

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON RULES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friday, November 16, 2012
10:10 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

RESOLUTION 120638 - Resolution authorizing the
City Council Committee on Rules to hold
hearings to investigate the creation of
Registered Community Organizations and the
impact they will have on the community.

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COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good

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morning, everybody. This is the Council

4

Committee on Rules to hear testimony on

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Resolution 120638, and I would ask

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Ms. Marconi to please read the title of

7

that resolution.

8

THE CLERK: Resolution No.

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120638, resolution authorizing the City

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Council Committee on Rules to hold

11

hearings to investigate the creation of

12

Registered Community Organizations and

13

the impact they will have on the

14

community.

15

COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

16

you.

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The Chair first recognizes,

18

before we start taking testimony,

19

recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

20

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

21

you. I want to thank the Chairman for

22

trying to work this out. Many of you

23

know we've had many questions and

24

concerns about the hearing and whether we

25

would have this today, whether we

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2 wouldn't, because we're trying to come up
3 with something that will pass by the day
4 we recess, which is December 13th. And
5 so we're having this hearing today on the
6 resolution, which is almost identical to
7 the bill we introduced yesterday. We
8 will have hearings on December 4th about
9 the bill, but basically we're taking the
10 testimony today so we can get it all in
11 so that on the 6th, we can report the
12 bill out and pass it on the 13th.

13 So albeit we have hearings
14 scheduled for the 4th, we hope that we
15 can get our testimony in today so that on
16 the 4th we can tweak anything we need to
17 tighten up and basically spend our time
18 trying to report it out.

19 I want to thank all of you for
20 being involved in this issue. This is an
21 issue that has come up from grassroots to
22 the City Hall Chambers. And so I commend
23 our community organizations who came out.
24 We heard it on the radio. We heard
25 people talking about it. I talked to

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2 people not even from my district who were
3 concerned about being represented in the
4 Zoning Code and having standing or
5 authority or being recognized as
6 existing.

7 And so this is really a
8 grassroots effort that has come to us,
9 and we appreciate all of you who have
10 worked hard to get us to this point.

11 Again, we want to thank the
12 Chairman. He's worked hard to try to
13 work it all in. And we're not finished
14 yet. We have hearings almost every day
15 of the Rules Committee, because there are
16 so many issues that affect us.

17 And let me say again about the
18 Zoning Code. I have issues. Certainly
19 Councilman O'Neill will have his hearings
20 as well. Because we are allowed to amend
21 the code, the law that allows us to have
22 a Zoning Code, we can go through this
23 whenever we find something, we have issue
24 with it, raise it, raise the issues.
25 Bring it to me. Bring it to the

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2 Chairman. Bring it to members of this
3 Committee. Bring it to Councilman Bill
4 Green. Bring it to anyone you feel is
5 interested in that issue or your District
6 Councilperson to try to have us make the
7 code as representative of our city and
8 the people who live and work here as
9 possible.

10 And with that, again, let me
11 say thank you, Mr. Chairman, and we look
12 forward to a positive hearing.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
14 very much, Councilwoman. And I also want
15 to recognize, as Councilwoman Blackwell
16 referenced him, Councilman Green and
17 Councilman O'Brien, members of the
18 Committee also here.

19 The first group of people
20 testifying will be from the
21 Administration. They can approach the
22 table.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Let me

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2 just set some ground rules here. Now,
3 there's not as many people as we first
4 thought here, but there are a number of
5 people listed to testify and we want to
6 give everybody a chance, but also try to
7 move the hearing along. So we're going
8 to set some ground rules here.

9 First of all, there's a whole
10 lot of people who have given written
11 testimony. If you have written
12 testimony, that testimony will be made
13 part of the record. You don't have to
14 sit there and read it. Also, we have to
15 put a time limit on people. This is a
16 similar time limit what we put for public
17 comment at City Council meetings and on
18 public hearings of the budget on the
19 budget. We're going to set a limit of
20 three minutes. Okay? Three minutes for
21 everybody. You should be able to get
22 your point across in three minutes.

23 So if you have written
24 testimony, this is the time you could go
25 over it a little bit, pare it down if you

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2 have to to fit into that three-minute
3 category, because we're going to have a
4 timer here, so you'll be hearing this
5 thing go off. We're going to give the
6 Administration a little bit more time,
7 hopefully not too much more on each one,
8 to get their point across, answer any
9 questions, and then we'll go to the
10 testimony from the rest of the public.
11 But, again, we're going to stick to this
12 three-minute rule. So please respect our
13 rules. We really appreciate it.

14 Mr. Greenberger, please
15 identify yourself.

16 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER: Good
17 morning, Mr. Chairman, members of
18 Council. I'm Alan Greenberger, Deputy
19 Mayor for Economic Development.

20 In the spirit of what you just
21 said, I'm going to dispense with the
22 first several paragraphs of my testimony,
23 which are about background on the Zoning
24 Code, you know this stuff pretty well,
25 and go right to the matter here.

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2 After conducting its first
3 round of civic engagement several years
4 ago, the Zoning Code Commission added
5 another goal to the ones that had already
6 been established, and that was to ensure
7 that the role of the community in the
8 development approval process. The RCO,
9 registered community organization system,
10 is a central component, but not the only
11 facet of the code designed to meet this
12 goal. We established the RCO system
13 because we believe that it is an
14 appropriate -- is appropriate to
15 recognize Philadelphia's wealth of civic
16 associations and the valuable role that
17 they've played in many development
18 decisions. At the same time, the ZCC
19 felt it was important to create a
20 consistent and transparent citywide
21 process for such input with an
22 accompanying set of obligations and
23 opportunities for such organizations.
24 These obligations and opportunities are
25 set forth in the Zoning Code and in the

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2 Planning Commission's regulations that
3 Eva will discuss in a minute.

4 The Zoning Code Commission
5 worked diligently for more than three
6 years to develop a uniquely-Philadelphia
7 set of tools that ensures that all
8 residents have an appropriate voice in
9 zoning decisions that will impact their
10 quality of life. These are the tools:

11 Earlier and better notice of
12 Zoning Board of Adjustment hearings;
13 additional documentation of Zoning Board
14 decisions and clarity about the right of
15 citizens to appear and testify at the
16 Zoning Board; a public Civic Design
17 Review process for large projects even
18 when they're by right that are likely to
19 have an impact on the public realm; early
20 notice and public meeting hosted by one
21 of the registered community
22 organizations; Philadelphia 2035 District
23 Planning process that is engaging
24 citizens in planning for the future of
25 their area; and the Citizens Planning

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2 Institute that educates citizens about
3 the planning, zoning, and development
4 process.

5 As you can see from this list,
6 RCOs are a component of, but certainly
7 not the only provision in the Zoning Code
8 that provides for the public to have
9 input into the development process.
10 We're proud of the work we're doing in
11 this area, and as you know, we're
12 obligated to provide a one-year report to
13 City Council about the impact of the new
14 code and related recommendations. We'll
15 continue to monitor the effectiveness of
16 these public input tools and recommend
17 changes to improve them at that time as
18 necessary.

19 That concludes my testimony.
20 I'm going to turn it over to Eva
21 Gladstein, unless there are any questions
22 at this moment.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Well,
24 let's hear from Ms. Gladstein and then if
25 there's any question.

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2 Go ahead.

3 MS. GLADSTEIN: Good morning.

4 Eva Gladstein, Deputy Executive Director
5 of the City Planning Commission. I'll
6 also try to abbreviate my testimony
7 because you have it in front of you and
8 just give a little bit more detail beyond
9 what Alan provided in terms of all of the
10 citizen input opportunities that are
11 newly provided in the new Zoning Code.

12 The new Zoning Code extends the
13 notice period for ZBA hearings from 12 to
14 21 days, requires additional information
15 on the ZBA poster and also requires that
16 when a hearing is continued for seven
17 days or more, that it be reposted when
18 there's a continued hearing.

19 In addition, the Zoning Code
20 clarifies the right of any member of the
21 public to appear before the ZBA and for
22 that person to be represented not just by
23 an attorney but also by a translator or
24 family member and have the right to
25 provide testimony.

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2 Beyond that, we established the
3 Civic Design Review process, and for the
4 first time, the Zoning Code provides that
5 even by-right projects when they hit
6 certain triggers are the subject of
7 notice to the registered community
8 organizations, a public meeting with the
9 RCOs as well as a public Civic Design
10 Review meeting and with a representative
11 of the local community on that Civic
12 Design Review Committee.

13 As a companion to all of this,
14 we created a Citizens Planning Institute
15 in 2010 that will soon have graduated 150
16 members of the public, who have been able
17 to get very comprehensive training on
18 planning and zoning, as well as community
19 organization development to help our
20 community members participate as fully as
21 they want to in the development approval
22 process and in the zoning process.

23 We understood early on that
24 community organizations play a very
25 unique and active role, and we wanted to

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2 support that through the RCO system,
3 through the Civic Design Review, and
4 through the Citizens Planning Institute.

5 The Zoning Code also requires
6 that if there is no RCO, that the
7 District Councilperson stands in the
8 stead of that RCO. And with amendments
9 that were just approved out of this Rules
10 Committee earlier this week, the District
11 Councilperson gets a notice from the
12 zoning applicant at the same time that
13 the zoning applicant is providing a
14 notice to the registered community
15 organizations.

16 I just wanted to add one other
17 point, which is that while the Zoning
18 Code establishes the framework for the
19 registered community organizations and
20 Civic Design Review process, a lot of the
21 detail -- the Zoning Code requires the
22 Planning Commission create regulations to
23 go further in detail, and a lot of the
24 information with regard to RCOs and Civic
25 Design Review is contained in the

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2 Planning Commission regulations, which
3 themselves were subject to a number of
4 public meetings and discussions with
5 community organizations, civic
6 association members, and just members of
7 the general public.

8 The system -- we opened up the
9 system in June. Over 200 groups are now
10 registered as community organizations,
11 but the process has really just begun to
12 work, and I would join with Alan in
13 asking that we have a little bit more
14 time under our belt to see how it is
15 working before we start to make
16 adjustments to the process.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
18 you, Ms. Gladstein. Before I recognize
19 Councilwoman Blackwell, just two things.
20 First, for those of you who might be
21 cold, we are too. We're going to try to
22 get a little heat in this room. It's
23 sometimes not as easy as it sounds.

24 Secondly, again, just to keep
25 things moving, I'm going to ask

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2 Ms. Marconi just to read the names of the
3 next three people that we have here so
4 they can be ready to come up hopefully.
5 If they're not here, we'll move on from
6 there, and then we'll recognize
7 Councilwoman Blackwell.

8 THE CLERK: Harris Sokoloff,
9 Kiki Bolender, Jim Foster.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So if
11 they're in the room -- I see
12 Dr. Sokoloff -- if they could be ready to
13 come up next.

14 And excuse me. Councilwoman
15 Blackwell.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Not at
17 all.

18 I have a few questions and
19 would like to intersperse comments.

20 This issue arose -- as Eva
21 Gladstein knows, West Philadelphia
22 participated widely and greatly in Zoning
23 Code revisions. We were for it, and we
24 got that we needed to do that. But
25 questions arose with regard to RCOs, and

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2 we have overlapping areas sometimes,
3 boundaries, and who would be recognized,
4 and that was a question. We also thought
5 that if a senior citizen, let's say an
6 80-year-old lived next door to a proposed
7 development, obviously she wasn't part
8 of -- if she decided that she didn't want
9 to be part of any organization, she
10 should still receive notification that
11 they want to build next to her and that
12 everybody ought to be included in any
13 plan. So we came up with this -- we
14 compromised to one block, unless 50
15 percent of the block is vacant or
16 commercial, and then we could receive
17 notification from then an extra block
18 square.

19 So the goal was not to
20 undermine any RCO or any existing
21 community organization, but the goal was
22 to make sure that all neighborhoods, no
23 matter who you are and people who live in
24 neighborhoods, have a right to know just
25 what the plans are.

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2 We do not feel that we should
3 wait if we want to make amendments, and
4 we're glad to hear about the Citizen
5 Planning Institute, but we believe we're
6 elected to represent people and that all
7 people who live on blocks in our city
8 have a right to know what's going on in
9 their neighborhoods, whether or not they
10 want to participate in an RCO.

11 Bishop Harris is here, Ram Sue
12 from Snyderville CDC. She's part of the
13 Ephesians Church in my district. She was
14 the reason why we talked about trying to
15 lower the blocks, but she has said she
16 does to -- we said as long as there is a
17 block represented, that they should be
18 able to be an RCO. Your regulations say
19 five or more. She has conceded that and
20 said she has eight blocks, but in her
21 case, they're focused on five blocks to
22 do work in.

23 So all the issues that we've
24 come up with came out of the grassroots
25 community who had concerns and who wanted

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2 to be included and notified about any
3 plans they have. There's no interest in
4 undermining any plans that Zoning or that
5 City Planning might have. We're only
6 interested in making sure that
7 neighborhoods know what's going on,
8 because neighborhoods have a right to
9 self-determination.

10 With that, I'll ask two
11 questions. Number one, the Civic Design
12 Review process, that's supposed to be for
13 larger groups. Is that instead of them
14 going to the Zoning Board, they go to --
15 they undergo a Civic Design Review
16 process? How does that fit in with
17 zoning?

18 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER:
19 They're different processes. There are
20 going to be -- the Civic Design Review is
21 based on the idea that large projects --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: How
23 large is large?

24 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER:
25 There's three levels, hundred thousand

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2 square foot building or more in anything
3 except an industrial district. So except
4 industrial districts. We're not doing
5 that. But over a hundred thousand square
6 feet is a Civic Design Review project,
7 whether or not it needs a variance. So
8 it might even be an of-right project, but
9 the philosophy is that a big project has
10 bigger impacts sort of at a proportion to
11 smaller projects.

12 The next level down is -- Eva,
13 you correct me if I'm wrong -- is 50,000
14 square feet.

15 And tell me what the context
16 is.

17 MS. GLADSTEIN: If it's
18 surrounded by multi-family housing.
19 Anything other than single-family
20 housing.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So
22 would they go to Zoning and the Civic
23 Design process?

24 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER: When
25 they apply to L&I, L&I will say, Your

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2 project meets one of these triggers,
3 so-called triggers, that forces it into
4 Civic Design Review. That will happen
5 separate from whether the project needs a
6 variance. So the project might be
7 totally of right and ready to go, but we
8 still force these large projects into at
9 least one public hearing so that people
10 could comment, and what we found over
11 time is that public comments often help
12 projects get better, even if they're of
13 right.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And in
15 that instance, then that project would
16 still go back before Zoning for the
17 variance; am I correct?

18 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER: So
19 if the project then still needed a
20 variance, it would have to go before the
21 Zoning Board of Adjustment, that's
22 correct. And that would be the normal
23 Zoning Board of Adjustment process as
24 amended by the new regulations.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank

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2 you. I have one other question.

3 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER: Oh,
4 there's one other thing, because I want
5 to complete the answer to your question.

6 Just go ahead.

7 MS. GLADSTEIN: If the context
8 for the project is single-family housing,
9 then the trigger is lower. It's 25,000
10 square feet of construction or 25 units.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Great.
12 My last question, because I know we want
13 to move quickly, Ms. Gladstein, quote,
14 you say that RCOs can self-declare their
15 boundaries. They will no longer have to
16 be the same as the organization's
17 governing documents or bylaws.

18 I have no idea what that means,
19 because I don't understand why an
20 organization would have one address and
21 you said they can self-declare their
22 boundaries. They don't have to have --
23 they don't have to be the same as the
24 organization's governing bylaws. I don't
25 know what you mean by that.

