
13 6000 block of Trinity Street, I have
14 watched the ongoing revitalization of the
15 wildlife surrounding Cobbs Creek with
16 great excitement. However, my
17 neighborhood's proximity to the creek
18 means that raccoons and other animals are
19 frequent visitors on my block.

20 Recently an abandoned house
21 located at 6038 Trinity has become a
22 nesting area for raccoons. This has
23 greatly increased the potential that my
24 neighbors or I might have a dangerous
25 confrontation with one of these animals.

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2 My neighbors and I are not in a
3 position legally or financially to
4 maintain a neighbor's abandoned private
5 property, and the current City policy
6 seems to leave this ongoing issue
7 unaddressed.

8 I have been told that the
9 Department of License and Inspections is
10 not authorized to seal the second story
11 openings or vacant structures, meaning
12 that these animals will freely access the
13 house. Furthermore, Animal Control's
14 jurisdiction is limited in its scope to
15 animals that are located in an occupied
16 structure or appear to be sick or
17 wounded.

18 While I understand that
19 free-ranging animals are a part of life
20 in my neighborhood, I believe that the
21 City can do more to minimize the
22 potential for dangerous confrontations
23 between the City's residents and our
24 four-legged neighbors. A strategy that
25 addresses the issue of vacant structures

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2 will help to ensure that raccoons are not
3 finding shelter in or near residential
4 areas where confrontations are more
5 likely to occur.

6 Thank you again for this
7 opportunity to submit testimony.

8 So with that being said, I'm
9 going to ask the Clerk to please call the
10 first witness, please.

11 THE CLERK: Charles Reeves,
12 Kimberlee Hickinson, and Mario D'Adamo.

13 (Witnesses approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Ladies
16 first. Officer, please state your name
17 for the record and you can begin your
18 testimony.

19 OFFICER HICKINSON: My name is
20 Officer Kimberlee Hickinson. I'm going
21 to say good morning, Chairman Johnson,
22 Chairwoman Bass, and other Committee
23 members. Thank you for allowing me to
24 testify to this issue.

25 I did a pre-written statement,

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2 so I'm just going to kind of read off of
3 that.

4 I'm going to say the cost of
5 the raccoon problem I think is on the
6 expensive side for many residents of
7 Philadelphia. I experienced the cost
8 about a week ago when I heard a noise in
9 my attic. I do not live in Southwest
10 or -- I live actually in Germantown. So
11 it's a citywide issue. It's not just the
12 focused areas that were just talked
13 about.

14 But I had a raccoon in my attic
15 and I called PACCA. They advised me to
16 call some wildlife service agency. I
17 called on a Monday, and they told me that
18 they would not be able to address my
19 issue until Thursday. So that left me to
20 wonder what was I going to do with a
21 raccoon in my closet from Monday to
22 Thursday. So hopefully -- I was hoping
23 that it left, which it did, but they
24 actually came on Wednesday. They came a
25 day early, which was good. I had someone

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2 home to let them in.

3 The cost that they discussed
4 over the phone was a \$200 option. I'm
5 not sure what I was getting for the \$200,
6 but then they discussed a \$400 option.
7 Four hundred dollars for me probably
8 would not have been such an issue, but I
9 work in South Philadelphia and I know for
10 a lot of the residents they are on fixed
11 incomes. That might be a stretch.

12 So for \$400, the gentleman came
13 to my home. He went on my roof. He put
14 a trap on my chimney. That was if they
15 were to exit, we were able to catch them,
16 and then he foamed an area that he
17 thought was another access point.

18 It wasn't an independent
19 assessment about what was going on. The
20 person at my home had to point out the
21 areas that they thought was a problem and
22 then they investigated it. It wasn't
23 like I felt like they had superb
24 knowledge about raccoons and how they
25 would get into your home so they can

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2 check independently and say, Okay, this
3 is your problem, that's your problem. So
4 if we didn't point that out, they didn't
5 discuss it.

6 He spray-foamed one hole. If I
7 were to buy a can of -- it was the kind
8 of stuff that you could buy from Home
9 Depot, Walmart. That's \$7 to \$10. A
10 trap, I bought that from Walmart as well.
11 That's about \$50 to \$75. With that being
12 said, \$400 for this person to do
13 something that I probably could have took
14 care of myself for less than \$100 is kind
15 of a stretch for a lot of people in
16 Philadelphia. And then it's another
17 charge for them to get it once they trap
18 it. So that's another \$50 every time a
19 raccoon is caught for them to remove it
20 from our property.

21 And then on top of that, they
22 just relocate them. I don't know how far
23 they relocate them, because I live near a
24 big park. I don't know if they're just
25 going to let them go in the park so they

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2 can come back. But I think the pricing
3 is definitely an issue. And even
4 independent contractors, they see it as a
5 big money mine to trap and get rid of
6 raccoons.

7 We also have phone calls with
8 the raccoons being in people's windows,
9 in their trees. Elderly people are very
10 scared of them. Kids are scared of them.
11 I just was on my way here talking to
12 another colleague. Her grandmother I
13 think lives on the 5800 block of Hatfield
14 and she was saying the same thing, that
15 she lives near a park and they migrate
16 towards her block, and when it becomes
17 dark, it's hard for pedestrians to walk
18 down the street because you have these
19 animals that kind of have taken over the
20 block when it becomes dark.

21 So I think it's a big problem
22 and I think it needs to be addressed in a
23 more cost-effective manner just because
24 it's so many people that may not be able
25 to afford getting rid of these animals.

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2 That's it.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

4 Sir, can you please state your
5 name for the record and you can begin,
6 please.

7 MR. D'ADAMO: My name is Mario
8 D'Adamo and I'd like to thank the
9 Councilpeople Gym, Johnson, and
10 Taubenberger for allowing us to testify
11 today.

12 The officer has really given a
13 good oversight of the problem. I've
14 lived in my current address in Packer
15 Park area, South Philadelphia since 1999.
16 More recently, I guess in the past four
17 or five years, the problem with raccoons,
18 possums, and groundhogs is just growing
19 exponentially. You cannot go out at
20 night without fear of coming into a
21 raccoon, possum, groundhog. I can give
22 you some anecdotal stories.

23 Most recently, I called ACCT
24 when there was a possum that was on my
25 step bleeding. My dog went out and came

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2 back with blood on his face. I had a
3 little Terrier. Blood on his face, and I
4 said, Where did this blood come from? I
5 go outside and there's a possum that had
6 probably gotten into an altercation with
7 either a raccoon or the groundhog. So
8 there's blood coming out of it.

9 I called ACCT and they did
10 respond because it was an injured animal.
11 By the time ACCT came, the possum had
12 left.

13 The issue is -- I have what the
14 officer is referring to is called a
15 Have-a-Heart trap, right? I bought mine
16 at Harbor Freight. They're like \$40
17 there. So the conundrum is this: You
18 can easily catch the animal. You put
19 cantaloupe or something else into the
20 trap and the animal will get into the
21 trap.

22 Now, if you go to the
23 Pennsylvania State Commission's website
24 and I tell you it says there is that a
25 landowner has the right to -- landowners

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2 have a right to protect their property.

3 Landowners may take action with personal

4 property, other than agricultural crop,

5 is being destroyed or when a sick or

6 diseased animal poses a threat to humans,

7 farm animals or pets. Only the property

8 owner or person in charge of property may

9 take steps to capture or kill the

10 wildlife.

11 So the state is saying that if

12 your property is being damaged, which

13 happened to the officer's, in my case I

14 have a number of things, but one is this

15 raccoon that I caught in a Have-a-Heart

16 trap several times. You call up ACCT.

17 They will not pick up the animal that is

18 caught in Have-a-Heart trap. So -- and

19 you can see from the photo they're not

20 warm, fuzzy-looking animals. They carry

21 rabies. They're in the rabies vector.

22 When the person from ACCT came

23 to my house to address the possum

24 question, he told my son, he looked at

25 the trap, he said, I hope your father is

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2 not trapping groundhogs. They have
3 rabies.

4 So I am -- my shed is
5 collapsed. They destroy the foundations
6 of homes. So we're stuck in this
7 conundrum.

8 If I lived outside of the
9 county, I guess, in Luzerne or some other
10 county, if you catch the animal in a
11 trap, you can euthanize it. I don't want
12 to euthanize it. I'm a hunter for 40
13 years, but I don't want to euthanize a
14 groundhog in my yard.

15 If ACCT has a contract with the
16 City of Philadelphia and they have people
17 on patrol going around looking for sick
18 animals or stray dogs and stray cats, I
19 think if you catch an animal in a
20 Have-a-Heart trap, they should come and
21 pick that animal up.

22 Now, I made mention to some
23 people in City Council perhaps we can
24 even give a donation to ACCT, but what
25 happened was when I've caught the

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2 groundhog at least three times, I'd call
3 one of the companies listed on ACCT's
4 website. I don't know if that's who you
5 called, but they charge like \$150 to come
6 down and pick up the animal. They will
7 allow you to bring the animal up to ACCT
8 if you catch it in a Have-a-Heart trap.
9 I've tried that on two occasions. One
10 occasion when I caught it in the trap, I
11 brought it to the trunk of my car in the
12 cul-de-sac where I live, and by the time
13 I got to the trunk, the animal had taken
14 off. It went through the trap, running
15 into the street.

16 The second time I was able to
17 get the trap into the trunk, took it up
18 to ACCT, I believe 111 Hunting Park
19 Avenue, went inside, talked to the
20 people. They came out. When I opened up
21 the trunk, the groundhog ran out and ran
22 in the parking lot.

23 The raccoons are another
24 problem. You go out to put out the
25 trash, especially elderly people, you'll

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2 see them inside your trash can. My
3 next-door neighbor unfortunately who just
4 passed away last week, she was willing to
5 testify, but they're afraid to put their
6 trash out.

7 There's dead raccoons. Packer
8 Avenue I saw a dead raccoon last week.
9 Week before there was another dead
10 raccoon.

11 So my thought is, if the state
12 law says that you can trap and euthanize
13 the animal, there's a reason why the
14 state game law says that. It's because
15 they can do tremendous damage to your
16 property.

17 My foundation of my home is in
18 jeopardy. My shed has collapsed. The
19 officer has had one in her house. If
20 we're going to pay these private
21 contractors, it would cost me probably
22 \$150 to \$200 a month times 12 months a
23 year. It would cost me like \$3,000. If
24 ACCT has a contract, they'll pick up the
25 sick or diseased animal. Can they be

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2 contracted for extra service of picking
3 up an animal that's perhaps trapped in a
4 Have-a-Heart trap? They know how to
5 handle those animals.

6 You see from the photo they
7 have really big claws and they have big
8 teeth, and when they get out, they're
9 dangerous. And also they carry fleas and
10 other diseases. These are not cute
11 animals that the guy picks up on February
12 2nd. They're tamed. They're wild
13 animals. And the raccoons, there's cases
14 in Camden, New Jersey less than six
15 months ago where a child was attacked
16 when they become rabid.

17 Now, we're seeing them walking
18 around in the daytime. I'm not an animal
19 expert, but I know that when nocturnal
20 animals walk around in the daytime, they
21 can be rabid. So before we have an
22 unfortunate circumstance, I think City
23 Council could either look at ACCT or give
24 us some other insight perhaps.
25 Philadelphia Police can euthanize the

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2 animal. I know that the deer in the past
3 year -- I'm on the Board of Packer Park
4 Civic Association. There's been at least
5 ten deer that have been killed by car on
6 Pattison Avenue between 20th and Broad.

7 One night last summer my son
8 went to look at the one deer that got
9 killed, just to look at it, and as he was
10 looking at the one deer that got killed,
11 a deer ran out and another car hit that
12 deer and --

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Could we
14 stay focused on raccoons, if you don't
15 mind, please.

16 MR. D'ADAMO: Yeah. Well, it's
17 raccoons and groundhogs.

18 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I want to
19 stay focused on raccoons and your
20 experience with raccoons, please.

21 MR. D'ADAMO: My experience
22 with raccoons are similar to groundhogs.
23 They ruin your property. They're a
24 danger to your health and human safety
25 because they can attack a person. They

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2 have people who are afraid to put their
3 trash out. And I'm afraid that if a
4 child is riding on a bicycle, one of them
5 is outside in the daytime, they're going
6 to be running away from the raccoon.
7 They're walking along the top of your
8 fences. They're taking your trash out.
9 They're going into our homes, and they're
10 doing a lot of damage.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
12 sir.

13 Can you please state your name
14 for the record, please.

15 MR. REEVES: Good morning. My
16 name is Charles Reeves. I want to thank
17 you again, Councilman, both of y'all, for
18 bringing this situation.

19 My thing is twofold. Both of
20 them already stated the facts. The thing
21 is, we got kids. I live in Grays Ferry
22 community. My blocks are smaller. We
23 can't afford it. I got renters in my
24 community. They can't afford for \$400 to
25 do that. So now what we do -- we don't

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2 even have information on how to address
3 the trash. So, first of all, I would ask
4 for information.

5 Then, second of all, I got two
6 schools. I got University of Audenried,
7 University of Alcorn, and I have a park.
8 So the raccoons in the last three years,
9 they have grown four times. Like I
10 started out with six. We got 25. They
11 walking around now.

12 Our kids in summertime, you
13 know, like to stay out late. My whole
14 concern is my babies, right? I don't
15 want them to get bit, but our kids, you
16 know -- our little kids are curious,
17 aggressive. They not real scary. I
18 mean, it's going to be a problem.

19 I live by an alley. So my roof
20 is already tore up. The raccoon came off
21 the tree, jumped on our porches, and tore
22 the hole in it. So that's something that
23 I got to pay for. But everybody in my
24 community can't afford this.

25 I appreciate y'all coming with

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2 this, but I need information. We need to
3 know how to kill them if we have to,
4 right, and/or trap them. We can't afford
5 traps. So I'm letting you know -- I'm
6 not speaking for my whole community. I
7 can't. But I'm telling you, we can't
8 afford traps. We can barely afford to
9 pay our rent. So traps is not an issue.
10 I mean, somebody got to help us or it's
11 going to be a problem.

12 I got young men -- I hate to
13 say this. I got young men running around
14 with guns. This is the reality. My
15 young boys out of pocket, I don't want
16 them shooting at a raccoon and hitting my
17 babies.

18 This is a problem. I'm glad
19 you brought it up, Councilman, and I
20 don't got much to say more, but you got
21 to do something before it get -- it's
22 summertime. That's watermelons, that's
23 cookouts. It's a problem. And, again,
24 my community deal with stuff kind of
25 different, you know, different breed. We

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2 got to talk to them a different way. If
3 you grant me the information, I can reach
4 out to them.

5 So that's basically all I want
6 to say. I know everybody else got
7 something to say. But I like the fact
8 everybody want to save them. That's all
9 well, but we can't afford it.

10 Thank you again.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
12 Mr. Reeves.

13 Questions from my colleagues?

14 Councilman Al Taubenberger.

15 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
16 think what all of you have kind of
17 brought a part -- and correct me if I'm
18 wrong, and this is for anyone that wants
19 to answer it -- is as follows, that it's
20 very, very expensive to go to a private
21 contractor, and then the question is, if
22 you did it yourself, if you either
23 borrowed the trap or maybe even the City
24 through a program could give you a trap
25 or lend you a trap, the question is what

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2 do you do with the animal. And that has
3 to be a policy that I think should be
4 worked out with Animal Control. I mean,
5 it just has to be, because everyone that
6 just spoke is absolutely correct in as
7 far as they're dangerous. They have
8 rabies. They could have rabies. They
9 certainly make a mess -- if you go in a
10 trash, they certainly can make a mess. I
11 mean, a complete mess. And if they get
12 into your home, God forbid, your home --
13 burglars don't sometimes do as much
14 trouble as a raccoon will do as they rip
15 your house apart and cut wires and
16 everything else. I mean, they just gnaw
17 through things. And so a policy has to
18 come from it.

