

Joint Committee on Labor and Civil Service and Public Safety
March 11, 2020

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
JOINT COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND CIVIL SERVICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Room 400, City Hall
1400 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 191

Wednesday, March 11, 2020
10:10 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE PARKER, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM

RESOLUTION: 200036

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2 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Good
3 morning. This hearing is called to
4 order. This is the public hearing of
5 the Joint Committee on Labor and Civil
6 Service and Public Safety. The purpose
7 of this public hearing is to hear
8 testimony on Resolution No. 200036.
9 Members on the Committee in attendance
10 are to my left, Councilmembers Kenyatta
11 Johnson and Isaiah Thomas. Councilman
12 Curtis Jones who is the Chair of Public
13 Safety is directly across the hall in
14 our Caucus room finishing up a
15 briefing, but we did want to get
16 started for the record, keeping in mind
17 that our law enforcement officials who
18 are present today have some very
19 pressing issues to attend to so we
20 wanted to make sure we got started as
21 expeditiously as possible.

22 Before we begin, I want to
23 just provide some opening remarks to
24 give some context for my colleagues.
25 Several months ago, one of my friends

1 shared with me an incredible news
2 article about a woman who called 911 to
3 report a domestic violence incident,
4 but she did it under the guise of
5 ordering a pizza.

6 And when the 911 dispatcher
7 who was a seasoned worker with more
8 than 14 years on the job answered the
9 call, he initially thought it was the
10 wrong number or even a prank call. But
11 when the woman on the other line
12 insisted and gave her address, the
13 dispatcher realized that it was
14 something more serious going on.

15 The dispatcher began to ask
16 her a series of questions that could be
17 answered yes or no, and she answered
18 with sentences like yup, I need a large
19 pizza and, no, with pepperoni. When
20 the dispatcher reached out to the
21 police about the incident, he told them
22 to turn off their sirens when
23 approaching the apartment.

24 It turns out that the woman
25 called because her mother's boyfriend

1 had come home and begun to physically
2 abuse her mother. The dispatcher said
3 he had never received a call using this
4 kind of coded language before, but he
5 could tell that the woman needed help.

6 This was the story that made
7 me realize not only how stressful the
8 job could be for 911 dispatchers, but
9 also the level of something we don't
10 talk about a lot and, that is,
11 emotional intelligence, how much
12 emotional intelligence one must have
13 for this job.

14 The dispatcher in this story
15 couldn't see what was happening, that
16 he could have easily dismissed it, but
17 his institutional knowledge and
18 intuition told him that something
19 wasn't right and that meant the
20 difference between someone getting help
21 and something much more serious of
22 potentially happening.

23 Soon after I heard of this
24 story, that's when I learned about the
25 staffing challenges at Philadelphia's

1 911 call center. Now, I want to
2 emphasize to all who are in attendance
3 that the challenges that we are going
4 to reference, they are not unique to
5 Philadelphia.

6 Recruiting and hiring 911
7 dispatchers, effectively staffing 911
8 call centers and retaining 911
9 dispatchers has literally been a
10 national problem for the last several
11 decades and it has only gotten worse in
12 the recent years' labor market.

13 There was a Philadelphia
14 Inquirer article that was published on
15 August 22, 2018 that focused
16 specifically not only on Philadelphia,
17 but on Montgomery County's 911 call
18 center challenges, and it echoed the
19 fact that counties and states across
20 the nation has "grappled" with a dire
21 shortage of 911 call-takers and
22 dispatchers, jobs with long hours, high
23 stress and relatively low pay.

24 Philadelphia's 911 unified
25 call center is not only competing with

1 surrounding counties like Montgomery
2 County for employees, but it is also
3 competing with other City employers.
4 As the Inquirer article stated, despite
5 incentives like health insurance,
6 pension enrollment and partial college
7 tuition enrollment that aim to keep
8 call-takers and dispatchers as
9 long-time employees, some people simply
10 don't stick it out.

11 The night shift, it can be
12 tough for people accustomed to a more
13 conventional working schedule or for
14 people whose families who are not able
15 to accommodate the graveyard shift, and
16 some of the call employees, it can be
17 hard. It can be hard, some of the
18 calls that they receive on the psyche.

19 I want to specifically
20 emphasize the chronic stress and
21 anxiety that come with this job and are
22 often people diagnosed, undiagnosed or
23 untreated for post-traumatic stress
24 disorder and that can follow.
25 According to the Wall Street Journal,

1 emergency call center jobs can be
2 emotionally taxing.

