

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

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, December 2, 2013
1:20 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

BILL 130848 - An ordinance authorizing the
Commissioner of Public Property and the
Commissioner of Parks and Recreation to enter
into a lease agreement with the Philadelphia
Housing Authority for use by the City of the
property located in the area bounded by Aspen
Street, Markoe Street, Fairmount Avenue, and
47th Street...

- - -

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COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

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afternoon. This hearing is called to

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order. This is a public hearing of the

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City Council Committee on Parks,

6

Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, and the

7

purpose of this public hearing is to hear

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testimony on Bill No. 130848.

9

I want to recognize the

10

presence of a quorum of Committee

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members. In attendance are Councilwoman

12

Blondell Reynolds Brown, Councilwoman

13

Maria Quinones-Sanchez, and Councilman

14

Kenyatta Johnson.

15

Does anyone have any opening

16

remarks?

17

(No response.)

18

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And if we

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can now have the Clerk read the title of

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Bill No. 130848.

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THE CLERK: Bill No. 130848, an

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ordinance authorizing the Commissioner of

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Public Property and the Commissioner of

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Parks and Recreation to enter into a

25

lease agreement with the Philadelphia

1 12/2/13 - PARKS - BILL 130848
2 Housing Authority for use by the City of
3 the property located in the area bounded
4 by Aspen Street, Markoe Street, Fairmount
5 Avenue, and 47th Street, all under
6 certain terms and conditions.

7 (Witness already seated at
8 witness table.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And we're
10 going to have our first witness testify,
11 which is Mr. Patrick Morgan.

12 MR. MORGAN: Good afternoon,
13 Chairwoman Bass and members of the City
14 Council Committee on Parks, Recreation,
15 and Cultural Affairs. My name is Patrick
16 Morgan, Chief of Staff to the Deputy
17 Mayor/Department of Parks and Recreation
18 Commissioner, Mike DiBerardinis. I am
19 pleased to appear before you today to
20 provide testimony in support of Bill No.
21 130848.

22 This bill authorizes the
23 Commissioner of Public Property and the
24 Commissioner of Parks and Recreation to
25 enter into a lease agreement with the

1 12/2/13 - PARKS - BILL 130848
2 Philadelphia Housing Authority for use by
3 the City of the property located in the
4 area bounded by Aspen Street, Markoe
5 Street, Fairmount Avenue, and 47th
6 Street.

7 Adjacent to the Mill Creek
8 Playground, this currently vacant parcel
9 is to be used solely for the
10 construction, development, maintenance,
11 and operation of what will be a public
12 passive park space. Pending City Council
13 approval of the ground lease, starting in
14 early 2014 we intend to engage with
15 community members to help design and
16 develop an accessible, safe, and
17 well-designed public park space.

18 The design elements for this
19 park could include features such as
20 pedestrian pathways, benches,
21 landscaping, and streetscape
22 improvements, including trees and
23 pedestrian lighting. Philadelphia Parks
24 and Recreation will maintain this asset
25 once construction is completed.

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2 In partnership with other City
3 departments and the Philadelphia Housing
4 Authority, this will allow for the
5 creation of public open space, which will
6 meet several criteria of Greenworks,
7 Green2015, and Phila2035, including
8 connecting neighborhoods to parks and
9 open space.

10 Therefore, I appear before you
11 to pledge the support of the Department
12 of Parks and Recreation for this
13 legislation and respectfully ask that
14 City Council approve Bill No. 130848. In
15 addition, I respectfully request that
16 this committee vote this bill out of
17 committee with a favorable recommendation
18 and that the rules be suspended to permit
19 first reading at the next City Council
20 session.

21 Thank you very much. I'd be
22 happy to answer any questions that you
23 have at this time.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
25 very much for your testimony.

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2 Are there any questions from
3 the panel?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I know that
6 we are awaiting Councilwoman Blackwell,
7 who I believe she's coming over right
8 now. But I did just want to ask if you
9 could possibly elaborate on this project
10 and maybe talk a little bit specifically
11 about some of the environmental impacts,
12 what was this parcel previously and what
13 will it look like in the future.

14 MR. MORGAN: Sure. Thank you.
15 And I just want to -- she's not here
16 right now -- but just publicly thank
17 Councilwoman Blackwell and her staff for
18 her support and continued support on this
19 project.

