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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, June 11, 2007
11:00 a.m.

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY
COUNCILMAN JUAN RAMOS
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

RESOLUTION 060711 - Resolution authorizing the
Council Committee on Public Health and Human
Services to hold hearings regarding the inmate
overcrowding and security problems at the
Philadelphia Prison System.

- - -

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COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Good

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morning. I'd like to call the Committee

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on Public Health and Human Services to

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order and note that this Committee was

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held October 31, 2006 and the Committee

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was recessed to the call of the Chair.

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Therefore, a quorum was established at

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that first hearing and there is no need

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for -- that quorum stands through this

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hearing. And, also, it was a resolution

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and it does not necessarily require a

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quorum.

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We will now have the Clerk read

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the title of the bill.

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THE CLERK: This is regarding

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Resolution No. 060711. Resolution

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authorizing the Council Committee on

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Public Health and Human Services to hold

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hearings regarding inmate overcrowding

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and security problems at the Philadelphia

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Prison System.

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COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you

24

very much.

25

In October of last year, this

1 6/11/07 - PUBLIC HEALTH - RES. 060711
2 Committee held hearings regarding the
3 dangerous conditions that exist in the
4 City's prisons. During these hearings,
5 many correctional officers testified
6 regarding the horrendous conditions that
7 exist in the City prisons. They
8 indicated their fear for their lives and
9 the lives of the inmates that resulted
10 from the understaffing and the
11 facilities' capacity.

12 These security issues and
13 overcrowding have created an environment
14 where inmate crime, violence and riots
15 are more likely to occur and have
16 produced an unsafe and severely stressful
17 workplace environment for City employees
18 in our Prison System. Additionally, this
19 environment has led to renewed litigation
20 against the City regarding the violations
21 of the constitutional rights of inmates.

22 Like any other public service
23 that protects our public safety, we need
24 to ensure that correctional officers have
25 a safe environment. Like the Humane

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2 Society, we have to protect inmates from
3 unreasonable and inhumane conditions
4 while they are paying their debt to
5 society.

6 The purpose of this hearing is
7 to discuss and address some recent
8 developments which have been brought to
9 the public's attention regarding triple
10 celling inmates at Riverside Correctional
11 Facility, correctional officers'
12 suspension for minor infractions and
13 other issues that are exacerbating the
14 already dangerous conditions. This
15 follow-up hearing is for the purpose of
16 updating Council, as well as the public,
17 on these new and serious conditions that
18 have been brought before this body.

19 We apologize for the short
20 notice of the hearing. Due to the fact
21 that City Council will recess on Thursday
22 until September, we thought we would try
23 and hold this hearing today for this
24 update so that we can hear some of the
25 concerns that were brought before the

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2 Council the other day. So we didn't want
3 to delay the discussion until September,
4 and we may even continue it to September,
5 but at least we wanted to have something
6 on the record before we recessed.

7 So we now thank you and we call
8 on our first panel.

9 I'd like to recognize
10 Councilman Kenney is with us today and
11 there will be other Councilmembers
12 joining us soon.

13 We have Panel 1. Would you
14 please identify your name for the record
15 and proceed to testify.

16 MR. THOMPSON: My name is
17 Wendell Thompson. I'm the Business Agent
18 of Local 159, District Council 33.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Go ahead.
20 Introduce yourselves as you testify.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam
23 Chairman, Council, for having us here
24 this morning. I'm here to testify this
25 morning on the seriousness and danger

13 You go back to October and I'm
14 pretty sure you're still waiting on the
15 24-point plan that they said they had for
16 y'all from the Managing Director, and I
17 ask, have you gotten that plan yet. They
18 have no idea what's going on.

19 They trying to put the pressure
20 on the union, when the fault is on the
21 administration. It's their job to staff
22 these prisons. Right now you have a jail
23 system built for -- a new facility built
24 for females that's overcrowded. They
25 don't have the correct staff to run it.

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2 We gave you a letter. I don't
3 know if you got the letter from one
4 inmate that we gave you that what's going
5 on right now, but the bottom line, the
6 jail was built 64 to one on the first
7 floor. The second and third floor was
8 two to 128. They're trying to open up
9 these jails with less staff with these
10 inmates living three in a cell. That's
11 going to become a dangerous situation
12 this summer. Our staff is down. Over
13 the last two years, we done lost close to
14 over 300 correction officers and they
15 have not replaced any of them.

16 There's something wrong where
17 you have 650 correction officers take the
18 Sheriff test and 139 process and go to
19 the Police Department. It seems like
20 when they talk about crime of
21 Philadelphia, they talk about locking
22 them up, what they supposed to do, but
23 they forget about where they locking them
24 up. People forget about the Prison
25 System.

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2 We, the men and women of the
3 Philadelphia Prisons, the correction
4 officers, are the ones that goes in every
5 day, kiss our loved ones like everybody
6 else, hoping we can go home. It's like
7 we crying, we crying. We ask for help
8 every day. It seems like nobody listens
9 to us. It falls on deaf ears.

10 So I'm here this morning before
11 this panel to let you know you're either
12 going to pay now or pay later, because
13 something major is going to happen up in
14 them prisons and you're going to wind up
15 paying a lot of lawsuits, and some people
16 going to wind up losing their lives. And
17 I ask you, don't let that happen.
18 Somebody got to take a major look at
19 what's going on up there as far as the
20 staffing and who is running it.

21 For some reason, we're losing
22 the prisons. We're losing. I get people
23 come to work wanting to do their job and
24 they get suspended, sent home when they
25 feel as though their lives are put in

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2 danger, because they want them to do
3 something they won't do. You take any of
4 the Wardens, the Commissioner and ask
5 them to go open them houses up by
6 theirselves for eight hours, see if
7 they'll do it. But they want these
8 officers to do it. If they don't do it,
9 they send them home and suspend them.
10 That's wrong.

11 The bottom line is, safety is
12 first for the inmates and the officers.
13 And they're trying to find a way to cut
14 corners, and that's not going to happen.
15 You're supposed to have certain numbers
16 to open up them housing areas. That's
17 what you're supposed to have, them
18 agreements we have, but they want to
19 break them agreements.

20 Now, if they do what they want
21 to do and somebody get hurt, the first
22 person going to get hurt behind
23 everything, it may make a stand, it may
24 lose his life, but then they want to
25 discipline the correction officer on

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2 something they wouldn't do.

3 I come here to you this morning
4 to ask you to put a stop to this. Find
5 money for the Philadelphia Prison System.
6 Find money so we can get the correct
7 staff up there. One of the first things
8 we will ask you to do is ask the Mayor to
9 waive the \$35 fee that he charge for
10 applications. It's something when you go
11 from over 7,000 people taking the test to
12 only 239 took the last correction officer
13 test. Something is wrong with that
14 picture, when you drop from 7,000 to 239.

15 It's like I'm here to say, we,
16 the men and women of the Philadelphia
17 Prisons, are asking for help. They're
18 crying for help. They're here this
19 morning to testify to let you know how
20 they feel, how their families feel and
21 the help they need, and that's why we're
22 here this morning.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
25 very much.

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2 Mr. North.

3 MR. NORTH: Good morning. I'd
4 like to thank the Committee for holding
5 these hearings today. My name is Lorenzo
6 North. I'm President of Local 159.

7 Thursday I addressed City
8 Council and I talked about the conditions
9 of one of the dangerous prisons on State
10 Road, which is PICC. Today you will hear
11 from officers that work them housing
12 areas that work in the jail every day,
13 and they will tell you the conditions
14 where the inmates are locked down day
15 after day. They're running activities
16 short of staff, which put the inmates and
17 the officers in danger every day. We had
18 an inmate killed last year, and we still
19 haven't found out who done it.

20 So I'm asking you, once you
21 hear the testimony today, to take action
22 that will see that the prisons are secure
23 and safe at all times.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.

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2 Mr. Katz.

3 MR. KATZ: I'll be especially
4 brief. The eloquence of the two Local
5 159 officials speaks well and goes to the
6 heart of the problem.

7 As someone who is a relatively
8 newcomer to this type of difficulty, I
9 have been amazed to see that everyone who
10 has the responsibility is stumbling in
11 circles trying to find a mutually
12 acceptable way of allocating funds to
13 increase the complement of security of
14 correctional officers to the advantage of
15 the security of the whole system. And
16 basically as I understand it and as I see
17 this problem, it is a failure by the
18 administration of the system to be able
19 to find a way of properly staffing the
20 number of correctional officers and
21 allocating the hours to those
22 correctional officers that are necessary
23 in order to have a civilized security
24 system.

25 As it now stands, you have this

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2 fiscal fooling around going nowhere, to
3 the detriment of the lives of both
4 inmates and correctional officers and, in
5 some instances, the possibility of the
6 general public.

7 I don't know how in the world
8 it reached such a level of dilemma, but
9 somebody somewhere is not doing their
10 job. Somebody somewhere needs lessons in
11 communication. And the conveying of
12 obligations that City Council, the Office
13 of the Mayor, the administration of the
14 Prison System and those of us who are
15 supposed to be alert to it; that is,
16 Local 159 of AFSCME, don't seem to be
17 doing what should be taking place. We
18 are coming here to set this problem in
19 your laps and to help you find a
20 direction in which we want you to take
21 the lead in saying to your other
22 governmental units with whom you have to
23 work in tandem, Here is the money that
24 has to be allocated, here is the minimum,
25 minimum security levels that the system

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2 should anticipate, and do it not
3 yesterday, not next month, not the month
4 later, but immediately, immediately.

5 Now, I don't know how
6 procedurally that would work, but there
7 are means by which City Council and
8 committees such as yours who are put in
9 the forefront to analyze and come back
10 from the problem, there are means by
11 which emergency funding, emergency
12 allocation and emergency hiring can be
13 obtained. You will hear from a number of
14 dedicated men and women just how bad the
15 extent of this problem is.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
17 very much.

18 Mr. North, have you heard
19 anything about the 24-point plan that we
20 discussed in October?

21 MR. NORTH: I think the last
22 time I heard about it was here.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So nothing
24 has come forward?

25 MR. NORTH: No.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Do you
3 remember it was with the Law
4 Department --

5 MR. NORTH: Yes.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: -- that
7 discussed it?

8 MR. NORTH: Yes, and I haven't
9 heard nothing since then.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Okay.
11 Just refresh my memory in terms of that
12 24-point plan. It was supposed to be
13 about reforming the entire system?

14 MR. NORTH: Well, the
15 Commissioner testified that he had the
16 24-point plan, but we never seen it.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: We'll wait
18 until the Commissioner comes forward.

19 Mr. Katz, we certainly hear
20 what you're saying in terms of the
21 finances, and this City Council has been
22 aggressive in funding a number of the
23 departments, particularly the Health
24 Department when they testified last year
25 because we did not have enough staff in

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2 the Health Department and health
3 inspectors, and we appropriated money
4 through the City Council, but the Mayor
5 didn't spend it. So we have to have some
6 agreement from the Administration, and
7 that is the procedure. We can
8 appropriate the money or we can put it in
9 the budget, but the Mayor does not
10 necessarily have to spend. It has to be
11 based on what his priorities are in terms
12 of where he wants to spend the money
13 that's given to him through the budget
14 process. I'm not sure that that will is
15 to give the money to the Prison System.

16 MR. KATZ: We are confident
17 that if you make the means available to
18 the extent that the case has to be in a
19 detailed fashion set forth before the
20 Mayor to enlist his cooperation, that we
21 can do that.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I don't
23 believe that's going to be -- because I
24 think if this was a major issue, knowing
25 and understanding the overcrowding and

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2 the conditions that were discussed in
3 October when these gentlemen and the
4 staff members came to testify, we would
5 have seen that there might have been some
6 sensitivity to that and some effort to
7 move to provide the funding to the
8 prisons that would be needed, and that
9 was not done when the budget was sent to
10 us.

11 MR. KATZ: It has to be, in an
12 emergency fashion, revisited. That's all
13 I can suggest. Revisited, revisited now.
14 And to the extent that any office of our
15 division of government is unresponsive,
16 such as if in fact the executive office
17 is unresponsive, there are ways in which
18 it can be, quote, explained, end quote,
19 to the Mayor's Office and a sensitivity
20 to the peril that's being created. It's
21 real peril.

22 As a relative, quote, outsider,
23 end quote, I'm shocked at what is being
24 conveyed to me and I'm shocked at what I
25 see. It's not my body and my life that's

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2 on the line there. It's those for whom I
3 have a certain responsibility and you
4 have a certain responsibility and the
5 Mayor has a responsibility, and if we all
6 recognize that responsibility, let's do
7 the right thing, let's allocate the
8 money, let's get it in there and let's
9 properly staff the prisons.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

11 Councilman Kenney.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

13 What is the current status of
14 any existing agreements or lawsuits on
15 the federal level? I remember a number
16 of years ago there was a federal judge
17 who actually took control of the prison
18 population and was directly involved in
19 who got released and who didn't get
20 released and dealing with the levels of
21 prison population.

22 What is the jurisdiction of the
23 Federal Court currently as it relates to
24 these issues?

25 MR. KATZ: I don't know that

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2 anything has been done at this juncture.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: No. I
4 mean, this was a number of years ago when
5 Judge Shapiro had extreme input into the
6 Prison System. Why would you not just
7 file an emergency petition with the
8 Federal Court to make the same argument
9 and then -- I mean, as Councilwoman Tasco
10 says, this is a very strong mayoral form
11 of government. We could allocate \$50
12 million to the system and the Mayor would
13 refuse to spend it. He can't ignore a
14 federal judge or a federal court order.
15 So why aren't you at that level asking
16 for emergency injunctive relief?