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2 MS. GLADSTEIN: I apologize if
3 I misunderstood. When I read the edits
4 in the bill that you introduced
5 yesterday, it deletes language that says
6 that the boundaries have to be consistent
7 with the organization's governing
8 documents. So if I misunderstood, I'm
9 happy to have misunderstood, and I
10 apologize for the misunderstanding. Our
11 regulation -- the Zoning Code does
12 presently say if you have governing
13 documents, the boundaries have to be the
14 same. Your amendments delete that, and
15 perhaps -- and I was very conscious of
16 it, because City Council asked us to put
17 that language in last year.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
19 don't know of any group who would say I'm
20 an RCO, but my address is some place
21 else. I don't understand the rationale.

22 MS. GLADSTEIN: It's not an
23 address. It's the area of their focus or
24 their concentration. So are they
25 interested in these five blocks? Are

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2 they interested in this mile? Are they
3 interested in a smaller area or a larger
4 area?

5 And, in fact, just to go to one
6 of your earlier points, we never intended
7 and have not tried to say that there
8 cannot be overlapping groups. There are
9 many overlapping groups, and we have not
10 tried to change any group's boundaries,
11 but some groups -- the question is, if a
12 group has bylaws and it says this is the
13 area, can they then tell us for being an
14 RCO that they want it to be twice as
15 large or five times as large even if that
16 makes them overlap with other groups? I
17 think that's really the question. I
18 think that's something we can work with
19 you and your staff about, if we're on the
20 same page, because most of the times the
21 groups have bylaws that do say what area
22 they want to cover, and we were just
23 trying to make sure they stuck with that,
24 or if they were changing the bylaws, they
25 did that publicly so community residents

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2 were aware.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: It
4 wasn't a question. Groups who are
5 organizations, their area is where they
6 say they are. So we never had an issue,
7 never tried to say that you're not where
8 you say they are. For me it was a
9 non-issue all the way around. We don't
10 have those problems. In trying to
11 streamline language, maybe language was
12 changed or maybe if it was repetitious,
13 we deleted it some place because we
14 referred to it some place else, but
15 nobody was trying to say that we want to
16 say we're an RCO but we're really
17 representing some other area. That just
18 doesn't --

19 DEPUTY MAYOR GREENBERGER: I
20 think it sounds to me like we're on the
21 same page on this. We just got to make
22 sure the language is straight, I think.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yeah.
24 That was my issue.

25 MS. GLADSTEIN: I'll share with

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2 your staff why I interpreted it the way I
3 did, and maybe we can work together and
4 resolve it.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
6 don't see a problem for us to resolve to
7 begin with.

8 MS. GLADSTEIN: Okay. Thank
9 you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
11 you, Mr. Chairman.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We do
13 have a couple weeks before December 4th.

14 MS. GLADSTEIN: That's the good
15 news.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Not just
17 on this bill, but some of those others
18 will get resolved too.

19 Being no other questions, Eva,
20 I think can you stay?

21 MS. GLADSTEIN: Yes, I'm able
22 to stay.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We might
24 as well just have a seat reserved for you
25 over there.

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2 MS. GLADSTEIN: Thank you very
3 much, with a computer and a phone.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
5 Mr. Greenberger, thank you very much. In
6 case there's questions that come up as
7 time goes on.

8 Again, Ms. Marconi, call those
9 names again and then see who is here.

10 THE CLERK: Harris Sokoloff,
11 Kiki Bolender, Jim Foster.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ms.
15 Bolender, I know you weren't here when I
16 said we got a three-minute time limit.

17 MS. BOLENDER: Pardon me?

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
19 Three-minute time limit on testimony. So
20 if you have written testimony, you can
21 submit that.

22 Dr. Sokoloff, please identify
23 yourself for the record.

24 DR. SOKOLOFF: Thank you. My
25 name is Harris Sokoloff. I live on

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2 Chadwick Street in Philadelphia. I'm the
3 Director of the Penn Project for Civic
4 Engagement. Mr. Chairman and members of
5 the Committee, thank you very much for
6 allowing me some time to testify today.
7 I have submitted testimony previously and
8 I will not read from that, but I'll draw
9 from that a bit.

10 First of all, I'm here not in
11 any personal role as a resident of
12 Philadelphia, but rather to represent the
13 work we did in 2010 for the Zoning Code
14 Commission to hold the series of
15 community engagement forums. The first
16 one was with the development community.
17 We invited about 150 different zoning
18 lawyers, real estate lawyers, and
19 developers to come to a meeting, an
20 afternoon meeting, to work through a set
21 of issues. We also invited 150
22 community-based organizations.
23 Eighty-five of them came.

24 Just for a piece of
25 information, we had a list of 258

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2 community-based organizations. Addresses
3 and contact information were not good for
4 about 108 of them. So we were only able
5 to contact 150. Of those, 86 did come.
6 And then we held the third meeting where
7 the development community and the
8 community organizations came together to
9 work in an evening to figure out where
10 there was common ground.

11 The report of that is available
12 to you. If you'd like, I can give you a
13 copy for the Committee, but I believe
14 we've already done that back in 2010.

15 When we began the project, we
16 were asked to address a number of
17 questions about the development review
18 process. That was the specific purview
19 of our work. When, who, how, how to
20 notify and a bunch more. We were worried
21 that we were not going to be able to get
22 any common ground, any compromise or
23 agreement. We were worried that each
24 side would think that it could only get
25 more if the other side got less.

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2 We were encouraged by the
3 willingness of the groups to work
4 together and by the fact that they were
5 able to reach common ground, and, in
6 fact, the idea of registered community
7 organizations was one of the strong areas
8 of common ground in the report.

9 There are three themes that
10 came out. I'm just going to talk very
11 briefly about the three themes that
12 emerged from the work. One is the need
13 to balance power and access to the
14 decision-making process. The developers
15 in the community all agreed that they
16 wanted to create a unified mechanism to
17 make sure that the interests of all
18 parties, both individuals and groups,
19 have access to the decision-making
20 process, and the RCOs are a way of doing
21 that.

22 Neighborhood organizations were
23 concerned that developers might have --
24 they were concerned to make sure that any
25 individual or community organization

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2 could have legitimate reason and access,
3 and the developers were concerned they
4 have one rules of public process, they
5 were consistent from neighborhood to
6 neighborhood so they can know how to do
7 that.

8 The RCOs help through that.
9 They provide a level playing field for
10 community organizations and for the
11 developers.

12 And part of what the goal here
13 is two things. One is to create a
14 partnership between the neighborhood
15 groups and the developers so that they
16 are partners, not adversaries, and the
17 other is to -- in those areas where there
18 are multiple community organizations, to
19 create a mechanism that would encourage
20 them to work together, encourage and
21 require them to work together.

22 One of the things we were
23 trying to stop was the ability of one
24 group -- for a developer to pit one group
25 against another or for community

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2 organizations to say that they weren't
3 included. So the idea of registered
4 community organizations do that. They
5 also thereby protect each group from
6 surprises by the other side, and
7 neighborhood leaders believe that
8 inclusive early notification is
9 essential. Developers agree also that
10 early notification can help them gain a
11 useful variety of perspectives.

12 So for these basic reasons, the
13 registered community organizations
14 addressed those needs, and we would urge
15 the Council to sort of keep them strong,
16 but also not remove any need for them to
17 work together. The idea of having them
18 work together is crucial, both for the
19 developers and for the community
20 organizations that we spoke with and the
21 individuals that came to our meetings.

22 Thank you very much.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
24 you, Doctor.

25 Before, Ms. Bolender, you

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2 speak, maybe we could call the names of
3 the next group so they can be ready to
4 come up next.

5 THE CLERK: Joan Williams,
6 DeBorah Giles, Suzanne Anderson, Lucia
7 Esther, Elsie Wise.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you
9 could all be ready to come up in the next
10 group.

11 Ms. Bolender, please.

12 MS. BOLENDER: Thank you,
13 Chairman Greenlee and Councilwoman
14 Blackwell. I am Kiki Bolender. I'm a
15 resident of Philadelphia, as is Harris.
16 I am here today to speak as Chair of the
17 Design Advocacy Group and as Co-Chair of
18 the -- co-creator of the project that
19 Harris talked about. Thank you for
20 listening.

21 Working with Harris has taught
22 me how hard it is to listen, how little
23 we all listen, and how hard it is
24 especially when you have 100 things
25 competing for space in your brain, and I

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2 know that you Councilpersons have maybe a
3 thousand, not a hundred competing items
4 in your brains.

5 You have before you a number of
6 amendments to the new Zoning Code put
7 forth in good faith by Councilmembers
8 Blackwell and O'Neill to make adjustments
9 to the code that they believe are in the
10 best interest of the citizens of their
11 districts. I'm here today to argue that
12 the proposed changes to the registered
13 community organizations are not in their
14 best interests and will in fact work
15 against their best interests.

16 You've all probably heard the
17 quote from Winston Churchill, "We shape
18 our buildings, and afterwards our
19 buildings shape us." The Zoning Code
20 really is about our buildings. When we
21 talk about the code and the new
22 registered community organizations, or
23 RCOs, we're talking about how decisions
24 are made about those buildings, what form
25 they take, and how they're used.

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2 I agree with Mr. Churchill,
3 these buildings shape the future
4 character of our city, but also shape the
5 future character of its people, as do the
6 processes by which the decisions about
7 those buildings are made.

8 I'm passionate about seeing the
9 RCOs succeed. I've taught the class in
10 zoning in Philadelphia since the very
11 beginning of the Citizens Planning
12 Institute, with which I'm sure familiar,
13 and I know there are people in the room
14 today who have attended the Citizens
15 Planning Institute.

16 Councilwoman Blackwell brought
17 up an issue that we struggle with
18 continually, both in Common Ground and in
19 the Citizens Planning Institute, and that
20 is the issue of the near neighbors. I
21 believe I spoke about this last time I
22 was here, but there are tiers of
23 interest. There's the near neighbor, the
24 young neighbor that you spoke about who
25 is the next-door neighbor, the community

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2 or neighborhood, and then the City as a
3 whole. It's very hard to reconcile those
4 things, and what Harris and I were
5 working on were ways to reconcile their
6 interests, find common ground, and leave
7 nobody out in the cold.

8 I've witnessed many dozens of
9 passionate citizens from all over the
10 City become more educated by the process
11 by which buildings are built here and how
12 those people can best be involved in the
13 process. I believe that RCOs are a great
14 step forward to bring their great talents
15 into the decision-making process.

16 In the Common Ground project,
17 we heard a common theme from dozens of
18 civic leaders and developments. Everyone
19 benefits if citizens are heard and
20 respected, and the current system of
21 citizen input is frankly a mess. Some
22 civic groups are very organized,
23 responsible, and effective. Others are
24 well organized and have tactics that, as
25 one developer put it, border on

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2 extortion. A developer paying off a
3 community group with thousands of dollars
4 for new office space or baseball uniforms
5 for the kids does nothing to improve the
6 quality of the environment. Other
7 neighborhoods have few, if any, viable
8 civic groups. So the Councilmember and
9 those individuals close to her or him
10 wield out-sized power over development.
11 The latter groups in particular would
12 benefit from the RCOs, and they are
13 already benefiting from the Citizens
14 Planning Institute.

15 The new Zoning Code requires an
16 applicant to contact local groups, who
17 then need to work together to hold one
18 meeting with the applicant. That in
19 itself is a great step forward, as I
20 think Betty Turner will tell you shortly.
21 It won't always be easy, but the code
22 section is designed to help neighbors
23 find a way to talk with one another and
24 to resolve their difficulties. The group
25 will have a much stronger voice than an

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2 assortment of small groups and aggrieved
3 individuals, and I would argue that they
4 have a greater chance of including that
5 next-door neighbor and making her voice
6 heard. There is a level of certainty
7 about the process for developers, which
8 will make them more willing and creative
9 participants in the process of
10 decision-making.

11 There are many things in the
12 amendment that I think go against the
13 spirit of the RCOs as they were created,
14 but I think that there are two passages
15 that are particularly devastating. One
16 upends the Civic Design Review Committee,
17 calling for an unlimited number of RCO
18 representatives to sit on that committee
19 and presumably to vote. This would
20 likely result in a group --

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We'll
22 need you to finish up. Okay?

23 MS. BOLENDER: I'm sorry.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's
25 why I said three minutes.

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2 MS. BOLENDER: I was trying to
3 not talk as fast as I usually do.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We have
5 this. You don't have to read the whole
6 thing.

7 MS. BOLENDER: I apologize.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So if you
9 could --

10 MS. BOLENDER: Yes. The one is
11 the differences to the setup of the Civic
12 Design Review Committee and the other is
13 having multiple meetings that are
14 arranged by the Councilperson. We feel
15 that the civic groups can do this
16 themselves, and they've already started
17 to do it, and then having the
18 Councilperson in the role of anointing
19 favorites is counter to the quality of
20 the advice that could be given.

21 Thank you very much.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

23 Thank you.

24 Councilwoman Blackwell.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:

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2 Absolutely.

3 The issue of having one RCO
4 versus two, we mentioned in our opening
5 remarks that you have some groups who
6 overlap. Therefore, if an applicant
7 comes and wants to develop, sometimes
8 groups get along. You may only need one
9 meeting. But you have some groups that
10 fight and are diametrically opposed to
11 what other groups want, so you've got to
12 have separate meetings. We don't believe
13 that we are in any way undermining the
14 spirit of RCOs, but we believe that we
15 are certainly protecting it.

16 And my question is, you said
17 a -- quote, a cynical person might wonder
18 in this view that this person actually
19 stands to benefit from discord among
20 neighbors.

21 How could a District person
22 benefit when we're elected to represent
23 some 153,000 people? How could we
24 benefit from discord among neighbors?

25 MS. BOLENDER: As I read the

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2 amendment, the District Councilperson
3 would be the one who would choose whose
4 voice would be the loudest. And I think
5 I maybe didn't quite express it properly,
6 but in the code as it stands, all the
7 RCOs who are in the district are
8 represented. But what Harris and I are
9 talking about are getting those people
10 together to find common ground, not to
11 put everybody at odds, not to have
12 separate meetings, to get those people
13 together.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But
15 what makes you think we're trying to put
16 people at odds, because we say all
17 communities, every neighbor has a right
18 to have his or her voice heard.

19 MS. BOLENDER: That's exactly
20 what we're saying.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
22 think that you undermine -- in fact, I
23 resent your saying that any District
24 Councilperson could benefit from discord
25 among neighbors. We're elected to

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2 represent people. We're not elected to
3 fight them, but we're trying to protect
4 them. And if you check the language, the
5 language says the District Councilperson
6 may. Some people may want to be
7 involved; some don't. In my district, I
8 am involved, and I have somebody at the
9 Zoning Board every Tuesday, every
10 Wednesday, and we're involved in every
11 aspect of zoning change, because we
12 realize that that certainly affects
13 neighborhoods for the rest of our
14 lifetimes.

15 We want everybody's opinion
16 included. I'm not saying people have to
17 agree, but certainly if somebody is
18 building in your area, you should know.
19 You should be able to go to the meeting.
20 That does not say how you have to feel or
21 how you have to vote.

22 We fight for inclusion. That's
23 our job, to make sure that everybody in
24 every neighborhood is included in any
25 development that happens there. That

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2 does not create discord. That creates
3 inclusion, and that's what we're elected
4 to do. And I resent anyone who says that
5 we're not trying to do our jobs to fight
6 for inclusion. That's what it is. If
7 you reread the language, you will see
8 that that's what we call for.