19 But if you had an animal and
20 you don't know what to do with it, that
21 is a big problem, because you've actually
22 done half the work. Officer, thank you
23 for your service as well.

24 OFFICER HICKINSON: I'm going
25 to say I've contracted -- I mean, I've

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2 contacted a private contractor before. I
3 forget who it was, but he described the
4 price of \$1,200 to do the same thing that
5 they did for kind of like \$400, but I
6 think they probably had a more aggressive
7 approach to it. But I'm going to say
8 it's not only just the \$400 that I had to
9 pay, but it's also \$50 or depending on
10 who you get, anywhere from \$50 to \$200 to
11 remove it. So it's not only costing you
12 to protect your home. It's costing you
13 to get rid of this animal as well.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

15 Right.

16 OFFICER HICKINSON: So I think
17 that that's the biggest thing as far as
18 cost. Even if you gave out -- if a
19 policy was put in place as far as giving
20 out traps to people that need them, it's
21 the collection of these animals and where
22 are you putting them. Because if you're
23 taking them to parks that are still in
24 neighborhoods, they're just going to
25 invade somebody else's home and do it --

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2 destroy somebody else's property.

3 I have all the screens on my
4 top floor are shredded because they are
5 always trying to find a way in your home.
6 So it definitely has to be a policy in
7 place of how to also get rid of them.

8 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
9 that's important, particularly, Officer,
10 when you're doing the work. I mean,
11 you're capturing the animal. And also
12 for the animal's welfare, maybe we can
13 talk to some animal experts. Maybe there
14 is a preserve somewhere and some place
15 that would accept these animals, if
16 that's possible. I'm very interested in
17 hearing what some of the experts have to
18 say.

19 I thank you all for taking the
20 time.

21 MR. REEVES: I got a question.
22 Out of anything you take out of this
23 meeting, we need information. We need to
24 learn how to deal with them, how to put
25 the trash away, how to close up our

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2 windows, how to tell our kids. That's
3 the most thing that should come out this,
4 because I know everything ain't going to
5 get them fast, but if you can just put
6 information online, however the City can
7 give it out, then we can kind of fight it
8 ourselves. I mean, we know how to work
9 together. But if we just -- we don't
10 have the information, because I heard you
11 can't shoot them and I heard you can't
12 kill them. I don't know what you can do
13 and what you can't do, but I know they're
14 crawling in my porch. Like I have a
15 picture of them in my window. They
16 looking at -- my wife is screaming
17 because the raccoon looking upstairs in
18 the window. It's not funny, but we have
19 to learn how to address it.

20 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

21 There's a lot of interesting or diverse
22 information. The Pennsylvania Game
23 Commission, I believe, states somewhere
24 that you cannot release them, that you
25 must kill them. Well, you cannot kill

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2 them in Philadelphia either, and it may
3 not be the right thing to do, but on the
4 other hand, they can't be in your house.

5 I love animals. I really do,
6 but they can't be living in your bedroom
7 and they can't be living with you, and
8 it's just not healthy, it's not good, and
9 we need to do something as a modern city
10 to deal with this. That's why we're
11 having the hearing. I really want to
12 also thank the leadership of Councilwoman
13 Gym and Councilman Johnson.

14 MR. D'ADAMO: One last thing,
15 it's very easy to catch the animal. If
16 you have a Have-a-Heart trap, which they
17 do not injure the animal at all, the
18 animal walks in, they're safe, you catch
19 them right away.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So your
21 primary point, Mario, and I know I talked
22 about earlier staying focused on the
23 raccoons, but I know part of your
24 testimony is about the groundhogs and so
25 forth, but your primary -- it sounds like

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2 your primary essence of your argument is
3 what is the City actually doing, Animal
4 Control Unit, when you catch the animal.

5 MR. D'ADAMO: Exactly.

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: The
7 response.

8 MR. D'ADAMO: Exactly.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: That makes
10 sense. I just wanted to be clear on that
11 key point that you were making.

12 Councilwoman Helen Gym.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman.

15 Well, I just wanted to
16 acknowledge Mr. Reeves. I think you
17 raise a very important aspect, which is
18 the commitment to a public information
19 campaign about how to help communities
20 address this issue. It's a health risk.
21 It's obviously a serious concern for a
22 lot of families, but I don't -- I think
23 we should be talking to Animal Control
24 and our Health Department about how to do
25 a better public information campaign out

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2 there that can help folks like yourself.

3 And I do appreciate the amount of agency
4 that you bring to this, the idea that,
5 look, give us the information and we'll
6 try to figure this out.

7 The one thing that I think is
8 also really important to -- because in
9 your particular case, you're seeing an
10 uptick in your neighborhood. Animals
11 are, and especially raccoons, are
12 foragers or scavengers. They're going to
13 go to places where there's trash and
14 empty buildings, and it's pointing to a
15 broader issue around neighborhood types
16 of quality of life issues that I think
17 that these animals are likely more a
18 symptom of than necessarily a cause.

19 So I'm curious about whether
20 you feel like these known factors,
21 attractors to raccoons and other nuisance
22 animals are increasing because you're
23 seeing additional problems that we should
24 be paying attention to in your
25 neighborhood.

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2 MR. REEVES: I think the
3 abandoned buildings is an uptick. Like
4 25 percent of my community is abandoned.
5 So, I mean, that's a problem. But they
6 tearing down stuff. Stuff, I guess --
7 when they was hid right before it, when
8 they tear it down, they coming out. So,
9 yeah, it's the whole rebuilding of the
10 community. That's causing a problem too.
11 Because wherever they was hiding or
12 controlled, now they coming out, and then
13 it's a problem.

14 So I agree with you 100
15 percent, that it's other factors.

16 And as far as taking care of
17 your trash. See, there's a whole bunch
18 of factors, but the increase came with
19 the abandoned buildings, I would say.
20 That's how I would see it.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I think
22 that's been a known factor with a lot of
23 these infestations, is that they are
24 attracted to trash. They are attracted
25 to vacant buildings and other types of

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2 things. So the more that we can kind of
3 zero in and maybe take out some of these
4 very specific problems, but we're trying
5 to be committed to addressing the bigger
6 issue we have in our city, which is
7 abandoned lots and vacant buildings and
8 people who aren't taking care of or have
9 left behind property that we should
10 really be paying attention to. But thank
11 you very much.

12 MR. REEVES: Thank you, ma'am.

13 OFFICER HICKINSON: My question
14 was, what if it's not that issue?
15 Because just where I live at, it's a lot
16 of, I'm going to say, forage, and that's
17 not going to be taken care of, because
18 there are parks. So it's nothing -- it's
19 not a trash issue. I mean, the only time
20 I think it's a trash issue is probably on
21 trash night, and we encourage our
22 neighbors to put it in a receptacle that
23 has a lid that closes so they wouldn't be
24 able to get into your trash.

25 But I have on one side of the

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2 street, it's a big lot because it's a
3 recreation center. Then on the top part
4 of my block is a park, because it's near
5 to LaSalle. Then on -- and then my
6 backyard is pretty spacious. So it just
7 attracts a lot of those animals that like
8 to scavenge. So how do you combat that
9 if it's not another environmental factor
10 that's, I guess, breeding them?

11 MR. D'ADAMO: And can I add, I
12 agree with the officer, because in my
13 neighborhood, the trash can lids,
14 everyone has secure lids. I have
15 double-lock lids. The raccoons will
16 pull -- they're very smart animals.
17 They'll pull the lids off or they'll
18 scratch through the container. So
19 there's nothing -- it helps to keep the
20 neighborhood tidy. It helps a lot, but
21 there's no natural predators for these
22 raccoons and other animals. There's no
23 natural predators. So they have to be
24 taken and either euthanized or relocated
25 far away from the City.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I do have
3 a question I want to ask, and we do have
4 Animal Control who are the experts, so
5 they'll come and give their presentation,
6 but I do know, at least it was explained
7 to me, that when you talk about the
8 public information campaign, and how you
9 maintain your trash and so forth can play
10 a part. So I guess my question would be,
11 prior to today, has this always been a
12 problem? If the neighborhood has always
13 been tidy, there's always been trash put
14 in trash cans with lids, has it been the
15 same type of problem as it is now as it's
16 been in the past?

17 MR. D'ADAMO: In my
18 neighborhood, I can speak for my
19 neighborhood solely, but the people have
20 always kept their trash cans closed
21 tightly, as she said, the officer's. We
22 live near a park, FDR park, and they're
23 going to be coming from that park.
24 There's been a whole area, Siena Place
25 where they knocked down a lot of old

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2 abandoned homes, raccoons are coming out
3 of that area and possum.

4 I don't think there's anything
5 that you can do to keep your house
6 raccoon or possum or groundhog proof. I
7 think they have to be caught, released or
8 caught and euthanized. And it has to be
9 done professionally, because it's a
10 danger when you're touching those traps.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.
12 That's it.

13 Any other questions from the
14 panel?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So if you
17 want to stick around while ACCT, Animal
18 Control, gives their testimony, then
19 you'll hear some information as to their
20 approach and so forth. And if y'all want
21 to also provide additional questions as
22 they go through the process, that may be
23 helpful as well.

24 Can the Clerk please call the
25 next panel.

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2 (Thank you.)

3 THE CLERK: Vincent Medley.

4 And will the other departments from the
5 Administration please come forward to
6 answer questions as well.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Good
10 morning, Vincent. How are you doing?

11 MR. MEDLEY: Good morning.

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Were you
13 here like about a month ago regarding the
14 dogs?

15 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, Councilman, I
16 was.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You're
18 pretty busy this month.

19 I think we also have
20 representatives from License and
21 Inspections, the Health Department, and
22 Streets Department.

23 Okay. Vincent, are you ready?

24 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, I am.

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Please

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2 state your name and title for the record
3 and then proceed with your testimony.

4 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, Chairman. My
5 name is Vincent Medley. I am the
6 Executive Director of the Animal Care and
7 Control Team of Philadelphia, who has the
8 animal control contract with the City of
9 Philadelphia.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You can
11 begin.

12 MR. MEDLEY: Good morning,
13 Chairman Johnson and members of the
14 Committee. My name is Vincent Medley and
15 I am the Executive Director of the Animal
16 Care and Control Team of Philadelphia,
17 also known as ACCT Philly, and I am here
18 to testify on addressing the nuisance
19 behavior by raccoons.

20 The issue of raccoons as a
21 nuisance is not only a Philadelphia
22 phenomenon, but it is also a national
23 one. Raccoons living in an urban
24 environment is nothing new. In fact, it
25 can be argued that raccoons have always

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2 lived among us. In the immortal words of
3 the street poet LL Cool J, "don't call it
4 a comeback, they've been here for years."

5 That being said, I recognize
6 that having raccoons living among us and
7 often dwelling within the homes of our
8 citizens is a serious concern to the
9 Council and the people whom they live
10 among. Unfortunately, raccoons do not
11 have the same aversion that many humans
12 do about being neighbors.

13 The Humane Society of the
14 United States' website states, "Raccoons
15 don't know that our luscious vegetable
16 gardens, uncapped chimneys, and full bird
17 feeders aren't there just for them." It
18 even goes beyond that. Raccoons live
19 among us because they have ample shelter
20 and food resources to live and to thrive
21 in the community. It is also true that
22 the total eradication of raccoons is not
23 practical, legal, humane or possible. It
24 is for these reasons that the national
25 best practice and one that ACCT Philly

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2 strongly endorses is peaceful

3 co-existence.

4 While on its face peaceful

5 co-existence sounds like a passive

6 approach, the reality is that peaceful

7 co-existence employs methods that

8 minimize human interactions with

9 raccoons, keep them out of their living

10 areas, and strive to keep the community

11 safe.

12 You may be aware that

13 Pennsylvania local governments are

14 preempted by the state from engaging in

15 the regulation of wildlife. However,

16 ACCT Philly, as an exempted nuisance

17 wildlife control operator, has authority

18 over wildlife that actually creates a

19 nuisance, which means causes damage to

20 property or is a risk to human health or

21 safety. The ability of ACCT Philly to

22 regulate raccoons is quite limited and,

23 as such, education of the public is key.

24 In 2016, ACCT Philly embarked

25 on a public information campaign that

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2 included media stories, presentations to
3 neighborhood groups, and partnered with
4 Chairwoman Bass and the Managing
5 Director's Office to create palm cards
6 that detail in English, Spanish, and
7 Vietnamese the services that ACCT Philly
8 provides and tips on how to peacefully
9 co-exist with raccoons.

10 For our part, ACCT Philly works
11 cooperatively with City departments to
12 respond to health and safety issues with
13 respect to raccoons. L&I contacts us to
14 respond and assist in clean and seal
15 operations. Public Health and ACCT
16 Philly work together to address any
17 rabies-related issues caused by raccoons.

18 I believe any danger posed by
19 raccoons is being effectively addressed
20 by the current ACCT Philly policy of only
21 responding when the public is in imminent
22 danger of injury, the raccoon is sick or
23 injured or to eliminate the spread of
24 disease to people or animals. Per the
25 Center for Disease Control, only one

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2 person ever has died of raccoon rabies.

3 The greater issue is the nuisance that
4 raccoons pose, particularly in homes and
5 neighborhoods.

6 There are root causes for
7 raccoons living in neighborhoods. These
8 causes include vacant and dilapidated
9 buildings and discarding food in
10 unprotected ways that allow raccoons to
11 access them. Because animals usually are
12 cared for by humans, whether the humans
13 realize it or not, we recommend that all
14 Philadelphia residents practice the
15 following best practices to deter
16 raccoons:

17 Do not feed raccoons.

18 Use metal or heavy plastic
19 trash containers. Keep the lid tightly
20 fastened to keep odor from escaping. If
21 needed, use bungee cords or ropes or put
22 a weight on the lid so raccoons can't
23 open it.

24 Keep food away from raccoons.

25 Raccoons tend to feed at night. If

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2 raccoons steal food from your pet's
3 outside food dish, feed your pet during
4 the day and bring the bowl inside at
5 night.

6 Keep barbecue grills clean or
7 stored in a secure place.

8 If you see a raccoon in the
9 yard, turn on the lights and make noise
10 to scare it off. Do not corner a raccoon
11 or force it to defend itself.

12 Use a wildlife repellent to
13 drive raccoons from your property. You
14 can buy a repellent at a home and garden
15 or discount hardware store.

16 Clean up spilled seeds around
17 your bird feeders or bring your bird
18 feeders inside at night.

19 Light your yard or alley with
20 floodlights or motion-detected lights.

21 Don't give raccoons a place to
22 stay. Seal any openings on your
23 property, especially buildings like sheds
24 and garages. Report vacant, unsealed
25 properties to 311 so they can be sealed

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2 as quickly as possible.

3 In conclusion, ACCT Philly
4 recently met with several City
5 departments - Streets Department, L&I,
6 Health, and Zero Waste and Litter - to
7 discuss raccoon infestations. We
8 recommend a public campaign that informs
9 residents on ways to keep raccoons off
10 their property, stronger enforcement on
11 property owners who have allowed human
12 dwellings to become a refuge for raccoons
13 or other wild animals, and presentations
14 to the neighborhood associations led by
15 ACCT Philly to assist communities in
16 dealing with raccoon issues.