17 MR. KATZ: Because it seems to
18 us that the emergency injunctive relief
19 forthcoming from the federal bench would
20 probably be one of opening up the gates
21 and kicking inmates out, and that doesn't
22 make any sense. I don't know that the
23 Federal Court has the jurisdiction -- has
24 the power of effectively saying to City
25 Council and to the Mayor, You have a

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2 major problem here, now here's what you
3 have to allocate, et cetera, et cetera.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But the
5 original federal lawsuit was filed by
6 people on behalf of the prison inmates.

7 MR. KATZ: That's right.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You should
9 be filing something on behalf of the
10 prison guards.

11 MR. KATZ: We may well do that.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But I think
13 if you're looking for a jurisdiction
14 that's going to be able to go directly to
15 the issue and direct City officials to do
16 certain things, it's more likely the
17 federal bench than it's going to be the
18 Mayor's Office.

19 MR. KATZ: Well, if that could
20 effectively be done -- and legally I have
21 some reservations as to the power of the
22 Federal Courts to go to the type of
23 details that are necessary -- that would
24 be fine and it would take some time.
25 However, what can really be done is a

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2 recognition of the problems that beset
3 this community and this system by a
4 joinder of City Council and the Mayor.
5 We're here before the body of City
6 Council.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And you
8 have an ear here and you have a desire to
9 be cooperative here. Nothing against the
10 Mayor personally, but I know that when he
11 sets his mind to something, he's not
12 going to change it, and with few months
13 left in his term, he's probably not going
14 to budge.

15 So rather than -- and I don't
16 mind sitting here hearing this. I think
17 it's important that we and the press know
18 what's going on and it's continually
19 promulgated, but if you think you're
20 going to leave here today and the two of
21 us are going to convince the guy on the
22 second floor to change his mind, it's not
23 going to happen between now and January.
24 And I'm not saying that as a cop-out; I'm
25 telling you that's what has been our

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2 experience in the past eight years.

3 MR. NORTH: Mr. Kenney, could I
4 answer that, what you were looking for?

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Yes.

6 MR. NORTH: What you talking
7 about when Justice Perrill had power over
8 the Prison System, back in '93, I think
9 it was, or '94, Mayor Rendell and City
10 Council President John Street at the time
11 got the judge persuaded how they could
12 control the Prison System. She released
13 it back to them.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Correct.

15 MR. NORTH: And ever since they
16 had it back, Philadelphia City had it, it
17 has become a disaster. They gave them --
18 I'm just telling you what happened. They
19 gave them the power back to the City.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And you'll
21 get no argument from me, and you're there
22 on the ground and you see it every day
23 and I don't doubt your word. All I'm
24 saying is, if you're looking for the more
25 direct way in which to approach this,

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2 this is important, but in the end, you're
3 not going to probably get any relief from
4 the second floor until there's another
5 Mayor, which will be January '08.

6 MR. THOMPSON: Well, between
7 now and then, we have a crisis on our
8 hands.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm not
10 discounting -- that's why I'm wondering
11 why you're not in front of a federal
12 judge seeing whether or not you can
13 effect the situation through a federal
14 court order.

15 MR. KATZ: Because, frankly, it
16 may have been overly naive on our part,
17 but we are convinced or were convinced --
18 and I'm beginning to scratch my head as
19 to whether or not we are being too
20 optimistic. We were convinced that if we
21 take our plate to City Council and show
22 City Council the plate and the problem
23 and gain a receptive set of
24 recommendations and a receptive set of
25 potential legislation from City Council

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2 and shove that under the Mayor's nose,
3 that we can induce the Mayor to be a
4 cooperative participant.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: That's, I
6 think, an incorrect strategy.

7 MR. KATZ: And that can be done
8 much more quickly --

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But the
10 issue for us, remember, is that we have
11 Thursday -- we amended the bill, as you
12 saw, on last Thursday to deal with the
13 School District and an extra \$10 million
14 that's required to hopefully keep some of
15 our young people out of having to come in
16 contact with you later in life, but if we
17 amend the bill again this week and we'll
18 have to have an extra session of Council,
19 which we can't guarantee we can get, even
20 if we do that and pass that
21 appropriation, how do you get him to
22 spend it?

23 MR. KATZ: We'll do our best to
24 deal with that with some of the realities
25 of life.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

3 MR. KATZ: But right now we're
4 here asking for your help.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And I think
6 it's important that you are here and I
7 think it's important that we know the
8 conditions and the public knows the
9 conditions, but if you're looking for a
10 direct result in getting this fixed, it's
11 not going to come out of the second floor
12 until January '08.

13 MR. KATZ: Well, I should hope
14 that Council can take the first step
15 enabling us within a matter of weeks to
16 go to the Mayor and I --

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: One of the
18 things I would have hoped, we might have
19 had the request earlier during the budget
20 process in terms of -- what we need to
21 know is what is the ideal amount of money
22 that you need, what is it that you need,
23 how many additional employees do you
24 need, what does it take to run the
25 ideal -- well, it won't be ideal given

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2 overcrowding, but in terms of the number
3 of officers you need to provide for the
4 staffing, what would the cost be for
5 that. There has to be a figure. You
6 want us to draft a figure? I mean, how
7 much money are you requesting and how
8 much would you need to hire additional
9 employees? Those are the things that
10 also have to be discussed.

11 MR. KATZ: There's no doubt in
12 my mind that a general figure, a general
13 reasonable figure, can be achieved
14 jointly with the administration of the
15 prison and the administration of the
16 correctional officers, Local 159, and
17 that can be done in a matter of a day or
18 two.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Mr. North,
20 you don't have any idea how much money
21 you need to hire additional people, and
22 can that be done in a day or two?

23 MR. THOMPSON: First of all,
24 ma'am, we done lost over 300 on the last
25 two years.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: But when
3 you come to us to talk to us about
4 dollars, you have to give us some figures
5 and you have to tell us what that figure
6 buys. I understand and I am sensitive to
7 the discussion here, but at the end of
8 the day, we need to know what is the
9 bottom line and what would you ask
10 Council to pay for.

11 So if you're asking us to
12 provide funding for so many staff
13 members, then we have to know what that
14 means in terms of dollars and cents.

15 MR. KATZ: We will have a
16 conservative figure in your hands
17 tomorrow.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: But that
19 doesn't mean that it's going to get done,
20 is what Councilman Kenney is saying. We
21 can appropriate the money. People can
22 come back here for a special session,
23 which I doubt Council will do, and then
24 the Mayor will not spend the money. The
25 Mayor will not spend the money, because

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2 the priority, as I see it -- and this is

3 only my personal view -- has not been to

4 address the overcrowding in the prison.

5 If so, some of the other requests that we

6 have received in this Council for

7 expenditures of funds from the General

8 Fund would not come forth and that money

9 could have been redirected to the

10 prisons.

11 So it's a matter of trying --

12 have you had a discussion with the Mayor

13 about this?

14 MR. KATZ: I beg your pardon?

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Have you

16 had a discussion with the Mayor about the

17 overcrowding?

18 MR. KATZ: I personally

19 haven't.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Have you

21 all had any discussion with the Mayor at

22 all about the overcrowding?

23 MR. THOMPSON: Yes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: And what's

25 his response?

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2 MR. THOMPSON: Save it for the
3 next Mayor.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Beg your
5 pardon?

6 MR. THOMPSON: Save it for the
7 next Mayor.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Is that
9 what he said?

10 MR. THOMPSON: Yes.

11 MR. KATZ: Well, I am confident
12 that we can revisit, maybe not
13 successfully, but armed with the might
14 that is given to us by virtue of a
15 responsive City Council and a figure,
16 that we can revisit the Mayor prior to
17 the time he abandons responsibility, and
18 all we're asking for is the opportunity
19 to do that.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
21 very much. Let us hear from the next
22 panel. You won't go any place, will you?

23 MR. THOMPSON: No.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.

25 Saliym Hakiym, Natalie Mims and

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2 Gerald Carter.

3 Would you come this way,
4 please.

5 Good morning.

6 (Good morning.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
8 please begin. Please state your name for
9 the record and begin your testimony.

10 MS. MIMS: Good morning.
11 Commissioner, ladies and gentlemen of the
12 Council, good morning. I would first
13 like to thank you all for your time and
14 attention in regards to the matter at
15 hand, the ever-rising number of female
16 inmates --

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: What is
18 your name? You have to identify
19 yourself.

20 MS. MIMS: I apologize. My
21 name is Natalie Mims, correctional
22 officer.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Go ahead.

24 MS. MIMS: I apologize.

25 The ever-rising number of

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2 female inmates and the dire need for the
3 Philadelphia Prison System to configurate
4 a solution that will enable all the staff
5 to adhere to the PPS mission, which is to
6 provide a safe and secured environment
7 for both staff and detained or sentenced
8 inmates.

9 I, Correctional Officer Mims,
10 am currently assigned at RCF, where the
11 proposed increased ratio, which was at
12 one time due to past practice 64 inmates
13 to one CO, would be 99 inmates to one CO.
14 I respectfully and most humbly --

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Excuse me,
16 please. Would you please read that again
17 and go slowly so we can hear. Our ears
18 don't hear that fast.

19 MS. MIMS: I apologize.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Because
21 you're citing some information that we
22 need to hear. So please read a little
23 more slowly.

24 MS. MIMS: Shall I start over?

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Yes. You

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2 don't have to thank us again.

3 MS. MIMS: The ever-rising
4 number of female inmates and the dire
5 need for the Philadelphia Prison System
6 to configure a solution that will
7 enable all staff to adhere to the PPS
8 mission, which is to provide a safe and
9 secured environment for both staff and
10 detained or sentenced inmates.

11 I, Correctional Officer Mims,
12 am currently assigned at RCF, where the
13 proposed increase ratio, which is now
14 at -- which was at one time due to past
15 practice 64 inmates to one CO, will be
16 increased 99 inmates to one CO. I
17 respectfully and most humbly speak in
18 representation of the officers at RCF and
19 would like to first bring to our
20 Commissioner's, the Honorable Leon King,
21 Esquire's, attention that we would much
22 rather deal with our present dilemma, as
23 with the Philadelphia Police Department,
24 as well as the Philadelphia Fire
25 Department in an in-house formality.

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2 Therefore, we request of the Commissioner
3 a conference with a panel with five
4 correctional officers from RCF in an
5 effort to remedy this threatening
6 epidemic.

7 We acknowledge the fact that
8 our President is in a moment of mourning
9 and that the Business Agent is the
10 elected mediator for such crisis, but to
11 our despair, we have yet to hear from him
12 and are left to assume that it's possible
13 our concerns are not being relayed as we
14 so desire them, which is why we have
15 taken such extreme measures by requesting
16 this most needed and overdue conference
17 with the Honorable Commissioner King in
18 an attempt to adduce the many possible
19 hazards in the event that the proposed
20 ratio increase is implemented.

21 We make this request with no
22 intentions to forfeit our right to be
23 heard by the Council if for some reason a
24 mutual agreement cannot be concluded from
25 the requested conference. For now, we

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2 simply ask that all avenues of resolution
3 be explored by the Philadelphia Prison
4 System before the next level of resolve
5 be utilized.

6 Again, on behalf of the
7 correctional officers at RCF, I thank you
8 for your time and I'm looking forward to
9 working hand in hand with our Honorable
10 Commissioner.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.
12 Just let me ask you a question. I have
13 one. You said you had 64 inmates to one
14 correctional officer?

15 MS. MIMS: Past practice.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: And is
17 that the ideal complement? What would be
18 the, I guess, normal average complement
19 in most prisons that would be the ideal?

20 MS. MIMS: For the past
21 practice, it has proven to be just
22 enough, safe enough, we all go home at
23 night.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Sixty-four
25 to one?

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2 MS. MIMS: Sixty-four to one.

3 The proposed increase would be 99 inmates
4 to one CO. And maybe we're under the
5 assumption that because it's female
6 inmates --

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: That
8 they're not as violent?

9 MS. MIMS: -- they're not
10 dangerous, but I would like to, from my
11 own personal experience, I would like to
12 say, we're dealing with females that will
13 carry a child, give birth to a child and
14 then kill it.

15 We're not asking for the
16 unrealistic. Everybody wants to work.
17 Everybody wants to provide for their
18 children and not be on the other side of
19 the Prison System. Therefore, we're just
20 asking of our Commissioner to hear us out
21 and maybe we all can work together.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you.
23 Thank you.

24 Next?

25 MR. HAKIYM: My name is Saliym

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2 Hakiym and I'm a Union Delegate for Local
3 159 and presently I'm --

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
5 pull the microphone closer and speak
6 slowly.

7 MR. HAKIYM: And presently I'm
8 at Riverside Correctional Facility, which
9 we call RCF.

10 One of the main problems that
11 we see that my membership tells me with
12 the increase of inmates, the ratio of
13 inmates to our officers, is that the
14 increase of arguments. Even though we
15 can handle that ratio that we once had at
16 64 to one that she just mentioned, when I
17 came into the system, the ratio from the
18 court decree was 57 to one, and once they
19 opened up CFCF, we went into an agreement
20 with the administration to increase it
21 because of how they had constructed CFCF,
22 and that brought the ratio up to 64 to
23 one. And from that, anything that was
24 built since CFCF was constructed, the
25 ratio was supposed to be maintained.

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2 Approximately two, maybe two
3 and a half years ago, they opened up what
4 we called multi-purpose rooms at RCF.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Opened up
6 what?