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. BOLENDER: Councilwoman
11 Blackwell, I'm not making this up. I'm
12 telling you what we heard over and over
13 again in the Common Ground sessions. We
14 heard people saying that Councilpersons
15 played favorites, that they had people
16 who were close to them for one reason or
17 another, and that other people got
18 excluded. I don't want to get into a
19 back and forth, but RCOs --

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: No,
21 because you cannot tell me that without
22 naming people. And my groups know that
23 we try to do the right thing and we let
24 the groups decide what they want. I
25 don't believe that it is in your interest

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2 to sit here and say that Councilpeople
3 play favorites and try to do what they
4 want based on groups they like or
5 dislike. I resent that. It's not true.
6 And unless you want to name people, I
7 suggest that you not proceed with that
8 line of -- with that line of questions or
9 those kinds of statements.

10 MS. BOLENDER: I will give you
11 a copy of our report.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ms.
13 Bolender, if I could just add, could
14 those people who thought Council played
15 favorites were the ones that didn't get
16 what they wanted?

17 MS. BOLENDER: No. It was both
18 sides.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Maybe. I
20 don't know.

21 DR. SOKOLOFF: If I might
22 just --

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Quickly,
24 so we can move on.

25 DR. SOKOLOFF: Just go quickly.

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2 Councilwoman, I think one of the issues
3 that you've raised and I think it's
4 really very important to really focus on
5 is how we can make sure that groups that
6 disagree come together to work through
7 their disagreements rather than fight.
8 Councilwoman, you and Councilman Greenlee
9 and other Councilpeople have an important
10 role to play in helping do that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Sir,
12 if you have three RCOs and you have three
13 meetings because they don't agree and two
14 say yes and one says no, then -- and we
15 put in it that they submit a summary,
16 then it's obvious. It's two versus one.
17 We don't know what you're talking about.
18 Maybe you all ought to look at yourselves
19 and how you see it and how you think we
20 should react. But we represent the
21 communities. We represent people, and
22 we're going to do our right to fight for
23 inclusion, because that's why we're here.

24 MS. BOLENDER: We're asking for
25 the same thing, Councilwoman. We're

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2 asking that people get together, resolve
3 their differences, but we want them to do
4 it face to face.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But
6 you can't make that decision either. You
7 can't sit in the room -- all this came
8 about because some people sat in the room
9 and after we had all these community
10 meetings, they thought they were writing
11 a good document and they came up with
12 things that did the opposite of what the
13 meetings were designed to do.

14 We're going to fight for
15 community inclusion as long as we -- I've
16 been here some 35 years. You know, God
17 willing, I'll be here, and we're going to
18 always fight for inclusion, and we resent
19 anybody who says that that's not what
20 we're trying to do.

21 MS. BOLENDER: And I've been
22 here for 31 years and I will fight for
23 the same thing.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
25 I don't know what you're fighting for. I

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2 know what I'm fighting for. Your
3 statements prove that we needed this
4 hearing and that we needed to come up
5 with amendments to RCOs. Your statements
6 have proven that.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
9 both.

10 DR. SOKOLOFF: Thank you.

11 MS. BOLENDER: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

13 Ms. Marconi, will you please call the
14 next group.

15 THE CLERK: Joan Williams,
16 DeBorah Giles, Suzanne Anderson, Lucia
17 Esther, Elsie Wise.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: How many
19 of those folks are here?

20 I understand it's DeBorah
21 Giles. Sorry.

22 (Witnesses approached witness
23 table.)

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

25 Ms. Giles, I understand -- you'd like to

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2 start?

3 MS. GILES: Okay. I can. Good
4 morning.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
6 Everybody, three minutes now. Please
7 proceed.

8 MS. GILES: I'll read fast.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Again, if
10 you have something you want to submit and
11 then just summarize, that would probably
12 be the better way to do it.

13 MS. GILES: I do have something
14 to submit.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. Go
16 ahead.

17 MS. GILES: My name is DeBorah
18 Giles. I have been a resident of
19 Philadelphia as a student, then a renter,
20 and now as a homeowner and owner of my
21 own tax accounting small business. Over
22 the years, especially as a longtime
23 homeowner since 1982, I have seen the
24 benefit of being an active Philadelphia
25 citizen that was able to voice concerns,

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2 opinions, constructive criticisms
3 regarding specific ideas about
4 development projects. Developers,
5 speculators, and institutions have been
6 attracted to the landscape created by
7 existing residents, who had already made
8 Philadelphia better by their decisions to
9 stay and purchase homes, do maintenance
10 to those homes, beautify and maintain the
11 streets on which they live, and
12 altogether actively participate as
13 Philadelphia citizens. It has become
14 very apparent to me the benefit of having
15 a voice with respect to community
16 interest is effective in keeping a
17 balance to residential quality of life
18 and commercial revitalization.

19 The registered community
20 organization is an attempt to consolidate
21 the process of who speaks to the
22 developer about a project and its issues.
23 In theory and from a developer's
24 standpoint, consolidating the evaluation
25 process is convenient and helps move the

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2 project faster through the zoning process
3 and to project implementation in order to
4 save project costs. However, convenience
5 sometimes comes with a price. The RCO
6 has created another level of hierarchy
7 for the citizens of Philadelphia which,
8 from my perspective, is restrictive,
9 disenfranchising, and has drawbacks from
10 achieving the best development use. It
11 limits the impact residents have on their
12 own communities, communities which they
13 too invested money, sweat equity, and
14 time.

15 If everyone has the same
16 knowledge -- had the same knowledge and
17 the same vision, the RCO might work, but,
18 of course, this is not the case. We,
19 residents, developers, Councilpersons,
20 we're all different people. We hail from
21 different experiences that spawn
22 different ideas. At times we all think
23 we are right, and we can at times be
24 wrong, which is even more reason to have
25 inclusive discussions about long-term

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2 development in the area. It is a
3 beautiful thing when at the end of all
4 the discussions, arguments, disputes, and
5 assertions there is a project that the
6 entire community can become vested in,
7 support, and maintain. Some processes
8 are not meant to be rushed, and project
9 development is one of them.

10 One issue with the RCOs --

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you
12 could make this the last paragraph,
13 please. If you could make this the last
14 paragraph.

15 MS. GILES: Okay.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Because,
17 again, I want to be fair to everybody.

18 MS. GILES: Okay. This is the
19 point. We are all humans and prone to
20 mistakes. Even with the best intentions,
21 we sometimes miss a point and can only
22 see things from one perspective. As
23 President Obama said on the Jay Leno
24 Tonight Show, the community is stronger
25 when everyone has a voice. It is the

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2 responsibility of government to make it
3 easier for everyone to have a voice, not
4 harder.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
6 you. Thank you, ma'am.

7 I would like the record to
8 reflect that --

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: --
11 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, a member of
12 the Committee, is also present.

13 Ms. Williams, please identify
14 yourself for the record and proceed.

15 Good morning.

16 MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning,
17 and good morning to members of the
18 Committee. My name is Joan Williams. I
19 am First Vice-President and Director of
20 Projects and Programs for the West
21 Philadelphia Coalition of Neighborhoods
22 and Businesses. I'm here representing
23 Lee Tolbert, who is the President and CEO
24 and, of course, our member organizations
25 and residents who are reflected in our

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2 membership makeup.

3 I do have copies of documents
4 here that I would like to present to the
5 Committee. I'm not going to read them.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We'll
7 have them distributed.

8 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. I'm not
9 going to read them, of course, word for
10 word, but I just want to make a couple of
11 comments.

12 Our concern is about the
13 requirement for registered community
14 organizations. And we have been involved
15 with the Planning Committee from back in
16 March and April when the Planning
17 Committee itself had hearings on this,
18 and we provided testimony. The documents
19 that I've presented are a letter of
20 April, I think, 16th, 2012 to
21 Mr. Greenberger, who is the Chairman of
22 the PCPC, and also a letter to you,
23 Councilman Greenlee, in reference to this
24 hearing and also an article from the
25 Tribune, which was done as a result of a

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2 community meeting we had in reference to
3 the RCOs.

4 Basically I just want to
5 summarize that information by saying that
6 we, the West Philadelphia Coalition, are
7 opposed to registered community
8 organizations. It's a matter of, similar
9 to if it's not broke, don't fix it. We
10 see this as an opportunity or a mechanism
11 to limit input into development in the
12 community. It's my understanding, if I'm
13 not mistaken, that the developers must
14 meet with RCOs, but not necessarily
15 others in the community that are not
16 designated as RCOs. We're looking at the
17 impact as opposed to the intent of any
18 regulation proposed by either City
19 Council or the Planning Commission. It's
20 like saying, for example, that there's
21 going to be an adverse action against
22 everybody who goes to West Philadelphia
23 High School, and there's no intent to
24 make that adverse action based on race,
25 but if you recognize that almost

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2 everybody at West Philadelphia High
3 School is African American, then the
4 impact is what you look at as opposed to
5 the intent.

6 So I just wanted to make a few
7 other comments in terms of the
8 implementation and the problems we
9 foresee. We think that it's going to
10 impact negatively on primarily low- and
11 moderate-income communities in the area,
12 and we think that that's unfortunate. We
13 think that -- and I'll sum this up in 15
14 seconds.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
16 Thank you.

17 MS. WILLIAMS: We think that
18 the impact should be lessened or, as a
19 matter of fact, eliminated because the
20 more affluent communities I think are
21 better in a position to qualify as RCOs.
22 We have some concerns expressed in the
23 letters I gave you in terms of the
24 qualifications. We're not saying that
25 everybody who is a member of the

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2 Coalition can't meet the qualifications,
3 but we're saying that the impact is going
4 to be a problem.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

6 Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Williams.

7 Who would like to go next?

8 Ms. Wise, right?

9 MS. WISE: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

11 Please.

12 MS. WISE: Good morning. I'm
13 Elsie Wise, President of West Powelton
14 Concerned Community Council. I am here
15 this morning to express my concern of the
16 RCO program that I was told about by the
17 City Planning Commissioner and informed
18 that I was to register my organization.
19 I was not sure what I'm supposed to do,
20 but I was told if I did not register,
21 then Councilwoman Blackwell will support
22 and put someone in my spot, and I
23 couldn't see that. I've been head of
24 this group for over 40 years. I don't
25 think that it's good for me to be pushed

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2 aside for an RCO that know nothing about
3 my community and have been accepted and
4 appointed to be the RCO for West Powelton
5 in which they don't even know our
6 boundaries, know nothing about us,
7 although they live there. This person
8 should not have been picked as West
9 Powelton's RCO. We do too many things
10 and too much for our community to allow
11 this to happen. I am not supporting this
12 RCO and I'm not supporting the person
13 that was picked, because they are doing
14 everything wrong --

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. WISE: -- after being
17 picked. They're going around spreading
18 rumors about my Vice-President and
19 myself, that we don't know what we're
20 doing. We've been doing things for 40
21 years. All the sudden we don't know what
22 we're doing? And we just don't like it.
23 We're not going to accept it. I'm not
24 going to roll over and nobody is going to
25 tell me what to do as far as my community

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2 is concerned, because I fight too hard
3 for it, and I'm not going to be led up a
4 wrong alley. That's the reason I am here
5 to talk about the RCO.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you, Elsie. I'd like to ask you --

8 (Applause.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
10 let me make it -- I'd like to ask who
11 told you that if you didn't register,
12 then I would put somebody in your place.

13 MS. WISE: The City Planning
14 Commissioner Rick Redding told me that.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
16 Rick is here. We're going to ask him
17 that. The issue is -- and everybody
18 knows. Elsie worked with Lucien
19 Blackwell when he first came. Elsie has
20 a right to run her organization. West
21 Powelton Concerned Community Council has
22 been around, as she says, for some 40
23 years. We meet with them all the time.
24 They deal a lot with zoning because
25 they're near that Penn, Drexel area. We

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2 have a lot of issues. And certainly if
3 somebody else comes along, nobody can
4 supplant and undermine any community
5 organization.

6 We'll ask Rick to comment on
7 that, because nobody has a right to tell
8 anybody who is around they can't be. But
9 these are some of this -- it's like that
10 negative opinion we got from
11 Ms. Bolender, this negative stuff there
12 that people are doing to fight unfairly,
13 because they have their opinion and they
14 don't want -- we're for all inclusion.
15 So people who undermine and lie on me and
16 on others, we're prepared to take them
17 on. These are our communities, and we
18 have a right to say and do what we want.

19 Thank you, Elsie. That's a
20 lie. I didn't say that.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
23 Ms. Esther, you'll go next, and then if I
24 could ask Ms. Gladstein and whoever else
25 would like to come up, Mr. Redding maybe.

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2 The issue of anybody else, any other
3 member of a community that's not in an
4 RCO not being respected, that kind of
5 issue, I think we're going to hear that a
6 lot, and maybe you could respond to that
7 after Ms. Esther speaks. Okay?

8 You're Ms. Esther. I hope I'm
9 saying that right.

10 MS. ESTHER: Yes.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
12 Please.

13 MS. ESTHER: Hello. My name is
14 Lucia Esther and I live in the West
15 Powelton area, and I've owned my house
16 and lived in it for about 27 years, and
17 we began to -- we have attended West
18 Powelton Concerned Community Council
19 meetings, and we also went to the zoning
20 matters workshops with Mr. Sokoloff and
21 Ms. Bolender, and then in the spring, I
22 went to the Citizens Planning Institute
23 classes. And we welcomed the opportunity
24 to have the RCOs. We saw that as being a
25 positive step in creating more

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2 information, of gathering information, of
3 getting more people to participate in the
4 planning process. And we certainly
5 recognize that there are other groups and
6 in many cases within a territory you
7 have -- City Planning wants to have
8 census tract territories rather than
9 little parts of things. We also
10 recognize that there are now commercial
11 business corridors which traverse through
12 the territory so that they would be RCOs.
13 We now see with the list that's come out
14 that there are particular ward leaders
15 which have RCOs. Therefore, if they're
16 with a particular political party, then
17 other people can't participate in that.
18 But we thought that the RCO was a way
19 that we would meet with the developers,
20 that we could then have our opinions to
21 be written down.

22 We understand that the City,
23 being a gigantic place, that there needs
24 to be some structure of getting
25 developers to come in, to sit down and

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2 talk. And we like having the signs
3 posted for the developing, giving us more
4 time to see them, but we would also make
5 a suggestion that the developers would
6 post a sign not just for the zoning but
7 where the meeting is going to be, so that
8 people could be thinking about it,
9 because we have many cases where all the
10 sudden people are coming and saying,
11 Well, there's a development that's come
12 up against my house, I never received a
13 flyer, I never knew that there was going
14 to be a discussion on the meeting, we
15 don't know where to go to get
16 information. And we're trying to get
17 information out to people.

18 And maybe more emphasis on
19 getting developers to come into a
20 community and talk with people before
21 they buy the land so that they'll have an
22 idea of what it is we want, and the
23 community needs to sit down and do some
24 long-range planning in advance.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All

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2 right. Thank you, Ms. Esther. I
3 appreciate it.

4 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
6 morning, ladies, and I do appreciate this
7 very informative and heartfelt testimony.
8 I want to commend Councilwoman Blackwell
9 for her willingness to pull this out of
10 our -- what were ongoing hearings around
11 the passage of the zoning bill and making
12 this a standalone issue so that we can
13 really get our heads wrapped around it.

14 Councilwoman Blackwell, this
15 really is an important issue. When I
16 look across this room and see so many
17 familiar faces of folks who have been in
18 the trenches forever, you're here because
19 you care and you expect to be involved in
20 ways going forward the way it has worked
21 in ways in the past. So my hope and
22 expectation is that all stakeholders,
23 from the Administration for sure under
24 Councilwoman Blackwell's leadership and
25 the numerous leaders I see across this

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2 room, will continue to be vigilant and
3 help us figure out a way where we not
4 only hear what you're asking very
5 respectfully, but figure out how we can
6 accommodate what your ask is while we
7 also find what I call the middle ground
8 and capture some of the tenets of the new
9 zoning legislation as well.