17 Thank you for the opportunity
18 to testify today, and I'm happy to answer
19 any questions.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: The other
21 department heads, you're not here to give
22 testimony. You're just here to answer
23 questions, correct?

24 Thank you, Vincent. So before
25 we get into asking questions, I want to

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2 get an overview from you, Vincent, on the
3 current campaign that you started in
4 2016, because you also give
5 recommendations to start another public
6 campaign. So how effective has it been?
7 What's the strategy of the campaign that
8 you started in 2016 working with
9 Councilwoman Bass? And give us an idea
10 of what's taking place with that campaign
11 to date.

12 MR. MEDLEY: So we have made
13 palm cards available in the three
14 languages that I described earlier. We
15 have partnered with Parks and Rec to get
16 that information out to the community.
17 We also have presented to neighborhood
18 associations regarding raccoons and the
19 ways that we can assist them depending on
20 the nature and the reason for the
21 raccoons in their neighborhood.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Do you
23 have data on the number of presentations
24 that have been done over the last year
25 since 2016 particularly on this topic of

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2 raccoon infestation or interaction and
3 also a list of the actual community
4 groups that you engaged in about
5 information sessions regarding raccoons?

6 MR. MEDLEY: I can get the
7 specific information. I know I myself
8 went to the Hunting Park neighborhood
9 association and presented on raccoons
10 personally. And we do it basically on a
11 case-by-case basis. Once we get
12 information that a neighborhood has a
13 generalized problem, we do invite them to
14 ask us to come to speak to their
15 neighborhood association. In fact, one
16 of the gentlemen that testified in the
17 last panel, I've already reached out to
18 him to start that process.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: But
20 wouldn't -- I'm just trying to get
21 clarity just trying to understand,
22 because I know if we started a campaign
23 in 2016 and then at the end of your
24 testimony, you say you recommend that we
25 start a campaign, I guess that means we

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2 want to restart the campaign that you
3 embarked on in 2016.

4 Why is the campaign on a
5 case-by-case basis? Like a campaign for
6 me is -- you ever see the campaign about
7 tobacco cigarettes? It's like
8 commercials, it's like stickers, it's
9 like information PSAs on the radio to
10 address the issue. So I'm trying to get
11 some clarity on is this a campaign or is
12 it when somebody calls and they need
13 help, we'll go out? Because that's not a
14 campaign. That's just more somebody
15 called, filed a complaint, and we were
16 responsive as opposed to being proactive.
17 So I'm just trying to get some clarity.

18 MR. MEDLEY: So our campaign is
19 a lot smaller than a citywide campaign,
20 because we are a non-profit that is
21 making the most of the resources we have.
22 So the recommendation is that the City as
23 a whole provide the funding and that
24 support and that spokesperson --

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Makes

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2 sense.

3 MR. MEDLEY: -- that can really
4 connect with the community.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. I
6 have another question. In terms of --
7 we've been having complaints all
8 throughout the City of Philadelphia. Do
9 you have data on which neighborhoods in
10 the City of Philadelphia you receive the
11 most complaints from regarding raccoons?

12 MR. MEDLEY: We can get that
13 information for you. I don't have that
14 data right now. I know that 311 collects
15 data on raccoon calls as well. Because
16 our scope is so limited, we only record
17 calls that we actually have an officer
18 respond to.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

20 Councilwoman Gym.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
22 very much.

23 And I'm wondering if we could
24 have a representative from -- well,
25 actually before I ask that. So the

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2 public information campaign is your palm
3 cards and some of the meetings going out
4 into the neighborhoods and I think -- and
5 then some media stories; is that right?

6 MR. MEDLEY: Yes. Yes,
7 Councilwoman.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So beyond
9 that, do you feel like you need more
10 assistance in order to get a much more
11 robust campaign going?

12 MR. MEDLEY: Yes. I believe --
13 and I think the idea is to better
14 coordinate, especially with the Council
15 offices and the neighborhood
16 associations. And I think that just
17 building a structure to communicate and
18 to be able to provide that information I
19 think is what I would recommend.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Is it
21 possible to get a Health Department
22 representative just to figure out where
23 we are on the public information aspect
24 of it. Is someone from the Health
25 Department here?

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2 (Witness approached witness
3 table.)

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I just
5 want to take a moment and acknowledge the
6 presence of Councilwoman Cindy Bass, who
7 had to step out for a moment, as well as
8 Councilman Green.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Hi. Good
10 morning.

11 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: Hi. Good
12 morning. My name is Dr. Palak
13 Raval-Nelson. I'm the Director of
14 Environmental Health Services for the
15 Philadelphia Department of Public Health.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So I'm
17 trying to -- I think you heard the
18 testimony before and also some -- it
19 sounds like there's a lot of questions
20 from our public about how we handle
21 infestation, what are people supposed to
22 do, and of course people know to call
23 Animal Control, but beyond that, I'm not
24 entirely clear that there's external
25 information that's readily available to

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2 communities and individuals if they're
3 faced with this situation. And could you
4 talk a little bit about how the Health
5 Department is working with ACCT and what
6 you think we can do to better inform our
7 communities about this?

8 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: Sure. So
9 absolutely. The good news is that ACCT
10 and the Vector Control program within the
11 Division of Environmental Health Services
12 are located in the same building as well
13 as our Division of Disease Control. So
14 if there was a scenario or a situation
15 where there was a case of a rabid raccoon
16 or the potential of rabies, the three
17 groups would work together. ACCT would
18 be responsible for the animal, as that's
19 their expertise, and we would work with
20 the exposed person to provide the
21 education.

22 As far as proactive education
23 is concerned, we really with Vince and
24 their group, they take the expertise on
25 the animal behavior issues, and we will

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2 work with them to help them, if needed,
3 to go out to do educations and provide
4 information. We also try to link on our
5 web page information about education and
6 how to address issues with exclusion and
7 what to do if a raccoon gets in your home
8 and how to handle that.

9 The best kind of information
10 that we could provide would be almost
11 exactly the same as what Mr. Medley
12 explained, which is cover your trash,
13 keep food inside, and then try to seal up
14 openings and provide exclusion.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: What's the
16 last major public information campaign
17 the Health Department did, would you say?
18 I know you do a number of them.

19 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: On raccoons?

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: No; just in
21 general.

22 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: Oh, just in
23 general? Well, I could talk to you for
24 days about those.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: How about

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2 pick one.

3 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: We've done
4 our extensive campaign on lead, as the
5 Councilwoman --

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So could you
7 talk a little bit like if you do a major
8 public information campaign, say, on
9 lead, what would be like the rollout?
10 What is the City's approach towards it,
11 how extensive is it, and how much
12 resources do you actually put towards
13 that? I'm trying to get a relative
14 compare about what we could assist with
15 on the other end of it for a new
16 campaign.

17 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: No problem.
18 I can absolutely -- and all the sudden
19 I'm getting warm, so I'm -- I was
20 freezing in here. I meant to go ahead
21 and take my jacket off.

22 So our lead campaign where last
23 summer we conducted an entire campaign to
24 educate landlords about and families to
25 make sure that they actually get their

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2 child lead tested and that if they're
3 living in a tenant property, that they go
4 ahead and ask the landlord for a
5 lead-safe or lead-free certificate.

6 The process involved having a
7 person that is specialized trained in
8 developing literature for the ad
9 campaign, and then we went ahead and bid
10 out the different companies. It was, I
11 believe, about \$30,000, Councilwoman, but
12 I can get the exact number if needed.

13 And once the pictures and the
14 appropriateness and literacy level and
15 the language issues were all sorted out,
16 then the campaign was rolled out on SEPTA
17 buses, at stops. So it was essentially a
18 blitz for about, I would say, two months.
19 And from that, we did find that based on
20 tracking information, at least 40,000
21 people visited that, but please don't
22 quote me on the data. We can get you
23 those details. We have them available.
24 And essentially it was a full-on
25 education campaign.

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2 So that would be something that
3 could be done, but I think the biggest
4 part of it is ensuring that the
5 appropriate message with ACCT's expertise
6 along with our folks is -- the
7 appropriate message is designed with the
8 information and then rolled out
9 accordingly.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yeah. I
11 think that that sounds right, and it
12 sounds like the ACCT already has these
13 palm cards, and so it's probably worth a
14 review about how appropriate that is,
15 whether it's convertible into more public
16 space, but I think what some of the
17 community groups are requiring is just a
18 more energized kind of public focus on
19 what to do should you face this kind of
20 situation.

21 And then just one other quick
22 question from -- thank you very much.

23 DR. RAVAL-NELSON: Sure.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And then one
25 other quick question for Mr. Medley. So

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2 could you talk a little bit about what
3 you feel like is the scope of the
4 problem? I know you deploy -- you only
5 record if you deploy what percentage or
6 can we get any like understanding of how
7 many calls you get in versus how many
8 actual individuals get deployed out and
9 are we seeing an uptick in terms of the
10 number of complaints both either received
11 or being sent out?

12 MR. MEDLEY: So in looking at
13 our data, this past year we impounded,
14 took into our care/custody, 441 raccoons,
15 which is up from 2015 when we took in
16 about 314. So in the last five years,
17 the highest year we've had was 2012 when
18 we impounded 459.

19 According to 311, the total
20 number of calls regarding raccoons as a
21 whole was 2,826 raccoons.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Could you
23 repeat the number again.

24 MR. MEDLEY: 2,826 raccoon
25 calls. And that was general information,

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2 like what to do if I have one in my
3 house, what should I do if I get bit, who
4 do I call about an injured wildlife, and
5 then also who do I call about an animal
6 stuck in a tree or inside of a car.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: All right.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Vincent, I
10 just have one question. The relationship
11 between ACCT and the City of
12 Philadelphia, explain that from a funding
13 standpoint, because it sounds like also
14 you're limited in resources when it comes
15 to dealing with not just the raccoon
16 issue but also I know when we have a lot
17 of issues regarding dogs that bite
18 individuals and the response time and
19 going out. That becomes an issue as
20 well.

21 Just give me a brief overview.
22 How much is the budget? How much funding
23 does the City provide to help you do your
24 job?

25 MR. MEDLEY: So the City

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2 provides us about \$4 million a year to
3 provide --

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: That's a
5 nice budget. I didn't know you were
6 going to say 4 million, but go ahead.

7 MR. MEDLEY: Well, and as some
8 of the data would suggest is that it's
9 below the national standard, the \$4
10 million.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: What's the
12 national standard?

13 MR. MEDLEY: It's \$4 per
14 capita, which would put us at about \$6
15 million for a city our size.

16 But our relationship is that we
17 are the animal control, but we have -- we
18 contract for services. So those services
19 are specific to public safety issues that
20 are imminent and then dog and cat issues
21 for the most part.

22 The reason why I think we have
23 it that way is because one of the
24 national best practices, especially when
25 you talk about lifting or increasing the

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2 lifesaving rate, is to take resources
3 that would be used for wild animals where
4 the only -- for the most part, the only
5 exit for them is euthanasia and diverting
6 that to animals that -- so you end up
7 euthanizing the raccoons. Those
8 resources that you could have been using
9 to save animals, you end up because
10 you're so -- the resources are so
11 limited, you end up euthanizing dogs and
12 cats. And so it's a heavier burden on
13 the shelter as a whole which increases
14 the euthanasia rate.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

16 Councilman Al Taubenberger.

17 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
18 you, Mr. Chairman.

19 And, Mr. Medley, thank you for
20 your service and the things you're doing,
21 because I know you have -- I don't think
22 it's easy work that you're doing.

23 I think the campaign that you
24 outlined is excellent, and anything we
25 can do to help spread that word. Where I

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2 have a little difficulty, though, is --
3 which goes beyond the scope of the
4 information you give out. If that
5 raccoon is actually in your house, that
6 takes on a whole different realm. I
7 mean, that could put a family in panic,
8 and also the fact of the matter is that
9 it's extremely unhealthy, even -- forget
10 about rabidness and biting. I mean,
11 raccoons have fleas. They have all kinds
12 of other problems, and they're not meant
13 to live with humans.

14 If someone has a raccoon
15 actually in the house and they know
16 they're there and they call your offices,
17 what happens?

18 MR. MEDLEY: If the raccoon is
19 in a living area, then we go out. If it
20 is inside like an attic or inside of a
21 wall, then that's outside of the scope of
22 what we do.

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
24 Say they know it's in the house, but it's
25 not going to come and greet you at the

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2 door and thank you for coming. It's
3 going to probably hide in a little place
4 and probably might be in a wall. Then
5 what happens if they're in -- if they're
6 in the building but not visible?

7 MR. MEDLEY: So because being
8 inside of the building takes a specific
9 set of skills that we do not in our
10 industry have, that's more of a pest
11 control issue, so we heard earlier about
12 installing exclusionary devices, which
13 they look like traps, but they allow the
14 raccoon to leave the building but not
15 allow them to go back through that same
16 space. So the installation of those
17 takes a specific expertise.

18 The assessment of the extent of
19 the problem is something outside of the
20 scope of -- I started as an animal
21 control officer in 1999. So I've been
22 doing this for at least 18 years.

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: You
24 know the business very well.

25 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, sir. Yes,

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2 sir. And so it's just outside of the
3 scope of what we're trained to do. Our
4 focus is public safety but imminent
5 public safety, especially being the --
6 using the resources to the maximum. And
7 so when it comes to raccoons or any
8 wildlife inside of a building, we only go
9 out if a human has a threat of being in
10 personal contact with that animal or the
11 animal is sick or injured or shows some
12 sign of rabies.

13 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
14 I would differ just slightly with you on
15 that in the sense if they're in the
16 walls, they're going to figure out a way
17 to come out. They're there hiding. And
18 raccoons or groundhog or anything of that
19 nature, they're big animals compared to
20 mice and other things, which is more like
21 wildlife control. But they then capture
22 it or you capture it, then what happens?
23 Do you take it with you?

24 MR. MEDLEY: Yes. If we
25 capture it, it does come to our location,

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2 and we generally euthanize it and test it
3 if we believe that there's a possibility
4 of rabies.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Just
6 so we have a sense for disease control, I
7 get that.

8 In the numbers you gave, you
9 say impounded. Is that captured or
10 brought in 314 and 441 raccoons?

11 MR. MEDLEY: 441 raccoons in
12 2016, that includes brought in from the
13 public and also brought to the shelter by
14 our animal control officers.

15 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: So
16 you can actually -- if someone were to
17 have one of the Have-a-Heart traps, which
18 were talked about before, they trap it,
19 they can then bring it to you; is that
20 correct?

21 MR. MEDLEY: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
23 Do you ever -- if that is also -- do you
24 do the reverse, where they have the
25 animal in a Have-a-Heart trap, but do you

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2 come and pick it up?

3 MR. MEDLEY: It depends on -- a
4 lot of it has to do with us assessing the
5 situation. A lot of times that is
6 possible if we've had a previous
7 conversation with the citizen regarding
8 the nature of the issue.

9 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: But
10 if the citizen brings the animal to you,
11 you will unequivocally take it?

12 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, we will take
13 it.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
15 All right. If you had more resources,
16 could you do more, you had more dollars
17 in your budget to take care of --

18 MR. MEDLEY: To tell you the
19 truth, if we had more resources, I'd
20 probably ask that we divert it to
21 something else, because we still are not
22 where I'd like to be in terms of all of
23 our services in terms of dogs and cats
24 and assisting the public with -- because
25 that's our greater -- that is much

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2 greater public --

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: No; I
4 understand, but a raccoon in a house can
5 be a big problem to a family. I mean,
6 one, you heard the pricing that the
7 officer gave, what it costs to call a
8 private animal control person. Many
9 Philadelphians don't have that kind of
10 money, between \$400, \$500. Even there
11 was a price given over \$1,000. So I
12 think this is where we need to work with
13 you.