7 MR. HAKIYM: Multi-purpose
8 rooms. It's just a room, but they just
9 house inmates. They put six inmates in
10 the room. You really can't secure that
11 room, especially for people that work the
12 11:00 to 7:00 shift. So that means the
13 inmates can just walk around all the
14 time. And I know it's a failed policy
15 when you put people in rooms that wasn't
16 built for them, because there's no
17 running water or anything like that.

18 Approximately five years ago
19 when I was working at CFCF, they
20 instituted another failed policy of
21 overburdening the COs. And I was working
22 Bravo one-three, which is quarantine, and
23 they put bunk beds down there in the
24 dayroom, which means that there was 20
25 inmates that was running around all the

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2 time. And from that, those that was
3 housed in the cells could not come out.
4 And this one particular incident, I got
5 into an altercation with one of the
6 inmates and I broke my hand. My hand was
7 all pinned up, and it was because of
8 people that was on that unit that was in
9 the dayroom.

10 Now, the inmate that came out
11 that I had the altercation with, he
12 refused to get back into his cell. And I
13 understood why after he said he wasn't
14 going back in, and the reason why he
15 didn't want to go back in the cell,
16 because he said he was locked down all
17 day for something that he didn't even do.
18 He was already locked up. So he would
19 rather go to the hold. At least he would
20 come out for two hours a day instead of
21 just coming out for medication or picking
22 up his tray.

23 So now we're back to that same
24 juncture again, but only this time I'm
25 with the females. The females have

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2 special needs, and when I seen those
3 numbers before for 57 to one that was for
4 that court decree, when we agreed to the
5 64 to one, it didn't have anything to do
6 with gender specific, because when you
7 speak about officers, it's not gender
8 specific. It is not.

9 So here we are again. Are
10 those inmates pleased with what's
11 happening when you have three in a cell?
12 You can look at the cells, and I wish you
13 guys would come up there and see the
14 cells sometime. They have two to a cell.
15 They say that's what they built it for,
16 but if you looked at it, you will see
17 that it was only really designed for one
18 person. Now they have three. They have
19 someone that's sleeping what we call
20 "boats," on the floor. For females --
21 it's worse enough for a man, but for a
22 female. I'm looking at this and she's
23 sleeping by a toilet.

24 We still have the same amount
25 of supplies that we once had. For

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2 instance, if it's two females in a cell,
3 they get two rolls of toilet paper.
4 Sometimes the administration think
5 they're using too much. I don't know.
6 I'm not a female, but I do know y'all
7 when you go to the bathroom, you use more
8 than what a man would use. All these
9 supplies, for their pads, they don't have
10 enough pads for the women.

11 This Warden and the one that I
12 had worked under before he came here,
13 they make decisions, but it's basically
14 decisions that has already been approved
15 for them to make. If they're able or
16 we're able to make decisions, because
17 they are the Wardens to run their jails,
18 I think we would do a little bit more, a
19 little bit better than what we're doing
20 right now.

21 I stand roll call sometimes. I
22 hear names called for different posts,
23 and I never see that person again. I
24 hear the name, but I never see that
25 person at the post. Or if they do happen

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2 to show up, they're pulled, for whatever
3 reason.

4 So what I'm asking is, these
5 policies that they're putting in place,
6 it's basically, from my opinion, for
7 those who haven't done the job or have
8 been so far removed from the job that
9 they're not concerned about our safety.

10 I know we're talking about
11 staffing, but approximately two weeks ago
12 on a unit that had over 150 people, it
13 had three officers on there. Whatever
14 happened, I can't really say, but they
15 pulled the third officer. Was it a
16 little better for those officers? Yes.

17 Officers have a lot of stress
18 in their life. We don't talk about it,
19 but it's there. I know they get
20 consultants and they come in and they
21 make their recommendations, but you have
22 all the experts you need right here in
23 the system that's there. Right now I
24 work with colleges, chapters, social
25 workers. I never worked with them

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2 before, but I have since they have put me
3 here at RCF. I've talked to them. I
4 asked them what do they think is wrong.
5 Well, their workload has increased, too.
6 It's not just us. It's theirs, too.
7 Medical's workload has increased. People
8 that's in quarantine, they slip through.
9 How do I know? Because I'm working up
10 there with the social workers, because
11 they ask me to call these certain inmates
12 down to them. They should never have
13 went to the units. They should have
14 stayed in quarantine.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Excuse me
16 a minute.

17 I'm sorry. We just realized we
18 didn't have a stenographer. But it's
19 being taped. It's being recorded. Your
20 testimony is being recorded. It just
21 kind of threw me off there for a minute.

22 Would you continue, please.

23 MR. HAKIYM: So I think since
24 those that are calling the shots or
25 corrections haven't done the job or have

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2 been so far removed from the job, that we
3 have to come to people like you for some
4 sort of relief. We're not asking that
5 anyone else come in and do the job for
6 us. We're not asking for that. We just
7 need some relief that we can continue to
8 do our job and do the job safely.

9 One other thing that I would
10 like to say and I have always said this
11 since I found out from working at CFCF,
12 at one time we was all -- when I say
13 "all," I'm speaking about all the
14 facilities. When we use our walkies, we
15 all heard everybody. If there was an
16 incident that was happening and I needed
17 assistance and I was working at CFCF or
18 right now if I'm working at RCF, someone
19 at another facility can step on that
20 transmission of mine's, right, and that
21 is precious time.

22 I think that -- and they going
23 to say it's money, but I think we all can
24 have our own frequency. It's okay for
25 all the center controls to hear

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2 everything, and I think they should.
3 CFCF has its own frequency, because
4 everybody was stepping on everyone and
5 you couldn't really get the help. If
6 they did it for CFCF after it was
7 constructed, they can do it for this one,
8 too.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Madam
10 Chair, just one question on the frequency
11 issue.

12 Are you saying that you're on
13 the normal City municipal band or you
14 have your own --

15 MR. HAKIYM: We have a band.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Who steps
17 on your frequency?

18 MR. HAKIYM: The rest of the
19 facilities. We have PICC, DC --

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are all on
21 the same band?

22 MR. HAKIYM: They're all on the
23 same band, and I don't understand that.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But CFCF is
25 on a separate band?

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2 MR. HAKIYM: Is on a separate.

3 But it wasn't like that when they first
4 constructed it. They found out that
5 there was a problem, so they constructed
6 it at CFCF.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So you're
8 telling me that an officer at Riverside
9 would have the transmission stepped on
10 from PICC?

11 MR. HAKIYM: Yes. And I'm
12 going to say this, too: If the three of
13 us are partners at this time, only one of
14 us would have a walkie anyway. So if one
15 of us take a tour on the other side of
16 the unit, if something was occurring,
17 that person who didn't have the walkie,
18 they're going to be out of luck. They're
19 going to be in big trouble. And this is
20 every day.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So in a
22 team of three, there's only one
23 walkie-talkie?

24 MR. HAKIYM: Even if it was
25 just a team of two, it still could just

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2 be one walkie. We need equipment.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: All right.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good

6 afternoon. Could you please state your

7 name, sir, and offer your testimony.

8 MR. CARTER: Good morning. My

9 name is Gerald Carter, officer of RCF.

10 Basically, I'm here to state

11 more so what my counterparts are talking

12 about in regards to safety of the jails.

13 Currently, I can speak for RCF, because

14 that's the jail I currently work at. I

15 feel that right now that the conditions

16 are unsafe as far as the officers go, as

17 far as the census of the jail, as far as

18 the overcrowdedness where you have two

19 officers and you have 150-some-odd

20 inmates. I feel as though it is somewhat

21 unsafe.

22 And then there are times where

23 the officers -- where if you have two

24 officers, then you have two officers and

25 two rovers or escorts, so forth, to run

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2 the floor, they'll pull the escort or
3 move an officer off the block and then
4 have one escort and the center to open
5 the floor up, which I feel is unsafe.
6 Because say if you have two floors or two
7 units of 150-some inmates, if you have
8 two officers and may have one rover and a
9 fight breaks out on one of these units,
10 the officers are at risk, because that
11 rover can't run on both units to cover
12 those officers. And that's what our
13 rovers do, they have to be that second
14 eye or that third eye for the officers.

15 Then there are officers that
16 are looking out for the safety. We come
17 to work for our safety. Our officers, we
18 all come to work to take care of our
19 family and for safety. We don't come to
20 work to be harassed or be beaten up or so
21 forth, and I feel as though I think what
22 the Prison System -- they have taken the
23 jails lightly, but I pretty much think
24 they taken our staff, the female jails,
25 more lightly than the other jails because

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2 they are females, and I think they don't
3 think these females can do the damage
4 that the men can do, where I witnessed
5 females attacking officers, whether they
6 be male or female, these female inmates.

7 And I think all the officers,
8 all we're asking for is safety. We come
9 to work, take our families, and we're
10 safe and we can go home to our families.
11 And I think as far as if the Commissioner
12 and the Wardens and so forth would look
13 at that and see where we're coming from,
14 they would understand it better. And
15 like they said, we're the real officers
16 that work in these blocks. We see what
17 these inmates do day-to-day. They don't
18 work the block or they don't come to see
19 the blocks or actually take a tour of the
20 blocks like we see it. So when we're
21 taking the risks, I don't think they
22 understand quite what we're going
23 through, and I think that on some points
24 we're underhanded on demand, we're
25 getting suspended if we don't open a

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2 block up because there's two officers or
3 one officer to all these inmates, we're
4 shorthanded. So if we don't open a block
5 up, then we'll get suspended and without
6 pay and so forth. Then we have to go
7 through all these allegations to get our
8 jobs back or to get back to work, where
9 as though that's from us taking our
10 families, all because we're looking out
11 for our safety, and I don't think that's
12 fair.

13 All we're asking for is the
14 manpower to take -- to run these blocks
15 or to run these units, really to run this
16 jail. That's any jail, not just RCF, all
17 the jails. All we're asking for is the
18 manpower to run these units and run this
19 jail. And I think if they look at it
20 from that standpoint of what we're
21 asking, the problem could reduce itself.
22 I'm not saying it would go away, but I
23 think it would maybe reduce itself.
24 Because at one time, like I said, I
25 witnessed where they had three officers

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2 to a block before the jail got to the
3 census where it is at now. And now it's
4 getting more crowded, but they're not
5 adding the other officer now.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How many
7 officers are on a block?

8 MR. CARTER: Two.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: How many
10 rovers are there per officer?

11 MR. CARTER: It's usually two
12 rovers, two escorts.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Two rovers
14 per one officer?

15 MR. CARTER: No. It's two
16 rovers per floor.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Two rovers
18 per floor.

19 MR. CARTER: Yes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And how
21 many officers are on each floor?

22 MR. CARTER: Two officers on
23 each unit and two rovers. About five or
24 six officers.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So

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2 conceivably you have five officers for
3 every two rovers?

4 MR. CARTER: No. It's two
5 officers to a unit. It's two units on
6 each floor.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Two units
8 per floor.

9 MR. CARTER: On the second and
10 third floor, it's two units.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that's
12 the norm? What you just described is the
13 norm, is what's normal?

14 MR. CARTER: Basically, yeah.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So what's
16 been the change?

17 MR. CARTER: The jail got
18 overcrowded and there's still two
19 officers on the units.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So the
21 number of inmates has increased, but the
22 manpower for coverage on any two units
23 has not?

24 MR. CARTER: Right. That I
25 witnessed, yes.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Whose
3 judgment is it, whose call is it to open
4 up a block? And I'm referring there you
5 said that there's suspensions. So then
6 who makes the call to open up a block or
7 not?

8 MR. CARTER: I mean, the Shift
9 Commander.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Forgive
11 me?

12 MR. CARTER: The Shift
13 Commander.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So the
15 Shift Commander may be making the
16 decision, but yet the officer is
17 suspended? I'm trying to make the
18 connect between the suspension --

19 MR. CARTER: Well, in the
20 instance where the blocks -- well, I can
21 say from my experience where the block
22 wasn't opened up, I had a Lieutenant that
23 wanted me to open a block up. It wasn't
24 a Shift Commander. It was a Lieutenant
25 that asked me to open a unit up that I

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2 was reprimanded with.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And when
4 you declined, that's when the suspension
5 happens?

6 MR. CARTER: Yes.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Speak to
8 me about the training of parole officers,
9 prison officers. Talk to me about the
10 training, because that can be tied to the
11 level of vulnerability one may feel. So
12 talk to me about the training. How long
13 is it? What does it involve? Training
14 of prison officers.

15 MR. CARTER: Well, their
16 training is about ten weeks. It's
17 basically training on the policies,
18 handling the fire weapons. There's fire
19 weapon training. You get how to handle
20 certain situations as far as disciplinary
21 or --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:
23 Disciplinary circumstances of inmates?

24 MR. CARTER: Yes.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So is

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2 there any training given to under what
3 circumstance one needs to make a judgment
4 about whether or not to open up a block?

5 MR. CARTER: You mean as far as
6 an officer opening a block up?

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Forgive
8 me? I can't hear you.

9 MR. CARTER: You mean as far as
10 a question for us where an officer open a
11 block up?

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes. When
13 an officer has to make the judgment call
14 that it is best --

15 MR. CARTER: That's for the
16 officer that go to the supervisor for a
17 supervisor to make that decision.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right.
19 Tell us what is working currently.

20 MR. CARTER: Currently, it was
21 the three officers to a block and three
22 rovers.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
24 then. I'll rest my questioning there.

25 Chairwoman Tasco.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
3 very much.

4 We're going to ask you to
5 remain, because we may call you back for
6 some questions. The Councilwoman may
7 have some more, but we need to call the
8 Commissioner because he has a time
9 constraint, and I want him to answer a
10 lot of the questions.

11 This testimony is nothing new.
12 He had this testimony in October, so we
13 want to hear from him this morning --
14 this afternoon in terms of what changes
15 have been made. So don't leave. We may
16 call you back. Don't go.