10 So in closing, I have to
11 commend -- you're still vigilant after
12 all these many, many years. It's good to
13 see you here.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
16 you, Councilwoman.

17 And thank you all for your
18 comment.

19 First, if I could ask
20 Ms. Gladstein to come back up. I just
21 want to address one very general issue,
22 but first Ms. -- and Councilwoman
23 Blackwell would like Mr. Redding to come
24 up too. But Ms. Marconi is going to read
25 the names of the next panel so we can

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2 keep moving too.

3 THE CLERK: Greg Benjamin,
4 Barry Smith, Kevin Horne.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: If you
6 could just be ready, you three, to be
7 next. They may not be here, but we'll
8 call the names again once we're finished.

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Eva, I
12 can see in the testimony that's been
13 given verbally and also in the written
14 things we have gotten that it seems to be
15 the recurring theme is what I think
16 Ms. Williams stated, that there's this
17 concern that if you're not in the RCO or
18 even though if you're a nearby neighbor,
19 that you will be ignored. Could you
20 address that a little bit, please.

21 MS. GLADSTEIN: Sure. I did
22 that in the written testimony, but I'm
23 happy to kind of summarize it.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just for
25 the record, because I think that's going

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2 to keep coming up, so people can hear
3 that.

4 MS. GLADSTEIN: The new Zoning
5 Code made -- we heard that concern during
6 the Zoning Code Commission process, and
7 Councilwoman was at a number of meetings,
8 which we appreciated and helped organize
9 for the meetings. We heard that concern,
10 so the new Zoning Code has very specific
11 language that makes it very clear that
12 any individual can testify at the Zoning
13 Board hearings, can be represented by an
14 interpreter, a family member, an
15 attorney, and can be there on their own
16 and testify.

17 We also increased the amount of
18 notice for the general public. We
19 also -- in terms of instead of it being
20 12 days that you see the orange poster,
21 it's now 21 days. We also requires that
22 more information be on that poster, and
23 because hearings often get continued,
24 we're requiring that there be a poster
25 for a continued hearing.

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2 So we made a number of efforts
3 to make sure that any member of the
4 public is able to -- you do not have to
5 be a member of a group, that you'll get
6 better notice. We also are requiring
7 that the meetings of the community
8 organizations be public meetings, and
9 that's in the Planning Commission
10 regulations, and that's something we hope
11 to be able to monitor with the assistance
12 of elected officials as well.

13 We're also requiring that
14 zoning permits be posted, so somebody
15 walking by the property can see it. That
16 was never clearly a requirement before.
17 So not just a zoning permit, but a
18 building permit. And we agree and had
19 many discussions about how to make sure
20 near neighbors are notified, because that
21 was a very important issue. I think the
22 Councilwoman has given us some language
23 that we can work with around that,
24 because that was something we struggled
25 with, how to make sure the voice of near

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2 neighbors would be heard. One of the
3 ways we did decide to do that was to say
4 in documenting the meeting, the public
5 meeting, you would be sharing -- the RCO
6 would be sharing notes of the meeting,
7 they'd be sharing the agenda, and they'd
8 be sharing the sign-in sheet so that the
9 Zoning Board could see if the near
10 neighbors were represented at the meeting
11 or not. And so that was something that
12 we had thought to do around that same
13 issue.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
15 you. Thank you.

16 MS. GLADSTEIN: And I also
17 wanted to just -- the concern that was
18 raised by Ms. Wise, I think she -- and I
19 don't need to speak for Mr. Redding, but
20 I want to be clear for the panel here,
21 that the Zoning Code has had a provision
22 that City Council asked us to put in that
23 said in the case where there is no RCO
24 for an area and there is a project, that
25 the District Councilperson can stand in

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2 the stead of an RCO, because we wanted to
3 make sure that there was a mechanism to
4 have a public meeting in areas of the
5 City where there was not a registered
6 community organization. So that's been
7 in the code. Council asked us to put
8 that in the code before it was adopted
9 last December.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
11 that is the weakness of this whole issue.
12 We amended the definition of a registered
13 organization so that it can be just any
14 community organization, but to have
15 community groups think -- everybody knows
16 about West Powelton. As she said,
17 they've been in existence 40 years.
18 Everybody knows that if you want to do
19 anything in Penn or Drexel in that area,
20 that you go see Elsie, you go see John
21 Leatherberry, you go meet with their
22 group. Whether or not they're
23 registered, whether or not they
24 registered themselves, they are still the
25 community group, the community

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2 organization in the area.

3 And that is the problem with
4 all of this. You know, sometimes
5 government wants to put everything in and
6 tie it in a package and tie it in a knot
7 and not deal with what the real issues
8 are out there in the streets, and that's
9 where we come in. We know the groups.
10 We're elected to know the groups. We
11 work with them, and anybody who comes to
12 us, any developer, anybody who wants to
13 do a project in that area, we say, Go see
14 Elsie, go see John.

15 So we don't have those issues.
16 This is stuff you all are creating in
17 trying to abate the code. You make it
18 more difficult in ways that make things
19 work. Everything, as Joan said, isn't
20 broken. Some of these things you make
21 harder with this stuff with these groups,
22 and now you're saying, Elsie, if you
23 don't register, you all don't count.
24 After 40 years, my goodness, how can we
25 say that?

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2 MS. GLADSTEIN: Nobody said
3 that, Councilwoman.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you.

6 MS. GLADSTEIN: And we would
7 not say that. We did hear from a wide
8 array of individuals and groups that they
9 thought it would be beneficial for there
10 to be public information to the groups
11 and their boundaries, and so the Planning
12 Commission website now does have a
13 database so people can know who the
14 contact people are, and the City's zoning
15 maps also have that information. So if
16 you're doing a project in an area, you
17 can look up and see which groups are
18 working in that area, and a number of
19 people did ask us to make that
20 information more available than it had
21 been in the past.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
23 nobody is against that.

24 MS. GLADSTEIN: Good. Thank
25 you.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
3 for coming, unless you have another --
4 I'm sorry; Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
6 very, very much for the clarity, and it
7 remains clear to me that with all of the
8 good substantial and effort that's been
9 put forth with depth to it, that the
10 connect is still not 100 percent in
11 place. And you should know that just
12 yesterday, I had a conversation with
13 President Clarke about the need even for
14 Councilmembers to be re-briefed, if you
15 will, off the record in the Caucus Room
16 with many of the new zone changes this
17 will taking place. So know that a memo
18 is forthcoming where we will be asking
19 you to provide that even to us.

20 So it remains still huge to us
21 as a new way of living. You can imagine
22 what it feels like for those in
23 neighborhoods at the ground level and how
24 they may feel in many ways still
25 disconnected with what the new changes

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2 are.

3 MS. GLADSTEIN: We appreciate
4 that, and I know it's a tremendous --
5 it's -- we're all used to working one
6 way, and it's not all changed, but a lot
7 of it is changed, and it's a very big
8 adjustment. We'd be happy to brief
9 Council again and in fact would be happy
10 to have some kind of regular meetings
11 with Council, again, because we're
12 charged with -- Council has asked us to
13 provide a one-year report, and we'd just
14 as soon meet more regularly with Council
15 to continue to have dialogue and
16 discussion.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That would
18 be in order. Thank you.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
21 you.

22 And especially since we have
23 these other -- not just this bill, but
24 others coming up, I think we do need that
25 kind of briefing.

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2 Councilwoman Blackwell.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

4 And, Mr. Chairman, and certainly to both
5 of you, if we don't understand it, how do
6 we expect John and Jane Q public to
7 understand it? This whole issue of
8 saying no to RCO we kind of all bought
9 into. Trying to come up with amendments
10 to try to work along with the
11 Administration is the trying part. So
12 we're trying to do our part to cooperate,
13 to work with the Administration, because
14 basically the people in this room are say
15 no to RCO. We didn't think it was
16 broken. We didn't think we needed this
17 stuff.

18 So we are not -- we have not
19 been trying to undermine the system.
20 We're trying to find ways to work it.
21 And to Councilwoman Reynolds Brown's
22 point, if she doesn't understand it, we
23 don't understand all this stuff, how do
24 we expect people who work every day or
25 are retired who are busy to know what's

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2 going on? It's just -- the intentions
3 may have been good, but it just didn't
4 work out that way. It's just too much.
5 It's just too difficult and it's just too
6 hard.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
9 you. Thank you, Councilwoman.

10 Any other questions or
11 comments?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
14 Thank you. Thank you both for coming
15 back up.

16 I understand the names we
17 called are not here, but I'm going to ask
18 them to be called one more time just to
19 make sure.

20 THE CLERK: Greg Benjamin,
21 Barry Smith, Kevin Horne.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I see no
23 response. If you could call the next
24 group, please.

25 THE CLERK: Madeline Shikomba,

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2 Tiffany Green, Theresa McCormick, Claudia
3 Sherrod.

4 (Witnesses approached witness
5 table.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: While
7 they're coming forward, Mr. Chairman, let
8 me say that they've worked hard on trying
9 to work on these amendments, get the word
10 out, and do what they can to protect
11 their neighborhoods.

12 Thank you, ladies.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
14 you.

15 Whoever would like to go first,
16 three minutes, please. Please identify
17 yourself, whoever would like to go first.

18 MS. KING: Good morning, City
19 Council Committee.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
21 morning.

22 MS. KING: Thank you for
23 allowing me to speak, but I'd just like
24 to say in gest, I'm sick and tired of
25 being sick and tired.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please
3 identify yourself for the record.

4 MS. KING: Rolanda King. I'm a
5 committee woman, block captain, community
6 leader.

7 Once again, I would just like
8 to reiterate, I am sick and tired of
9 being sick and tired. I have been
10 disheveled from community to community.
11 Plymouth Rock has landed upon us again in
12 the Point Breeze and Grays Ferry area and
13 its community groups by way of lack of
14 transparency, bigotry, racist mentality
15 within the City Planning Commission by
16 way it refuses to include anybody that
17 lives in those prospective communities
18 over ten years or more. There are no
19 Asians, Latinos, African Americans who
20 sit on this Planning Commission, which I
21 see is a problem, and this is why the
22 committee is meeting as a result of the
23 RCOs.

24 Communities that have been
25 historically black, the boundaries have

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2 been reassigned to new community groups,
3 taken away our ability to voice our
4 concerns around zoning and its
5 developments in our communities.

6 We are asking you to support
7 Councilwoman Blackwell's amendment to
8 make it a leveled playing field for all
9 those who live, work, and play in these
10 communities.

11 I am, once again, a block
12 captain, committee woman, and community
13 leader, and I feel that I am being
14 excluded from this process, but when we
15 need -- but when you need my neighbors to
16 vote, you come out to my neighborhoods.

17 Please, I'm asking to make the
18 committee people, block captains be part
19 of this process, along with the community
20 groups. Also, the community must be
21 included in this process of the so-called
22 RCOs.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
25 you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Whoever
4 would like to go next.

5 MS. GREEN: Hi. Tiffany Green.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please
7 proceed.

8 MS. GREEN: Good morning. How
9 is everyone? Good. I just want to start
10 off with, first of all, I want to make a
11 comment that I think that the ordinances
12 should be advertised in a general
13 newspaper regarding the upcoming
14 hearings, so when there's a hearing
15 regarding a zoning cleanup bill, the
16 residents in the community would know
17 when they can come down and actually do
18 hearings, because as it's stated, close
19 to 90,000 children do not have online
20 Internet service. Therefore, their
21 parents don't have it. So it's very hard
22 to find out what ordinances or hearings
23 that are coming up. I think it should be
24 in the general newspaper like you
25 advertise Sheriff sales. So like unlike

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2 the zoning cleanup bill where the
3 resident didn't really get a chance to
4 address their issues regarding that, it's
5 not fair and, therefore, it would make it
6 more of a level playing field.

7 RCO policy right now is about
8 making this a level playing field.
9 Yesterday -- and not to come down on Rick
10 as hard. Yesterday I saw Mr. Redding and
11 I asked Mr. Redding a question. I said a
12 developer did not notify an RCO. What do
13 you do?

14 And Mr. Redding said to me,
15 You're not an RCO.

16 The problem is this, is that we
17 have applied since June and it is now
18 November and we have yet to receive our
19 RCO status or our approval. And let me
20 read the letter that was sent to us real
21 quick.

22 At this time, your RCO
23 application is not approved. On
24 September 26th, 2012, we requested
25 additional information to aid in our

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2 review of the application. Specifically,
3 we asked for examples of your minutes in
4 several public meetings to convene your
5 organizations, and you sent an agendas of
6 two additional meetings.

7 Then he goes on to say that in
8 order to conduct a review of your
9 application, we are still requesting
10 minutes of several meetings, and they
11 also wanted us to document our executive
12 Board members elections. All that for
13 notification.

14 RCO is supposed to be about
15 notification, notifying what's coming
16 into your community. This is a form of
17 control, and this is the problem we have
18 with the Planning Commission, as my --
19 oh, they changed sisters.

20 Because this particular
21 department has no diversity. There is no
22 diversity in this department at all, and
23 yet you have representatives going out
24 dealing with urban communities who are
25 not connected to us culturally or even

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2 from a community standpoint. It seems to
3 be this pro market rate mentality coming
4 out of the Planning Commission, starting
5 from the Commissioner -- I mean the
6 Deputy Mayor all the way down to the
7 executive, all the way down to the Deputy
8 Mayor, all the way through the Director
9 and also the community person that comes
10 out to our community. This department
11 needs to be looked into very seriously.
12 This is not only about this RCO, there
13 are other policies that have been
14 implemented through this Zoning Code and
15 there is no type -- and when you go down
16 there, you can't get any justice at all.

17 Secondly, there's no appeal
18 process here. This is unconstitutional.
19 How are you going to have an agency that
20 self-governs, so, therefore, who do we
21 appeal to? Who do we appeal to? This is
22 unconstitutional. There's no appeal
23 process here for organizations such as
24 myself or West Powelton to go to to say,
25 Hey, we think that they've not made the

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2 right decision here?

3 We feel as though these
4 amendments make it more of a level
5 playing field, and as my sister said, you
6 have committee people who wants to help.
7 You get elected, yet they can't even get
8 on the registry to be notified. Is that
9 fair to them? That's not fair to them.
10 It's about notification. It's not about
11 control.

12 I want to talk about real --

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, I
14 got to --

15 MS. GREEN: I ran out of time?

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes, you
17 are.

18 MS. GREEN: One more. I'll sum
19 it up.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am.

21 MS. GREEN: Conflict of
22 interest --

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, I
24 got to keep it --

25 MS. GREEN: Is it three minutes

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2 already?

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I got to
4 keep everybody online.

5 Please, whoever is next.

6 MS. GREEN: I'm sorry.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's
8 all right.

9 MS. GREEN: Support the
10 amendments. Thank you.

11 MS. McCORMICK: Good morning.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
13 morning.

14 MS. McCORMICK: My name is
15 Theresa McCormick and I live in the Point
16 Breeze section. I am also an educator
17 and also a community advocate within my
18 community.

19 The reason why I came apart of
20 the -- about the RCOs is because, one,
21 the RCO process takes away the rights of
22 the citizens. As Ms. Green has stated,
23 when we tried to apply back in June, they
24 asked you to fill out the application and
25 submit certain information, but then they

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2 asked you for more information, and then
3 they came back and asked you for more,
4 and it continued. Still to this day the
5 information that was submitted, we still
6 have not received our RCO.