14 Let me also ask you this: In
15 comparison to your overall operation,
16 what is the percentage of wildlife that
17 you deal with?

18 MR. MEDLEY: So in terms of
19 wildlife and small exotic animals, we
20 pick up about 1,400 out of the 22,000.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
22 What's your definition of a small exotic
23 animal?

24 MR. MEDLEY: So like anything
25 from a hamster to possum to snakes.

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2 We've had alligators in the shelter.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

4 Alligators?

5 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, sir.

6 Chickens. We get pretty much --

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I

8 mean, it sounds humorous, but it's not.

9 I get you.

10 MR. MEDLEY: And part of this

11 conversation for us as a shelter is about

12 the flow of animals, and we are

13 consistently trying to figure out ways to

14 slow the flow of animals into the

15 shelter, because there's only so much

16 resource that we have.

17 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

18 Correct.

19 MR. MEDLEY: And so the best

20 practice is to limit it as much as we

21 can. And especially for lifesaving, one

22 of the recommendations is to lessen the

23 burden that wild animals have on the

24 shelter.

25 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank

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2 you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

5 Has there been any dialogue
6 between Animal Control and state
7 government regarding exempting
8 Philadelphia from the euthanasia
9 requirement?

10 MR. MEDLEY: Yes. We've had
11 dialogue with the dog warden, with the
12 Game Commission as well.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And what's
14 the status?

15 MR. MEDLEY: In terms of
16 euthanasia?

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

18 MR. MEDLEY: When it comes to
19 wild animals?

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

21 MR. MEDLEY: Our ability to --
22 we euthanize. That's generally the
23 option for wild animals. One of the
24 reasons why is because the resources that
25 would get the animal out alive are just

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2 not there considering the volume, and

3 so --

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON:

5 Understood.

6 MR. MEDLEY: A wildlife
7 rehabilitator, for instance -- in order
8 to relocate a raccoon, you'd have to keep
9 it a certain amount of time, and that
10 is --

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And that's
12 where the resources come into play at,
13 correct?

14 MR. MEDLEY: Yes, Chairman.
15 And that's because relocating wildlife is
16 a very good way to spread disease,
17 because you don't know what an animal is
18 incubating. And if it stays in its own
19 population, you know that if a disease
20 broke out, that it's isolated to that
21 group rather than maybe possibly having
22 an outbreak that occurred because
23 wildlife is being relocated.

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So when
25 you say staying inside its own

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2 population, like right now we're talking
3 about staying inside people's backyards
4 and neighborhoods throughout the City of
5 Philadelphia, which is technically not
6 their own environment. They came there
7 from somewhere else. So what would your
8 response be to the constituent that says,
9 again, in my backyard -- like I heard
10 this morning again on my way to work, a
11 woman said there's a family of raccoons
12 inside my backyard. And I don't think
13 she thinks that that's their natural
14 habitat. So how do we address that from
15 a public health and a public safety
16 standpoint? Because over this past
17 weekend, a lot of people I talked to -- a
18 couple people made some comments, like
19 you could be working on something much
20 more bigger and pressing, and I
21 responded -- and I know you mentioned
22 only one incident ever took place of
23 someone being bitten by a raccoon, right?
24 But we're trying to be preventive and
25 proactive on the front end, because

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2 usually us as elected officials who sit
3 up here at this table, when something
4 goes wrong in the City, everyone points
5 the finger and say, How come you weren't
6 doing this earlier and we've been calling
7 and we've been calling and we've been
8 calling. So now we're trying to be
9 proactive so we don't get a phone call
10 that a kid was in the wrong place --
11 actually the kid was probably in the
12 right place at the right time -- right
13 place at the wrong time as a result of
14 these raccoons being all throughout
15 neighborhoods in the City of
16 Philadelphia.

17 So like at what point -- I know
18 you have limited resources and you said
19 basically, quite frankly, to be honest
20 with you, in so many words, you said if I
21 had more money, this still wouldn't be a
22 priority, because dogs and cats are what
23 the priority is right now. And so, I
24 mean, if this is Animal Control, you do
25 get a \$4 million budget from the City of

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2 Philadelphia, actually which Council
3 approves, at what point in time would
4 this become some level of priority to
5 say, Okay, you know what, let's step it
6 up a little bit, let's come up with a
7 strategic plan in terms of making sure
8 that we're working in partnership with
9 License and Inspections, the Health
10 Department. I see you put on there
11 Vision Zero, the Department of Parks and
12 Recreation. Do y'all meet monthly? Do
13 y'all meet bimonthly to say, Okay, what
14 are the issues that are taking place out
15 there?

16 I'm just trying to get an
17 understanding, because right now it seems
18 like at the end of the day, even with
19 that testimony, I mean, your leadership
20 just says, listen, we don't have that
21 many resources, and even though y'all
22 give us \$4 million, if you gave us
23 another 2, which would be 6 million, it
24 would be national standard, I probably
25 still want to put more money in working

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2 on saving dogs and cats.

3 So I'm just trying to get a
4 little more clarity on like how do we
5 move forward if technically you're kind
6 of saying, you know, other things should
7 be more of a priority than this public
8 health issue, at least in my eyes?

9 MR. MEDLEY: And so --

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And if I'm
11 wrong, just clarify it for me. Am I
12 looking at it from a different
13 perspective or I missed something, help
14 me.

15 MR. MEDLEY: So, Chairman, we
16 have no problem with making the --
17 addressing raccoons a priority. The
18 question is what the solution is. Right
19 now I do not believe we have enough data
20 to say this is how we're going to resolve
21 the problem. So in generalized issues
22 like this, especially raccoons -- I know
23 in Chicago they did a study on coyotes.
24 It's some type of birth control is
25 generally the answer, because when we

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2 take a raccoon out of the community, we
3 take one raccoon. That raccoon's
4 resources now are open to another
5 raccoon, which that raccoon -- what
6 generally happens is the next raccoon
7 uses those resources to have a litter.
8 So the litter survives off of those
9 resources, but the problem is now where
10 one raccoon was using those resources,
11 now four or five are using those
12 resources. So they crowd each other out
13 and they start to push, and that's why we
14 see them in the City, because they had
15 ample space in the suburbs, in the
16 country, but the building all over this
17 area has really pretty much trapped the
18 wildlife, and so they're pushing back
19 because they don't have any other place
20 to go. And as you hear, not only are
21 they inside of buildings, but they're
22 also in a lot of the -- this is a very
23 lush city in terms of green spaces, and
24 they're coming out of the green spaces to
25 get the food and the shelter that humans

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2 provide.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON:

4 Understood.

5 Councilman Green.

6 And I'd also like to
7 acknowledge the presence of Councilman
8 O'Neill.

9 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
10 Mr. Chair.

11 This is a very interesting
12 topic personally, because actually a week
13 ago I had to catch a raccoon, which was
14 interesting about a week ago. And what
15 was interesting is that this is not my
16 first encounter with raccoons. I live in
17 Mount Airy, which is a very leafy area,
18 but what was interesting is that normally
19 when I've seen raccoons, it's normally in
20 the evening or early in the morning. I
21 get up at a very early time to go to the
22 gym. And so when I was leaving my
23 house -- this was a Sunday afternoon --
24 the raccoon was looking right at me. So
25 we called someone to come in to catch the

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2 raccoon. And I think the concern is
3 that -- and having a father who grew up
4 in the South, so I had some kind of
5 understanding of wildlife, and the fact
6 that this raccoon was going through trash
7 during the daytime made me think that
8 this raccoon may have been diseased or
9 had some other type of issues. And so
10 that raised a concern with me.

11 So the challenge was that my
12 house and my neighbor's house, we share a
13 driveway. I have a small dog. I have a
14 teenage son. My next-door neighbor's
15 children are a little bit younger. They
16 could have easily been playing outside
17 when this raccoon was there. So that
18 raised some concerns.

19 When you talked about -- and I
20 heard some of the data about the number
21 of raccoons that you trap on an annual
22 basis. Do you do any type of analysis of
23 where you're catching them? Because I
24 think having more proactive -- as
25 Councilman Johnson was saying, if we know

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2 you have raccoons in this area of the
3 City or that area of the City, what we
4 can do -- I know resources are tight.
5 What we can do from a more proactive way
6 of getting information out to neighbors
7 in those areas saying, Listen, what are
8 you doing in reference to your trash, how
9 are you maintaining your trash, other
10 type of information in a more targeted
11 way.

12 So my first question is, do you
13 do any type of analysis on where you're
14 catching raccoons over a period of time?

15 MR. MEDLEY: Currently we do
16 not. We only address it as something
17 imminent, an imminent public issue, but
18 it's on a case-by-case basis.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I mean,
20 clearly because ACCT has been around for
21 some time, I think the data of number of
22 raccoons you've caught over the years,
23 you usually should be able to put
24 together some analysis of where you
25 caught the raccoons, and that way, you

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2 could do a more intensive outreach to
3 neighbors and constituents in those areas
4 about the raccoon issues that they're
5 having.

6 MR. MEDLEY: We can --
7 definitely, Councilman. We have the
8 ability to heat map. So we could put
9 together a heat map of raccoons.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I think
11 that's something that would be helpful
12 for members of Council, that if you do
13 some type of heat map or analysis of
14 where raccoons are most prevalent,
15 especially around this time of year, as
16 you tend to have more raccoons in the
17 spring and the fall when people have
18 activities and those type of things and
19 trash is more prevalent. So I think
20 that's information you need to get out to
21 the District Councilmembers and actually
22 all Councilmembers so they can better
23 inform their constituents.

24 I know some years ago Council
25 President Clarke had hearings regarding

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2 raccoons, and I'm curious in reference to
3 this -- I'm looking at your testimony on
4 the first page, and I know there's some
5 challenges because we at the state level
6 were preempted from doing certain things
7 because raccoons is considered wildlife,
8 and that's under the purview of the state
9 government, and so we're preempted in
10 some ways. But then if a nuisance is
11 something becomes damaged, that if the
12 wildlife is a nuisance that causes
13 property damage or risk to human health
14 or safety, how do you make that
15 distinction? Because I think when
16 Councilman Taubenberger was saying if you
17 have a raccoon in your property, that is
18 causing property damage. So how do you
19 make the distinction between access to,
20 you said, living space versus in the
21 property which is causing property damage
22 and also being a nuisance?

23 MR. MEDLEY: So currently in
24 order for us to make that assessment, we
25 would need a City agency like L&I to say

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2 this animal caused damage to this
3 property. Our staff does not -- we can't
4 detect the cause of damage to property.

5 So, for instance, if a property
6 already has holes in it not related to
7 the raccoons and the raccoons occupy that
8 space, we'd have no way of knowing that.

9 So I think in terms of our work and
10 getting guidance from the Council as to
11 what specifically you would like us to
12 look into, I would work with the Managing
13 Director's Office to craft something that
14 fits within the scope of what we are able
15 to do, in addition to putting together a
16 plan for individual circumstances.

17 COUNCILMAN GREEN: You talked
18 about -- you talked a little bit about
19 other cities, and I think you said kind
20 of a birth control perspective. What do
21 other cities do in reference to these
22 issues, especially I'm thinking of
23 Mid-Atlantic Northeast cities that have
24 vacant properties, like a Baltimore,
25 maybe like New York City -- well, New

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2 York may be odd because of the resources
3 they have, but I'm thinking like a
4 Baltimore or a Richmond or Boston up and
5 down the Northeast seaboard. What do
6 they do from an animal control
7 perspective, and are there legislative
8 changes that we may need at the state
9 level that give more ability locally to
10 address certain type of wildlife like
11 raccoons?

12 MR. MEDLEY: I can look more
13 into that, and we have done some cursory
14 looks at cities like Baltimore. I know
15 that they're facing a very similar issue
16 where it comes -- where do you put the
17 resources. And the national best
18 practice is peaceful co-existence and to
19 only remove wildlife when it's absolutely
20 necessary. And so that generally is what
21 the practice is.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I guess my
23 concern when you say the national best
24 practice is peaceful co-existence, but
25 for a neighbor that may not have the

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2 resources to call someone -- luckily my
3 next-door neighbor knew a guy that had
4 been dealing with raccoons. So we were
5 able to call him very quickly. He came
6 almost within, you know, 12 hours to come
7 and set up a trap, or someone that is not
8 as -- I'll say much more aggressive and
9 not as afraid of raccoons will put up
10 their own trap. But you have many people
11 in the City, especially seasoned
12 citizens, as my dad would say, who don't
13 have the resources to bring someone from
14 outside, also because of their own
15 concerns about raccoons and whether that
16 raccoon has rabies or other type of
17 diseases. Peaceful co-existence is not
18 really a great response, so I guess my
19 question is -- and my response back to
20 you is that's not a really good solution
21 when people are dealing with raccoons on
22 a regular basis. I know, yes, we're
23 building and we're doing more and more
24 building into their natural habitat, both
25 from the suburbs and the City, but just

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2 saying peacefully co-exist with a raccoon
3 is not something people want to do.

4 MR. MEDLEY: So an animal
5 control agency is not equipped to deal
6 with the problem on the level that you
7 are asking, and what I mean by that is
8 that in order to keep a raccoon out of
9 someone's house, you must install an
10 exclusionary device. That lets the
11 raccoons go out, but they can't come back
12 in.

13 I'm not aware of any animal
14 control agency in the United States and,
15 in fact, I've trained staff in --
16 Baltimore is one of them -- from
17 Baltimore to Los Angeles. I'm not aware
18 of any agency that keeps raccoons out of
19 someone's house.

20 If there is an issue with a
21 raccoon that needs to be addressed from
22 an animal control perspective, we can do
23 that, but how animals get inside
24 someone's house is a deficient structure,
25 not in our expertise. How to keep an

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2 animal out of someone's house, not in our
3 expertise. What we do is address -- and
4 that's why our scope not only here in
5 Philadelphia but nationally is so
6 limited. It's limited to animals that
7 get into people's living spaces. Beyond
8 that, there's not a lot outside of that
9 in terms of training and solutions that
10 would satisfy what I think you're asking.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Well, no. I
12 think you're not really comprehending.
13 The title of your organization is Animal
14 Care and Control. So the key phrase is
15 "animal control." And I think being
16 proactive in using some analysis of
17 targeting locations in the City of
18 Philadelphia where this is more apt to
19 happen, getting information out to
20 constituents, say, in February and March
21 saying it's the warmer time of year, be
22 careful how you maintain your trash,
23 here's some information in reference to
24 how you do that can help control the
25 issue, but by just saying you're not

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2 equipped to do that I think is an
3 incorrect perspective. I think what
4 you're not doing enough is providing more
5 of the control aspect to constituents in
6 the City of Philadelphia on how they can
7 be more proactive and this organization
8 can be more proactive in trying to reduce
9 the possibility of raccoons coming to
10 someone's house.

11 MR. MEDLEY: We definitely can
12 do that, Councilman. We can definitely
13 target it for season and also put the
14 information out in a strategic way.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chair.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
18 Councilman Green.