17 MR. KATZ: Can I respond to a
18 question?

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: No, you
20 may not.

21 MR. KATZ: But I wasn't
22 prepared to answer, but I have the
23 answer.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
25 wait, please, until your turn.

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2 MR. KATZ: Okay.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

4 MR. KATZ: At some point when
5 you're ready for it --

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Yes.

7 We'll call you back. Thank you.

8 Good afternoon.

9 COMMISSIONER KING: Good
10 afternoon. I have a short prepared
11 statement that I'm going to read. It
12 shouldn't take me too long. Is that all
13 right?

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: All right.
15 Thank you.

16 COMMISSIONER KING: Good
17 morning, Councilwoman Tasco and members
18 of the Committee for Public Health and
19 Human Services. My name is Leon King and
20 I'm the Commissioner of the Philadelphia
21 Prison System appointed by Mayor Street
22 in 2002.

23 I am here to offer continuing
24 testimony in regard to City Council
25 Resolution 060711. I appreciate your

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2 giving me the opportunity to discuss with
3 you the issues of importance to the City
4 of Philadelphia and to the Philadelphia
5 Prison System and its employees.

6 The Prison System continues to
7 work on addressing our population
8 challenges utilizing the resources over
9 which we have authority. Our efforts
10 have been ongoing before and after our
11 last appearance at City Council.

12 Those challenges are readily
13 apparent; the solutions less so. Our
14 present overall census is 8,946 as of
15 midnight last night. This number
16 includes 273 inmates who are housed out
17 of county. That is close to the record
18 of 8,997 set just last month. In order
19 to house that many inmates, there are 200
20 triple cells at the House of Correction,
21 a current capacity to triple 192 cells at
22 CFCF in intake housing and a current
23 capacity to triple cell 102 cells at the
24 Riverside Correctional Facility.

25 We anticipate a continued

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2 increase in the inmate population, and I
3 will summarize the efforts we have been
4 making to meet this challenge. I will
5 then address what has happened between
6 PPS administration and District Council
7 33, Local 159 regarding the current
8 situation with RCF.

9 First, we at the prison have
10 continued to speak with the Criminal
11 Justice Coordinating Committee and fully
12 support City Solicitor Romulo Diaz, who
13 chairs those meetings, and work with him
14 to identify and implement measures that
15 will help reduce the inmate population at
16 the PPS. These solutions must come from
17 our partners in the criminal justice
18 system.

19 The Defender's Office continues
20 its efforts to file early parole
21 petitions, and in order to achieve
22 maximum efficiency, the Prison System has
23 allocated two additional social workers
24 who can be dedicated solely to the task
25 of ensuring that the adjustment summaries

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2 necessary for early parole petitions are
3 completed in the timeliest manner.

4 Another initiative to increase
5 efficiency in release is to have a bail
6 office located at the Prison System. The
7 current method for processing bail to
8 secure release of arrestees is time
9 consuming and puts unnecessary burdens on
10 family and friends who want to bail their
11 loved ones out. It also prolongs their
12 stay in the jail, which is something we
13 want to reduce. A bail office at the
14 Prison System, which is in the midst of
15 being initiated, will hopefully speed up
16 the process of arrestees being released
17 on bail. The court system has also
18 recently announced that they will begin
19 accepting bail by credit card.

20 Otherwise, the Prison System is
21 doing everything possible to stretch the
22 capacity through the use of contracted
23 satellite facilities. The current
24 operating capacity of the Prison System
25 using all satellites is as follows: We

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2 start off with the base number of 8,810.
3 With the further use of 192 "blue boats"
4 in the CFCF intake areas brings our
5 number to 9,002. We have 150 contracted
6 beds, with 135 being used as of June 7 in
7 Monmouth County, New Jersey, bringing our
8 number to 9,152. We also have a
9 contractual relationship that has not
10 been formalized to writing yet with
11 Lehigh County on an as-available basis
12 for both male and female inmates, and as
13 of June 7, we had 33 inmates, 28 males
14 and five females at that location.
15 Lastly, we have a contract with Liberty
16 Management located at 10th and Lehigh
17 that we just opened in the last month,
18 bringing our capacity up to 9,282, and we
19 currently have around 74 inmates at that
20 location, 53 males and 21 females. There
21 is also a contingency to add another
22 hundred or so "blue boats" or triples at
23 CFCF to help us deal with the population
24 over the summer and get us up above the
25 9,200 number.

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2 The following complications
3 regarding the available beds at our
4 contracted facilities must also be
5 emphasized. First, both the Monmouth and
6 Lehigh County contracts are based on
7 available beds. There is no guarantee at
8 either facility that Philadelphia will be
9 able to use any of the beds, meaning if
10 the people who run those facilities
11 decide they need the space, they give us
12 certain notice and we would have to
13 leave. Further, the beds to be used at
14 our Liberty Management and Coleman Center
15 facilities are based on inmate
16 classification; in other words, minimum,
17 and community-level inmates can be held
18 there, and we only have so many of those
19 to spread around.

20 To say that all of the above
21 creates a great operational strain is an
22 understatement. As stated at the outset,
23 we are not going to make a prediction,
24 but we are prepared for as many as 9,200
25 inmates this summer. Therefore, any

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2 number beyond 9,282 will cause more
3 drastic operational measures such as
4 additional triple cells I mentioned at
5 CFCF. Since May, we have come closer to
6 9,000 inmates each weekend.

7 I will now address the
8 situation at the Riverside Correctional
9 Facility, which opened in 2004. RCF is
10 our primary holding facility for women.
11 The design capacity for RCF is 768. And
12 I might -- I'm just going to backtrack a
13 little in the testimony. It's
14 traditional in the corrections field and
15 for every jail, I think, we've opened on
16 State Road, you design it for a certain
17 amount of people and by the time you open
18 it, you have more. So in 2004 when we
19 opened RCF with a capacity of 768, in the
20 prior years we topped 950 women. So
21 before the jail opened, it was
22 overcrowded, so to speak.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Could I
24 just ask quickly, why was it designed
25 that way? We know that it's going to

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2 take X number of months to design and
3 construct a facility, and if we know kind
4 of extrapolating forward that the 768 is
5 going to be 900, why didn't we just
6 design it for the 900 or a thousand?

7 COMMISSIONER KING: Because the
8 way these things operate is, people sit
9 down, they plan the facility, and then
10 the time that it takes one to negotiate
11 the site, make sure everybody is okay
12 with the site, hire the contractors, all
13 the financial changes the City goes
14 through, we end up --

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But you
16 also, I think, in your testimony, unless
17 I'm incorrectly understanding it, you
18 said it's understood within the system
19 that traditionally there's going to be --
20 it's like when they opened the Schuylkill
21 Expressway, it was under capacity --or
22 over capacity by that time they opened
23 it.

24 Don't we know that with the
25 24-month or 30-month design and

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2 construction process period that it's
3 going to be 900, not 768?

4 COMMISSIONER KING: We know
5 that, but it's just the way -- I don't
6 know what word I want to use, but the way
7 all the differing parties, organizations
8 work, by the end there's going to be
9 budgetary issues, there's going to be
10 concerns from -- that have to be taken
11 into account and it just ends up
12 happening that way.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Again, and
14 it's water under the bridge because the
15 facility is built, but if we know there's
16 going to be more inmates that need to go
17 in there when we design it, we should
18 design it appropriately and not --

19 COMMISSIONER KING: I mean, the
20 only thing I would say, for example, if
21 you take the three to four percent
22 increase that we have traditionally in
23 the prisons and you projected it for ten
24 years, you could take a reasonable
25 estimate that we would need, in order

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2 just to keep up with that, not to mention
3 all the police we're going to hire, et
4 cetera, we need 4,000 beds in the next
5 ten years.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Well, I
7 think there comes a point in time when
8 something is going to change that. It's
9 not going to continue -- I'm talking
10 about going forward over 24, 30 months,
11 not ten years. I mean, if we know
12 there's going to be too many people for
13 the facility, why are we designing them
14 smaller? I guess --

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: How did
16 you come to 764? I mean, why was that
17 the magic number?

18 COMMISSIONER KING: I don't
19 remember what the magic number was. That
20 ended up being the magic number based on
21 the money that we had and the resources
22 that we had to spend at the time we got
23 the permission to go forward.

24 And the only point I was
25 making, Councilman, is that the estimate

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2 we did for a 1,500-bed facility is \$190
3 million. You have to take that, as I
4 understand the process, and you put it
5 into all the other priorities that the
6 City has, and it may come out that we can
7 only afford a thousand bed facility and
8 that's what we built. I mean, that's
9 just the reality of it.

10 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Madam Chair,
11 point of information along the same
12 lines.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0:
14 Councilman, would you identify yourself.
15 We have a tape recorder. We don't have a
16 stenographer.

17 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Councilman
18 Juan Ramos.

19 Could it have been that the
20 number 768 was actually a greater number,
21 but then when it was time to crunch the
22 numbers and decide on the money, that the
23 only thing you can afford to build was
24 enough for 768 inmates?

25 COMMISSIONER KING: That is --

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2 I wasn't there for all that minutia, but
3 that is my understanding of what often
4 happens. You have to -- you're only able
5 to use the resources that you have. And
6 I think as the Chief of Staff testified
7 when she was here for the budget, the
8 City has a lot of priorities and they get
9 mixed in and people make decisions on
10 what gets spent.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: It doesn't
12 seem the prison is the --

13 COMMISSIONER KING: Excuse me?

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: It doesn't
15 seem the prisons are a priority.

16 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, no
17 one wants -- even if you said,
18 Commissioner, you have as much money as
19 you want to build a prison as big as you
20 want, then I have to find a neighborhood
21 that would like to have that prison, and
22 then we have to deal with the bidding and
23 all that. No one wants a jail. I don't
24 think that's the answer.

25 But I just want to finish real

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2 quickly.

3 Design capacity of RCF is 768.

4 As of June 7, 2007, the census at RCF
5 stood at 811. So we were over the design
6 capacity, and it's been that way for a
7 while. You heard the officer talk about
8 the rooms where four people are. Those
9 are rooms that were not designed for
10 inmates, but we've had to put inmates
11 there.

12 We were at this number even
13 after using every other possible area to
14 house female inmates. We have 125
15 inmates at a facility next to Holmesburg
16 called the Cannery, and based on the
17 initiation of recent contracts with
18 Liberty Management and Lehigh County, we
19 have 21 female inmates at Liberty and
20 five inmates in Lehigh County.

21 Still with all of the above, we
22 had to start triple celling at RCF.
23 Prior to implementing triple cells, we
24 contacted the union about our plans, and
25 the union requested that we adhere to the

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2 staff ratios at CFCF until we all had a
3 chance to sit down and discuss the issue.
4 I agreed to that. A meeting was
5 scheduled with the union for the next
6 Wednesday, and again in an act of good
7 faith, we adhered to the union -- the
8 staffing ratios the union thought that we
9 should. The scheduled meeting was
10 cancelled by the union the afternoon
11 before the meeting began, and until
12 Friday, no one responded to our attempts
13 to reschedule this meeting. As a result,
14 the PPS instituted staffing levels we
15 felt were appropriate. This morning we
16 did have a chance to meet. We requested
17 a meeting and are waiting for a briefing
18 with that.

19 And I want to be clear, there
20 is no agreement that states the
21 inmate-to-staff ratio at RCF or CFCF.
22 The union has claimed that the current
23 operational ratio at CFCF of one officer
24 per 64 inmates applies to RCF. It does
25 not. The union has claimed that an

22 I have addressed above, as much
23 as possible, the exhaustive operational
24 burdens and needs that the Prison System
25 will be incurring in the coming months.

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2 The Prison System will continue to do
3 everything in its power to deal with this
4 ongoing problem as best as possible in a
5 proactive manner. We are always open to
6 issues, discussing issues, with the
7 union, but it is a two-way street.
8 However, I again close by emphasizing
9 that the problems of the continually
10 rising population will not even begin to
11 be solved until more intense efforts are
12 made by the criminal justice system as a
13 whole to work together in addressing
14 those causes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you
16 very much.

17 Let me just ask a couple of
18 questions. All of the candidates for
19 Mayor are calling for more police
20 officers, which would mean more arrests
21 and convictions and more inmates in our
22 system. Have you heard any discussion
23 about increasing the staffing levels at
24 the prison?

25 COMMISSIONER KING: In

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2 connection to that, no, but there was
3 some testimony earlier about our staffing
4 challenges and we do have some -- our
5 last crop of CO candidates, there was --
6 I don't know what happened, but a lot of
7 them failed the psychological exam back
8 in October after we testified and we
9 really didn't get anybody off the last
10 list that was out. So we currently have
11 a class of 43. I do have authorization
12 from the Administration to hire more COs,
13 over 100 I have the authorization.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: How many
15 do you need? What would you need in
16 terms of --

17 COMMISSIONER KING: I need
18 closer to 250, but the problem --

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: 250 what?

20 COMMISSIONER KING: Extra.
21 Right now we're at about 1,725 and I
22 think the staffing plan calls for 1,950
23 or something like that.

24 Am I correct?

25 So that's the difference that

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2 we need. So what we have done is, since
3 we had the problem with that prior list,
4 we met with the Personnel Director, we
5 met with the Managing Director, because
6 what was happening was, we'd get a list,
7 the list would be exhausted, we'd have to
8 implement the recruitment team. We'd
9 have a month to run out before the list
10 closed. We'd do that. So now we have
11 continuous recruiting. So that as soon
12 as Personnel gets enough people who have
13 paid the money for the application, they
14 do a test and we'll get a class.