3 Callers are often in distress
4 and sometimes still in the throes of a
5 traumatic event. They can cry, yell at
6 or grow frustrated with 911 center
7 employees who are just trying to gather
8 information to help them dispatch the
9 first responders. A 911 center
10 operator may hear gunshots, callers
11 being wounded or killed while they are
12 on the phone or be the first person to
13 speak with someone who has found a
14 deceased loved one.

15 Some centers offer counseling
16 with local religious leaders or trained
17 therapists, but not all have these
18 services. For my colleagues in 2006,
19 particularly veterans Councilmember
20 Jones and Councilmember Johnson, they
21 will remember that in 2006 then
22 Councilman Jim Kenney introduced
23 Resolution 060745 that authorized the
24 City's Joint Committees on Public
25 Safety and Legislative Oversight to

1 hold hearings on whether the City
2 should establish a 311 constituent
3 contact center to unburden the current
4 911 emergency call center, so that we
5 could make Philadelphia more responsive
6 to our citizens' concerns.

7 And while the implementation
8 of 311 has helped to unburden the 911
9 dispatchers from some non-emergency
10 phone calls, the fact of the matter is
11 that 911 dispatchers remain overworked
12 and underpaid. The City is now facing
13 a situation where many of 911
14 dispatchers are feeling overworked,
15 exhausted and quite frankly
16 unappreciated to the extent where
17 their physical and mental well-being
18 could potentially negatively impact the
19 cohesion of the unit and the
20 functioning of the call center.

21 Philadelphia is struggling
22 with an increasing homicide rate. It's
23 still in the throes of an opioid
24 crisis. And as we know because we
25 mentioned how law enforcement officials

1 have to leave, we are dealing with a
2 drastic -- not a drastic, but an
3 increase in the number of and preparing
4 for a potential increase in the number
5 of coronavirus patients.

6 Additionally, Pennsylvania is
7 a swiftly aging state. That's going to
8 mean an increase in the number of age
9 and health-related emergencies in years
10 to come. So we called for this hearing
11 today to assess the hiring staffing and
12 retention challenges for the 911 call
13 center before we reach a crisis and to
14 analyze the workplace culture for our
15 911 dispatchers to ensure that we are
16 supporting their health and well-being.

17 I want to thank both the
18 Police and Fire Departments for their
19 assistance with this hearing. And as I
20 stated, when we took our tour that
21 neither Chairman Jones or I sort of
22 have an I gotcha sort of style. And
23 the point of this hearing is not to
24 "shame or guilt anyone," but to figure
25 out how we can all work together as a

1 cohesive unit to solve these staffing
2 challenges.

3 And for the record, I want to
4 say a special thank you to Councilman
5 Curtis Jones, Chair of the Public
6 Safety Committee. It was his insight
7 and his arranging a tour of the 911
8 call center last week so that we could
9 get a firsthand overview of what was
10 taking place at the 911 call center to
11 see how it was structured. And I want
12 to say thank you to Chairman Jones for
13 your leadership, and a special thank
14 you to Frank and all of the 911
15 dispatchers who I had the opportunity
16 to meet and to hear your stories
17 firsthand.

18 I now want to recognize
19 Chairman Curtis Jones who is the Chair
20 of Council's Committee on Public Safety
21 for opening remarks.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
23 Chairperson Parker. The first thing, I
24 won't reiterate what the Chairwoman
25 said, but I'll give you some of my

1 observations. The first thing you have
2 to know is it's located in The
3 Roundhouse, and it is actually a round
4 building which is not designed for this
5 type of activity, per se.

6 Some of this stuff will get
7 addressed with the relocation to the
8 new headquarters. But what you also
9 notice when you go into the room is
10 that the lighting is dim and it's more
11 of a calm place than you would imagine.
12 You would imagine that it was hectic
13 and everything, but these are trained
14 professionals that are designed in your
15 worse moments to be at their best, at
16 your worse moments to be at their best
17 because people are hollering, people
18 are excited, people are in danger,
19 people are concerned for loved ones and
20 they have to filter through all of that
21 to get to the facts so they can be of
22 assistance. That's the first thing
23 that I noticed.

24 The second thing that I
25 noticed, Madam Chair, it was a large

1 amount of female operatives there, and
2 I don't know what the correlation of
3 that is. It happened to be minority
4 females that were in that environment.
5 I don't know how that impact happened
6 but it happened, and that was something
7 that I took notice to.

8 The other thing that was
9 interesting was that the City was
10 divided into sections and whether it
11 was Northwest, Frankford, whether it
12 was West Philadelphia, it was divided
13 so there are different levels of
14 intensity. My 5th District in
15 Roxborough, Manayunk is very different
16 than my 19th District, so how they
17 rotate that kind of activity is
18 something I'd be interested in figuring
19 out.