19 I just had a question for
20 Streets and L&I, because I think it takes
21 a collective effort for all the City
22 agencies to participate, so it's not
23 necessarily all on Mr. Vincent Medley and
24 Animal Control. And so for the
25 representative from License and

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2 Inspection -- and I want to talk to a
3 representative from Streets just to get
4 an idea of, one, from an L&I standpoint,
5 when you receive the phone call that
6 raccoons are in an abandoned building,
7 what takes place? What's the process in
8 addressing that issue? Same thing with
9 Streets Department. When your code
10 enforcement -- I mean, not code
11 enforcement. The SWEEP team, when
12 they're called, Sanitation, to address
13 the issue of trash, garbage, with
14 specifically regarding issues around
15 raccoons, like what's the process when
16 you get the call from the constituent or
17 the 311 report and how you go about
18 addressing it?

19 MS. SWANSON: Good morning.
20 Rebecca Swanson, Director of Planning for
21 the Department of Licenses and
22 Inspections.

23 Councilman, a call for a
24 raccoon in a building would not actually
25 come to L&I. As soon as somebody

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2 mentions a raccoon or an animal, that's
3 going to be -- 311 is going to direct
4 that to ACCT or to another agency.

5 Do you want me to speak about
6 what we do with --

7 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes,
8 dilapidated buildings.

9 MS. SWANSON: -- abandoned
10 buildings?

11 So if a building is opened to
12 trespass, which we consider the ground
13 floor, so windows or doors on the first
14 floor that are visible from the street or
15 accessible, we will go and board them.
16 We use plywood. We use kind of special
17 screws that are not supposed to be able
18 to be popped off. That is what we do
19 with a vacant or abandoned building.

20 If there is a report our Clean
21 and Seal team sees that there is trash or
22 the idea that potentially something is
23 inside, whether it be a human or an
24 animal, the appropriate agencies are
25 contacted, whether it's the Police or

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2 ACCT. We will work with them if we
3 believe that there are animals inside.

4 We obviously don't want to seal a
5 building with animals inside of it. So
6 there is a partnership there.

7 But I will say anecdotally the
8 vast majority of properties that we go
9 out to seal, we do not identify -- we
10 don't have knowledge if there are animals
11 inside.

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

13 Thank you, Rebecca.

14 State your name for the record,
15 sir, and your title.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WARREN:

17 Good morning, Councilman.

18 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Good

19 morning.

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WARREN:

21 Keith Warren, Deputy Commissioner of
22 Streets for Sanitation.

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Good

24 morning, Keith.

25 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WARREN:

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2 How you doing, sir?

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I'm doing
4 pretty good.

5 Just go through the process,
6 Keith.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WARREN:
8 Again, specific calls for animals or
9 raccoons would not really be addressed
10 directly to Streets. It would be passed
11 to ACCT or Parks or some other agency.
12 But for trash stored improperly, we do
13 receive calls, and we go out investigate.
14 In most cases if it's on private
15 property, we can't really cite. We warn.
16 We educate. If it's in a public
17 right-of-way, we do cite. It just
18 depends on how it's stored.

19 Mostly our education process is
20 around anything dealing with animals is
21 sturdy container with a sealed lid.
22 There's also some education we give out
23 for commercial projects that are
24 chemically deterrent to rodents in
25 general, rodents, raccoons. There are

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2 some commercial products that you can
3 purchase, but other than that, that's the
4 extent of our involvement with it.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. And
6 my purpose of asking is, again, I think a
7 lot of this deals with communication as
8 well amongst the various agencies that
9 play a role, and obviously it starts with
10 Animal Control, but obviously Sanitation
11 from the Streets Department when you talk
12 about trash plays a role, as well as you
13 talk about the abandoned houses that some
14 of these raccoons may hang out in, so to
15 speak, play a major role in it as well.
16 So I guess part of, Vincent, you talked
17 about the recommendation of all of the
18 agencies coming together, maybe possibly
19 looking at some type of working group
20 amongst yourselves. And I'm not sure who
21 would be that person that would initiate
22 it, but I would think that at least
23 monthly there's like a group of folks
24 around the table at least having a
25 conversation if it's not about the

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2 campaign what the issues may be, because
3 if we're getting calls as Councilmembers
4 throughout the City of Philadelphia, then
5 obviously it's an issue. It may not be
6 on the same level of gun violence or it
7 may not be on the same level of, as
8 somebody asked me, the PFT-School
9 District contract, but it's an issue but,
10 most importantly, it's a quality of life
11 issue. Because if you're a homeowner and
12 you purchase your home, you're not really
13 trying to hear the City can't do anything
14 because you got a raccoon living inside
15 your roof and you don't really have the
16 money to actually pay to get the raccoon
17 taken out of your home. So that's why
18 for me this is just as important as any
19 other issue, because it's a quality of
20 life issue living here in the City, and
21 depending on where you live at will
22 determine how it has an impact, but this
23 is something that impacts all
24 neighborhoods, from low income to
25 moderate income and people from all

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2 different backgrounds here in the City of
3 Philadelphia.

4 So I just wanted to state that
5 for the record.

6 And so Councilman Al
7 Taubenberger.

8 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
9 you, Mr. Chairman.

10 Mr. Medley, we wouldn't be
11 having these hearings if we weren't
12 getting calls. I've been here -- I'm new
13 to these Council Chambers. I've been
14 here less than a year and a half, but
15 I've gotten two calls, one on groundhogs
16 and one on raccoons, and people wouldn't
17 be calling if it's not a major issue.

18 And if you have a raccoon, I
19 can't say it enough, in your house, in
20 your small backyard, if your kids can't
21 go out to play because the mother is
22 afraid -- we just recently had a police
23 officer this morning speak about that
24 they're in her house, and that's like a
25 major, major problem, and we need to be

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2 able to address that with our resources
3 to help. I know it's a bit beyond the
4 scope, but it changes a whole lot more
5 when it's almost -- well, I wouldn't say
6 almost. In your face. It's in your
7 house and in a small backyard. That is a
8 major problem. And I will have to tell
9 you, the constituent does not want to
10 hear about birth control for raccoons and
11 it doesn't want to hear about peaceful
12 co-existence, because that raccoon being
13 there is disturbing their life and they
14 have to have the resources to pay for the
15 mortgage, to pay for the rent, pay for
16 the food. They don't want to deal with
17 raccoons. They want the City to be of
18 some assistance to them in removing them.

19 MR. MEDLEY: So I would say
20 removing raccoons is not going to solve
21 the problem.

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
23 it is if it's in your house.

24 MR. MEDLEY: Now, it may solve
25 that individual --

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Or
3 intimately. I mean, a backyard -- well,
4 let me ask you this: Does your backyard,
5 would you consider that affecting the
6 family if kids can't go out and play
7 because the raccoons are using that as a
8 playground?

9 MR. MEDLEY: So I think there
10 are ways to keep raccoons out of the
11 backyard and I think working with
12 citizens to make their backyard
13 unfriendly to raccoons. And I also do
14 agree that we -- that starting some type
15 of coalition or committee to look at this
16 problem to help the public, as our
17 earlier panel -- a member of our earlier
18 panel stated, to be proactive and to
19 address the problem from that level.

20 I would agree that human beings
21 should not be in contact with wild
22 animals, and the reality is is that the
23 solutions we have, because they are so
24 embedded in our community now, are not
25 going to solve the problem. So I think

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2 part of it is taking a look at the
3 wildlife in our city, raccoons in our
4 city, and finding ways to coordinate with
5 ourselves and with other wildlife experts
6 to assess the problem and find out what
7 are the best solutions, I think would be
8 something that I am fully in support of.

9 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
10 I would love to work with you. I would
11 also like to help in providing the
12 resources to deal with this, because if
13 it wasn't a problem, we wouldn't be
14 getting a call and we wouldn't be having
15 these hearings. And I will be very
16 direct to you. In all due respect, for
17 you to say that if we gave you the
18 resources, you would refer them to cats
19 and dogs, well, that may be a problem
20 too, but I have yet to get a call on cats
21 and dogs. I've gotten two calls on
22 raccoons and on groundhogs.

23 MR. MEDLEY: And that's
24 because -- the reason why I say I would
25 divert those is because cats and dogs are

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2 in closer proximity to humans than
3 anyone. So some type of disease outbreak
4 is going to be much more of an impact to
5 the community if it's a cat or a dog than
6 it would be for a wild animal, because at
7 least with raccoons, people have the
8 instant signal I need to stay away from
9 this animal.

10 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
11 yes, I agree. And I don't disagree with
12 the answer you just gave, but I do
13 disagree that once it's in your house,
14 that's in your face, and they want that
15 matter resolved. If you talk to -- I'm
16 sure you have, but I have too. If a
17 raccoon is in your house, you're not
18 going to really want to hear about you
19 should live in co-existence and you
20 should have birth control for the
21 raccoon. They want that animal out.

22 MR. MEDLEY: Peaceful
23 co-existence doesn't mean that you allow
24 the raccoon to stay in your house. It's
25 more about looking at the solution to the

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2 individual problem at the house. And so
3 we're not saying to allow a raccoon --
4 I'm not saying to allow a raccoon to live
5 in the house, but we are going to see
6 them. They are going to be in the
7 community or in the wooded areas.

8 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

9 Seeing them is one thing, and I get that,
10 and some people might get upset with
11 that, but actually where they prevent you
12 from using part of your backyard or your
13 house, that is a major problem.

14 MR. MEDLEY: I would agree with
15 that, Councilman, and there are ways to
16 make it very unpleasant for raccoons and
17 we can definitely -- I can work with the
18 City departments and the Managing
19 Director's Office to take a look at that
20 and propose some solutions.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

22 Mr. Medley, thank you.

23 MR. MEDLEY: You're welcome.

24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

25 Mr. Chairman, thank you.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
3 Vincent. That's all for the panel, but,
4 Vincent, I do want to thank you for
5 taking time out of your schedule and
6 being here. I also just want to thank
7 you for just being straight up and
8 talking about the solutions and where
9 there are places where we don't have a
10 solution as opposed to just sitting here
11 and giving us the whole rosy picture of
12 how it's going to be addressed. So I do
13 appreciate that. I respect your honesty
14 as well in terms of how we can find ways
15 to address the issue.

16 What I would like to do also is
17 I'll follow up with Councilman Al
18 Taubenberger as well as Councilwoman
19 Helen Gym and Councilman Green if he
20 would like to as well to figure out how
21 we move forward. I know you made some
22 recommendations about the public
23 information campaign. I do want to
24 recommend that you take into
25 consideration during your own working

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2 group, we can support it as
3 Councilmembers, but I firmly believe that
4 everyone needs to be at the table, L&I,
5 Streets Department, Parks and Rec,
6 Managing Director's Office, at least so
7 y'all can all be on the same page on how
8 we're going to go about and address this
9 issue for the long term.

10 And so I just wanted to thank
11 all of you for being here on this
12 particular panel.

13 I want to next call up -- we
14 have two representatives from the
15 Pennsylvania Gaming Commission who would
16 like to add some input to this particular
17 topic as well. So I'm going to ask them
18 to come up and state their name and their
19 title for the record, because they wanted
20 to make some official statements for the
21 record as well.

22 (Witness approached witness
23 table.)

24 OFFICER CHECH: Good morning.
25 Officer Chech (ph). Wildlife

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2 Conservation Officer Chech, 637,
3 Pennsylvania Game Commission, assigned to
4 Philadelphia County.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You can
6 start, sir.

7 OFFICER CHECH: Okay. I've
8 been doing this job for 18 years in this
9 county. The City is blessed with 9,000
10 acres of public parkland. That's not
11 including Recreation Department or
12 private property. So animals are going
13 to -- wild animals are very much a part
14 of this landscape. They do belong here,
15 and peaceful co-existence is great.

16 If something is in your house,
17 in the living space of your house, that
18 is a priority. Whether it be Police,
19 Animal Control or us would respond to
20 something like that. I'm one officer for
21 the entire county.

22 I worked well with ACCT on many
23 occasions. We work together. If I can't
24 get there, they get there. If it is in
25 your house but is not in your living

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2 space, yes, of course, that is a priority
3 as well, but not as much of a priority.
4 We can't come out and trap every raccoon
5 that's in someone's attic or in someone's
6 yard or gets into someone's trash that
7 they don't want.

8 In the defense of ACCT, their
9 job basically is -- well, until
10 recently -- was cats and dogs, is their
11 job, as far as I understand. Wildlife
12 became like a collateral part of their
13 job. So they got a permit with us to do
14 the job.

15 Some of the folks that are
16 talking about trapping and the price of
17 trapping with private contractors, it's a
18 private industry. So one guy might
19 charge a hundred bucks, another guy might
20 charge 500 bucks. There are licensed
21 folks that have a permit from the Game
22 Commission to do this. They're sort of
23 responsible to us. There are a lot of
24 folks out there that aren't. And I don't
25 know with the cost of things, some people

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2 come out and trap and remove. Some
3 people come out and trap and repair or
4 look at the property and say, You need to
5 do this, you need to do that, like ACCT
6 was saying about their -- beyond their
7 scope.

8 I didn't have anything really
9 prepared. I saw this last night on the
10 news, figured I'd better come down here
11 and listen.

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

13 OFFICER CHECH: So there's a
14 lot of different issues, and one of the
15 major issues is the -- when you call
16 somebody, it usually takes sometimes two
17 days to get to me when it's a wildlife
18 issue, because they call ACCT or they
19 call about the trash. Like I think the
20 departments both said here once you say
21 animal, that's not us. I'm not saying
22 they're passing the buck, but it's the
23 animal, it's the trash, it's the
24 abandoned buildings. It's everybody's
25 issue together.

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2 One of the other things is that
3 when you trap an animal yourself, you can
4 do this yourself, like the officer said.
5 You can go get a Have-a-Heart trap. If
6 it's causing damage to your property, you
7 can trap it. Now people say what the
8 heck do I do with it, or they trap
9 something they don't want to touch. And
10 I've dealt with raccoons for 18 years in
11 this job. Some are docile and some are a
12 nightmare, and I know what I'm doing. So
13 I can see the public's issue with that.

14 The state law says that if it's
15 a rabies vector species, which possums,
16 raccoons, and groundhogs are, they are
17 not to be re-released anywhere. Where
18 are you going to re-release these things?
19 Take them down to the park? Now we have
20 8,000 raccoons in the park. They're just
21 going to come back to your neighborhood.
22 Or preserve -- there's no preserve that
23 just has a bunch of raccoons that says,
24 the City, bring us your 400 raccoons.

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thus

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2 euthanizing.

3 OFFICER CHECH: That's the
4 option.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: That's
6 what the issue is.

7 OFFICER CHECH: That's the
8 option, period.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: In terms
10 of the resources.

11 OFFICER CHECH: If a person has
12 a permit from the Game Commission, by law
13 that's what they do. That's what they're
14 supposed to do. If they go re-release
15 things, you're supposed to have the
16 landowner's permission where you're
17 re-releasing. Like he said about the
18 populations of raccoons, or any other
19 animal. If it's a rabies vector species,
20 we can't take a problem or an issue.

21 It's a rabies vector species, meaning it
22 can carry rabies. Not every raccoon has
23 rabies. All these raccoons that are out
24 right now, they don't have rabies, not
25 all of them. Maybe a few do, but they're

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2 out right now because they're having
3 babies. It's springtime and they're out
4 foraging for food, because it was mom and
5 dad two weeks ago, now it's mom and dad
6 and five babies. So they're out during
7 the day. Just because they're out during
8 the day doesn't mean it has rabies. It's
9 a good sign that it may, but that's not
10 the only contributing factor.