15 So the goal is to hire as many
16 as we can cram into the Training Academy
17 over the summer. The issue is that the
18 training period is 12 weeks. So if today
19 I hired 150, we were able to get them
20 through the process, we wouldn't have
21 them online for another 12 weeks. And I
22 know that they just gave a test, am I
23 correct -- two Saturdays ago they gave a
24 new test for COs. So we're looking for
25 them to come through.

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2 So we're trying to keep up with
3 the work that we have to do now, and the
4 union and the officers and I myself are
5 concerned about the fact that the
6 staffing is not where we want it to be,
7 but we're no different -- maybe a little
8 bit different. In my discussions with
9 Commissioner Ayers and people in the
10 Police Department, we're all having
11 trouble recruiting.

12 So we are redoubling our
13 efforts and trying to be strategic about
14 getting out there everywhere we can. We
15 have a full-time recruitment unit out.
16 So in that context, we're doing what we
17 can do to get more officers and we
18 recognize the need. In the context of
19 hiring more police, no, I haven't heard
20 any --

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: What are
22 the impediments to recruitment?

23 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, the
24 anecdotal conversation, things that I'm
25 hearing from my staff, from people in the

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2 Fire Department, a lot of it has to do
3 with the fact that people, for example,
4 when you tell them that you can't smoke
5 marijuana and work for the prisons, they
6 have a problem with that. They don't
7 want to sign up to do that. There's a
8 rigorous background check.

9 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Who does
10 the recruitment?

11 COMMISSIONER KING: We have
12 prison COs, correctional officers, social
13 workers and maintenance --

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So they're
15 getting this information from people that
16 they talk to about becoming correctional
17 officers?

18 COMMISSIONER KING: Yes. The
19 recruitment unit --

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: The
21 responses?

22 COMMISSIONER KING: Yeah.
23 They're out full time in the
24 neighborhoods and places where people are
25 looking for jobs trying to recruit folks.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Councilman
3 Kenney.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.
5 Have you requested a
6 pre-employment residency requirement
7 waiver from the Civil Service Commission?

8 COMMISSIONER KING: No.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Why?

10 COMMISSIONER KING: That's not
11 something the Administration wants to do,
12 as I understand it.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So we can't
14 find the people we need and we're going
15 to continue on -- I'm just talking
16 rhetorically to you. I don't need you to
17 answer. But we're going to continue the
18 process which is not serving us well
19 rather than trying to branch out into
20 other areas where we may have people
21 coming from the military, coming from
22 other areas that are trained, that are
23 disciplined and understand the
24 paramilitary life of these types of jobs
25 and we're going to continue to ask guys

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2 if they want to stop smoking pot? I

3 mean --

4 COMMISSIONER KING: Councilman,

5 I agree --

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Not that

7 he supports the --

8 COMMISSIONER KING: No. I

9 think we've tweaked it so we're out there

10 being more strategic about where we go,

11 and I told the recruitment unit I

12 specifically want them to contact people

13 in the armed forces, because there are

14 people who are from Philadelphia who will

15 be coming back looking for work, and

16 we're trying to connect with those

17 people. I talked to the Personnel

18 Director about as long as they do the

19 residency thing, if they have been in the

20 military and they do have a background or

21 have worked in corrections, how do you

22 explain that to people and explain how

23 that will help them, and they may have to

24 come to the prison and go through the

25 Training Academy for 12 weeks, but on

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2 week 13, they're eligible to take the
3 Sergeant's test or the Lieutenant's test.

4 So we're trying to work within
5 the confines of that. We have to do it a
6 little bit -- it's not exactly the same.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I have
8 given this example before, and I know
9 you're not in control of this, but I have
10 gone to a Phillies game at Citizens Bank
11 Park and seen an NYPD recruiting van --

12 COMMISSIONER KING: I've seen
13 them, too.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: -- parked
15 on the sidewalk trying to recruit people
16 from our city to come up there.

17 So I will send a letter to the
18 Mayor again asking for that
19 consideration, because I think if this is
20 that a crisis situation, we need to kind
21 of change things a little bit. We've
22 done it with the School District. We can
23 do it here as needed. If we don't want
24 to do an overall blanket policy of
25 eliminating the pre-employment residency

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2 requirement, we should at least be able
3 to do it in crisis. It seems like
4 there's one.

5 COMMISSIONER KING: The other
6 hindrance we have, most people have no
7 idea, they have bad pre-conceived notions
8 about what correctional officers do. I
9 was in the hardware store in Lafayette
10 Hill and I had my prison T-shirt on or
11 whatever it was and they said, Oh, you
12 work at the prison?

13 I said, Yes. I said, We're
14 recruiting.

15 He says, Oh, what, do I come up
16 and beat people down?

17 I mean, this is what the
18 public's view of us is, and that's part
19 of what the recruitment team is out there
20 trying to put a positive light. We've
21 got a whole new section on our web page
22 and booklets, and we're trying to do a
23 sort of media thing to make people
24 understand that it's not -- that's not
25 what we do and it's really more

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2 sophisticated than that.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You had
4 mentioned earlier in your testimony that
5 there were some arrangements with Lehigh
6 County and Monmouth County.

7 COMMISSIONER KING: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you have
9 any similar arrangements or have pursued
10 similar arrangements with the state
11 correctional system in Pennsylvania?

12 COMMISSIONER KING: We have 90
13 inmates up at Camp Hill. So they are
14 cooperating with us in that regard.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I
16 understand that maybe anecdotal -- I
17 don't know if it's accurate or not, but
18 Chester apparently is not anywhere near
19 capacity, the state correctional facility
20 there, and that's a pretty short distance
21 to be able to maybe have some synergy
22 with that facility.

23 COMMISSIONER KING: I haven't
24 heard about that one, but I will check
25 into it.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO:

4 Councilwoman Brown.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes. Just
6 a couple of follow-up questions regarding
7 your recruitment challenges.

8 What are the minimum age
9 requirements?

10 COMMISSIONER KING: I believe
11 you have to be 20 -- 19, and you have to
12 have a GED and a driver's license.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What are
14 the linkages with CCP for young people
15 who want to major in criminal justice and
16 start with an Associate Degree?

17 COMMISSIONER KING: I know that
18 the recruitment unit has touched base
19 with CCP. They started going over there
20 with the Fire Department and the Police
21 Department. My anecdotal conversations
22 with Commissioner Ayers tells me that CCP
23 is a good place to recruit. It's where
24 the Fire Department says they get their
25 best recruits from CCP. So we are at CCP

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2 and we've just in the last month or two,
3 since we've got the recruitment unit up,
4 going to places like CCP and trying to
5 get people to come into corrections. And
6 part of the challenge also is, if you go
7 on the City's website -- that's why we
8 updated ours -- and you go, I want to be
9 a CO, it says you start off at 32,000, I
10 think it is, and then 50 years later when
11 you're done, you're only making 38. So
12 who would want to take that as sort of a
13 lifetime thing?

14 So we've tried to update the
15 website, so when you go to our website,
16 you see that there's career advancement.
17 You can be a Sergeant, Lieutenant,
18 Captain, Warden, whatever it is.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Are you on
20 the City's channel, 63, 64, that talks
21 about various City departments?

22 COMMISSIONER KING: I don't
23 know. I'd have to check on that.

24 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I think
25 that would be a good place. People do

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2 flip to that channel every now and then
3 and they do listen to watch City Council
4 on Thursdays, and public meetings are
5 there and other programs are provided on
6 that channel as a means to recruit.

7 Now, is there any -- if you
8 hire 43 people, how will that alleviate
9 this -- help you with your staffing and
10 providing more people to this triple
11 celling?

12 COMMISSIONER KING: It will
13 help. It's not the help that we require
14 immediately. I mean, it's a minimal
15 amount of help. It's better than not
16 having the 43. But another issue that
17 comes up, as we train the 43, we're
18 losing people. So our attrition rate is
19 ten to 12 a month, I believe. So if it
20 takes --

21 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Why are
22 they leaving?

23 COMMISSIONER KING: Various
24 reasons.

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Such as?

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2 COMMISSIONER KING: Some people
3 come to the prisons, it's a weigh station
4 before they go to the Police Department.
5 Some people come -- there are few
6 people -- it's a weigh station to the
7 Fire Department. Some people don't like
8 the shifts at the prison, so they want to
9 go to the Sheriff's Department. Some
10 people retire. It's a whole host of
11 different reasons.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: What is
13 the average stay of a correctional
14 officer? What's the length of
15 employment?

16 COMMISSIONER KING: I couldn't
17 answer that question. I know a lot of
18 people like Mr. Thompson, for example,
19 who have been working at the Prison
20 System for decades. All the gentlemen
21 sitting behind me, my Wardens, Deputy
22 Commissioners, they've all been working
23 there a very long time. So there are a
24 lot of people at the prison who meet the
25 challenges and they're very dedicated

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2 City employees and stay there for years,
3 and then there are other people who have
4 different ideas and things that --

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: I guess my
6 question is, is there any way to do an
7 analysis of the number of individuals who
8 seek employment with your department? Is
9 there any analysis of how long they stay?
10 Certainly you're going to have some
11 employees who stay a long time, but if
12 there's a constant overturn, where does
13 that take place? Do they stay a year?
14 Do they stay six months? Do they stay a
15 year? Do you have the ability to do that
16 analysis so that you can also understand
17 probably why people are leaving and maybe
18 look internally as to what changes may
19 have to take place in order to maintain
20 the staff once you recruit them?

21 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, I
22 think that I'm sure we have the data
23 somewhere in the prison where we could
24 look at it and say, This is the average
25 length of time somebody stays based on

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2 our records. I don't know if that's
3 automated so we can do it right away, but
4 I certainly can check into that.

5 I know that when people leave,
6 they're asked to do an exit interview.
7 It's not mandatory, but we do get them
8 and I do see those, and that's how I can
9 tell you anecdotally why people leave,
10 because when they do fill out the exit
11 interview, they tell us. Sometimes it's
12 because they don't like the people, they
13 don't like working at the prison, but
14 most of the time, I'm moving to Florida,
15 I'm going to the Police Department,
16 what-have-you.

17 I mean, I can go back and
18 figure out if we can put that together,
19 but, generally speaking, there's a whole
20 host of different reasons why people
21 leave the prisons.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Well, it
23 seems to me, Commissioner, that it's a
24 serious situation and that you and your
25 staff might want to have that information

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2 on an ongoing basis so that you'll know
3 what's going on with your system and
4 address some of the issues that are
5 raised to help better recruit or help you
6 in your recruitment process. It's not
7 just for you, but all of the other people
8 that are part of your team, to know and
9 understand what's happening in the Prison
10 System, why people come, why people leave
11 and have more than an anecdotal reason
12 but more of factual detail based on
13 numbers and other documentation as to why
14 they're leaving so that we can look at
15 the system and respond to some of the
16 comments made about what's happening up
17 there and we better have a debate on fact
18 than --

19 COMMISSIONER KING: That's what
20 I'm all about, and that's just one of the
21 things I haven't gotten to yet, but we
22 will.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Tell me
24 about the 24-point plan that we were
25 supposed to receive in October or

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2 sometime.

3 COMMISSIONER KING: You were
4 supposed to receive?

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Well, we
6 want to talk about it. You said that
7 there was a 24-point plan. And it would
8 seem to me that if there's a 24-point
9 plan or any kind of plan to help address
10 some of the issues that have been raised
11 during these discussions, the
12 Administration might want to share it
13 with the Council.

14 COMMISSIONER KING: The
15 24-point plan has been looked at. It's
16 been revised. I think the number of
17 initiatives has been reduced to a more
18 workable number, and the City Solicitor
19 is the one who chairs that group. He
20 knows more about the details, but we
21 continue to meet and work on that. But
22 Prisons really isn't the focal agency as
23 it were. The issues surround what the
24 courts are doing.

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Councilman

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2 Kenney.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

4 Is there a prison system
5 national standard for numbers of inmates
6 per square footage, numbers of
7 correctional officers per inmates? I
8 mean, obviously there are goals, but is
9 there a standard which is accepted as the
10 best?

11 COMMISSIONER KING: There are
12 national standards for different things.
13 There is no national standard for
14 inmate-to-staff ratios, because it
15 depends on the facility, how it's set up.
16 For example, at RCF, the population is
17 different. There are females. That's
18 not the jail where we find shanks and
19 weapons. This is not where people are
20 stabbing themselves. It's set up so that
21 there are sight lines for unit controls
22 and center controls, and we have more
23 cameras in RCF than any of the other
24 jails combined. So it's different for
25 each jail.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is there a
3 standard for square footage per prisoner,
4 cell space?

5 COMMISSIONER KING: There is a
6 standard for square footage in regard to
7 a living area for inmates.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: What is
9 that?

10 COMMISSIONER KING: I don't
11 know off the top of my head.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Does anyone
13 there know? My concern or question is
14 how far off we are on that standard. Not
15 that every facility is perfect around the
16 country, but how far off are we on triple
17 celling prisoners and square footage.

18 COMMISSIONER KING: When the
19 jails were built, we built them as best
20 we could to those national standards, so
21 when you put a triple cell in a cell that
22 was built for two, obviously there are
23 going to be issues with what the national
24 standards are. We're going through the
25 process right now. The national

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2 accrediting body is called the American
3 Correctional Association, and we've had
4 them up to the prison and we're going
5 through that whole process to
6 specifically find out where we're in
7 compliance and where we're not.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is that a
9 report that's going to be issued?

10 COMMISSIONER KING: No. They
11 come and they tell us where they think
12 there's a whole -- there's a book you can
13 order that says these are the standards,
14 and they say this is where you have
15 issues and this is where you need to
16 work. In Monmouth I know they triple
17 cell inmates and they're accredited,
18 so...