20 The other thing that I would
21 say is technology. We're hoping that
22 we invest in technology so that people
23 can use the texting system to be able
24 to communicate things in awkward or
25 difficult situations.

1 Texting, if I'm on a bus and
2 someone has a gun or someone is doing
3 something illegal, it is easier to be
4 able and safer in real time to be able
5 to text and it goes to the realtime
6 crime center or to the dispatch center
7 so that they can render assistance
8 without compromising the individuals
9 trying to be a part of, so these are
10 things that we hope to add to when we
11 get a new commissioner.

12 We think that that's the
13 silver bullet that's going to save all
14 of us. But the reality is it's more
15 like a picture of a puzzle and that we
16 have to fix pieces one at a time. And
17 one of those pieces is the 911 call
18 center. So we hope that through these
19 hearings that we can put on the record,
20 because we had some off-the-record
21 dialogue, but also at the time of
22 budget put our money where our mouth
23 is. Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
25 you, Chairman Jones. The Clerk will

1 now read the title of the resolution
2 being considered today.

3 THE CLERK: No. 200036, a
4 resolution authorizing the Committees
5 on Labor and Civil Service and Public
6 Safety to hold joint hearings regarding
7 hiring, staffing and retention
8 challenges for the 911 unified call
9 center and the impact these challenges
10 have on the health and well-being of
11 911 dispatchers.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Will
13 the Clerk please call the first panel
14 to testify on the resolution?

15 THE CLERK: Inspector Michael
16 Gillespie and Craig Murphy.

17 (Panel approached Witness
18 Table.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: I want
20 to say good morning to each of you and
21 again, just say a special thank you to
22 Inspector Gillespie, Deputy
23 Commissioner Murphy and all of you who
24 were present during our tour, and just
25 thank you for walking us through very

1 patiently that process just so we could
2 understand how it works. I'll just ask
3 you to state your name for the record
4 and please proceed with your testimony.

5 MR. GILLESPIE: Inspector
6 Michael Gillespie.

7 MR. MURPHY: Deputy Fire
8 Commissioner Craig Murphy.

9 MR. GILLESPIE: Good morning,
10 Chairpersons Parker and Jones and other
11 members of Council. My name is
12 Inspector Michael Gillespie and I'm a
13 commanding officer of the Philadelphia
14 Police Department Communications
15 Division, which covers Police Radio and
16 our civilian 911 dispatchers call-
17 takers.

18 First, on behalf of
19 Commissioner Danielle Outlaw, thank you
20 for allowing the Philadelphia Police
21 Department to participate in today's
22 hearings. As you know, various topics
23 related to the 911 system are
24 highlighted in Resolution No. 200036
25 that touch upon recruiting, hiring,

1 salaries, call volume, 311 call center,
2 staffing, mandatory overtime,
3 retention, et cetera. So please allow
4 me to provide a brief overview.

5 First, I will begin with the
6 recruitment process for 911 operators.
7 The City of Philadelphia's Central
8 Personnel Department posts test
9 announcements for the police
10 communications dispatcher trainee
11 position approximately every two years.
12 Testing is a three-step process that
13 consists of a written, voice and typing
14 test.

15 Both the Philadelphia Police
16 Department and the Philadelphia Fire
17 Department hire from the same list.
18 Upon completion of the written test,
19 the applications that the applicants
20 are placed in rank order. At a later
21 date, a typing test is given.

22 Applicants who pass the
23 typing test are administered a voice
24 test. After passage of all three
25 tests, a list is published for the

1 Police and Fire Departments to hire for
2 the position of police communications
3 dispatcher trainee.

4 An issue that we face with
5 the hiring practice is the City's
6 civil service regulation hiring
7 practice, which includes the Rule of
8 Two regulation, the certification and
9 distribution process of the interview
10 list and the approval for the position
11 vacancies make it a constant challenge
12 to reach our current cap of 278 police
13 communication dispatchers.

14 The Rule of Two regulation is
15 that for every approved hiring, we
16 receive 1.5 names. The rule requires
17 that the names appearing sequentially
18 on a certification list are compared to
19 each other during the interview and
20 selection process. This comparison
21 often results in one of the applicants
22 having to be accepted even though they
23 do not meet the requirements for the
24 position.

25 Also, since we are only given

1 1.5 names for each vacancy and due to
2 applicants not responding, declining or
3 not being acceptable, police personnel
4 has to request additional names for the
5 interview for the vacancies. This
6 process usually adds an additional two
7 weeks to the already six- to eight-week
8 timeline.