20 So what the parcel was and
21 currently is is essentially just a vacant
22 kind of semi-green space right now. It's
23 just directly adjacent to the Mill Creek
24 Playground. It's just completely vacant
25 right now, and what it could become and

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2 we would -- and I mentioned some of the
3 potential design elements here, but of
4 course we would work with the community
5 to kind of see what they want. But what
6 it could feature is, again, just passive
7 space, sitting areas, lighting, different
8 walkways for people. You have the Mill
9 Creek Playground, which currently is a
10 very active space and there's work being
11 done there. So we feel that this would
12 complement that very nicely and provide a
13 more passive park option for the
14 residents there, who are currently in a
15 neighborhood that doesn't have a lot of
16 such passive open space options.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: How many
18 people do you think this playground will
19 service? Do you have an idea?

20 MR. MORGAN: I don't actually.
21 I mean, I could submit back to the Chair
22 in terms of the actual numbers of permits
23 that we have for the playground
24 specifically, but in terms of the passive
25 park space, there's -- I think just to

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2 the east of it, there's a new PHA
3 development. I think there's around 800
4 or so units there, and then there's also
5 a school. So this is a very kind of
6 dense --

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

8 Significantly used.

9 MR. MORGAN: Exactly. I would
10 say it's a little bit similar to
11 Hawthorne Park, which is also a project
12 that we worked on with PHA.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: But one of
14 the things -- and I do want to take a
15 moment and recognize the presence of
16 Councilman Bobby Henon, who is a member
17 of the Committee, and also Councilwoman
18 Jannie Blackwell, who is the sponsor of
19 this piece of legislation.

20 But I also wanted to briefly
21 mention that one of the things that we're
22 doing -- and I know that I've spoken with
23 the Deputy Mayor, Michael DiBerardinis,
24 about this -- one of the things that we
25 are very interested in and have been

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2 working to try to figure out ways to do
3 this in the 8th District is, whenever we
4 do a playground or recreation space, that
5 we make sure that it's really
6 intergenerational so there's something
7 for everyone. So it's not just the
8 swings and the basketball courts, but
9 there really is something for the
10 parents, that there is sort of like a
11 walking track or something, like if
12 there's exercise equipment that can be
13 implemented into these spaces, that they
14 really are family spaces.

15 And so I just wanted to
16 encourage that in your thinking. I don't
17 know if that's a part of the plan as
18 well, but we've been doing that. And
19 also from the rec center that was done in
20 Northeast Philadelphia, that really has a
21 specific attraction for young people with
22 developmental delays, such as autism.
23 There are certain things that are done
24 there as well, and we began to implement
25 those into our playgrounds also.

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2 So we just want to encourage
3 that as well. These things do cost a
4 little bit extra, but I think it's well
5 worth it.

6 MR. MORGAN: Absolutely, in
7 terms of the final product that you're
8 able to get. It makes it that much
9 better to have, I think, that robust
10 conversation from the start.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Great. And
12 I want to recognize Councilwoman
13 Blackwell.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
15 you. Thank you, Madam Chair and all
16 members of the Committee. Certainly we
17 support this legislation, and thank you
18 for those good suggestions about what we
19 should develop. We certainly have
20 talking to do.

21 On this piece of land, we have
22 pipes under it that were created when PHA
23 built the Lucien E. Blackwell Homes out
24 there. So we got to do a passive park
25 and we have to protect it with this

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2 lease, and it will ensure that nobody
3 will try to build on it, because all the
4 piping for development in that area is
5 under there. And adjacent to it or right
6 next door still on Aspen Street, we are
7 looking forward to building the Lucien E.
8 Blackwell Community Center. Across the
9 street is Mill Creek Rec Center, and
10 we've been fighting for years to fix it
11 up. It's been embarrassingly in
12 disrepair. And that and the Lucien E.
13 Blackwell Community Center are a match.

14 So this park -- it's like an
15 L-shape. This park will be a wonderful
16 addition to land we can't build on
17 anyway, and your suggestions certainly
18 are those we want to take, and certainly
19 we say that to Patrick. And thank you
20 all very much. Thanks for your
21 consideration.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
23 Councilwoman.

24 And at this time, I want to
25 recognize Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds

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2 Brown.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good

4 morning.

5 MR. MORGAN: Good morning.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So to

7 Chairwoman Bass's recommendation, what is

8 the process for your department and

9 planning and the District Councilperson

10 when it comes to the type of

11 recommendations that Council lady has

12 raised?