11 So the option is to kill them.
12 When a person traps them, they're to be
13 killed. And somebody said here about
14 Luzerne County. In Luzerne County, you
15 can go over to your trap and an approved
16 method of euthanasia is suffocation,
17 drowning, asphyxiation or gunshot. Now,
18 the City of Philadelphia, we have some
19 rules about firing guns, and if you
20 unlawfully discharge a firearm in the
21 City, that's a problem, but a lawful
22 discharge of a firearm in the City is not
23 illegal. So if a homeowner were to take
24 a pellet gun or a 22 and dispatch the
25 animal in their yard, that would not be

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2 an unlawful discharge of a firearm,
3 because they're lawfully discharging the
4 firearm at that animal in the trap. I
5 know we probably don't want to get into
6 that in the City, but there are ranges in
7 the City. There's a police range that
8 they fire their guns. There's private
9 ranges. So just shooting a gun in the
10 City is not unlawful, so to speak. And I
11 can see your eyes. I don't want
12 everybody to go out shooting -- the
13 raccoon that's in the trap. I'm not
14 talking about shooting raccoons off the
15 wires or stuff like that. I'm talking
16 about it's in the trap, it's a controlled
17 shot right down into the ground. But
18 that is a legal way of doing it in the
19 other 66 counties, let's just say that.

20 You can take a trash can, fill
21 it with water, take the trap, dump it in
22 there, the animal drowns. That's an
23 approved method, or carbon monoxide. I'm
24 sure that's how ACCT does it. They take
25 it, they put it in the chamber, they put

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2 the carbon monoxide on, animal basically
3 suffocates.

4 So they're the options,
5 re-releasing and things like that. I
6 don't want to take too much of your time,
7 if somebody has questions.

8 I want to mention another thing
9 about ACCT, their collateral duties of
10 when they said they want to take care of
11 the cats and dogs. They get all these
12 calls. If people were to bring it there,
13 they should put it down, and I think
14 that's what they said that they do. That
15 should be a viable method. I don't see
16 how that takes up too many resources. If
17 someone is bringing it there and you're
18 just putting it in the chamber and
19 turning the gas on -- they shouldn't
20 store it. They shouldn't keep it. They
21 don't need -- he mentioned about
22 rehabbers. If an animal is injured, it
23 can be taken to a rehabber, not ACCT.
24 ACCT can take it, get it out of the
25 person's possession, because it's in

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2 your -- you don't want the people having
3 it. And if it's injured, they can take
4 it to a rehabber, which is separate from
5 ACCT. They just get it there, same thing
6 I do, dump it off and the rehabber takes
7 care of it.

8 If the animal is in condition
9 where it needs to be dispatched or it's
10 going to be euthanized, it should arrive
11 at ACCT to be euthanized within minutes.
12 It's not like we're thinking about what
13 are we going to do with this animal.
14 It's a rabies vector species. It was
15 brought in in a trap. Put it in the
16 chamber and done and dispose of it.

17 I can probably go on for
18 another half hour, but I'll put it there,
19 and if anybody has any questions --
20 another big issue with this -- excuse me,
21 one more -- is the cat issue in
22 Philadelphia where we have all the
23 hooches and people feed the cats. And
24 the reason -- I know you're focusing on
25 raccoons, but what happens is, in the

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2 evening all those cat hooches become --
3 foxes come to those, raccoons and
4 possums, and eat the food there. They
5 interact with the domestic cat
6 population, and most of the people that
7 go to these hooches, when they see the
8 raccoon, they could care less about it.
9 They want it out of there. But now the
10 cat has been in a fight with the wild
11 animal. The rabies then could transfer
12 to the cat. Everybody wants to save the
13 cat. I'm not a cat hater. I'm just
14 saying everybody wants to save the cat,
15 then goes up and touches the cat, which
16 now has rabies. So that's a big issue
17 with some of these cats about feeding,
18 and we have cat hooches all over the
19 City.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: That's
21 good information for the record.

22 OFFICER CHECH: So there's much
23 more I can discuss with you at your
24 offices or whatnot or if anybody has
25 questions -- excuse me. If you folks

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2 have questions, if you have time.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

4 Councilman Taubenberger.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
6 thank you very, very much for being here,
7 and I think having the Game Commission
8 involved is very important to this
9 problem. And it is a problem.

10 Otherwise, we wouldn't be having these
11 hearings. I mean, people see it as a
12 real problem. Education I think is a way
13 to resolve it, but also I still -- my
14 heart goes out for the person that has a
15 raccoon in their house that is hell on
16 earth and the young mother who we learned
17 could not let her children out in the
18 yard because the raccoons were there, and
19 that is a real problem.

20 A couple questions for you.

21 Are you in charge of all of Philadelphia
22 County?

23 OFFICER CHECH: Correct.

24 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Any
25 other counties or just Philadelphia?

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2 OFFICER CHECH: I have
3 collateral duties in Delaware County
4 right now.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
6 you collaborate, but your jurisdiction
7 really is Philadelphia?

8 OFFICER CHECH: My assigned
9 county is Philadelphia.

10 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
11 And do you, by chance, live in
12 Philadelphia?

13 OFFICER CHECH: I did a few
14 years ago. I live in Cheltenham now.

15 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
16 you're familiar with --

17 OFFICER CHECH: I was born and
18 raised here, yes, for 26 years.

19 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
20 think it's important. I think people
21 ought to know your telephone number
22 before you leave here. I'd like to be
23 able to contact you.

24 OFFICER CHECH: Oh, we get the
25 calls too. It's 610-926-3136.

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2 610-926-3136.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Hold
4 on. 610-926?

5 OFFICER CHECH: 3136. Our
6 dispatchers will give information,
7 prioritize the calls, and if it's in
8 somebody's house running around the
9 basement, they'll give that job to us. I
10 work eight hours a day, 40 hours a week.
11 There's one of us and I have two
12 part-time officers. Councilman O'Neill's
13 office, I think Pam is her name or
14 something, but she's calling me all the
15 time from her office in the Northeast.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
17 How many calls do you think you get on
18 wildlife that is intruding into people's
19 homes or private areas, meaning --

20 OFFICER CHECH: Almost on a
21 daily basis. I mean, I get people
22 calling saying, A fox ran through my
23 yard. And I call them back, What
24 happened?

25 It runs through my yard at 6:00

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2 a.m. in the morning when I leave for
3 work.

4 Okay. Well, that's not an
5 issue or a problem to us if it's just --
6 normally I get people calling they don't
7 want the hawks eating the birds at their
8 bird feeders. So when you say when I get
9 wildlife-related calls related to humans,
10 that's where our business is. So it's
11 like almost all -- almost all our calls
12 are like that.

13 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

14 Because there really isn't, if I could
15 ask on this, just for my own edification,
16 there really isn't any legal hunting in
17 Philadelphia.

18 OFFICER CHECH: Yes, there is.

19 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: There
20 is?

21 OFFICER CHECH: Absolutely.

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
23 Where?

24 OFFICER CHECH: On private
25 property with bow and arrows.

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2 Absolutely. A lot of hunting in the
3 Northeast. I know that's part of your
4 district.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
6 at-large, but I live in the Northeast.

7 OFFICER CHECH: Okay. I'm
8 sorry. On private property you can hunt
9 with bow and arrows for deer and you can
10 hunt water fowl along the Schuylkill
11 River and the Delaware River, water fowl.
12 There's not a lot of raccoon hunting. In
13 Philadelphia you can't really do that,
14 because there's not like anywhere to do
15 it. Mostly trapping. People would trap
16 raccoons for their pelts, and they sell
17 their pelts. Fur trappers do that in
18 most of the other counties.

19 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
20 Understood. Well, I look forward to
21 working with you to kind of resolve this
22 problem, because, once again, we wouldn't
23 be having these hearings if there wasn't
24 a need. There is a need.

25 OFFICER CHECH: Absolutely. I

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2 mean, we can narrow the raccoon call
3 downs, but when you say wildlife
4 interacting with people, that's every
5 call I get just about.

6 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
7 you.

8 Mr. Chairman, thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.
10 Councilman Derek Green.

11 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chair.

13 Actually I wish representatives
14 from the City were still here, because I
15 think you provided some good information,
16 especially I know we have a very big
17 feral cat issue in the City of
18 Philadelphia, and I think as you were
19 talking, it made me think of there are
20 people I know in my neighborhood in Mount
21 Airy who have a very strong love for cats
22 and they put out food. I know a property
23 not that far from me, it was actually a
24 commercial business where they put out
25 food for cats on a regular basis, which

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2 the concept of that food attracting not
3 only the cats but also the raccoons and
4 then having an interaction. I think part
5 of the issue -- and this is why I wish
6 that ACCT was still here, because how
7 would you educate -- oh, I'm sorry. I
8 didn't see you.

9 Part of the issue is educating
10 people all throughout the entire City
11 that when you put out food for cats, that
12 can also attract raccoons and also cause
13 the possibility of rabies, and I think
14 people are not aware of that and that
15 dynamic. I think that goes back to the
16 public education issue that we need to do
17 a better job that when you're putting out
18 food for cats, you could also be inviting
19 other type of wildlife into your
20 community, and I don't think people have
21 that perspective.

22 OFFICER CHECH: Correct. And
23 they're not there at 2:00 in the morning
24 or 11:00 in the night when the other
25 critters are there fighting or trying to

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2 get some of that food. And with ACCT, I
3 mean, and our position and some of the
4 laws, that they catch the cats, they spay
5 and neuter them, then they re-release
6 them. So they're still getting fed.
7 They probably should be catching the cats
8 and doing something else with them rather
9 than -- I get what they're doing, so they
10 don't spread population, but people are
11 still housing -- those houses aren't only
12 cat houses. There's a place up in the
13 Northeast where the foxes come there all
14 the time and are eating some of the cats.
15 There's coyotes in the City. I don't
16 know if anybody is familiar, but there's
17 coyotes, we have turkeys, we had a bear
18 come through here in the Wissahickon last
19 fall -- or last spring. I'm sorry.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right. But
21 I just think that's something from a
22 public education perspective. I know
23 parts of the City that people need to
24 have a better understanding. People just
25 think we're doing nice things by feeding

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2 cats and putting out food, but that also
3 may be attracting other wildlife to them.

4 OFFICER CHECH: Correct.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you
7 very much for your testimony.

8 Any other questions for the
9 Administration?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. So
12 at this particular time, we're going to
13 have public testimony. So we're going to
14 call up the next panel.

15 Thank you very much.

16 OFFICER CHECH: You're welcome.

17 THE CLERK: Stacy DiStefano,
18 Viola Mason, and Ollie Bettis.

19 (Witnesses approached witness
20 table.)

21 MS. DiSTEFANO: Hi. My name is
22 Stacy DiStefano. I live in Point Breeze.

23 I took this picture yesterday
24 afternoon, but it really could have been
25 at any moment, just about any day of the

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2 week. That's from my balcony in my
3 bedroom in the front of my home.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: How do
5 they get on the roof -- I mean on the
6 balcony?

7 MS. DiSTEFANO: That's on my
8 balcony, yup. So I was standing in the
9 bedroom in daylight and about three feet
10 in front of me and trying to get in
11 through the screen door. So I can't open
12 my screen door at night. I can't sleep
13 with the windows open.

14 About two years ago, we moved
15 to Point Breeze. I never thought that I
16 would worry about raccoons. I can tell
17 you there was an abandoned home behind
18 our house when we moved in, and that was
19 demolished, and that's the first time we
20 saw one. So we just figured from the
21 demolition and things got moved around.
22 So we called ACCT, and they basically
23 said they couldn't do anything because it
24 was coming in our backyard. So we paid
25 the trapper, came out, about \$400 twice,

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2 two raccoons, took them away. And then
3 on the second time, he said, Well, you
4 have a lot of overgrown trees in the
5 alley behind your house and your block,
6 so it's like creating a highway system.
7 And I didn't see anyone address that
8 today. So the overgrown trees from the
9 alleys to the roofs are actually just
10 creating a very easy path for the
11 raccoons to get onto the roof.

12 In addition to that, there are
13 several vacant houses on our block that
14 you can see them coming in and out of
15 very easily. So it's a breeding ground
16 there. We actually called the City to
17 have the trees pruned back and then was
18 told that wasn't possible. So we paid to
19 have the tree pruned back. So at least
20 now there is no direct access to our
21 roof, but from my balcony, which is my
22 neighbor's roofs, almost every single day
23 that is now an incidence.

24 I was frustrated when I came
25 here, and now I'm actually angry, because

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2 what I'm hearing is the responsibility is
3 now on the homeowner. So it's a problem
4 I believe through City policy that the
5 trees are overgrown, there's abandoned
6 buildings not being dealt with. It's a
7 breeding ground for an infestation of
8 raccoons. That's not peaceful
9 co-existence. Being three feet in my own
10 bedroom and watching four raccoons on a
11 regular basis try to get in my home where
12 there's no food, it's a new house,
13 there's no delapidated structure, there's
14 no holes, that's not safe. There's 12
15 children on my block. That's not safe.

16 So now I found out today
17 sitting here that in addition to having
18 to pay for the traps, to pay for trees to
19 be pruned, now I have to somehow figure
20 out how to kill something once it's in my
21 yard, which is frightening and not
22 something I want my and my neighbors to
23 have to deal with. I'm very concerned
24 about that.

25 I also, with all due respect,

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2 I'm going to liken this to something like
3 an analogy. So if there was a hole in
4 the roof in this room and every time it
5 rained, water came in, I don't think the
6 solution would be the City would be
7 buying buckets to fill the water. I
8 think the City would want to fix the
9 hole.

10 So what I'm hearing today with
11 the public education campaign and traps
12 and palm cards and neighborhood talks,
13 you're buying buckets. We need to solve
14 the problem. The problem is an
15 infestation of these animals in
16 delapidated structures.

17 My neighborhood is not heavy
18 with trash. We don't have a lot of
19 abandoned buildings, but we have some,
20 but it shouldn't be on the residents to
21 fix this problem, and that's what I'm
22 really angry about today. I do think we
23 are way past public education around
24 this, and what I would suggest is maybe a
25 pilot project where you're reallocating

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2 some of the money for public education
3 and those phone calls to maybe take a
4 section of the City, prune back the
5 trees. You know, if the City doesn't
6 want to sell a vacant building, that's
7 fine, but then the City should demolish
8 it. The City should create an
9 environment where animals can't live
10 there. It is a public health campaign.
11 It's not about rabies. It's about not
12 being able to go outside of your house,
13 and that's frightening.

14 I literally cannot open my
15 sliding glass doors in my bedroom,
16 because just yesterday while I was
17 standing there, four raccoons were trying
18 to get in my screen.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: This is a
20 big raccoon.

21 MS. DiSTEFANO: Yes, it is.
22 Yes, it is.

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And I grew
24 up in South Philly all my life and I
25 thought I was like kind of a tough guy at

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2 one time, and I ran into a raccoon in
3 Grays Ferry. No, I was not tough as I
4 thought I was. So I just want to let you
5 know -- and I'm saying this all seriously
6 and honestly that I feel exactly what
7 you're saying, and I got -- I have a
8 too-friendly two-year-old son that I
9 would not want to have interact with any
10 of these.