7 Secondly -- thirdly, the other
8 problems that we have with the RCO is
9 that it leaves room for the developers to
10 just have communications with the RCOs
11 where the community -- which most
12 organizations do not live there, they do
13 not vote there, they do not pay taxes
14 there. They do not know our community.
15 Why are we putting organizations over the
16 residents?

17 Thirdly, the RCO process
18 legally orders a developer to only work
19 with the RCOs, not the community. So if
20 there's a development that's going to be
21 on my block, I have nothing to say about
22 that.

23 Number four, if a builder wants
24 to build something on your block, which
25 that's taking place now, you are a member

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2 of the block of organizations. I have no
3 say-so about that. Okay?

4 Six, it is easier to register
5 to become a business here in the City of
6 Philadelphia than to become an RCO.

7 (Applause.)

8 MS. McCORMICK: Next, the other
9 thing too as well is there's a conflict
10 of interest in terms of being an RCO.
11 Then the next thing is the creation of
12 the RCO in registry is a violation of our
13 constitutional rights here.

14 And, lastly, the City Planning
15 Commission website says that the new
16 Zoning Code allows the City Planning
17 Commission to manage community
18 organizations, which is not the mission
19 of the City Planning.

20 Thank you.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
22 you, Ms. McCormick.

23 Ms. Sherrod, before you speak,
24 please could you read the names of the
25 next group so, again, they're ready to

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2 go. I'm not sure who is here.

3 THE CLERK: Jeff Hornstein,
4 Folami Irvine, Gregory Lyles, Jihad Ali,
5 James Royal.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I know
7 some are here at least, if they could be
8 ready to go for the next group.

9 Ms. Sherrod, good morning. How
10 are you?

11 MS. SHERROD: Good morning.
12 Claudia Sherrod, Executive Director of
13 South Philadelphia H.O.M.E.S. and the
14 President of the Coalition.

15 I'm going to read my testimony.
16 It's very short and sweet. Do you have
17 it?

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes, we
19 do. We do have your testimony. I was
20 reading it earlier.

21 MS. SHERROD: Okay.
22 Philadelphia is a city of neighborhoods.
23 Each of our neighborhoods has various
24 community groups that work toward making
25 things better for their residents. Some

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2 groups have particular interests; other
3 groups are more general concerns.

4 Neither Point Breeze nor any other
5 neighborhood can afford to have the
6 Planning Commission or any other City
7 agency dictate policy.

8 Two community leaders, one from
9 Grays Ferry and myself for Point Breeze,
10 participated in an evaluation team to
11 determine the disposition of two surplus
12 school buildings. Also participating
13 with the evaluation was Jennifer Barr
14 representing the Planning Commission. In
15 her evaluations, Ms. Barr claimed that
16 there are only two community groups in
17 Grays Ferry, the groups with registered
18 community organizations or RCO status.
19 Ms. Barr stated that none of the other
20 community groups were community groups at
21 all. Ms. Barr's contention is patently
22 absurd. Just because a community group
23 is not an RCO doesn't mean that they
24 don't exist, that they don't have
25 opinions, that they don't have ideas that

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2 they feel will benefit their
3 neighborhood.

4 Ms. Barr also attempted to
5 categorize RCOs in Point Breeze referring
6 to one of them as an overlapping RCO and
7 implying that somehow that RCO is not as
8 meaningful as the other. How can it be
9 that Ms. Barr and the Planning Commission
10 gets to pick and choose who represents
11 our neighborhood and with what status?

12 In Grays Ferry, the Planning
13 Commission has disenfranchised the vast
14 majority of residents. They have taken
15 away any meaningful voice about what
16 happens in the neighborhood, particularly
17 for zoning. The Planning Commission
18 selected two community groups for RCOs
19 which are not qualified status, while the
20 majority of residents do not subscribe to
21 either group. This gives those two RCOs
22 virtually dictatorial authority over the
23 majority. This will be brought home to
24 rest when the RCO approves zoning that
25 the majority of residents oppose. It's

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2 only a matter of time. At the very
3 least, the Planning Commission should
4 have consulted with communities to
5 determine which organization the majority
6 of residents wanted to represent them.
7 They didn't, and because they didn't,
8 they are now disenfranchised, dissent,
9 and undercurrent of considerable disgust
10 with the Planning Commission and their
11 divisive and totalitarian action.

12 This is certainly not the way
13 to bring people and community
14 organizations together for the overall
15 health of our neighborhood. It is
16 certainly not the way to encourage
17 citizen engagement, which has for many
18 years helped Philadelphia to advance. I
19 once believed that our city leaders were
20 for progress and equality, where the
21 community was a part of the process. Our
22 leaders in Planning dictate to us rather
23 than making us a part of the process.

24 I have just one question. Are
25 we turning to the past of business as

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2 usual? And I'm sorry I got stumbled a
3 little bit, because I get frustrated. I
4 getting aggravated. I am truly upset,
5 you know. We have bigotry most of our
6 lives, and to think that we have to
7 continue on with this, it's unfair.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's
9 one of the reasons for the hearing,
10 ma'am, to try to get as much as --

11 MS. GREEN: And me and Claudia
12 agree on that.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: But I
14 appreciate all that you do.

15 Any questions or comments?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Seeing
18 none, before we call that group that we
19 just called, Councilwoman Blackwell would
20 like the Administration to come back up,
21 Ms. Gladstein and Rick Redding again,
22 please. She had a couple other
23 questions.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you, ladies. Thank you for all the work

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2 you've done on this issue.

3 MS. SHERROD: You're welcome.

4 (Applause.)

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Eva
8 and Rick, we tried to address some of
9 these in our amendments, but the question
10 still remains -- I've been asked to ask
11 this question. Can the Planning
12 Commission be asked to address their
13 issue of overlapping RCOs and the
14 conflicts that arise? How will they be
15 resolved? Who decides?

16 MS. GLADSTEIN: So as I stated
17 earlier, we understand that there are
18 RCOs whose boundaries overlap, and that's
19 been true on and off for years. We have
20 not attempted to resolve or change
21 boundaries. We've accepted the
22 boundaries. Right now the Zoning Code
23 said the boundaries should line up with
24 any governing documents the organization
25 may have.

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2 The groups are required to
3 coordinate and have one meeting right now
4 under the Zoning Code, but they're not
5 required to come up to agree as to how
6 they want to address the project. So
7 each group can come up with its own
8 position, supporting, not supporting,
9 asking for changes to the project.
10 There's no requirement that the groups
11 come up with a position, a unified
12 position, with regard to any project, be
13 it at the ZBA or Civic Design Review;
14 just that they document that they had the
15 meeting, who was at the meeting, and what
16 their position is.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Right.
18 This is why we asked that if there are
19 several RCOs, that you can have several
20 meetings, unless you have groups that are
21 willing to meet together. But let's say
22 there are two, to deal with her question.
23 Let's say there are two RCOs and maybe
24 one has existed traditionally. You all
25 love working with them, and they've done

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2 projects. And one is new. So who
3 decides whether the project -- and they
4 both submit summaries. So who makes the
5 decision on whether the project gets
6 approved or disapproved?

7 MS. GLADSTEIN: If they're
8 submitting a summary to the Zoning Board
9 of Adjustment, they're going to use the
10 judgment that they always use. They're
11 going to hear from the RCOs. They can
12 hear from members of the public who
13 choose to testify. They'll hear in many
14 cases from the Councilperson office and
15 they --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: So it
17 should still goes to the Zoning Board?

18 (Audience members talking.)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Hold it.
20 Please, please, please. No calling out.
21 Come on.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Then
23 it should still go to the Zoning Board.

24 MS. GLADSTEIN: It still goes
25 to the Zoning Board.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Unless
3 it's a big project over a hundred
4 thousand square feet, and then it goes to
5 the Civic Design Review?

6 MS. GLADSTEIN: Exactly. It
7 goes to the Civic Design Review
8 Committee. And I guess I want to
9 emphasize something that we did not point
10 out before. The Civic Design Review
11 Committee is, as Alan Greenberger, said
12 is reviewing large projects for their
13 impact on the public. What they are
14 charged with doing is making a
15 recommendation. It's advisory only. So
16 it is not an approval or disapproval per
17 se that can make a project go forward or
18 stop a project. The process is required,
19 but their recommendation is advisory.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Two
21 more questions. One -- and this one
22 maybe I need to amend a bill to deal
23 with -- are RCOs regulated to just
24 require one meeting with developers? I
25 hear that a lot. They're afraid that

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2 there can be just one meeting as opposed
3 to several meetings if they're required
4 with the developer.

5 MS. GLADSTEIN: There's a
6 requirement of one meeting. The meeting
7 has to be public. We were urging the
8 RCOs in an area to coordinate and
9 cooperate with each other to have the one
10 meeting. But there's nothing in the
11 Zoning Code that prohibits additional
12 meetings.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That
14 was my understanding, but we didn't write
15 it.

16 And the third and last
17 question, and then we'll go back to the
18 panel, it seems that the Planning
19 Commission has been given power in
20 deciding who becomes an RCO. Who
21 provides oversight of these unelected
22 officials to make sure this power is not
23 abused?

24 (Applause.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And

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2 maybe that response to Theresa's issue of
3 people applying to be RCOs and not
4 getting a response.

5 MS. GLADSTEIN: The Zoning
6 Code, as it was approved by Council,
7 delegates this responsibility to the City
8 Planning Commission.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
10 know. So we'll ask Rick to comment on
11 it.

12 Mr. Redding, how do you decide
13 who becomes an RCO? Can't three or five
14 or whoever in that area as long as their
15 boundaries -- they could overlap, but as
16 long as they have their own boundaries,
17 can't they all become RCOs?

18 MR. REDDING: First of all,
19 good morning, Councilwoman, Mr. Chairman,
20 members of the Committee. I'm Richard
21 Redding, Director of Community Planning
22 at the Philadelphia City Planning
23 Commission.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
25 we've enjoyed working with you over the

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2 years.

3 MR. REDDING: Yes. It's a
4 pleasure to be here.

5 I'm part of the decision-making
6 team at the City Planning Commission
7 where we review the submission by the
8 RCOs against the requirements in the
9 Zoning Code and the PCPC regulations. So
10 approval and disapproval is dictated by
11 the documentation vis-a-vis our
12 requirements and regulations.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
14 sorry. I was distracted. I'm supposed
15 to be at a veterans opening downstairs.

16 MR. REDDING: Councilwoman, I
17 was saying that I'm part of the
18 decision-making team at the Planning
19 Commission, and we review the documents
20 provided by the applicant, the RCO, and
21 we review that against the requirements
22 in the Zoning Code and in the PCPC, the
23 City Planning Commission regulations. So
24 we try to match up the documentation with
25 the requirements.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
3 not talking that. I'm only talking about
4 membership, the creation of RCOs. You
5 have no opinion -- I'm sure you don't
6 have any -- I'm sure you're not against
7 whoever wants to be an RCO.

8 MR. REDDING: We've been
9 encouraging community groups to become
10 RCOs because we think there's benefits to
11 that.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
13 that's to the issue of Theresa McCormick
14 and others who say they haven't heard. I
15 know. That's what I expected that I
16 would hear, that the City doesn't care.
17 The City would like every community to
18 have RCOs, because it makes it easier to
19 do business when we want to do things.

20 So I just wanted you to put
21 that on the record, because I know that
22 you don't have any, having worked with
23 you all these years, I know that you
24 don't have any reason to be against
25 anybody becoming an RCO, and maybe you

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2 all could check into whatever the Point
3 Breeze issue is. Okay?

4 MR. REDDING: Councilwoman, we
5 want communities to be organized and we
6 think that RCO enhances that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I know
8 that.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Just one
12 question.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
14 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Putting my
16 teacher hat on for 30 seconds, there's a
17 tenet that says the average citizen has
18 to hear something seven times before it
19 connects and it has to be received in
20 different ways. So with that as the
21 context, is there in this process of
22 getting information to citizens included
23 the whole block captain organization that
24 exists with the City of Philadelphia in
25 addition to the entire committee network?

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2 Because they are additional captains on
3 blocks in neighborhoods that would get
4 this information and have an opportunity
5 to share it. Is that a part of the
6 information-sharing network?

7 MS. GLADSTEIN: We did as broad
8 an outreach as we could about RCOs and
9 the opportunity to apply, but I don't
10 know that -- and for our planning
11 process, we do through Philadelphia More
12 Beautiful, we do mailings through our
13 planning process. We did not do a
14 mailing specifically for RCOs to the
15 block captains, although a lot of -- a
16 number of block captains are on the list
17 that we already have. So I think that's
18 a good idea.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Just as a
20 way to deepen the outreach and the
21 awareness of any potential activity
22 happening in communities.

23 MS. GLADSTEIN: Yes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
3 both again.

4 You heard the group. I see
5 Mr. Hornstein coming up. I see Mr. Ali
6 here.

7 Just read the names again just
8 quickly so we can --

9 THE CLERK: Jeff Hornstein,
10 Folami Irvine, Gregory Lyles, Jihad Ali,
11 James Royal.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
15 Mr. Hornstein. I see Mr. Ali coming up.
16 Please identify yourself for
17 the record and proceed with your three
18 minutes, sir.

19 MR. HORNSTEIN: Good morning.
20 I'll be brief as long as it takes, as
21 John Street says. My name is Jeff
22 Hornstein. I'm President of Queen
23 Village Neighbors Association, a
24 40-year-old civic organization
25 representing nearly 3,000 households in

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2 the southeast corner of Center City.
3 Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
4 And it's a shame Councilwoman Blackwell
5 had to leave before she hears a different
6 point of view on this.

7 As you may know --
8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: She'll be
9 back.

10 MR. HORNSTEIN: -- QVNA was
11 deeply involved in the crafting of the
12 new Zoning Code. We were excited, as
13 excited as one can be about something
14 like zoning, to see the City moving
15 forward and modernizing our code. As a
16 rapidly growing neighborhood, we want to
17 make sure the rules are transparent and
18 that there is proper balance between
19 neighborhood preservation, community
20 input, and economic vitality. The
21 registered community organization was, in
22 our view, an integral part of the new
23 code. For the first time, groups would
24 have formal standing. We were pleased
25 when we saw the applications, which

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2 implied that there would be criteria to
3 obtain standing, such as open meetings,
4 bylaws, elections, 501(c)(3) status and
5 so forth.

6 With the release of the RCO map
7 so-called in late August, it became clear
8 to many civic association leaders that
9 the new regulations have created, perhaps
10 unintentionally, confusing and
11 overlapping jurisdictions among so-called
12 local registered community organizations,
13 or LRCOs. It appeared to us that the
14 Planning Commission had essentially
15 ignored many of the criteria that it had
16 established.

17 I believe that the
18 implementation of these new regulations
19 will cause an immense logistical
20 challenge, in addition to creating
21 confusion for developers and community
22 members, the opposite of what I believe
23 to be the intention behind the reformed
24 Zoning Code. A group of civics
25 representing over 25,000 households

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2 submitted a letter to Mr. Greenberger on
3 September 13th, 2012. And we'll resubmit
4 that for the record of this committee.
5 In short, we believe there's perhaps too
6 much inclusion.

7 QVNA has a long history of
8 impartially reviewing development
9 applications. We have a zoning committee
10 that holds regular advertised meetings,
11 provides developers to neighbors in an
12 open and partial venue. We have open
13 meetings of our organization and can
14 justifiably claim to represent a
15 substantial constituency of residents
16 within our geographic boundaries, which
17 are specified in our bylaws.