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So you're
20 going through an accreditation process
21 right now?

22 COMMISSIONER KING: We're
23 starting that, yes.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: When will
25 that end?

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2 COMMISSIONER KING: I don't
3 know. They just came a month ago.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: How long
5 does it take; do you know?

6 COMMISSIONER KING: It depends
7 on what the issues are, because we have
8 to decide whether they're going to do all
9 six facilities. Two of them are pretty
10 old. Maybe we'll decide not to do that.
11 So in the next year, I would hope we
12 would be pretty close to completing that
13 process.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: What is the
15 status of the electronic monitoring
16 system and getting some of these people
17 with ankle bracelets out of the
18 facilities and under electronic
19 monitoring?

20 COMMISSIONER KING: The last I
21 remember hearing about that when it was
22 discussed at the Criminal Justice
23 Coordinating Committee, the
24 Administration did make funds available
25 for --

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Did or
3 didn't?

4 COMMISSIONER KING: Did make
5 extra funds available for electronic
6 monitoring, and the last I remember
7 hearing was that everybody in custody
8 that met the current criteria for
9 electronic monitoring had been exhausted,
10 and that is the last I remember hearing
11 about it. I don't know whether they've
12 expanded the criteria or not, but that's
13 the last report I got on the --

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: What was
15 the date of that last report?

16 COMMISSIONER KING: Months ago.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Months ago?
18 Can you initiate another look at that
19 or --

20 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, we're
21 meeting -- the Criminal Justice
22 Coordinating Committee is meeting this
23 week, I think, and I can bring it up
24 again.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: There was

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2 testimony earlier about the communication
3 system, about not every officer having a
4 walkie-talkie and that besides CFCF
5 there's a shared band with all the other
6 facilities that seem to cause problems
7 with stepping on transmissions. Do you
8 have any information on that?

9 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, we're
10 very, very concerned about the radio
11 system at the prison. Two or three weeks
12 ago we did a riot simulation at CFCF just
13 to go through a dry run-through, and we
14 did have issues with the radios and some
15 radios being found in places where they
16 weren't charged. And there is that issue
17 that the correctional officer brought up
18 about the radios, and the issue with that
19 is, we inherited the old system that the
20 Police and everybody else had when they
21 upgraded, and that system was better than
22 the one we had, but it's not where we
23 need to be.

24 So we went through this whole
25 scenario. I brought the issue up again

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2 with the Managing Director's Office. The
3 new young lady who is in charge of
4 emergency management is coming up to the
5 prison this week or next so we can sit
6 down and discuss that. But we do have
7 issues with communication and the radios.
8 Even if I call in from my car, I might
9 have to wait before two other people,
10 whoever jumps in before me. So we do
11 have issues with the radios and we're
12 trying to correct those.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is it
14 standard or is it reasonable that every
15 officer should have at least a radio?

16 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, off
17 the top of my head, I would say yes, it
18 would be reasonable that everyone has a
19 communication device, but that's --
20 that's not where we are at the prison.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I mean, do
22 we know how many we need and what the
23 costs are? I mean, those kinds of
24 specifics.

25 COMMISSIONER KING: I could get

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2 you those. I don't know it off the top
3 of my head.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I mean,
5 with all the things we've talked about,
6 some of the stuff is out of your hands
7 relative to court orders and other types
8 of things and the Criminal Justice
9 Coordinating Committee and the Managing
10 Director, but as far as having radios in
11 people's hands, I mean, that's something
12 that I think we could at least be a
13 little bit effective with in kind of
14 demanding and trying to transfer some
15 money to you to buy radios. I mean, it's
16 like not having a textbook in a grade
17 school. It's kind of basic.

18 COMMISSIONER KING: Like I
19 said, I think the feeling was we would
20 get the radios that the Police Department
21 had and those would be better than the
22 ones that we had, but they still face
23 challenges. And, actually, when I --
24 this is what I -- I don't know if I
25 should say. Anyway, when I left my house

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2 that day for the drill, I have a radio in
3 my van and I went -- I turned it to the
4 emergency station and it went dead. So
5 it's certainly an issue that we have to
6 work on, and it's part of a bigger issue
7 about emergency management at the prison
8 and what happens when a chemical spill --
9 chemical cloud comes down State Road.
10 What are we supposed to do with 8,900
11 inmates and 2,300 employees?

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Probably be
13 better coordinated if everybody had a
14 radio.

15 COMMISSIONER KING: I agree.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I would
17 appreciate finding out how many you need
18 and what the costs are, even if we have
19 to deal with the system problem at some
20 point. At least having -- that's the
21 only weapon I assume they have, is a
22 radio.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Blondell
25 Reynolds Brown.

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2 In the emergency preparedness
3 plan that was released by the Managing
4 Director's Office maybe now 18 months
5 ago, maybe two years ago, there was no
6 component or chapter of that document
7 that spoke specifically to how the Prison
8 System would handle emergency
9 preparedness?

10 COMMISSIONER KING: I don't
11 remember.

12 Was there anything on there?

13 No.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Were you
15 on the committee?

16 COMMISSIONER KING: I was
17 involved.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: What does
19 that mean?

20 COMMISSIONER KING: We had a
21 lot of meetings on this. I came, gave my
22 opinion and then they were broken out
23 into little groups and the report came
24 together.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And the

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2 answer to the question was, no, there was
3 no chapter devoted to preparedness for
4 the Philadelphia Prison System?

5 COMMISSIONER KING: Correct.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that
7 underscores Councilman Jim Kenney's
8 request of coordination between City
9 departments, and it goes to Councilwoman
10 Tasco's request for documentation and
11 sort of justifies the request for A, B,
12 C, D, E, F, G, which leads to a better
13 solution for prison overcrowding. It
14 just seems to me to be all tied together.

15 COMMISSIONER KING: It is. I
16 mean, the number one issue that drives
17 everything at the prison is the number of
18 inmates you have. I don't want to
19 subject my officers to triple celling. I
20 don't want to subject my officers to four
21 people in a room that was designed for a
22 social worker. I don't want to do that.
23 If I had my way, I'd stop up the flow. I
24 did that last year and got myself in a
25 lot of trouble. I said, We're not taking

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2 any more inmates until we get some empty
3 beds, and that got us in trouble, landed
4 us in court, because that's not what
5 people want to do.

6 So I don't want to do all that.

7 I want everyone to be happy, feel secure,
8 not feel like people are taking
9 advantage. But it's a tough nut to crack
10 with the emergency what we do at the
11 prison, because let's say there's an
12 issue with -- there was a fire the other
13 week at the prison. What are we supposed
14 to do with the 8,900 inmates? Do we have
15 8,900 handcuffs, 8,900 shackles? Do we
16 have enough buses to ship 8,900 inmates?
17 Where are we going to take the 8,900
18 inmates and how is the public going to
19 react when there are buses driving down
20 State Road filled with inmates and we're
21 taking them to where, Veterans Stadium?
22 Is the public going to want -- you
23 understand what I'm saying? Even if you
24 were to say release them, okay, we'll
25 release the low-level folks. If we

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2 release 40 low-level people -- 4,000
3 low-level people on State Road, you still
4 have to have a plan as to where they go.

5 So it's a really mind-boggling
6 problem when it comes to that sort of
7 thing.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So in the
9 monthly meetings that you have, wouldn't
10 that be the proper place to raise those
11 types of circumstances?

12 COMMISSIONER KING: The
13 issues -- I just think that we're making
14 a progression with the emergency
15 preparedness plan. Like I said, we're
16 meeting with the new emergency management
17 person, Ms. Maricopa, I think her name
18 is. She's coming up this week or next
19 week so that we can sit down and say,
20 Here's the problem, we got to take it to
21 the next level about what it is we're
22 going to do in the case of an emergency.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So to
24 reiterate Councilman Jim Kenney's
25 question, what is the short-term plan for

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2 more radios?

3 COMMISSIONER KING: Short-term
4 plan is right now to meet with
5 Ms. Maricopa and lay out what the issues
6 are with the radios and the problems we
7 had during the mock riot and see what it
8 is she can do to facilitate the resources
9 we need to upgrade those things.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right.
11 Thank you for your testimony.

12 Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0:
14 Commissioner, what is your answer to the
15 triple celling?

16 COMMISSIONER KING: My answer
17 to the triple celling?

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: What would
19 you do? What is your answer to that? I
20 mean, it's an issue raised by some of the
21 employees here about triple celling and
22 also -- I guess my question is, what can
23 you do about any of this?

24 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, I can
25 be as creative as I can in finding places

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2 for inmates to be that is a situation
3 where everybody is as safe and secure as
4 possible, but, again, triple celling, if
5 you have a housing area designed for a
6 hundred and I got to triple cell and it
7 is now 150, you've just raised all the
8 issues that the officers have to deal
9 with by 50 people. So it makes it more
10 difficult. I don't want to do it. It's
11 the best choice amongst all the evil
12 alternatives I have.

13 But I would do, for example --
14 I was talking to Commissioner Horn in New
15 York the other day. I was up there
16 speaking to him. Their prison population
17 has been reduced from 23,000 to 14,000.
18 I said, How did you do that? Was that on
19 purpose or was it a plan? I mean, was it
20 an accident or was it plan?

21 He said, It's kind of sort of a
22 mixture of both.

23 What they did was, they cut
24 crime in the City of New York by locking
25 up all the bad people and sending them

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2 upstate. Two -- and this is why I keep
3 emphasizing the judiciary -- they sped up
4 processing of felony cases by 30 to 40
5 percent. They sped up the processing of
6 misdemeanor cases by 30 to 40 percent,
7 meaning people are spending less time in
8 jail, meaning the population goes down.
9 And then the fourth thing they did was,
10 they reorganized their Probation
11 Department. They said, We're not going
12 to violate people because this is the
13 second time you didn't show up for your
14 appointment. They have kiosks. So in
15 New York, you go to a kiosk. You say,
16 I'm here. If you don't show up the first
17 time, the computer sends you a letter.
18 Second time you don't go, sends you a
19 letter. Third time you don't go, it
20 issues a warrant, and then if you bump
21 into the police at any other time, then
22 maybe you have a problem. And then they
23 took the probation officers who were
24 watching those little tiny people who
25 were doing minor -- arrested or on

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2 probation for minor things and they
3 focused them on the people who hadn't got
4 to the level of where they were going off
5 to state prison for ten or 20 years.

6 That's how you reduce the
7 population. Granted, New York and
8 Philadelphia are different, but that's
9 the type of plan you have to have in
10 place to effectuate this.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: What makes
12 it different? Why couldn't we do that?

13 COMMISSIONER KING: I just
14 think that we haven't evolved yet to the
15 place where everyone is ready to sit down
16 and sort of be decisive about that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Who makes
18 that happen?

19 COMMISSIONER KING: Well,
20 whoever wants to take leadership of the
21 issue. I think the Mayor has done a good
22 job in taking leadership of the issue.
23 Before he came along, we didn't have a
24 Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee.
25 We didn't have a 24-point plan. We

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2 didn't have a Solicitor who was in charge
3 of the committee. And I guess we could
4 all disagree about whether they're moving
5 fast enough or not, but we have a
6 foundation here. It's just that all
7 those people on that committee -- the
8 Mayor can only do so much. He can't --
9 if he was here, he'd probably say the
10 same thing I'm saying. He doesn't want
11 to triple cell. He doesn't want these
12 officers to feel like they're taking
13 advantage of them and they're not safe.

14 The point is, the Mayor can't
15 say, Okay, speed up those cases in
16 criminal division of the Court of Common
17 Pleas. Look at your bail guidelines.
18 Take care of the backlog. The Mayor
19 can't order people to do that.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Has he had
21 a discussion with the courts to talk
22 about that?

23 COMMISSIONER KING: Yes. On
24 the Criminal Justice Coordinating
25 Committee, those are some of the things

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2 that we talk about. Judge Fitzgerald
3 before he was elevated to the Supreme
4 Court instituted a process whereby they
5 sped up the number of serious felony
6 cases and how they were processed. It's
7 just that -- and we know the processing
8 times have increased, but the prison
9 population hasn't. So the next step that
10 people are working on is, well, are you
11 saying -- you have to put a priority on
12 cases where people are in custody. You
13 got to make sure you're speeding up the
14 process for that.

15 We have another situation in
16 the City where in the summer everybody
17 goes on vacation. So if you're unlucky
18 and you get arrested June 15th, you
19 better consider yourself lucky if
20 everybody who needs to be there to
21 process your case, your public defender,
22 your DE, the police officer, the judge,
23 they're not one of them on vacation all
24 over the summer, because then the case
25 gets slowed down and instead of having it

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2 take a month, it may take three.

3 So there's all sorts to issues
4 like that that have to be addressed. We
5 started doing them and we need to take it
6 to the next level. Otherwise, we're
7 going to continue to be here and this
8 really -- I mean, this is a symptom of
9 the problem, the union being upset and
10 concerned, as am I, about what's going on
11 at the prison and we're sitting here sort
12 of saying, This is what we think should
13 be done, when the hearing -- what we
14 should be focusing on in addition to this
15 is, what is the bigger criminal justice
16 system doing. And what concerns me --
17 and I don't know what word to use. Last
18 year we were in the prison litigation and
19 I had to go down and testify. Everybody
20 is concerned about inmates, and they
21 should be, and that's what the lawsuit is
22 about. We want the inmates to be safe
23 and secure. We want to make sure we're
24 not violating their constitutional
25 rights, but what everybody forgets about

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2 is that overcrowding isn't just about
3 constitutional rights of the inmates.
4 It's about the staff who work there. The
5 more inmates you put in the jail, the
6 more difficult it makes for them to do
7 their job, and the risk that something
8 happens increases.