13 MR. MORGAN: So, again, once

14 the ground lease is approved, I think in

15 early 2014 we can start talking with the

16 community, the Councilwoman's office, of

17 course, and Department of Public Property

18 to think about what the process will be

19 with the community, and I think it would

20 probably start with some visioning

21 sessions in terms of going out to the

22 community and really saying what do you

23 want for this parcel basically and

24 gathering those ideas. And I think this

25 will be part of several conversations

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2 that would happen. I would see for
3 something like this -- and I'm just
4 thinking of other projects that we've
5 done -- probably five or six meetings
6 that would take place, and we'd be
7 continually kind of having a conversation
8 with them and bringing them back some
9 design and testing them to see are we on
10 track, are we off track, thinking that
11 there's a limited budget here. So we
12 want to be respectful of what the
13 expectations are, but, again, we also
14 want to, as the Councilwoman noted, that
15 this parcel is really part of a broader
16 conversation that we're hoping to have in
17 terms of the playground, the community
18 center, and then this park, as well as
19 really providing some green amenities for
20 this neighborhood.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Madam
22 Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
25 Councilwoman. We've been talking about

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2 this area for maybe some 15 years. It's
3 taken us this long to get this far. It's
4 right across from Sulzberger.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I know
6 exactly where it is.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes,
8 having been born there. So that's that
9 area on that first parcel. The street I
10 believe we struck out, we had stricken
11 over there near Aspen Street, right there
12 at Aspen. But it's that first plot next
13 to Sulzberger where they put all the
14 piping. There's trees on top now.

15 But we've been talking about
16 this such a long time. We even have
17 PHA's investment commitment. It goes
18 down a little bit every year, so we're
19 afraid if we don't get this soon, every
20 year we lose another million, million,
21 million. Initially we had a \$12 million
22 Lucien E. Blackwell Community Center
23 project. We're down to 4. I'm afraid if
24 we don't get it done soon, that we're not
25 going to have any money.

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2 But we've been working on this
3 for a very, very long time and working
4 hard to fix up that area.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So with
6 that said then, I know of that area not
7 only because I used to live down there
8 but also prior to coming to Council knew
9 of the Council lady's work in that area.
10 And so having, A, the decrease in the
11 number of dollars; B, the need for
12 additional community meetings, what I'm
13 recommending and underscoring the
14 Chairwoman's point is, I am sure you have
15 templates of what is happening at other
16 rec centers in other parts of the City,
17 because I see still the differentials in
18 rec centers, and we can fast forward that
19 timeline of so many meetings by simply
20 showing up with here's what's possible
21 given this amount of acreage, here's
22 what's possible. We know it's possible
23 because it's happening in other parts of
24 the City. And so that then shortens the
25 timeframe, which doesn't threaten the

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2 further reduction of dollars.

3 MR. MORGAN: Understood,
4 Councilwoman.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that's
6 the point I want to make.

7 MR. MORGAN: Understood. Thank
8 you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
10 Chairwoman.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
12 Excellent point.

13 The Chair recognizes Councilman
14 Henon?

15 COUNCILMAN HENON: No.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You're
17 good?

18 Any other comments?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All right.

21 If there's no one else to testify on
22 behalf of this bill, that concludes
23 testimony on Bill No. 130848, and this
24 now concludes the public hearing of the
25 Committee of Parks, Recreation, and

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2 Cultural Affairs. We'll now go into our
3 public meeting shortly.

4 And I want to recognize
5 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown for
6 a motion on Bill No. 130848.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Madam
8 Chairwoman, I move that Bill No. 130848
9 be reported from this committee with a
10 favorable recommendation and further move
11 that the rules of Council be suspended so
12 as to permit first reading at the next
13 scheduled session of Council.

14 (Duly seconded.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It has been
16 moved and properly seconded that Bill No.
17 130848 be reported from this committee
18 with a favorable recommendation and
19 further moved that the rules of Council
20 be suspended as to permit first reading
21 at the next scheduled session of City
22 Council.

23 All of those in favor say aye.

24 (Aye.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Those

1 12/2/13 - PARKS - BILL 130848

2 opposed?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The motion
5 carries, and Bill No. 130848 will be
6 reported from this committee with a
7 favorable recommendation with a request
8 that the rules of Council be suspended to
9 permit first reading at the next session
10 of Council.