18 Until August 22nd, we were the
19 sole duly recognized community
20 association with our neighborhood, with
21 the parcel exception of South Street
22 Headhouse District where there's a
23 partnership between QVNA, Bella Vista,
24 South Street, Society Hill Civic and Wash
25 Square West. Now with the enactment of

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2 the new Zoning Code, in many instances
3 there are three, four, five or even more
4 recognized local RCOs for all or some
5 portion of each neighborhood. It's the
6 notion of our local RCOs to have any
7 meaning, it seems to us that it adheres
8 in the neighborhood-specific knowledge
9 and experience accrued by residents and
10 the leaders of these civic associations.
11 It seems to us that the Planning
12 Commission intended precisely to harness
13 this knowledge and experience in deciding
14 on the physical future of our city, not
15 pitting one group against another for the
16 right to participate in the process.

17 It is my belief that in the
18 City of neighborhoods, it is critical to
19 have functioning civic organizations to
20 help articulate neighborhood interests
21 and to plan. I believe there is nearly a
22 one-to-one correlation between
23 neighborhoods that are stable and
24 well-functioning and the existence of a
25 single well-organized civic association.

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2 I believe that time and resources ought
3 to be invested in helping create such
4 organizations rather than creating more
5 confusion in the process.

6 Thus, we respectfully urge the
7 City to consider rationalizing the
8 process and apply the criteria we all
9 assumed were being followed when we sent
10 in our applications to determine what
11 groups garner status as local RCOs.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
14 you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr. Ali,
17 before you start, Ms. Marconi, could you
18 just read the next group so they can be
19 ready.

20 THE CLERK: Anthony Byrd,
21 Douglas Swigon, Mary McNeil, Amara
22 Rockar, Matt Ruben.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr. Ali,
24 please.

25 MR. ALI: Good morning,

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2 Mr. Chairman and other distinguished
3 members of this Committee. My name is
4 Jihad Ali. I'm here today appearing on
5 behalf of Southwest Philadelphia District
6 Services.

7 For the record, I would like to
8 say that we oppose the RCOs. You know,
9 thinking about what Councilwoman Blondell
10 Reynolds Brown said about how the average
11 person needs to hear something seven
12 times, that would explain why this got by
13 me, because when they did all the talk
14 throughout the summer over the Zoning
15 Code, the big difference was the focus
16 was on the Zoning Code was changing.
17 This RCO was a trojan horse that was in
18 there, because I look at it -- it is a
19 black and a white issue, because this is
20 along the same lines that came up to take
21 away the black people's vote in this past
22 election. This is the same kind of
23 mentality that's behind this.

24 Because I'm proud to say this
25 is the people's house. Councilwoman

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2 always says this is the people's house.

3 Well, I'm proud to come down here,

4 because I paid my dues. I'm a retired

5 marine. I'm a former marine. I'm a

6 retired police officer. So I take my

7 civic responsibilities to heart. When I

8 come out, I come out because I have a

9 right to hear. I have a right to speak

10 into this mic. I don't give my votes to

11 anybody.

12 (Applause.)

13 MR. ALI: When it's election

14 time, we vote for y'all. I believe in

15 y'all. I believe in every one of you.

16 Now, two of you I have to --

17 well, one of you I have to give a round

18 of applause to, and that's Councilwoman

19 Jannie Blackwell, and to Tiffany Green,

20 because this got by me. And I'd like to

21 thank them for bringing this to our

22 attention.

23 The issue about the RCOs to

24 keep in mind as Councilpeople is, we

25 elect you. You're giving your power to

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2 non-elected people. Now, the
3 Administration did a wonderful job in
4 snowing the people, because the names
5 that I've always heard is Eva Gladstein
6 and Alan Greenberger. But when you look
7 at that committee, when you get past the
8 RCO issues for the small committees, when
9 you look at the big committee, the Civic
10 Design Review Committee, the seven
11 members, if something goes in front of
12 them seven members, it doesn't even come
13 to the RCOs. But that's where Council
14 needs to have their representative. Why
15 can't one of those seven people be
16 Councilwoman Blackwell? Why can't it be
17 you, Mr. Chairman, or you, Blondell? Why
18 can't one of the people's leaders be on
19 that seven-panel Civic Design Review
20 Committee? Because that's how we're
21 going to maintain control, because what
22 they're going to do is bypass us. You're
23 taking all that power, the million people
24 that voted for our leaders, and we're
25 giving it to people that will be out with

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2 the next Administration. That's not the
3 way this is supposed to be. This is the
4 people's house. Supposed to be led by
5 the people.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
8 you.

9 Thank you both.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just call
12 the names again, Ms. Marconi, and see who
13 is here. I'm not sure who is here.

14 THE CLERK: Anthony Byrd,
15 Douglas Swigon, Mary McNeil, Amara
16 Rockar, Matt Ruben.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Anybody?
18 (Witness approached witness
19 table.)

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
21 morning.

22 MS. ROCKAR: Good morning.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please
24 identify yourself for the record and
25 proceed.

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2 MS. ROCKAR: My name is Amara
3 Rockar and I'm a homeowner in Cedar Park.
4 I just want to clarify that these
5 comments reflect my opinions and my
6 opinions alone, not Cedar Park Neighbors
7 or any other organization.

8 I understand that there are
9 concerns that communities without a
10 registered community organization will
11 not be able to get their voices heard and
12 that the qualifications to become an RCO
13 are too strict. I looked up the
14 application to become an RCO and found
15 the following requirements:

16 Phone numbers for primary and
17 alternate contact; mission statement;
18 written rules such as bylaws; boundary
19 description that must conform to the
20 bylaws or governing documents; names of
21 Board members, executive committee
22 members, other leadership; recent meeting
23 announcement within the last six months;
24 recent meeting agenda within the last six
25 months.

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2 To me, these elements seem like
3 the basic requirements for a true
4 community organization that can
5 adequately represent the wishes of a
6 neighborhood. Since there are obviously
7 those that disagree, I thought I'd share
8 my experience at a zoning meeting held by
9 an organization that is not currently
10 eligible to become an RCO.

11 I received a flyer for the
12 zoning meeting at my home 24 hours before
13 the meeting was to be held. Earlier in
14 the week, I spoke to the person
15 organizing it, as he was petitioning the
16 neighborhood in opposition to the
17 development. He mentioned he was
18 concerned that community members outside
19 the boundaries of our neighborhood
20 organization, Cedar Park Neighbors, but
21 near the project had not been notified or
22 had an opportunity to meet with the
23 developers.

24 Because of the late notice for
25 the meeting, I posted the flyer on

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2 Facebook, and neighbors living in the
3 exact area the organizer was concerned
4 about commented that they had not
5 received a flyer, had not been notified,
6 and had no idea the meeting was
7 happening. This is not to fault the
8 organizer. He is just one person, and
9 there's only so much ground one person
10 can cover. But it speaks to the need for
11 RCOs to be more than a single person. If
12 there aren't other Board members or
13 volunteers to help publicize the
14 meetings, the RCO can't begin to properly
15 reach out to and represent the community.

16 The meeting itself was
17 something of a disaster. The organizer
18 didn't seem to understand what
19 constitutes an appropriate reason to
20 oppose a project based on the proposed
21 zoning. Consequently, much of the
22 two-hour meeting was spent on issues that
23 had nothing to do with the actual zoning
24 issues at hand. And I'm embarrassed to
25 say that a local ward leader spoke out

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2 against the project based on the complete
3 misunderstanding of how real estate
4 property tax assessments and the tax
5 abatement program work. To the
6 organizer's credit, a representative from
7 the Office of Property Assessment had
8 been invited and was able to explain that
9 everything the ward leader said was
10 incorrect. But it shows the need for
11 RCOs to specialize in handling zoning
12 matters. If the OPA employee hadn't been
13 there, the misinformation might never
14 have been corrected.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We have
16 your testimony, so if you could wrap up,
17 I'd appreciate it.

18 MS. ROCKAR: Yes.

19 As is often the case with this
20 kind of meeting, the loudest and most
21 upset voices from the community tended to
22 dominate the conversation. There are
23 many community members who supported the
24 project, but felt uncomfortable speaking
25 out in that kind of environment.

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2 Consequently, I was relieved when at the
3 end of the meeting ballots were
4 distributed for community members to vote
5 on the project. However, we were then
6 told they were sample ballots and never
7 notified of the vote tally. To this day
8 I still don't know exactly was the
9 outcome of the meeting. Again, I don't
10 blame the organizer, because he doesn't
11 run a community organization that has
12 members with the capacity to report to
13 them and be accountable.

14 If there are concerns about the
15 lack of RCOs in underrepresented
16 communities, we should be focusing on
17 fostering RCOs under the current
18 guidelines and helping community
19 organizations build capacity. As my
20 experience shows, without those
21 requirements, zoning meetings held by
22 unregistered, unorganized community
23 groups actually end up doing a disservice
24 to the very communities and people they
25 are attempting to serve and represent.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am,
3 all right. Okay. As I said, we've said
4 three minutes.

5 MS. ROCKAR: I just wanted to
6 get -- you have a copy --

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We set
8 the rules for three minutes. I told
9 everybody you didn't have to read your
10 testimony.

11 MS. ROCKAR: Okay.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
13 right. Thank you. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I'll
16 repeat that. Like Ms. Rockar had, if you
17 have written testimony, you don't have to
18 sit there and read it. That's why we
19 have it. That's why we have written
20 testimony.

21 Please call the next group.

22 THE CLERK: Steve Crum, Lemuel
23 Morries, Charles Hammock, Pela McFee, Ray
24 Nasser.

25 (No response.)

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Any of
3 those people here?

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
7 morning.

8 MR. NASSER: Good morning.
9 Thank you for hearing me and the chance
10 to be here. I represent the Hawthorne
11 community that's located south of South
12 Street and Broad and 11th Street.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: State
14 your name for the record.

15 MR. NASSER: My name is Ray
16 Nasser.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
18 you.

19 MR. NASSER: When we were using
20 our community organizer, when we were
21 using our RCO, one of the reason we were
22 using is because we're a community
23 organizer. We have elections in our
24 community. I was elected with 32 votes.
25 Yeah. We are -- I been living there for

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2 seven years. I did not become a Board
3 member right away, because they used to
4 call me, you are the newcomer.

5 Therefore, I show them that I'm not a
6 newcomer. I'm a new resident and I'm
7 working for my community, and that's what
8 the RCO is supposed to be.

9 Leaders in our community know
10 what they want for the best interest of
11 the neighborhood. We have fought big
12 developers, and we have fought against
13 Councilmens that are making wrong
14 decision. The wrong decision because you
15 can look at it, Broad and Washington.
16 They change the zoning code to C-5, which
17 you know what? It was wrong, but we
18 leave and we have to move on. Okay?

19 Another thing I say -- a lot of
20 people want to be part of the RCO, but
21 you know what? Just to be in
22 disagreement, not to look at things
23 correctly.

24 I have attended so many zoning
25 meeting, not just in our community, just

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2 to learn how things done.

3 About notifying our residents,
4 we do notify our residents. Maybe we
5 have a good system. We have e-mails. We
6 have websites. We have Facebook. We
7 have signage on the posts, which is
8 illegal, which I'm trying to tell the
9 Councilman in our district that you guys
10 should make an exception for our
11 community organizer to post flyers on the
12 post light, like, you know, safety
13 meetings and stuff like that. We always
14 afraid that we're going to get fined on
15 that.

16 But going back to RCO, I think
17 RCOs should be concentrated on community
18 organizer. We always have meetings. Our
19 meetings are publicized. You're welcome
20 to come and make your statement. If you
21 disagree, you can always write it. And
22 we always invite everybody to come to the
23 Zoning, ZBA, hearing and make their
24 opinion over there or contact the
25 Councilman if you think that the

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2 community is not doing the right thing or
3 making the right decision. We always
4 open for everything.

5 Yes, we are in a world and we
6 live in democracy. We're going to have
7 disagreement and we're not going to have
8 people that we agree and disagree.

9 Therefore, you know what? I understand
10 that everybody wants to have their voice,
11 opinion, but you go by majority. If I
12 don't like what my Councilman, then I
13 should have three different Councilmen in
14 our district. Maybe they will get it
15 right.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: We're not
17 going to change that one.

18 MR. NASSER: All right. Got
19 you. Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
21 you. That would be a lot of fun,
22 wouldn't it?

23 Could you call the next group,
24 please.

25 THE CLERK: Geraldine Brown,

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2 Ruth Bazemore, Judith Robinson, Jeffrey
3 Braff, Lawrence Lindsay, Betty Turner,
4 John Smyth.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Whoever
8 would like to go first, please. I'm
9 going to try to stick to the three-minute
10 limit because we still got some people
11 that want to testify.

12 MS. TURNER: Good morning --

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good
14 morning.

15 MR. TURNER: -- Chairman
16 Greenlee and members of the Rules
17 Committee of City Council. Thank you for
18 this opportunity. My name is Betty
19 Turner. I'm a retired education
20 administrator and faculty, but, most
21 importantly for today, I am the President
22 of Germantown Community Connection, a
23 non-profit 501(c)(3) macro grassroots
24 civic organization. I'm also 75 years
25 old. So I fit that realm around the 80

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2 group that the Councilwoman was speaking
3 of.

4 But my primary reason for being
5 here today is to give testimony in
6 support of the new Zoning Code and
7 particularly the registered community
8 organization system and the Civic Design
9 Review.

10 As I was preparing my testimony
11 to you today, I was reminded that the
12 citizens of Philadelphia voted for the
13 Zoning Code reform and that the new
14 Zoning Code Title 14 of The Philadelphia
15 Code has only been in effect since August
16 22nd, 2012, less than three months. I
17 was also reminded that we have no
18 evidence-based data to determine what
19 works and what does not work in almost
20 every area of the new Zoning Code. So I
21 was delighted to learn and understand
22 that the Rules Committee hearing is on a
23 resolution and not a hearing on an
24 ordinance.

25 I also want to share some stats

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2 with you, that during the course of the
3 development of the new Zoning Code, there
4 were over 50 community meetings across
5 the City led by the Zoning Commission.
6 Thirty-five hundred citizens of
7 Philadelphia were engaged in that, and
8 there were 31 commissioners.

9 I also want to share with you I
10 have had and been engaged in the
11 practice. As we have become a new RCO, I
12 have had the opportunity to be engaged.
13 To date, our local RCO has been involved
14 in two public meetings, each with a
15 different developer applicant and a
16 different local RCO in the Upper
17 Northwest. The first meeting concerned
18 new construction accessory to a main
19 building, construction accessory to a
20 main building. The two RCOs involved
21 after a public meeting offered support
22 for the application with four provisos in
23 keeping with community plans and the
24 approved Cheltenham Commercial Corridor
25 Beautification Plan, which was approved

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2 by both our community and the
3 Philadelphia City Planning Commission.
4 The outcome of the public meeting was
5 satisfactory to the community and the
6 developer applicant. By the way, this
7 one included also an issue-based RCO.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, I
9 need you to finish so we can keep the
10 same rules.

11 MS. TURNER: Okay. The second
12 involved --

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am,
14 really if you can give an example.

15 MS. TURNER: Can I just tell
16 you the second --

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: One
18 paragraph.

19 MS. TURNER: You need a
20 practice one.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: One
22 paragraph.

23 MS. TURNER: Okay. The second
24 involved an appeal to the Zoning Board of
25 Adjustment for a use variance, although

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2 initially the applicant did not realize
3 that there were two RCOs with overlapping
4 boundaries and notified only one. After
5 finding out his project had two RCOs,
6 with short notice he contacted the second
7 one. A public meeting was held, and the
8 outcome was support for the use variance.
9 The RCO letters -- in this case, each RCO
10 penned its own letter. The first one we
11 did a collaborative letter. The RCO --

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am, I
13 really -- Ms. Turner, I really need you
14 to finish, in all fairness, and other
15 people can testify.