9 So overpopulation is not just
10 about inmates' constitutional rights.
11 It's about the safety and security of the
12 COs, the correctional officers, the
13 social workers and everybody else who
14 works there.

15 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: In the New
16 York model, who took the lead to take
17 action to alleviate the prison
18 overcrowding?

19 COMMISSIONER KING: I know
20 early on they had a strong person. I
21 think it was like a Deputy Mayor or
22 someone who like oversaw the Criminal
23 Justice Coordinating Committee, but then
24 I think it was when the subsequent Mayors
25 and people in the criminal justice system

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2 together sat down, because people were
3 fed up with crime, how are we going to
4 redeploy what we have.

5 That's what -- and that's what
6 needs to be done, because if you go back,
7 Mr. Eskind, our Public Information
8 Officer, was reading the newspapers from
9 1952 and the headline is, Prisons are
10 Overcrowded and the Union is Complaining
11 to the Administration that You're Doing
12 Nothing About It. I mean, it's an
13 ongoing problem for decades. And when we
14 had -- even when the courts are
15 supervising, the prison population still
16 went up. We got to build some
17 facilities.

18 So it's an ongoing problem.
19 Until society says we're going to
20 prioritize things differently, this is
21 what's going to continue to happen.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Let me
23 just ask you one last question. In the
24 testimony earlier, Ms. Mims testified
25 about the ratio of inmates to

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2 correctional officer, and in your
3 testimony you say that there is no
4 official agreement to that. Is that
5 true?

6 COMMISSIONER KING: It's
7 absolutely true. There is no agreement.
8 That's why Mr. Thompson, he knows -- he
9 and I have been working together for a
10 while, and he knows. Where is this
11 agreement? I haven't seen it. They
12 haven't produced it. There is no
13 agreement. We operate a certain way at
14 CFCF and we can operate -- that's
15 management's prerogative how we deploy
16 and --

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Is there
18 an industry standard --

19 COMMISSIONER KING: No.

20 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: -- to the
21 number of inmates to a correctional
22 officer?

23 COMMISSIONER KING: No. Again,
24 it's based more on the design of the
25 facility. I was up in New York a week

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2 and a half ago and their ratios are
3 different than ours. I've been to
4 Montgomery County, Bucks County, all
5 sorts of jails and prisons around, and
6 their ratios are different than ours.
7 Actually, if you compare us to other
8 jurisdictions, we're more staff rich than
9 other places. So it depends on the level
10 and I think -- it just depends.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: But they
12 don't have as many inmates as we do.

13 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, they
14 may not have as many inmates overall,
15 but, for example, in Monmouth County,
16 they have 1,500 inmates. They're all in
17 one facility. So RCF you have whatever
18 it is today, 800-and-something. But what
19 I said was -- I said to Deputy
20 Commissioner Brockenbrough, I said, Go
21 sit down with Warden Giorla, because we
22 don't agree with the -- that we're bound
23 by what we do at PICC, because it's
24 different than CF, it's different than
25 House of Correction. I said, Sit down

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2 with the Warden and find out what he
3 thinks is the appropriate staffing level
4 in RCF given the fact that we're putting
5 beds up. If he had come back and said,
6 Commissioner, I think it should be the
7 same in RCF as it is at CFCF, I would
8 have said, Okay, that's fine, but that's
9 not what happened. He came back and,
10 This is what we think we can do and this
11 is what we think is safe and secure based
12 on everything that's happening.

13 And, again, I'm open to talk to
14 the union, but they have to come up with
15 an alternative proposal. It can't be,
16 There's an agreement, which doesn't
17 exist, and you have to follow it. It has
18 to be, Okay, Commissioner, I understand
19 you want to do this, this is what we have
20 to offer, and then maybe you work out a
21 compromise. But it can't be one side
22 takes all when there's no lawsuit or
23 anything like that to back up the
24 argument. And I don't think Warden
25 Giorla or Deputy Commissioner

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2 Brockenbrough, all of whom worked in
3 jails for decades, I have no reason to
4 question their judgment about this.

5 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: This is my
6 final question, I think. Who are members
7 of the Criminal Justice Coordinating
8 Committee?

9 COMMISSIONER KING: Let's see.
10 The Chairman of -- the person who chairs
11 it in the name of the Mayor is the City
12 Solicitor. Then we have the President
13 Judge of Municipal Court, the
14 Administrative Judge of Court of Common
15 Pleas, the Court Administrator for the
16 Court of Common Pleas, the Deputy Court
17 Administrator for the Court of Common
18 Pleas. The DA sends a representative.
19 The Public Defender sends a couple of
20 representatives. We have a couple other
21 people from the Law Department, people
22 from the Prisons, people from the
23 Sheriff, everybody -- I think I got
24 everybody. Clerk of Quarter Sessions,
25 Probation/Parole -- well, the Probation

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2 Department and the Police. So everybody
3 is there.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Any other
5 questions?

6 Councilman Ramos.

7 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: Thank you,
8 Madam Chair.

9 Commissioner, you mention in
10 your testimony that you're very close to
11 having a bail office located at the
12 Prison System. How much of this would
13 reduce your triple celling once this gets
14 functioning?

15 COMMISSIONER KING: That's hard
16 to predict. Something will have to
17 look -- and I don't know how necessarily,
18 but the goal is -- because part of what
19 we think is the -- if you have to -- I
20 don't know. On a Friday afternoon you
21 come down and you pay your bail at CJC
22 and you've got to wait for a fax or a
23 piece of paper to go up to CFCF, et
24 cetera, et cetera, you may be delaying
25 someone two days or longer at the prison.

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2 But if you come up, the bail office is
3 right there, you deal with it in CMR, you
4 can get out in a matter of hours. The
5 theory is that that will reduce the
6 population.

7 I don't know how I'll be able
8 to specifically tie it to triple celling,
9 but our goal is to do everything that we
10 can possibly do or get people to agree to
11 do to reduce the population, and we think
12 speeding up the bail process is one of
13 those things.

14 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: You still
15 haven't done any surveys to see how much
16 this would reduce the population, by
17 having a bail office right there?

18 COMMISSIONER KING: No. I
19 don't know --

20 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: But it gives
21 me the impression that you think that
22 this definitely would make a -- will
23 bring down the number of inmates you
24 house, because this bailing stuff because
25 it is being done downtown versus on site

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2 and that you wind up with, like you said
3 in your testimony, families that want to
4 get their kins out of your jail but they
5 can't because the process -- the
6 bureaucracy is too slow. So, I mean, by
7 what you state, it seems like this can
8 significantly --

9 COMMISSIONER KING: I hope that
10 it does have a significant effect. I'm
11 not sure. We'll have to see how it works
12 and keep track of it. For example, I
13 don't know how I would say if you were
14 going to do a bail -- like predict who
15 would use the bail window and what type
16 of inmates they'd be bailing out. I'd
17 have to wait until we had it up and see
18 who is using the credit card, who is
19 coming up to the jail to bail people out,
20 what inmates those are.

21 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: When do you
22 think this bail office is going to open
23 up?

24 COMMISSIONER KING: I'm
25 expecting it immediately. I mean, we've

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2 been talking about it now for about a
3 month. I know the room has been
4 identified. I know the Court has said we
5 are going to dedicate staff. Everything
6 is in place. So I would hope within the
7 next month or less that we'd have that up
8 and running. I know the credit cards are
9 doing that now.

10 COUNCILMAN RAMOS: I surely
11 hope -- and if we can be of any help, if
12 I can be of any help in saying, Let's get
13 this done, we need to get this done to
14 see if in fact -- because I believe it
15 can in fact start resolving the problem
16 of triple celling and the concerns that
17 you have and the union about triple
18 celling.

19 But in this committee, this
20 Coordinating Committee that you refer to,
21 is there talk about how do you change
22 the -- this is very, very difficult. Now
23 you talk about changing maybe even the
24 mindset of -- changing the mindset of
25 people, because the mindset here is

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2 probably throughout the country. A lot
3 of people are against building new
4 prisons and expanding prisons, and you
5 have people that don't want you housing
6 any of your inmates or expanding into
7 their neighborhood or using a facility in
8 their neighborhood or building a facility
9 in our neighborhoods to do this. It's
10 like everywhere you go, everyone is
11 saying no to you. We don't want you
12 to -- more prisons is not the way to go.
13 Don't bring them into my neighborhood.

14 I mean, is that type of
15 discussion going on? Has anyone broken
16 through the ice of that very difficult
17 opposition that's understandable?

18 COMMISSIONER KING: The
19 discussion goes on. I bring it up
20 whenever I possibly can. One of the
21 things we try to do is just raise the
22 profile of the Prison System in a
23 positive light, tell our story, tell what
24 our issues are. Because what I say it is
25 really -- when we talk about triple

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2 celling at the prisons and we talk about
3 the difficulties that the officers are
4 going through, it's really our fault as a
5 community, because the community decides
6 what's important. And until the
7 community decides what is it they want to
8 do, Mr. McDonald, either you build a lot
9 more prisons somewhere in the City or you
10 come up, as the Mayor has started to do,
11 with a more comprehensive plan on what
12 you're going to do with people and
13 decide -- what you need to decide is that
14 we want the dangerous people who are
15 going to hurt us in prison and those
16 people who are just nuisances; for
17 example, I don't know, I was driving on a
18 suspended license and the judge puts me
19 in jail for 60 days, if I had my way and
20 I was the Commissioner and you didn't
21 have a prior record, you'd go to work
22 release, you'd go to a day reporting
23 center, you'd come on the weekends.
24 Those are the type of things that you
25 have to do to address these problems.

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2 COUNCILMAN RAMOS:

3 Commissioner, I think that given the
4 circumstances, you're doing a good job
5 under some very, very difficult
6 surrounding circumstances. Since I have
7 been in and out of your -- thank God, not
8 as an inmate -- in and out of your
9 facilities over the years, I continue to
10 visit you, meaning the Prison System,
11 either through ministry or my work here
12 or what other capacity I have served in
13 my adult life, and it is a very, very
14 difficult job to do, extremely difficult.

15 I visited a state prison
16 recently and I was so happy that the
17 place did not look so dark as it did the
18 last time I had been there maybe two
19 years ago. It was freshly painted. The
20 color design was different, and the
21 inmates were painting, exhibiting their
22 artwork, and the place looked different.
23 And those type of things, I think, help
24 be able to maintain the prison safe and
25 keep the population, who, to a greater

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2 extent, understands that they've done
3 something wrong and need to pay the price
4 for it.

5 But I don't envy your job, and
6 the only thing I can see myself is only
7 trying to be supportive, understanding
8 that it's a very, very difficult
9 operation. Thank you for your work.

10 COMMISSIONER KING: Thank you.
11 And I just want to say it's not -- I
12 don't run the prisons by myself, but I
13 have all these great people behind me
14 that help me do it, and it trickles on
15 down. The Prison Commissioner is nothing
16 without the line staff and everybody that
17 works between to do the job. And I often
18 say at the prisons, one of our problems
19 is, we're so good at dealing with the
20 challenges that we're given, granted,
21 it's good that we have officers who care
22 enough to come here in City Council and
23 let you know what they're feeling and
24 thinking, but everybody there does a good
25 job and every year we get another

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2 challenge and we do pretty good with
3 that. I don't know what Mr. McDonald
4 thinks. He's looking at me, but that's
5 what happens.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: A couple
7 of questions. The Coordinating
8 Committee, is there anything to prohibit
9 City Council from having a presence on
10 that committee?

11 COMMISSIONER KING: You'd have
12 to ask the City Solicitor that one. I
13 don't know.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Not a
15 problem.

16 Second question, you say each
17 year you're given new challenges. Cite
18 for us two or three accomplishments from
19 this past year that were presented as
20 challenges maybe 24 months ago where
21 there's now been improvement.

22 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, for
23 example, the lawsuit that we got last
24 year, we went from a situation in the
25 receiving room where we had lots of

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2 people and now we've reduced that down to
3 a hundred people that we have in the
4 receiving room. People are going through
5 there in 24 hours. They're in a bed in
6 less than 72, and people are doing that
7 without -- not a lot of additional staff
8 and they're doing it with more inmates.
9 So that's number one.

10 The same thing at CFCF in the
11 intake area with the triple cells. It's
12 192 extra beds that are in that intake
13 area at CFCF. We haven't had a major
14 incident. No one has been hurt. The
15 inmates are processed. I'm not getting a
16 lot of grievances from there. The Prison
17 System adapted, responded to that
18 situation.

19 And the same thing, I think, at
20 RCF. So far -- granted, it's only been
21 two weeks -- the staff there has adapted
22 to that situation. They're going to make
23 it work. I have every confidence that
24 they will, and that's why I say that's
25 the Prison System's greatest asset.

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2 Because four years ago, we adapted and
3 put triple cells at House of Correction.
4 We did such a good job, now everyone
5 thinks I guess we should keep them
6 forever. We don't think so. But those
7 are some of the challenges that we faced.

8 The Wardens, we've been on
9 them, despite the fact that they have not
10 as much staff as they would like that
11 their posts may require. Assaults are
12 still down or at the same level.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What's
14 still down?

15 COMMISSIONER KING: Assaults on
16 inmate and staff across the system is
17 down. Use of force is either consistent
18 or down. And the length of time that
19 inmates spend in their cells is less than
20 it was last summer. And they're doing
21 that. The staff has gotten less than it
22 was last summer and we have more inmates.