9 Often times the established
10 list is already depleted when we make
11 an additional request for names. If
12 this occurs in the middle of the hiring
13 practice, for example when we need
14 additional names, we then must proceed
15 with the names already interviewed,
16 which results in us starting a class
17 with less than the approved vacancy.

18 To prevent losing the
19 applicants we've already interviewed,
20 we usually decide to proceed with the
21 names we've already interviewed and
22 approve, which results in us hiring
23 less than the number approved to fill
24 the vacancy. The issues mentioned
25 concerning hiring rarely allows us to

1 reach our current cap of 278 police
2 communication dispatchers.

3 As a result, we average a
4 staffing level of 248 police
5 communication dispatchers. Regarding
6 911 dispatcher salaries, in the past we
7 have advocated for the police
8 communication dispatchers to be paid
9 more. We've also noted their duties
10 and associated stress. As a result,
11 the dispatchers received an additional
12 \$1500 annually.

13 The current salary range for
14 the dispatcher trainees is \$35,042 to
15 \$38,023. And the current salary range
16 for the dispatchers is \$41,930 to
17 \$45,869. Call volume is quite high.
18 The 911 center process is approximately
19 2.4 million calls annually, which in
20 turn equates to 6,486 calls per day.

21 With respect to individual
22 dispatchers respective call volume, our
23 data shows that on average depending on
24 the amount of call-takers working, each
25 dispatcher assigned to a call-taking

1 position would handle approximately 140
2 calls per eight-hour shift. The 311
3 call center handles a number of
4 non-emergency calls that would
5 otherwise add to our call volume.

6 It's important to note that
7 we previously had a differential police
8 response unit that was originally
9 intended to handle lower level calls of
10 service. Over the years, the number of
11 calls they handled diminished due to
12 district commanders wanting to handle
13 those jobs through their own personnel.
14 This move allowed for more community
15 interaction and increased the
16 probability of solving those crimes.

17 The dispatchers are
18 distributed amongst four platoons; 1, 2
19 and 3 platoons which handle the
20 operations of Police Radio. While 5
21 platoon handles the external
22 administrative, audio reproduction,
23 training and the mobile data computers.

24 On any given day, the line
25 platoons are unable to staff the room

1 without the use of overtime, preferably
2 through volunteers and when all else
3 fails, mandatory overtime. Staffing
4 the room is done based off of
5 statistical data in four-hour blocks.

6 The highest level is the
7 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. shift; followed
8 by the 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift
9 and the third highest level is the
10 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. shift.

11 Philadelphia Police Radio staffing
12 levels are a combination of a number of
13 required positions and variable
14 positions.

15 Required positions are
16 dispatched consoles, operations desks
17 and administrative phone lines.
18 Variable positions are 911 call-takers.
19 The number of 911 call-takers can be as
20 low as 8 and as high as 33. Minimum
21 service levels established by the
22 Pennsylvania Emergency Management
23 Agency, known as PEMA, require that 911
24 centers answer 90 percent of their
25 calls within 10 seconds.

1 This standard is used as a
2 gauge regarding how we are servicing
3 the public. These statistics are
4 audited annually by PEMA. Failure to
5 maintain the service level can
6 jeopardize the City receiving funds
7 generated by the 911 surcharge on phone
8 bills. We consistently average just
9 above or just below 90 percent of our
10 calls being answered within 10 seconds.

11 In 2018, we averaged 90
12 percent of our calls. In 2019, we
13 averaged 89 percent. PEMA has now
14 mandated that our police communication
15 dispatchers will need to attend 24
16 hours of training every two years and
17 also be trained in CPR. This training
18 will further affect our current
19 staffing levels since dispatchers will
20 not be able to answer dispatched calls
21 for a period of 24 hours per
22 dispatcher.

23 This in turn will create an
24 increase in overtime in order to meet
25 our staffing levels. The minimum

1 number of call-takers required to staff
2 911 phone calls is eight. This is done
3 during the hours of 3:00 a.m. to
4 7:00 p.m. specifically, which is our
5 lowest or slowest four-hour block of
6 time.

7 In the event that the
8 call-taker room begins to receive more
9 calls than they are available that are
10 available call-takers, we rotate
11 dispatchers from the dispatch room to
12 the call-taking room until the call
13 volume has diminished. And in the
14 event there is a major problem with our
15 phone system, Police Radio emergency
16 operation procedures will request that
17 four call-takers leave the center to
18 staff the backup center which is in
19 City Hall.

20 Once they are in place, the
21 calls then can be received at the
22 backup center. The remaining
23 call-takers will then go to the backup
24 center, the intent to provide the
25 public with uninterrupted 911 call

1 service. With respect to mandatory
2 overtime, the situation becomes
3 necessary when the volunteer list for
4 overtime has been exhausted. It also
5 becomes necessary after we have made
6 subsequent calls to dispatchers not on
7 the volunteer list.