11 MS. DiSTEFANO: Absolutely not.
12 So part of that issue around public
13 education, it seems to me, with all due
14 respect to the testimony before, a little
15 bit condescending. I mean, we're not
16 feeding them. We're not strewing trash
17 around. We're not creating an
18 environment where they're welcome. And
19 from that photo, you can see because it's
20 daylight and because I'm standing two
21 feet from them, when you switch the
22 lights on and off, they're also in my
23 backyard, but honestly, you know, that is
24 where the trash is, so that's a little
25 more understandable. Certainly not on a

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2 roof and not on a balcony. You turn the
3 lights on, they just look right back at
4 you. You open the door, they actually
5 get up on all fours. There is no fear.

6 So it's not about educating the
7 public on what to do. We now have
8 domesticated city animals. They are not
9 afraid of people. They're actually
10 annoyed with you if you're in their way.

11 For that mother and baby to
12 stand there while -- I have on my phone
13 about 12 other photos. They didn't
14 even -- they weren't even remotely phased
15 by my presence in front of them in broad
16 daylight.

17 So we're beyond public
18 education, and I think we need to address
19 the heart of the problem, the roof that's
20 leaking. How do we reduce the population
21 of these animals in abandoned buildings.
22 It's not about how do we tell people how
23 to trap and drown and kill and BB guns.
24 That's alarming. That's something that
25 as a resident of Point Breeze and of the

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2 City, I don't want to hear that's my
3 responsibility to do something about
4 this.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

6 Ma'am, just state your name for
7 the record and begin.

8 MS. MASON: Yes. My name is
9 Viola Mason and I'm not really here about
10 the raccoon problem. I just could hear
11 the similarity to some of the other
12 problems I deal with. I live in
13 Southwest Philly. I'm very well aware
14 and work within the community cat and the
15 trap, neuter, return program. So there
16 are answers in terms of cats in your
17 neighborhood. People should in fact be
18 schooled that they don't leave food out.
19 I'm well aware that that should not
20 happen.

21 The reason why I'm here,
22 though, is the comparison to a problem
23 I've been having with Pit Bulls running
24 loose and what you do about that, because
25 I had an awful time getting any agency in

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2 the City to respond to vicious Pit Bulls
3 in my backyard, which is fenced and had a
4 locked gate.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Ma'am, I
6 would like to do this, if you don't mind,
7 could we keep it raccoon focused, and if
8 you have a specific issue regarding --

9 MS. MASON: Someone else
10 introduced the cat problem, but you also
11 invited me to speak, so...

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: On the
13 topic of raccoons. I think the person
14 who --

15 MS. MASON: Well, I've said my
16 peace, so I'm perfectly glad to go ahead
17 and shut up.

18 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: No, I
19 wouldn't say shut up. I would just say
20 if you can try to keep it toward the
21 raccoons, but go ahead, ma'am. Go ahead.

22 MS. MASON: What is it you want
23 me to say?

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You're
25 finished?

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2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I do
3 have a quick question.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Sure.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
6 we just did talk quickly about the
7 intersection of where folks are feeding
8 cats. If this Council were to propose an
9 ordinance against that practice of
10 feeding cats outside, would you oppose
11 that or would you be supportive?

12 MS. MASON: I would oppose it.
13 I understand that it is in fact legal at
14 this time.

15 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: It is
16 what?

17 MS. MASON: Legal to feed cats.

18 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
19 Outside?

20 MS. MASON: Yes.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
22 And if it became illegal, you would be
23 opposed to that?

24 MS. MASON: Yes.

25 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.

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2 I just wanted to know that. Okay.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

4 Ma'am, just state your name.

5 Are you finished, ma'am?

6 MS. MASON: Well, I have
7 nothing to say about raccoons.

8 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. Go
9 ahead with the cats. Dog you said,
10 right?

11 MS. MASON: Well, I don't want
12 to give you a full lecture on cats. I
13 believe that the City does need to become
14 more educated about the community cat and
15 the trap, neuter, and return program. I
16 have put a lot of my time and a great
17 deal of my money which I saved ACCT, who
18 otherwise would have been responsible, a
19 great deal of their budget and I would
20 like at least minimal appreciation for
21 it, and I met up with the reverse when I
22 tried to deal with the Pit Bull problem
23 of vicious Pit Bulls in my backyard,
24 fenced, gated, et cetera, and which
25 nobody seemed to think it was their

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2 business to deal with it.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.
4 Anything else, ma'am?

5 MS. MASON: No. That will be
6 all.

7 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you
8 very much. Thank you for your service.

9 Next.

10 MS. BETTIS: Good morning,
11 everyone. I'm here about the raccoons
12 and the possums, and as I said in my
13 note, the rats too, but I can handle
14 them. They're not that big.

15 So the problem with the
16 raccoons that I have --

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Can you
18 try to keep it raccoon focused, please,
19 if you don't mind.

20 MS. BETTIS: Yeah, I am.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

22 MS. BETTIS: So the raccoon
23 problem that I have is, there are two
24 giant raccoons on my block, and I think
25 they may have children. They come out

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2 day or night. And I watch my
3 grandchildren during the day, and like
4 the young lady says, I can't let them go
5 outside and play, and they wondering why
6 they can't, and I'm trying to explain to
7 them that there are two raccoons out
8 there. One of my grandchildren actually
9 thinks it's a dog, because they're like
10 huge.

11 I'm not opposed to killing any
12 animal, because I have a dog. I just
13 need someone to remove them into a safer
14 environment for them so that they are
15 away from me.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

17 MS. BETTIS: So I thank you and
18 I appreciate you and, Mr. Johnson, I
19 appreciate your office, because every
20 time I call, I get results.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
22 ma'am.

23 MS. BETTIS: Thank you so much.

24 COURT STENOGRAPHER: Can you
25 please state your name.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yeah,
3 state your name for the record.

4 MS. BETTIS: Ollie Bettis.

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I just
6 want to say to Ms. DiStefano -- correct?

7 MS. DiSTEFANO: Close.

8 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Close?
9 Okay. So I just want to state for the
10 record -- and I know Vincent Medley is in
11 the back. He runs ACCT, Animal Control
12 Unit. Hopefully there will be a working
13 group to look at -- you got L&I that
14 deals with the abandoned houses and you
15 have Streets that specifically deals with
16 all things trash related as well as
17 working to clean out alleyways. Like
18 that would be the comprehensive approach.
19 That was the sole purpose of inviting all
20 of them here today, because I would think
21 that just from a leadership standpoint,
22 everybody would be at the table, but it
23 only happens if it's a priority, let me
24 just be quite frank with you. When it's
25 a priority, all the people are at the

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2 table working in sync together to
3 addressing the issue. So hopefully that
4 will be the perspective moving forward,
5 and myself and my colleagues up here,
6 we'll work in partnership with the Animal
7 Control Unit, Mr. Vincent Medley to see
8 how we could be supportive of that
9 process moving forward.

10 But I definitely recognize --
11 and I live in South Philadelphia all my
12 life, from a kid until now, and, again, I
13 don't remember having any raccoons
14 growing up in South Philly. And here's
15 the interesting part: We have more
16 abandoned buildings before Point Breeze
17 had development and I haven't seen a
18 raccoon. I mean, Point Breeze didn't
19 always look the way it is today and we
20 didn't have raccoons. Actually, we had
21 way more abandoned homes and alleyways
22 with probably trees and debris in it, and
23 I don't remember seeing raccoons. But
24 this is a different environment, but I do
25 know from a cleanliness standpoint, we

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2 have a role to play from the City in
3 terms of addressing those type of issues.
4 And so your remarks were definitely on
5 point, and we will work to make sure that
6 there's a level of followthrough moving
7 forward for the long haul.

8 So thank you very much for your
9 testimony.

10 THE CLERK: Larry Henderson,
11 Anthony Jones, and Pamela Thomas.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Please
15 state your name for the record and begin.

16 DR. JONES: My name is
17 Dr. Anthony Jones and I live in the East
18 Oak Lane section of Philadelphia. And
19 hearing all the people here today that
20 have come before me, as well as I am
21 quite familiar with Officer Chech has
22 been to my house twice, and I'm familiar
23 with most of the people at ACCT Philly.

24 About eight years ago, I
25 started trapping raccoons because they

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2 were such a menace in the neighborhood.

3 So I'm also a block captain, on the Board

4 of Oak Lane Community Action Association,

5 and I was the Chairman of Crime and

6 Safety in that district working with the

7 35th District and Captain McCloskey at

8 that time. So we realized that there was

9 a problem with this, and neighbors, we

10 tried bringing in people that we would

11 pay to get them. The neighbors decided

12 this is very expensive. We had a range

13 of about \$200 up to about \$750.

14 So I took it upon myself, I

15 said, Okay, you know, let me do some

16 research and figure out some things. So

17 on my block of the 6600 block of North

18 13th Street, I purchased traps,

19 researched how to trap raccoons, and

20 actually got very good at it. ACCT

21 Philly would pick the raccoons up. We

22 didn't have a problem. Then I guess

23 about three years ago and actually as

24 late as last year, I received some

25 things. Officer Chech appeared at my

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2 house because somehow it was stated that
3 I was trapping and skinning the raccoons.
4 And I couldn't figure that out, because
5 in fact ACCT Philly were picking up the
6 raccoons. So I don't know how I could
7 skin them if they had them.

8 But anyway, we moved forward.
9 And what I've heard here today is that
10 this is a problem, and really I think,
11 okay, education is one part of it, but
12 what about community involvement? What
13 about if people say in the community, I
14 am willing to trap if you're willing to
15 pick up, and I think a partnership in
16 this situation might really help.

17 Now, as the woman before
18 mentioned about raccoons being on her
19 balcony, it's crazy. I have them in the
20 backyard. They're all over the place.
21 We have senior citizens. Most people are
22 afraid to go out in their yards. We have
23 lush yards, very similar to I think what
24 Councilman was saying like Mount Airy,
25 very big, very deep, wide green space.

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2 And, you know, you're sitting out there.
3 I've been out there grilling, and
4 raccoons have come by, you know, just
5 like, Hey, what's on the menu, and it's a
6 little crazy.

7 So, once again, I'd like to say
8 to the City of Philadelphia as well as to
9 ACCT Philly, how are we going to solve
10 this problem? And, yes, we do need a
11 partnership. I think people in the
12 community are willing to work with you,
13 as I was willing to work with ACCT Philly
14 and I had three traps that were going all
15 the time. This is how many raccoons
16 we're catching, so good that they really
17 thought that I guess I was a professional
18 trapper, and I was just like, No, I just
19 want to get these things out of the
20 neighborhood.

21 As I had talked to people in
22 ACCT Philly, they had said to me -- we
23 had good conversations and we had not so
24 good conversations, but as it was stated,
25 we're never going to get rid of them. I

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2 understand that. I get it. But a
3 reduction in the population I think is
4 also helpful, and that's sort of where
5 our communities stand at this point, is
6 let's reduce the population of these
7 animals, because, yes, as we heard today,
8 people do not want to live with them in
9 their backyards. You don't want them
10 hanging out while you're grilling and
11 you're entertaining friends and things of
12 that nature.

13 So hopefully this panel -- and
14 I thank you for taking on this issue,
15 because it is a quality of life issue.
16 In East Oak Lane we have dealt with
17 numerous quality of life issues. So I
18 thank you, City Council and Chairman, for
19 taking on this issue very much so, and I
20 will bring back information to my
21 community, who is having elections on
22 Wednesday of this week, and sort of tell
23 them what you're thinking and what's
24 going on with City Council to help us,
25 the citizens of Philadelphia, with this

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2 issue.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

4 Councilman Taubenberger.

5 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:

6 Doctor, thank you so much for sharing
7 your thoughts and testimony.

8 About how many raccoons do you
9 capture in a year?

10 DR. JONES: I go on their cycle
11 in the spring and I go on their cycle in
12 the fall, but I do catch some in between
13 during the summer, and I'd say any given
14 time, I could catch anywhere from six to
15 eight.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
17 And these are all captured on your
18 property?

19 DR. JONES: On my property,
20 coming through. Clearly hear them at
21 night. You know, I'm a musician by
22 trade, so listening to sounds, and now I
23 know exactly the chitter chatter of
24 raccoons as they're talking back and
25 forth. And when I have the windows open

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2 at night, you can clearly hear them in
3 the backyard.

4 It was mentioned about leaving
5 on lights and things of that nature. We
6 looked through a lot of that as a
7 community, and people were doing things
8 of that nature, and as the previous woman
9 had stated, you know what, they are used
10 to it. This just does not phase them.
11 Motion light detectors, they realize --
12 they're smart creatures, and they
13 realize, you know what, that's not really
14 going to do anything, until they maybe
15 see a human. Sometimes they move away;
16 sometimes they don't. They get so used
17 to you. So it is an issue when I'm
18 catching that many. I think one time
19 they came out and there were two raccoons
20 in one trap.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Wow.
22 That's interesting.

23 Mr. Chairman, I would have to
24 say I think -- and, Doctor, if you would
25 want to be involved in this. If we did

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2 have an ad hoc committee working out
3 these difficulties, your expertise and
4 experience would be very much welcomed, I
5 believe, on that committee.

6 DR. JONES: I would be honored.
7 As I travel around the world in various
8 capacities and doing different things, I
9 always promote the City of Philadelphia.
10 I love my city. Don't want to move out
11 of the City, you know. Would like to
12 just resolve issues. So I'm always open
13 to --

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: You'd
15 like to have peace in your own backyard.

16 DR. JONES: Right. That's all.
17 It's not asking for much.

18 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: No; I
19 don't think it is either. Thank you,
20 Doctor.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
23 Councilman.

24 Next person, please.

25 MS. THOMAS: Yes. Hello. Good

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2 afternoon. My name --

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just state
4 your name.

5 MS. THOMAS: Pamela Thomas, and
6 I am a block captain in Frankford, 2000
7 block of Marguerite and Torresdale.

8 Now, I've had several people
9 come to me pertaining to the raccoon
10 issue, and it's major in my block. The
11 other day, I'm going to say about two
12 weeks ago, I was standing outside talking
13 to my neighbor. I'm like, What is that?

14 She said, That's a raccoon.

15 I said, What?

16 And she says, Oh, yeah. It's a
17 family in the back of this property right
18 here.

19 I said, Are you kidding me?

20 So when they procreate, I don't
21 know how many babies they have. So you
22 figure if it's a family behind a house,
23 then you have Torresdale, which goes this
24 way, there's a family over there. Then
25 you have an alleyway where I live at.

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2 They're all back there. So of course me
3 being a block captain, everybody, Well,
4 what do I do about the raccoons? Who do
5 I call?

6 I said, Call 311.

7 So call 311. No, that's not
8 our issue. You have to call, you know,
9 Animal.

10 I said, Okay. So what do you
11 do? I mean, sometimes I don't even want
12 to go outside in the back, because I
13 don't know if one is going to be back
14 there. I have a backyard, and there are
15 kids that play in the alleyway. So
16 that's another concern. And people in my
17 block -- I know this is an issue with the
18 trash, and when I get home, there will be
19 notes going in everybody's door, because
20 I tend to let people know what's going
21 on.

22 On my way coming down here, I
23 texted the neighbor. I said, Listen, I'm
24 going to this raccoon thing. Him telling
25 me the other day talking to him, I said,

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2 Well, what's going on with the lady's
3 trash across the street? Why is it all
4 over the street?

5 Oh, that was a raccoon.

6 I says, Okay. I still need to
7 talk to her about her trash, because why
8 would you -- if you know it's a raccoon
9 issue...

10 But my only thing is please get
11 help. We need help with the raccoons.
12 It's a major problem. Because any two
13 times you standing talking to somebody
14 and it just walks right out, no,
15 that's -- no. That's not good.