16 MS. TURNER: If you really want
17 to know about the RCOs, you really have
18 to hear the practice.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I
20 understand, but, like I said, everybody
21 has to have --

22 MS. TURNER: Can I just have
23 two seconds, Mayor Greenlee? Can I just
24 have two seconds?

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

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2 you. No, not thank you. Trust me, I
3 don't want that.

4 MS. TURNER: Well, I'm in
5 support of the RCOs, and I think City
6 Council and you guys need to look at the
7 long-term vision and the effect that this
8 is going to have on community,
9 government, and the developers.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
11 you.

12 MS. TURNER: Thank you very
13 much.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you
15 for making me the Mayor for at least a
16 couple of seconds.

17 Whoever would like to go next,
18 please. Please identify yourself for the
19 record and proceed.

20 MS. BROWN: Yes. Good
21 afternoon. I'm Geraldine Brown. I'm the
22 Director/President of Dunlap Citizens and
23 Concerned in West Philadelphia area. I'm
24 also a block captain for 27 years. I'm
25 also a community activist as far as being

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2 with CDCs, the 52nd Street business
3 corridor, also the West Philadelphia
4 Coalition.

5 I'm also stating the same
6 thing. I felt like the way that we were
7 proceeding in all of the zoning meetings,
8 the workshops that they had at 3801, at
9 the Enterprise Center, we were all
10 participating in that process, but still
11 when it broke down, we was under the
12 impression it was about the zoning area,
13 not about that an ORC (sic) would come in
14 our community to tell us what we can do.

15 I'm also affiliated with
16 Ms. Elsie Wise. We have been around the
17 community, as Ms. Brown can testify to
18 know this about us, and we were not
19 informed. Now, our community center, the
20 building is under construction, but our
21 organization was very much alive and
22 operating as according to the ordinance
23 of our bylaws and according to our
24 building as far as being 301(c) and
25 operating in West Philadelphia.

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2 But we got no notification. In
3 fact, Mr. Redding was not even aware that
4 we were still up and running. And when
5 he was informed, he did contact me to let
6 me know that I may have missed out on
7 some of the meetings that the
8 Commissioner was having, but I was
9 welcome to come and then to testify as
10 well. So I feel that we as the grassroot
11 organizations who have been here and has
12 set the way to show people how -- and
13 even with the technology, we want to
14 encourage our young, our youth, to take
15 on what we have founded in our community.
16 And we're not going to have anyone to
17 come and tell us what we can and cannot
18 do in our community.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
21 you. Thank you, Ms. Brown.

22 Please identify yourself and
23 proceed.

24 MS. BAZEMORE: My name is Ruth
25 Bazemore. I'm the past President of

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2 Haddington Leadership. I have Block
3 Captains Coalition, which is 14 blocks.
4 I'm with Achievability. I'm with the
5 Haddington/Cobbs Creek CDC, and I'm a
6 community activist, and actually I have
7 been the President of Haddington working
8 with Mr. Redding for years.

9 I found out that our community
10 was no longer being even mentioned at the
11 City Planning, and I contacted Dunlap and
12 other groups. Because why? We the
13 grassroot -- we founded this area, and
14 I've been really active in Haddington and
15 for -- it seems like now the community
16 groups are not even part of the Mayor
17 committee. You're not even recognizing
18 community as who we are. And so when I
19 found out about the RCO, it was already
20 like in place and you had to come to
21 meetings. Are you kidding me? We have
22 meetings, and what we already do -- and I
23 said I wasn't going to even apply,
24 because I think it's basically disregard
25 our democracy and who we are. And for

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2 the regulations that they want for us to
3 be a part of something we founded, it
4 just don't even make sense.

5 When you tell us that we have
6 to have an advisory board, we have to
7 have monthly meetings, we have to give
8 you minutes, you know, I go to Planning
9 meetings and they give agenda and they
10 never give me any minutes of what the
11 City is doing. Are you kidding me?

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. BAZEMORE: I feel that it's
14 a violation of our rights. We just went
15 to Zoning for something that came into
16 our neighborhood that people are coming
17 in without due process, and we were able
18 to prevail, because Zoning sent them back
19 to the community for the community to
20 have meetings. And we prevailed. And we
21 still do what we need to do, but we don't
22 need other groups who don't know us,
23 don't know the City and going to tell us
24 how to run it.

25 Thank you.

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2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
4 you, Ms. Bazemore.

5 Thank all of three of you for
6 being here.

7 MS. TURNER: Thank you very
8 much.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You're
10 welcome.

11 MS. TURNER: I wish I had more
12 than three minutes.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Ma'am,
14 those people who have waited a long time
15 would be here until 4 o'clock if we gave
16 everybody all the time they wanted.

17 Sir, whoever would like to go
18 first, please identify yourself for the
19 record and proceed.

20 MR. LINDSAY: Lawrence Lindsay.
21 I'm a resident of Carpenter Street in the
22 Bella Vista section of Philadelphia.

23 I agree with those who have
24 come before me that say that a strong
25 community organization that has to follow

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2 certain rules has to be open to the
3 public is critical to a proper
4 examination of the zoning issues. I have
5 one specific criticism of the process as
6 it exists now.

7 We were relieved to find that
8 there were certain criteria, but when the
9 zoning map became available, we also
10 found that there was a brand new RCO in
11 our neighborhood, a neighborhood that's
12 had an established community association
13 and an informally recognized zoning
14 committee for decades, and yet there was
15 a new entity which had been recognized,
16 without adequate scrutiny, in our
17 opinion. And what I think needs to be
18 tweaked is the fact that as far as I can
19 tell, there's no mechanism to appeal a
20 decision to recognize the community
21 association. There should be -- our
22 association could have been denied, as
23 many of the residents here have
24 complained today.

25 I think there needs to be some

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2 mechanism to challenge the application of
3 the criteria. That's my only comment.

4 Right now I don't see it in your
5 regulations. It seems like the staff has
6 the ability to recognize or not
7 recognize. In our case, we thought they
8 were overinclusive. They created
9 confusion for the developer where none
10 existed before, recognizing two dual RCOs
11 within the same area. When we examined
12 the code, we didn't see a mechanism to
13 challenge that determination.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I got
16 you.

17 And, Ms. Gladstein, both
18 Councilwoman Brown and I would like to
19 maybe get into that a little bit after
20 Mr. Braff testifies. Maybe we could ask
21 a little bit about this whole appeal,
22 oversight, or whatever you want to use.

23 Mr. Braff.

24 MR. SMYTH: It's John Smyth.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I'm

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2 sorry.

3 MR. SMYTH: That's all right.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sorry
5 about that. Go ahead, please.

6 MR. SMYTH: I understand many
7 of the groups in this room either don't
8 understand the policies, haven't been
9 given a fair shake, might need some help.
10 More than anything, I heard they're
11 looking for respect. I feel very similar
12 to them.

13 In Bella Vista, over 20 years
14 ago, we didn't have neighborhood
15 organizations. We had political
16 ambitions. And what I did is, I became
17 the founder of the Bella Vista Town Watch
18 to protect homeowners' rights. We have
19 volunteers. We're organized,
20 professional, and we have rules for
21 zoning in particular that mirror the ZBA.
22 We try to make things simple without our
23 own rules.

24 Furthermore, we've learned to
25 work very closely and professionally with

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2 Queen Village, Hawthorne, Society Hill
3 and Wash West.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That
5 wasn't your three minutes yet.

6 MR. SMYTH: Well, just to
7 finish, our reward for working with them
8 and all the political agencies was a
9 change in the RCO rules that made it more
10 confusing. We'd like to have --

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Made it
12 more confusing? Okay.

13 Mr. Lindsay, before you leave,
14 just so I'm clear, did your group apply
15 to be an RCO?

16 MR. LINDSAY: We did. We
17 thought the application process was
18 simple and fair. We have to have public
19 meetings --

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And you
21 were accepted?

22 MR. LINDSAY: We were accepted.
23 We have no problem with that, but what
24 happened was, all of the sudden there was
25 a second group with no history of any

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2 hearings in the community, no history of
3 any true organization, not open to the
4 public, who was also recognized.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: So you're
6 saying when you talked about appeal, you
7 talk about appealing someone else or
8 another group being able to also be an
9 RCO; is that what you're saying?

10 MR. LINDSAY: Both. We should
11 have standing to appeal the recognition
12 of another community or association,
13 but -- an RCO, not community group. But
14 also I see no mechanism to appeal had
15 the --

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Had you
17 been rejected?

18 MR. LINDSAY: Had we been
19 rejected.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
21 right.

22 Ms. Gladstein, if we could just
23 talk about that for a second, please. I
24 know there's a couple other people that
25 came later and want to testify too, but I

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2 think that struck both of us up here as
3 an issue as far as if for whatever reason
4 there was a group that thought they were
5 aggrieved, and you heard the two
6 scenarios, one either they were turned
7 down or they think there's a group that
8 isn't, quote/unquote, legitimate, could
9 you address that.

10 MS. GLADSTEIN: Sure. We
11 created -- again, the Zoning Code
12 delegated this to the Planning
13 Commission. So we created an internal
14 review process or an appeal process, if
15 you will, which came into being when Rick
16 Redding testified he shared that he was
17 part of the review, and the reason he was
18 part of the reason is that the review
19 goes through several levels, and we did
20 review requests for additional
21 consideration, requests about groups that
22 were -- we didn't reject any group. We
23 simply accepted or not, and every group
24 that --

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Well, if

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2 you didn't accept, you rejected, right?

3 MS. GLADSTEIN: Right, but each
4 group that was not yet accepted, we sent
5 a note saying we'd be happy to work with
6 you to continue to get accepted and have
7 work still ongoing with some groups. So
8 we have not created an appeal process
9 outside of the Planning Commission, but
10 within the Planning Commission we've had
11 three levels of review.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Now,
13 within the Planning Commission, how does
14 someone -- I guess they know if they're
15 not accepted what they can do, right, it
16 sounds like what you're telling me, but
17 what if -- and I think this was what
18 Mr. Lindsay is saying, that at least in
19 his opinion, there was a group formed
20 that hadn't meet that criteria. Would
21 they know how to raise that issue with
22 the Planning Commission?

23 MS. GLADSTEIN: Probably three
24 or four groups objected to the fact that
25 another group was approved, because they

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2 felt they didn't have a history or they
3 were just stating what they would do
4 going forward. In general, they either
5 shared that letter with the community
6 planner from the Planning Commission, who
7 then -- or the letter went in one or two
8 cases directly to Deputy Mayor
9 Greenberger. In both cases, the
10 Community Planning Division reviewed that
11 request. I reviewed it along with Gary
12 Jastrzab, the Executive Director, and
13 then the Deputy Mayor.

14 But perhaps what we can do in
15 our regulations is to state that more
16 clearly, because I agree it's not stated
17 clearly in our regulation. It's just
18 something that we did internally.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just so
20 people know what to do, because I
21 understand there is a possibility of some
22 groups could pop up and maybe they figure
23 out how to do the paperwork right or fill
24 out the forms. Maybe they really don't
25 have that history.

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2 MS. GLADSTEIN: Well, part of
3 this was the dilemma of managing this
4 process, that you want to be inclusive,
5 as Councilwoman Blackwell said many
6 times. Inclusivity meant that we were
7 taking on good faith the statements that
8 groups were making on paper, whereas
9 other groups felt that perhaps they
10 should not be included. So we heard both
11 from groups that were not included that
12 wanted to be included and we heard from
13 groups who felt that we had accepted too
14 many of the applications.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: My point
16 was just so people know the process.

17 MS. GLADSTEIN: I think it's
18 fair to state it would be helpful to have
19 the appeal process in writing.

20 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I don't
21 want to do back and forth. If you have a
22 question, you can ask Ms. Gladstein. If
23 you have a question, you can ask Ms.
24 Gladstein, because we have some other
25 people that need to testify. Because I

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2 don't want to go back and forth. We'll
3 be here forever.

4 MR. SMYTH: Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I think
6 we have two names of people who came here
7 and that were already called, but we'll
8 call them again.

9 THE CLERK: Matt Ruben and
10 Madeline Shikomba.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
12 Ms. Shikomba, if you want to -- now, for
13 both of you, because you were not here,
14 we got a three-minute limit. We held
15 that to everybody else. I got to hold it
16 to everybody.

17 (Witnesses approached witness
18 table.)

19 MS. SHIKOMBA: Well, I was
20 incapacitated at this point. That's why
21 I wasn't here.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: No.
23 That's fine.

24 MS. SHIKOMBA: My name is
25 Madeline Shikomba. I'm here to testify

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2 regarding RCOs.

3 I disagree with Ms. Eva

4 Gladstein what she said about groups.

5 These policies was just recently

6 established. You should not have all

7 groups adhere to these policies

8 immediately. They should be allowed to

9 apply, be given status as RCOs, then meet

10 those standards that have been

11 established.

12 You are now favoring

13 established groups, which leads people

14 who have newly formed groups cannot even

15 apply for RCOs. This is not what this

16 amendment was for. So, therefore, I

17 would suggest that you should at least

18 look at it as a different matter.

19 The requirement prevents newly

20 formed groups from being registered as

21 RCOs. The present requirements to

22 register as RCO favor groups already

23 established. Newly formed groups are not

24 being able to meet these requirements, so

25 some provisions must be made for them to

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2 meet it.

3 Registration should be open at
4 all times and not restricted to a certain
5 period of time. By having open
6 registration, the groups can apply at any
7 time. Ten months out of a 12-month year
8 an organization cannot apply. That means
9 that developers can get his proposal
10 through during the hiatus, especially if
11 he knows an area does not have an RCO.
12 He can wait for that hiatus period to get
13 his RCO -- his proposal accepted.

14 A renewal should be every three
15 years. I don't want to see the CPC
16 coming back here in a year saying, Oh, we
17 don't have enough staff to meet this
18 requirement. If you have it for three
19 years, they have enough staff and they
20 wouldn't be coming back to you looking
21 for more money. That's what I see
22 they've been doing.

23 Issues-based organizations
24 should not be required to be
25 incorporated. Issues-based organizations

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2 should not be asked to meet any higher
3 requirement than the standard RCO.

4 City funding organizations
5 should not be allowed to be RCOs. Why?
6 Because it's a conflict of interest.
7 RCOs may be subject to undue influence.
8 City agencies that are RCOs may be
9 subject to undue influence. Receiving
10 City funding may tempt them to sabotage
11 or hold up projects they may not support
12 or not in their personal interest.

13 Realtors and developers should
14 not be allowed to serve as
15 representatives of RCOs or be on RCO
16 Boards or hold RCO office on the Board,
17 because, again, conflict of interest.

18 We're also asking that an
19 appealing agency be established. The CPC
20 should not be the appealing agency. How
21 many self-regulations have or are willing
22 to overturn their own decision?

23 Presently I'm suggesting that the City
24 Councilperson should have the right to
25 override CPC decisions concerning denial

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2 of RCO status to groups that are in their
3 area until such an agency and/or
4 procedure is established.

5 Furthermore, City Council
6 should be provided with a list of all
7 groups being denied RCO status, and the
8 list should include the name of the group
9 denied RCO status, the area -- the reason
10 for their denial, the area in which they
11 serve, and the City Council district in
12 which they were located.

13 Furthermore, I think that
14 the --

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:
16 Ms. Shikomba, I need you to finish. This
17 needs to be the last paragraph.