11 With that, the business of this
12 committee is concluded.

13 Thank you, everyone, for
14 attending.

15 MR. MORGAN: Thank you very
16 much.

17 (Committee on Parks,
18 Recreation, and Cultural Affairs
19 concluded at 1:35 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
correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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A able 10:8 Absolutely 10:6 accessible 4:16 accurately 19:5 acreage 15:21 active 7:10 actual 7:22 addition 5:15 11:16 additional 15:12 adjacent 4:7 6:23 11:5 Affairs 1:4 2:6 3:15 17:2 18:18 afraid 14:19,23 afternoon 2:3 3:12 agreement 1:17 2:25 3:25 allow 5:4 amenities 13:19 amount 15:21 and/or 19:22 answer 5:22 anyway 11:17 appear 3:19 5:10 apply 19:20 approval 4:13 approve 5:14 approved 12:14 area 1:18 3:3 4:4 11:4 14:2,9 15:4 15:6,9 areas 7:7 Aspen 1:18 3:4 4:4 11:6 14:11 14:12 asset 4:24 attendance 2:11 attending 18:14 attraction 9:21 Authority 1:17 3:2 4:2 5:4 authorizes 3:22 authorizing 1:15 2:22	autism 9:22 Avenue 1:18 3:5 4:5 awaiting 6:6 aye 17:23,24 B B 15:11 back 7:21 13:8 basically 12:23 basketball 9:8 Bass 1:11 2:2,18 3:9,13 5:24 6:5 7:17 8:7,13 10:11 11:22 16:11,16,20 17:15,25 18:4 Bass's 12:7 began 9:24 behalf 16:22 believe 6:7 14:10 benches 4:20 better 10:9 bill 1:15 2:8,20,21 3:1,20,22 4:1 5:1,14,16 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1 16:1 16:22,23 17:1,6 17:8,16 18:1,5 bit 6:10 8:10 10:4 14:18 Blackwell 1:11 6:6,17 8:18 10:13,14,23 11:8,13 13:21 13:24 14:7,22 Blondell 1:13 2:12 11:25 17:5 Bobby 1:12 8:16 born 14:8 bounded 1:18 3:3 4:4 briefly 8:20 bringing 13:8 broader 13:15	Brown 1:13 2:12 12:2,3,6 13:23 14:5 15:5 16:5,9 17:5,7 budget 13:11 build 11:3,16 building 11:7 built 10:23 business 18:11 C called 2:3 carries 18:5 center 9:19 11:8,9 11:13 13:18 14:22 centers 15:16,18 certain 3:6 9:23 certainly 10:16,19 11:17,18 CERTIFICATE 19:2 certification 19:19 CERTIFY 19:3 certifying 19:23 Chair 1:11 7:21 10:15 13:22 16:13 Chairwoman 3:13 12:7 16:10 17:8 Chairwoman's 15:14 Chief 3:16 CINDY 1:11 City 1:2,7,17 2:5 3:2,13 4:3,12 5:2,14,19 15:16 15:24 17:21 Clerk 2:19,21 comes 12:10 coming 6:7 15:8 comments 16:18 Commissioner 1:16,16 2:22,23 3:18,23,24	commitment 14:17 committee 1:3 2:5 2:10 3:14 5:16 5:17 8:17 10:16 16:25 17:9,17 18:6,12,17 community 4:15 7:4 11:8,13 12:16,19,22 13:17 14:22 15:12 complement 7:12 completed 4:25 completely 6:24 concluded 18:12 18:19 concludes 16:22 16:24 conditions 3:6 connecting 5:8 consideration 11:21 construction 4:10 4:25 contained 19:5 continually 13:7 continued 6:18 control 19:22 conversation 10:10 13:7,16 conversations 12:25 correct 19:8 cost 10:3 Council 1:2 2:5 3:14 4:12 5:14 5:19 12:11 15:8 15:9 17:11,13 17:19,22 18:8 18:10 Councilman 1:12 1:12 2:13 8:16 16:13,15 Councilperson 12:9 Councilwoman	1:11,11,13,13 2:2,11,12,18 3:9 5:24 6:5,6,17 7:17 8:7,13,17 10:11,12,14 11:22,23,25 12:3,6 13:14,21 13:23,24,25 14:5,7 15:5 16:4 16:5,9,11,16,20 17:5,7,15,25 18:4 Councilwoman's 12:16 course 7:4 12:17 courts 9:8 created 10:22 creation 5:5 Creek 4:7 6:23 7:9 11:9 criteria 5:6 Cultural 1:4 2:6 3:15 17:2 18:18 currently 4:8 6:21 7:9,14 D D 1:13 December 1:8 decrease 15:10 delays 9:22 dense 8:6 department 5:11 12:8,17 departments 5:3 Deputy 3:16 8:23 design 4:15,18 7:3 13:9 develop 4:16 10:19 development 4:10 8:3 11:4 developmental 9:22 DiBerardinis 3:18 8:23 different 7:7
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