16 So thank you.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you
18 for your service.

19 Next, sir. State your name for
20 the record, please.

21 MR. HENDERSON: My name is
22 Larry Henderson and I live in the West
23 Oak Lane area, 1500 block of Nedro. And
24 I've been having this problem since 1985
25 with these raccoons, and I've had, I

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2 guess, no less than 25 that I had to have
3 removed, me personally at a cost of in
4 excess of \$15,000 worth of damage to my
5 property. Trees had to be cut down, and
6 it just keeps going on and on.

7 So listening to the panel and
8 the different people that were up here
9 earlier, apparently none of them had to
10 try to call any of the City agencies for
11 assistance, because you call this number,
12 Well, wait a minute, let me transfer you
13 to this number, and they transfer you to
14 another number, and after about 30
15 minutes of this, you just sort of like
16 give up and you go do what you got to do.
17 And what I did, I had to go buy
18 Have-a-Heart traps, and luckily I have
19 some people that I work with. They would
20 come out. They live in another county.
21 They would take them out there. I didn't
22 care what they did with them, as long as
23 they brought my trap back, because I had
24 to go out and buy that.

25 But you're talking about an

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2 animal that really is at the top of the
3 food chain in the City, and it is not
4 afraid of anything, anybody.

5 You're talking about the trash
6 cans. The City of Toronto, Canada, I
7 think they did a survey. I think it took
8 them about six months of finding a trash
9 can that they could not get in, and they
10 pretty much deal like what the City did
11 with the recycling bins. They said,
12 Okay, these are the trash cans that we
13 use. We recommend everybody gets them.
14 They have them at Home Depot, but these
15 trash cans are in excess of a hundred
16 dollars. So this whole thing is very,
17 very expensive.

18 As far as them climbing, the
19 first time I knew I had a problem at my
20 house, the lady says, There he is, and I
21 thought she was pointing at me, because
22 it was like 6:00 in the morning. It was
23 actually a raccoon scaling up the side of
24 the wall carrying a younger raccoon that
25 I didn't know I had a problem. They

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2 actually got up and pulled away some of
3 the wood away from the eaves area, and
4 that's where they were going in at. But
5 she was actually just climbing, scaling
6 up the side of the wall. And just like
7 you, Councilman Johnson, I never seen
8 these problems in the City. I grew up in
9 North Philly, and in my area that I grew
10 up at, they have problems. And you just
11 go like, where are all these things
12 coming from?

13 And I would like to -- I'm
14 sorry. I don't want to mispronounce your
15 name, but I'll tell you what you do.
16 When you hear something in the wall and
17 you go like, Maybe if I ignore it, it
18 goes away, and they get to scratching and
19 they come through that Sheetrock in the
20 wall, you got to take some action, and
21 that's happening now. So when people
22 say, Oh, I don't know, you know. They
23 put a nice name on it, euthanize. You
24 try to treat them like you would a mouse.
25 You put them in a mouse trap, the mouse

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2 trap is there to kill the mouse, that's
3 what you got to do with these raccoons.
4 They're not going to back away from
5 anything.

6 And the only person I heard
7 here today that actually had some good
8 information was the last gentleman. I
9 think he was with the state. He gave the
10 most valid thing. You cannot treat them
11 like they're just going to go away if you
12 do this, you do that. They don't go
13 away.

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I will say
15 this, though. I mean, I guess depending
16 on who you are, at least everybody is not
17 going to pick up a gun or try to go
18 outside and suffocate or shoot with a
19 pellet gun or shoot with a real gun. I'm
20 just being honest with you. I mean, I
21 don't -- I mean, to each his own, because
22 I know you said you did some trapping.
23 I'm not trapping, bottom line. That's
24 not what I'm into. I'm not dealing with
25 no rodents. That's not how I'm going to

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2 address it, but to each his own.

3 I think there's a variety of
4 different ways, but I think this is good
5 because it gives us a view of everything
6 that's going on out here, and hopefully
7 there'll be a comprehensive approach to
8 say, Okay, here's what the options are in
9 terms of us moving forward. But I'm just
10 saying, me personally, that's not where
11 my head is at in terms of me pulling out.

12 MR. HENDERSON: See, it doesn't
13 have to be an abandoned property. It
14 just has to be something that they can
15 either pull away from, say like siding or
16 wood. Whatever it is, they will pull
17 away from that and gain access to the
18 property that you live in.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I agree.

20 MR. HENDERSON: So it doesn't
21 have to be an abandoned property for them
22 to continue doing whatever they want to
23 do.

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: We agree.
25 We agree on that.

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2 Councilman Taubenberger.

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
4 you, Chairman. I thank you on your
5 leadership for bringing all these folks
6 to the table. I think the ideas and
7 thoughts came out are pretty good.

8 And I just also wanted to say,
9 I thank the panel that was here. I have
10 no comment other than you wanted to know
11 how to pronounce my last name. It's
12 Taubenberger.

13 MR. HENDERSON: Taubenberger.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
15 Taubenberger, long German name,
16 Taubenberger. But I'll get you a card
17 before you leave.

18 MR. HENDERSON: Okay. Thank
19 you.

20 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
21 Because I think this is a problem.
22 Working on together with the leadership
23 of the Chair and other Councilpeople
24 here, Councilman Green, Councilwoman Gym,
25 I think we can -- and Councilman O'Neill

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2 was here as well. We can resolve this
3 problem or at least control it, because
4 we don't need to have our neighbors and
5 our citizenry sharing their homes with
6 raccoons. I am sorry. My love for
7 animals goes so far, and that ends right
8 there where they share a home.

9 MR. HENDERSON: At one time the
10 City had a Vector Control that handled
11 like these type of problems with rats and
12 whatnot. I don't know what happened to
13 them, but I tried to contact initially in
14 the beginning, and they were like, Well,
15 if they live on the other side of Broad
16 Street, you don't have a problem.

17 I said, No. I'm on the other
18 side. I didn't know they knew to stop at
19 Broad Street and not come over, you know.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I'm glad
21 we're having the hearing, because --
22 excuse me, Mr. Medley. And thank you for
23 sticking around. Do you know about
24 Vector Control that the City of
25 Philadelphia once formerly had and what's

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2 the status as to do we have it now or
3 don't have it? Can you come on up?

4 (Witnesses approached witness
5 table.)

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So it's
7 under the Health Department, but can you
8 clarify it for me, Mr. Medley, and then
9 we're going to wrap up.

10 Go ahead, sir.

11 MR. MEDLEY: Chairman, we do
12 have a Vector Control. I do not believe
13 that they address raccoons at this time.

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. So
15 they would handle what? Rats? So is the
16 Health Department still here? No. She
17 left already?

18 Oh, you're here. Go ahead,
19 sir. Can you help us out, please.

20 MR. WILSON: Sure. Dave
21 Wilson, Deputy Managing Director for
22 Community and Culture.

23 The Vector Department is part
24 of the Health Department and they handle
25 for -- it's rats and mosquitos, is the

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2 vector piece of that that they cover.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So how
4 could we add raccoons to that population?
5 What classifies as a rodent or animal
6 that comes under your jurisdiction?

7 MR. WILSON: I think that
8 basically how everything is -- how
9 everything is situated right now, that we
10 have a way in which we deal with
11 raccoons. It's just that it's in a
12 limited scope. And I think that's what
13 this hearing has really kind of pretty
14 much outlined for us, that how do we deal
15 with the rampant problem with raccoons.
16 And I think what I've taken away from the
17 Committee here today is that we need to,
18 one, coordinate better within the
19 Administration to work with one another
20 to address the problem, as well as
21 outreach to the community, whether that
22 is -- I think Councilman Taubenberger
23 talked about an ad hoc committee or
24 something to that extent. So that's what
25 I've taken away here. That's what we

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2 have spoken about earlier prior to this
3 hearing.

4 So I think the structure that
5 is already established works. I think
6 Vector Control is a space that deals
7 with -- and I think we want to look at
8 that as pests. I don't think we've --
9 pests, whether it deals with rodents,
10 pests whether it deals with insects and
11 things to that extent. And on the animal
12 control side, that we deal with the
13 animals as it relates to the nuisance and
14 the problems they provide against the
15 health and safety for the community, if
16 that makes sense.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes, it
18 does. Okay. All right. Well, we will
19 be in contact. We will be working with
20 you in partnership, Mr. Vincent Medley,
21 and look at a long-term strategy and
22 figuring out how best we move forward in
23 addressing this issue, because at the end
24 of the day, I don't think it's going
25 anywhere. Over my brief time here at

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2 Council being a Councilperson
3 representing the Second Councilmanic
4 District, it's only increased in terms of
5 a concern through phone calls to my
6 office in the capacity of me being here,
7 and that's what drove us to say, you know
8 what, let's have a hearing and give us an
9 idea on how we move forward.

10 And so I want to thank
11 everyone.

12 Is there anyone else here for
13 public testimony?

14 If not, I would like to -- one
15 person? Come on up, sir. State your
16 name.

17 (Witness approached witness
18 table.)

19 MR. MALONE: My name is Kevin
20 Malone. I reside in North Philadelphia,
21 Willington Street. It's about three
22 blocks, four blocks west of Broad Street.

23 I think that the concern that
24 we're seeing in our neighborhood is
25 actually there's an abandoned home. And

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2 I came in late, so I don't know if this
3 was brought up before. But I think
4 there's an abandoned home where there's
5 multiple families of raccoons that are
6 actually living in that house, and they
7 will crawl out, and as I heard as I was
8 coming in, they're very friendly, a
9 little too friendly for, you know, my
10 liking, and they will go right next to
11 your door, come into your backyard when
12 there's people out there, especially --
13 we have a grill. We like to grill.
14 We're trying to barbecue. They smell
15 that. They love that. They eat that up.

16 So I'd like -- what could the
17 strategy be for situations where we have
18 families living in abandoned homes or
19 condemned homes and then at night when
20 they come out, that's -- they got a nice
21 place to stay if they're just shacking up
22 in an old row home. So how could we
23 approach that? What do we think?

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So part of
25 that will be working in partnership with

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2 L&I, because they do the clean and seals
3 of the abandoned buildings. And I think,
4 again, that's why collectively we have to
5 have everybody at the table on the issue.
6 But that's basically a clean and seal
7 issue, and hopefully as we move forward,
8 if everybody is working in sync with one
9 another and let's say you come out, you
10 have a complaint, this particular house,
11 we have a family of raccoons living in
12 there. Animal Control Unit, they come
13 out, remove them, and hopefully that
14 property will be sealed properly where we
15 won't have the issue.

16 But also there's another issue
17 regarding L&I that we'll have to address
18 in the long term. They're only, I think,
19 it's the first floor windows and doors
20 are sealed, but not the second floor.
21 And so that's something that we have to
22 look at further to try to figure out,
23 okay, if they're scaling the walls and
24 they can't get in on the first floor,
25 they'll just scale the walls and go in on

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2 the second floor. So that's part of a
3 longer conversation that we have to see,
4 but that's why we're having this hearing,
5 at least to start the process as opposed
6 to standing idly by and just letting this
7 issue just take place throughout the City
8 and with no type of feedback, no type of
9 strategy, no type of thought process on
10 how to address the issue but, most
11 importantly, a plan on addressing the
12 issue.

13 Are you finished?

14 MR. MALONE: Yeah. I guess
15 just one more question I'll ask before I
16 get out of here. Just going forward,
17 what is the best thing for the residents
18 in the neighborhood to do going forward
19 to get involved with this committee or
20 just any strategies that were recommended
21 before I got here? I don't know if
22 anybody from Animal Control, but --

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: They have.
24 So I'm going to do this to be brief.
25 One, if you want to participate and

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2 follow up, just get in contact with my
3 office, 215-686-3412, and one of my staff
4 members will talk to you prior to you
5 leaving. And then also get in contact
6 with the Animal Control Unit. They'll
7 give you the best -- they just gave me a
8 card on just some of the key things that
9 residents can do to address this
10 particular issue from an information
11 standpoint.

12 Thank you very much.

13 MR. MALONE: Yeah, absolutely.

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Please
15 state your name for the record, please.

16 MS. PETERS: Sarah Peters. I'm
17 in Point Breeze. I actually spoke with
18 the Councilman this morning to talk about
19 this.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

21 MS. PETERS: I have had a
22 horrible problem with families of
23 raccoons in my backyard. I have an
24 18-month-old child who I will not allow
25 go back there, because they are so

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2 aggressive. They are not afraid of you
3 at all. In fact, if you go out there and
4 you start doing all these tactics --
5 because, yes, I have called ACCT, I have
6 called 311, and they gave me all kinds of
7 tips on how to try and keep this menace
8 out of my backyard, and none of it works.

9 These raccoons are there to go
10 after you. I mean, they know that you're
11 more scared of these gigantic creatures,
12 and there are four or five of them
13 together all fanning out around you. So
14 essentially all of these preventive
15 measures, as far as I'm concerned, really
16 don't work.

17 We keep talking about abandoned
18 buildings, but no one is also addressing
19 the issue of construction that is not
20 secured. So there are a whole bunch of
21 these raccoons that are also actually
22 finding shelter in these construction
23 areas that they have no fencing around,
24 that they have absolutely no security
25 around.

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2 So I don't have at this point
3 any abandoned buildings. I was on Point
4 Breeze Ave two days ago and I had a
5 raccoon in the middle of the day start
6 hissing at me, and I'm like, okay, this
7 is insane.

8 But, yes. I think that's
9 another thing that we really need to look
10 at, the fact that we have all this
11 unsecured construction going on and these
12 raccoons are hiding out in those
13 buildings as well. And you might
14 consider that even though you had more
15 abandoned buildings before and yet this
16 raccoon problem has gotten worse as we've
17 been seeing all this construction
18 happening is, they are finding shelter in
19 those buildings. I know that for a fact.
20 This started when I had massive
21 construction going on around my property,
22 because a whole bunch of these buildings
23 went up. I'm at 1942 Annin Street. They
24 build these very large -- it's been
25 completely -- you know exactly where it

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2 is.

3 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes, down
4 the street.

5 MS. PETERS: I mean, we have
6 massive amounts of construction that
7 happened over the last few years.

8 So I'm just proposing that we
9 have to look into some other issues
10 besides just the abandoned housing and
11 also say, Hey, listen, again, if we have
12 unsecured construction going on, they're
13 going to definitely be hiding out there
14 as well.

15 And I'm sorry, but, I mean, all
16 the times that I called about this
17 problem, there was absolutely no reaction
18 whatsoever. They just kept telling me,
19 We can't come to deal with it. If the
20 animal isn't physically in your living
21 room, we can't come out there. And yet
22 some -- a contractor hit a cat one day on
23 my street, which we have a million of
24 these feral cats, and they were out there
25 within 20 minutes to pick up the cat.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

3 MS. PETERS: Right? And I

4 followed up about the cat, and they were
5 like, Well, we had to euthanize the cat
6 because it was so badly damaged. But I'm
7 thinking -- and I did say to them, I was
8 like, Okay, so I've called a million
9 times about these raccoons and you send
10 someone within 20 minutes for a cat.

11 And that's all I have to say.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you
14 very much for your testimony.

15 Anyone else have public
16 testimony?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Well,
19 thank you very much.

20 Councilman Al Taubenberger, do
21 you have any questions?

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Thank
23 you.

24 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you
25 for taking your time for the testimony.

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2 Seeing none, the Committee will
3 stand in recess to the call of the Chair.

4 Thank you very much.

5 (Committees on Legislative
6 Oversight and Public Health and Human
7 Services concluded at 12:45 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter, and that this is a true and
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