18 MS. SHIKOMBA: Okay. The
19 criteria for RCOs should be established
20 for all. They have been sending out
21 letters to different RCOs asking for
22 additional information that is not
23 required as of right now for RCOs to
24 apply.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All

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2 right. I appreciate it, ma'am. Thank
3 you.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

6 Mr. Ruben, if you'd like to come forward,
7 please. If you could identify yourself,
8 please, and proceed.

9 MR. RUBEN: Good afternoon. My
10 name is Matt Ruben. I'm President of the
11 Northern Liberties Neighbors Association.
12 I apologize. I was rushing to get here,
13 so thank you for taking me now.

14 First, I want to say that the
15 lady's -- some of the lady's comments
16 just now are actually quite important. I
17 think it would be beneficial for openness
18 and transparency to know what
19 organizations have been, at least as of
20 now, denied RCO status, and I think
21 anything that can be done to improve the
22 ability of any group to apply for RCO
23 status would be great.

24 I would like to say, however,
25 that there have been a number of concerns

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2 that have been raised about RCOs, and I
3 have been -- I was following it earlier
4 today online on the live stream, and
5 those concerns are important.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That
7 wasn't three minutes. Go ahead. This
8 high technology.

9 MR. RUBEN: But I don't believe
10 that these proposed amendments address
11 most of these concerns, and that's the
12 main issue here.

13 So I am very much in favor of
14 addressing a lot of the concerns that
15 organizations have that do not have a
16 tremendous amount of staff or technical
17 capacity. I'm in favor of more openness
18 and in doing everything we can
19 politically and policy-wise to help every
20 organization that wants to be an RCO
21 become one, but I do not think the
22 proposed amendments as written address
23 most of these concerns.

24 My understanding is, the
25 amendments include, among other things,

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2 requirements for hand flyering by RCOs
3 that not only would be onerous for
4 well-organized organizations in some
5 circumstances, but that would make it
6 even harder for the less well-organized
7 groups to fulfill that role. So I think
8 there's a contradictory message being
9 sent here. On the one hand, say no to
10 RCOs and on the other hand, put
11 additional requirements on RCOs. I think
12 it's very tempting for community groups
13 to want their Councilpeople to be able to
14 make decisions about who the community
15 group is, unless and until your community
16 group ends up on the wrong side of such a
17 decision. I think the best thing is to
18 have a rational, open policy to enable
19 administratively to be determined who
20 RCOs are. And the problems in
21 communities where you do not have an
22 established RCO are not caused by RCO
23 legislation. They're caused by a long
24 history of organizations trying their
25 best to stand up for their community

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2 without the necessary resources and
3 political support. And the RCO system
4 attempts to help with that and does not
5 contribute to or hurt that.

6 So I would hate for us to ruin
7 well-considered RCO rules that they have
8 no role in causing these problems. I
9 don't think we should make this problem
10 worse, and I think that portions of these
11 amendments threaten to do so.

12 Finally, I will end by saying I
13 understand the principle of councilmanic
14 prerogative and the importance of
15 collegiality on Council. However, these
16 amendments would affect the entire city,
17 and I think it goes overboard to assume
18 that a committee should pass any piece of
19 legislation simply because it happens to
20 have been introduced. So I would
21 encourage this Committee to carefully
22 consider the language of these amendments
23 and to consider the fact that these will
24 not address many of the issues that have
25 been raised here today, and in some cases

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2 will make it more onerous for these
3 organizations which are small and
4 valiantly struggling to represent their
5 communities.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Let me
8 just say, first of all, on your last
9 comment, I don't think this Committee or
10 any committee just approves bills because
11 they're submitted.

12 MR. RUBEN: I don't either, but
13 I just want you to know that that's a
14 concern that we have.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Then
16 why say it?

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I think
18 you were insinuating something there,
19 that we already made up our mind, and
20 that's absolutely not accurate. And if
21 you had been here just a couple days ago,
22 there was some proposals that we thought
23 were not timely to be brought up and we
24 didn't accept them.

25 MR. RUBEN: Mr. Chairman, I

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2 will --

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That was
4 a little out of line on that.

5 MR. RUBEN: Mr. Chairman, I
6 respect that your view is that, and to
7 clarify, I would say I think that there
8 should not be a presumption towards, say,
9 compromising between what exists and
10 what's been introduced until there's been
11 a real assessment of whether or not
12 what's been introduced will actually
13 improve the situation even in a
14 compromised form.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And
16 that's why we're having the hearing, to
17 consider both sides of that.

18 MR. RUBEN: I appreciate that.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And we've
20 heard from both sides today.

21 Councilwoman Blackwell.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
23 think some people just think we're
24 supposed to live without government and
25 without elected officials. The same

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2 comments I made to Ms. Bolender refer to
3 you. And if you read the regulations
4 carefully, it gives many examples and
5 many ways that people can contact a
6 community. Flyering is only one of them,
7 and flyering is not necessarily difficult
8 for community organizations. You have to
9 speak for yourself. But I could see the
10 trend of thought that you and some others
11 have who have gotten together who decided
12 elected officials have no role, but I
13 dare to beg with you, that we're elected
14 to have a role. We're elected to try to
15 protect our citizens, and we are elected
16 to try to make sure there is inclusion,
17 and the only way you can deal with that
18 is -- maybe you agree with some
19 overthrowing the government, but we're
20 going to be involved as long as we're
21 elected. And we thank you for your
22 comments. We hear this little trend of
23 stuff that you all have met with and
24 tried to say that this is what you want
25 to see, but you're wrong, and as long as

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2 we're elected, we're going to represent
3 people who send us here in spite of
4 people like you who think that elected
5 officials have no say.

6 MR. RUBEN: Councilwoman, you
7 have a right to your opinion, but not to
8 your own facts, and I resent the
9 implication --

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
11 you don't have a right --

12 MR. RUBEN: -- that we want to
13 overthrow the government.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I have
15 a right --

16 MR. RUBEN: We have worked
17 extensively with our Councilperson.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Mr.
19 Ruben --

20 (Everyone talking at one time.)

21 COURT REPORTER: I can only
22 take one person at a time.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: If you
24 don't like what we say, you don't have to
25 be here. But we run this. We run this.

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2 And with that, we'll say thank you for
3 your comments and we invite you --

4 MR. RUBEN: We support City
5 government, and this has been done with
6 legislative involvement. I will not be
7 characterized as someone who doesn't want
8 government to have a role, because it is
9 not accurate, and I want to make sure
10 that my comments are all on the record in
11 that regard.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
13 heard you.

14 MR. RUBEN: Thank you very much
15 for your time.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
17 right.

18 (Audience members talking.)

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Hold it.
20 Easy, easy, everybody. We're almost
21 through this. But we can't have people
22 speaking at the same time, and this is
23 City Council and the Councilperson has
24 the right to speak first.

25 Ms. Gladstein, just for the

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2 record, we had talked about -- you don't
3 have to come back up. We had talked
4 about the appeal mechanism, and you said
5 you'd take a look at that. If we could
6 get -- if there's changes, if we could
7 certainly be informed of that, I'd
8 appreciate it.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And we
10 want it written. We want copies.

11 MS. GLADSTEIN: What we can do
12 is prior to December 4th, we'll share
13 those with you.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
15 you. I appreciate that.

16 Ms. Turner, your comments will
17 be made part of the record. Okay?

18 MS. TURNER: Thank you so much.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You're
20 welcome.

21 MS. TURNER: I really enjoyed
22 being here.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
24 right. I appreciate being called the
25 Mayor for about two seconds.

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2 Being no one else here to
3 testify -- we have other people to
4 testify. Please, sir, come forward.
5 We're going to stick to that three-minute
6 rule now.

7 You too? Why don't you come
8 forward too.

9 MR. LOCKARD: Yeah. I
10 registered.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Did you?

12 MR. LOCKARD: Yeah.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Maybe
14 your name was called. What's your name,
15 sir?

16 MR. LOCKARD: Philip Lockard.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It
18 doesn't matter. Go ahead, please.
19 Please identify yourself.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 MR. LOCKARD: My name is Philip
23 Lockard. I live in North Philadelphia,
24 and I appreciate you giving us the chance
25 to put our two cents into this ROC (sic)

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2 dialogue today.

3 I'm from North Philadelphia
4 because I want you to see that I am the
5 victim of zoning. We were trying to be
6 organized over there so we can get out of
7 the way of revitalization. We want to
8 beautify Philadelphia. And what they did
9 to us over there in North Philly is just
10 the first step of what the ROC is going
11 to do to the people in Southwest and West
12 Philadelphia, systematically taking their
13 rights away from the culture of the
14 communities, putting other people in and
15 making them the bosses all over people
16 that have been standing in the community
17 for years.

18 I've been a block captain for
19 45 years, an ex-committee person in '98
20 to '99, and the people that's running my
21 community today because of NTI, who went
22 to work with people that had shady
23 backgrounds, we have no rights. We have
24 no say-so, and they're going to push us
25 out of our community.

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2 Now, I'm going to take the
3 other half of this and say, there is a
4 solution to this. With all this money
5 changing hands, with all this
6 gentrification authority, why is it that
7 the homeowners always got to be on the
8 low end of the deal? There's enough
9 money to get people out of your way so
10 that we can beautify Philadelphia without
11 being hostile toward one another. But to
12 just put the homeowners at the bottom of
13 a high end constantly is totally inhuman.
14 Just like they do in my community now,
15 which is overran by people that work the
16 corners and because they got somebody who
17 had a hand higher than ours, they control
18 our community now, and they're pushing us
19 out, and we have no say-so. I wish we
20 did have an ROC commission down there,
21 but because we wasn't organized back in
22 the '90s and because the Police
23 Department and the Zoning Department and
24 everything else didn't work in our favor,
25 here we are.

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2 We're getting ready to be
3 plucked out of our neighborhoods, and the
4 location is 20 minutes from all points of
5 the City. The location is worth more
6 than the house.

7 So gentrification need to be
8 revised down to a human level, because
9 we're not machines or cans that you can
10 kick down the road. We are human beings
11 in the community, and we are part of
12 Philadelphia and we want to beautify
13 Philadelphia. So with giving a ten-year
14 tax abatement to developers and giving
15 the homeowners the shaft is not going to
16 fly no more. We want to get out the way,
17 but make it possible so that we can get
18 out the way.

19 And I thank you, Chairman
20 Greenlee, and I want to say hi to my
21 favorite Councilman, Jannie Blackwell,
22 and thank you for this time.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
24 you, sir. Thank you.

25 Sir, please identify yourself

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2 for the record.

3 MR. HUDGINS: Yes. Good
4 morning. My name is Reginald Hudgins and
5 I'm a resident of West Philadelphia, and
6 I came to the hearings this morning to
7 voice my opinion that the RCOs, as the
8 way it's constituted now, is not heading
9 in the direction of empowering the
10 citizens of the great City of
11 Philadelphia.

12 As it is constituted, it
13 disenfranchises the majority of the
14 people who are not able to become RCOs.
15 And we have to be very careful that we
16 don't sell out our city to land
17 speculators and developers. The citizens
18 are the ones that control the City, and
19 we must -- it's grateful that you
20 Councilmembers are working with that.

21 We have to be careful, because
22 what we're going to do, we're going to
23 hack our city to land speculators and
24 then our monies, even for the City
25 government, are being taken over by

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2 private entities, and as a result, this
3 will take the power from the people of
4 this great City of Philadelphia.

5 So I am thankful that you have
6 held these hearings and take in
7 consideration the advocacy of the people
8 who have been living here for years.

9 There's no friction between the
10 newcomers, as I say, and old-comers, but
11 the people who have been here know what
12 is great for this city, and the other
13 ones who want to make the changes should
14 take heed to the advocacy of these
15 long-term residents in Philadelphia and
16 continue the great work of Councilman
17 Greenlee and Mrs. Blackwell and assure
18 that we do continue to have our rights
19 and don't sell the City to the
20 speculators and land developers. All
21 over the City it's going that way. The
22 best thing for the speculators and the
23 land developers to do is instead of them
24 doing that, give the money to the City so
25 that you can do the work that you're

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2 supposed to do. They want to develop
3 housing. You have housing departments in
4 Philadelphia and the education. Let
5 those people donate their money to the
6 City and as a charity so that you can
7 fulfill your obligation to the citizens
8 of this great city.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
11 you. Thank you, sir.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Is there
14 anyone else here that wants to offer
15 comment or testimony? Sir, yes.

16 (Witness approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please
19 identify yourself for the record and
20 proceed.

21 MR. BODE: My name is Charles
22 Bode. I've been a resident of West
23 Philadelphia since 1968.

24 I'd like to address a technical
25 issue in an e-mail that came about the

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2 proposed ordinance, and it says, RCOs
3 will have to provide written notice, and
4 it goes on to say, every resident on each
5 block. And I would like to suggest that
6 that is quite difficult. We have
7 problems with gated communities, with
8 apartment buildings that are locked.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir, let
10 me just be clear. Where are you reading
11 that from? What e-mail? Where did it
12 come from?

13 MR. BODE: It's an e-mail that
14 seems to have come from Eva Gladstein
15 about the new ordinance apparently.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
17 right. You want to come up now and
18 address that?

19 Was there something else you
20 wanted to say?

21 MR. BODE: What I want to say
22 is instead of every resident, which would
23 include babies, people in prisons,
24 instead of every resident, which will be
25 difficult to do, that it should be a

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2 good-faith effort to get to every
3 property or something such as that
4 instead of every resident. That's my one
5 point.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I don't
7 think it logically meant every resident,
8 but --

9 MR. BODE: Well, that's what --

10 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I
11 understand.

12 Why don't you come up.

13 MS. GLADSTEIN: It currently
14 says every occupant, business owner, and
15 business operator. And I think perhaps
16 we can work with the Councilwoman's
17 office just to take into account if there
18 is a multi-family building or whatever
19 how that gets drafted, just to make it
20 clear that you might be flyering the
21 building rather than every apartment or
22 something like that.

23 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
24 All right. I'm slightly lost, but go
25 ahead.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
3 wouldn't have had these problems if you
4 had just worked with us instead of
5 sending out e-mails to confuse people.
6 And in many places, we put good-faith
7 efforts, and if --

8 MS. GLADSTEIN: It does say
9 good-faith effort.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
11 didn't send out that e-mail. You created
12 your own issue sending out that e-mail.

13 MS. GLADSTEIN: It does
14 currently say occupants, business owners,
15 and operators. All occupants, business
16 owners, and operators.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I guess I
18 didn't see the e-mail, so okay. I got
19 you.

20 All right. Thank you. Thank
21 you both.

22 One more time, is there anyone
23 else here to testify on this resolution?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Seeing

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2 none, now what this Committee will do on
3 this resolution will recess to the call
4 of the Chair. There will be, I'm sure,
5 conversation between now and the hearing
6 to try to work out some issues.

7 The one thing -- Mr. Ruben
8 left, I think, but he said something, I
9 think, about let's not negotiate. Maybe
10 I misunderstood him, but if he said that,
11 he was definitely wrong on that one. He
12 said something about negotiating or let's
13 not negotiate something. But in any
14 event, I think we need to negotiate this
15 and negotiate some of the other issues
16 that are coming up.

17 So, again, unless there's
18 further comment or questions, the
19 Committee on Rules on Resolution 120638
20 will be recessed to the call of the
21 Chair.

22 Thank you.

23 (Committee on Rules recessed at
24 12:30 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
proceedings, evidence and objections are
contained fully and accurately in the
stenographic notes taken by me upon the
foregoing matter on November 16, 2012, and
that this is a true and correct transcript of
same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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