23 So this is why I say, I think
24 that given all of the challenges that we
25 face, we do a pretty good job at the

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2 prison.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And you've
4 put on the record a number of bullets, if
5 you will, about this emergency
6 preparedness big issue, which could be
7 perceived as a new challenge. That has
8 been registered with the Coordinating
9 Commission and now you're at the step of
10 coming up with a strategic plan to
11 address that?

12 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, we
13 don't deal with the Coordinating
14 Commission --

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: The
16 coordinating -- this entity we've been
17 talking about.

18 COMMISSIONER KING: The
19 emergency management office?

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: No, no,
21 no, no.

22 COMMISSIONER KING: The CJCC?

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes, yes,
24 yes.

25 COMMISSIONER KING: The

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2 emergency thing wouldn't be something
3 we'd bring up with them. That's the
4 Managing Director's Office, and we have
5 brought that up and I said Ms. Maricopa
6 is coming to see us to talk about the
7 radios and the whole thing.

8 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Let me
9 just ask you, what is the process for you
10 to receive information as to what's going
11 on in the Prison System if there are --
12 with the union? I see in one of the
13 letters addressed to me they complain
14 about officers being sent home without
15 proper paperwork done after an agreement
16 had been made within 48 hours. How much
17 of that do you know? Does that happen at
18 a level below you? And if there are
19 things that are going on that the
20 staffing people feel that they're not
21 getting a fair shake, how do they reach
22 you?

23 COMMISSIONER KING: Well, I
24 won't say I know everything that goes on
25 at the prison, because it's a big place,

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2 but I know most of the things that go on.

3 At some point, for example, you mentioned

4 the issue with the paperwork and people

5 getting suspended and the paperwork not

6 getting ready. That is an issue that we

7 address and, as far as I recall, we

8 solved that issue. If it's a recurring

9 issue, this is the first I'm hearing

10 about it from you. Maybe I was copied on

11 that letter, but I was on vacation.

12 So I try to -- I usually get an

13 update on what the union is complaining

14 about. Phil Goldsmith gave me this

15 BlackBerry that I sleep next to -- that's

16 next to my head every morning. Before I

17 step out of bed, I get up and see how

18 many inmates are in RCF, how many inmates

19 we have in the Prison System, and every

20 time there's an issue, whether it's

21 somebody had to use pepper spray or

22 there's some incident of violence, I get

23 my BlackBerry, and usually before the

24 BlackBerry, Deputy Commissioner

25 Brockenbrough calls me, because I get

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2 upset when I hear it from the BlackBerry
3 before I hear it from him.

4 So I know a lot of the things
5 that are going on in the facilities and
6 what the issues are, and we try to
7 address all of them. The officer said
8 she'd like for me to come over and talk
9 to them. I don't have a problem with
10 that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: This
12 letter was dated June 5th.

13 COMMISSIONER KING: That was
14 last week. I was on vacation. But if
15 that's a recurring issue, I believe we
16 were supposed to have resolved that. I
17 would imagine it has to do with the two
18 officers at RCF who refused to open up
19 and they were suspended. It usually
20 arises when someone does something so
21 egregious they're immediately suspended
22 and told to go home. We don't have
23 enough time to instantaneously do the
24 paperwork. That's what I'm guessing.

25 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you

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2 very much for your testimony.

3 COMMISSIONER KING: Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Mr. Donald
5 Tomes, Debra Minnick and Charmaine
6 Odrick.

7 Good afternoon. Would you
8 state your name for the record, please,
9 and begin your testimony.

10 MS. ODRICK: Good morning. My
11 name is Charmaine A. Odrick.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Pull the
13 microphone to you, please.

14 MS. ODRICK: Good morning. My
15 name is Charmaine A. Odrick.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Pull the
17 mike to you. Okay. Would you testify,
18 please.

19 MS. ODRICK: Yes. I'm usually
20 the officer on G-2 at PICC. I started at
21 PICC October --

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
23 tell us what PICC is, please.

24 MS. ODRICK: It's a maximum
25 prison.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: What does
3 PICC stand for?

4 MS. ODRICK: Philadelphia
5 Industrial Correctional Facility.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: All right.

7 MS. ODRICK: I've been there
8 since October, and I can honestly say
9 I've never seen anything like it. Now I
10 think I'm a permanent officer on G-2 and
11 I'm usually by myself with 100 inmates.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Is this a
13 male or female facility?

14 MS. ODRICK: Male, yes. It's a
15 pod where they have workers, Philacor,
16 they have jazz. These are institutional
17 programs. And they get up early in the
18 morning. They like for them to be out of
19 there by 11:30, have their meal and out.
20 And it's constantly an ongoing thing, you
21 know. We run the medications, sick hall,
22 visits, medical calls, some come over for
23 clinic trips.

24 Previously I was scolded
25 because I neglected to search a

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2 gentleman, a couple of gentlemens. They
3 got past me. I had somebody on the
4 phone, like a visit. I'm looking for
5 something to write it down, because
6 during the course of the day, I might
7 forget. And I had gotten a verbal -- a
8 written warning, you know, not to let it
9 happen again. But as I stated, I'm
10 sorry, I just didn't have the time.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Have you
12 been suspended?

13 MS. ODRICK: No.

14 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So your
15 concerns here today are?

16 MS. ODRICK: Just the
17 unsafetyness in the jail, very much so.

18 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: When you
19 were trained, were you trained at the
20 facility?

21 MS. ODRICK: We were at the
22 Academy, yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Did you
24 ever visit the facility during the course
25 of your training?

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2 MS. ODRICK: Yes. During the
3 course of the training, they have you go
4 to all of them. By the time I went, they
5 were all women housed there back in '89.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So you're
7 speaking to the fact that you have 100
8 women?

9 MS. ODRICK: I have 100 men.

10 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: And you're
11 the only officer there?

12 MS. ODRICK: Usually like,
13 okay, if I get a partner with me, maybe
14 half an hour later they'll call them and
15 put them somewhere else, you know, detail
16 them somewhere else.

17 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: So when
18 the men are let out of their cells, are
19 they let out all 100 at the same time?

20 MS. ODRICK: Oh, yes, and we
21 have to let them out and immediately lock
22 the cells back again.

23 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: And so you
24 are in the midst of 100 inmates by
25 yourself when they are out of their

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2 cells?

3 MS. ODRICK: When they're out
4 of the cells, no. Usually when they're
5 out of the cells, we have a partner.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: You have
7 what?

8 MS. ODRICK: A partner. When
9 they're out of their cells, we have a
10 partner. I have another person with me.

11 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: But when
12 they are inside, you're there and they're
13 in their cells and you ought to be
14 responsive to their needs?

15 MS. ODRICK: Yes, because, you
16 know, we still have to run -- you still
17 run church. If they have jumar, you
18 still run jumar. Like I said, you have
19 to get those visits out. Medical is
20 constantly calling. Everybody is
21 constantly calling. Like I said, I have
22 a Philacor pod and I have gentlemen that
23 have to go in. And then you turn around
24 11 o'clock, they're back again, and we
25 have to search them, put them back, feed

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2 them, all one person.

3 They have a rover. They'll
4 call a rover at the beginning of the
5 shift, but they always, nine times out of
6 ten, pull this rover. When they call
7 medications, somebody from another unit
8 usually have to step out of their area so
9 you can do your medication.

10 We don't have any walkies on
11 the area at all. The consoles do not
12 operate -- I've been there since October,
13 like I said. I don't know how long
14 they've been broken, but they do not
15 operate.

16 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

17 Yes?

18 MS. MINNICK: Good afternoon,
19 panel. My name is Officer Minnick. I'm
20 one of the transfers that were
21 transferred from PICC and I'm currently
22 on the unit of G-1, which is a maximum
23 security unit. I'm the female that I've
24 worked since I've been over there. We
25 have -- it's three units, and we have an

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2 aux, which one officer is responsible to
3 oversee all three units, and I'm --
4 majority of the time, I'm over there all
5 alone with 100 inmates. I'm responsible
6 for feeding, making sure they get out for
7 medication, visits and all the --
8 everything that's run in sick hall. And
9 my main concern is the doors that they
10 have over there are very insecure. The
11 inmates, they can pop out them doors at
12 any given time, because we have seen
13 them. The locksmith had came over there
14 on several occasions, fix what he can fix
15 and that's it.

16 The panel never works since
17 I've been over there. We do not have
18 walkie -- I haven't seen a walkie on the
19 unit. And during our lunch period, if
20 the Sergeants can't find anyone to
21 relieve us, we are responsible for
22 relieving each other. That means that
23 you are responsible for looking out for
24 your unit and another unit, which to me
25 is a very unsafe environment, because I

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2 cannot maintain my tours on my unit, then
3 maintain tours on another unit, because
4 if something happened on another unit
5 while I'm making a tour, I'm held
6 accountable for it. And it's very
7 unsecured, you know.

8 If you do get a partner, like
9 Ms. Odrick said, within a matter of
10 minutes they're pulling them and then you
11 have nothing. And it's real unsecure.
12 As far as a female, you know, we have to
13 search males, and a lot of these guys are
14 very disrespectful towards you, which we
15 understand because they're tired of being
16 locked down, you know. And we have to --
17 they tell us we can run restrictive
18 movement, which means you can allow two
19 inmates out at a time to take showers and
20 use the phone, which in the meantime you
21 have these two inmates, you have all
22 kinds of other stuff going on, visits,
23 medication, you know, and that's more
24 inmates out.

25 We have addressed this issue

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2 before, but since I've been over there, I
3 haven't seen any changes, and it's
4 really -- it's not really a safe place to
5 be.

6 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.
7 Sir?

8 MR. TOMES: Yes. My name is
9 Officer Donald P. Tomes. I'm a Union
10 Delegate at PICC. And what the officers
11 have told you is that it's too much work
12 for one CO to handle 100 inmates
13 constantly going places. They run the
14 jail like it's fully open. Inmates must
15 go to GED, church service, social
16 workers, wherever. Groups are going out
17 left and right. You're by yourself. You
18 have to use a key. Okay? There's no
19 rovers in the areas. There's no one to
20 respond to help you at all.

21 This issue had been addressed
22 to the administration that when you have
23 so many units in restrictive movement,
24 when you have lack of staff, how can you
25 run all of the programs without the

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2 officers feeling unsafe and the people
3 feeling unsafe, the social workers
4 feeling unsafe? And it's a very
5 stressful -- it's so stressful that I go
6 into center control and I ask the desk
7 Sergeant, could you call some people in
8 for overtime?

9 He said, Mr. Tomes, I have and
10 they don't want to come.

11 Now, any time some of them
12 don't want to come in to make overtime,
13 they say no, you know it's a bad
14 situation. It's really bad.

15 Now, Mr. King have also --
16 Commissioner King also expressed that we
17 need 250 officers. So can you imagine
18 what we're going through? If we need 250
19 officers, can you imagine what we're
20 going through, being placed alone all the
21 time? There's no rovers. They make you
22 do your own mouth checks. You have to
23 search inmates constantly coming in and
24 out of your housing area. And if you
25 miss an inmate, you are sent home, what

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2 happened at PICC about two weeks ago.
3 Most of the officers got sent home
4 because they didn't pat search, and a lot
5 of them was alone by theirselves trying
6 to run medication, trying to make things
7 work.

8 The jail cannot work when
9 you're understaffed. You have to stop
10 these programs. You have to think about
11 the safety of the officers.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
14 all very much for your testimony.

15 Mr. Katz, you want to come
16 back? Be brief. I'm freezing in here.

17 Would you all let Mr. Katz have
18 a seat, please.

19 Sit at the table, please.

20 MR. KATZ: I just wanted to
21 give you the information.

22 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Would you
23 state your name, please.

24 MR. KATZ: Bernard N. Katz,
25 attorney for Local 159.

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2 When I responded to some
3 questions a couple of hours ago, I did
4 not know that there were figures that the
5 union had already accumulated for what
6 was necessary to properly staff the
7 complement and what the cost would be.
8 So rather than wait until tomorrow to get
9 it to you, I would like to state it to
10 you now.

11 There is a basic necessity of
12 hiring 500 more officers. The cost of
13 that is as follows: The basic salary is
14 34,700, the allocation for fringe
15 benefits and similar expenditures is
16 9,000, for a total of 43,700, which
17 amounts to an annual expenditure of
18 21,500,000.

19 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Now, this
20 is 500 total inmates you need or
21 additional inmates -- I mean correctional
22 officers?

23 MR. KATZ: Five hundred
24 additional correctional officers, and the
25 cost would be as I have just indicated.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
3 very much for the information.

4 MR. KATZ: I didn't want you to
5 wait until tomorrow to get that
6 information.

7 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
8 very much.

9 Is there anyone else here to
10 testify on this resolution?

11 Yes. Identify yourself,
12 please.

13 MR. NORTH: Lorenzo North,
14 President of Local 159. I appreciate the
15 time you gave to the hearings today.

16 We have went to the
17 administration on many occasions, because
18 my officers are in danger. This summer
19 will be a long summer, and for the last
20 three summers, I think we was lucky. In
21 1996 was the last riot we had at the
22 prison. That was at the Detention
23 Center. It's no joke. It's not fun.
24 Officers get hurt and inmates.

25 This summer I will say this:

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2 The next step may be the courts or some
3 kind of action by the union, because I
4 cannot allow my officers to be in danger
5 no more. So we're asking City Council
6 for some kind of help, and I appreciate
7 all the help you can give, but if
8 Commissioner King continues putting my
9 officers in danger, there will be some
10 kind of action by the union.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN TASC0: Thank you
13 very much for your testimony.

14 This Committee will stand in
15 recess until the call of the Chair.

16 Thank you.

17 (Committee on Public Health and
18 Human Services adjourned at approximately
19 1:15 p.m.)

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