8 According to District Council
9 33's contract, we can only mandate
10 dispatchers for a maximum of four
11 hours. Mandating personnel does not
12 fully complement our needs since the
13 four hours is usually connected to the
14 end of an eight-hour shift. Being
15 mandated or required to work mandatory
16 overtime often brings complaints of
17 fatigue and other factors.

18 These complaints are
19 understandable. However, our data
20 shows that any given dispatcher is only
21 mandated approximately once every four
22 weeks. So once a month, the average
23 dispatcher is required to work a
24 four-hour mandatory or extended shift.
25 Regarding retention, we lose an average

1 of three police communication
2 dispatchers per month due to
3 retirement, promotion, demotion,
4 resignations and/or termination.

5 There are often complaints
6 associated with retention and they
7 involve low morale, mandatory overtime
8 and other factors. However, it appears
9 that most personnel leave for nonshift
10 type of assignments such as a permanent
11 day-work position. Turning now to the
12 current 911 center facilities, the
13 center received a total upgrade in
14 2018.

15 With this upgrade, the room
16 was stripped out, cleaned, recarpeted,
17 repainted. The upgrade included new
18 furniture, window treatments, equipment
19 and software. In the future, the
20 Police Radio operations will be moving
21 to 400 North Broad Street. Within that
22 state, we are able to expand and
23 redesign the space in order to be more
24 effective and efficient.

25 More positions were added to

1 both the call-taking section and the
2 dispatch section with the capability to
3 further expand the call-taking section.
4 This concludes my testimony. At this
5 time, I would be happy to answer any
6 questions you may have. I thank you
7 for your time. And if I may, I'd like
8 to introduce Sergeant Joan Loads to my
9 left and also behind me I also have
10 Chief Inspector Michael Cochrane and
11 Captain Ed Appleton to answer any
12 questions that you might have.

13 MR. MURPHY: Good morning,
14 Chairs Parker, Jones, and members of
15 the Committees on Labor and Civil
16 Service and Public Safety. My name is
17 Craig Murphy, the Deputy Commissioner
18 of the Philadelphia Fire Department and
19 I am here to speak regarding Resolution
20 No. 200036.

21 First, I would like to thank
22 you for the opportunity to speak on
23 behalf of our fire communication center
24 dispatchers and for your attention to
25 their needs. Today I am joined by

1 Angel Rodriguez, the chief dispatcher
2 in our communication center. Our
3 dispatchers are the backbone of our
4 department, and we often refer to them
5 as the first of the first responders.

6 We are only able to put out
7 fires, conduct rescues and provide
8 emergency medical services because of
9 the dispatchers who come across our
10 radios and tell us where to go and who
11 needs our help. Last week, I spent
12 some time down in the FCC to talk with
13 some of our dispatchers in preparation
14 for this hearing and observe several
15 interactions that made me immensely
16 proud of their work.

17 On one occasion, I overheard
18 a dispatcher walking a caller through
19 the steps of CPR to a loved one for
20 several minutes helping them count off
21 when to do compressions, all the while
22 updating the caregiver on the status
23 and location of the medic unit. He
24 worked this until the medic unit
25 assumed care. Then he told the

1 caregiver what a great job they had
2 done, ended that call and less than 20
3 seconds, his screen lit up and he was
4 on to provide assistance to the next
5 citizen in need.

6 This is something that
7 happens daily down in the FCC and
8 highlights the importance and talent of
9 those who chooses to serve the City in
10 this way. While the job is incredibly
11 rewarding, over the years like many
12 public safety call centers throughout
13 the country, we have had issues with
14 recruiting and retaining dispatchers.

15 We currently have 43
16 dispatchers, eight supervisors, one
17 chief and one deputy chief dispatcher.
18 While the FCC manages thousands of
19 calls daily with the staff that they
20 have, they are often short-staffed and
21 have to rely on overtime and calling in
22 dispatchers on their days off.

23 They currently operate with
24 around 10 personnel on each platoon,
25 but would ideally have at least 13 to

1 keep up with the demand while
2 maintaining a somewhat balanced working
3 environment. The dispatchers work
4 12-hour shifts and rotate between 24-
5 and 60-hour weeks. Regardless of how
6 busy we are, we always attempt to give
7 everyone 15- to 20-minute breaks
8 throughout their shift to break up the
9 highly demanding and highly stressful
10 job that our dispatchers do.

11 Through our efforts to make
12 this tough job more attractive, the
13 reality is that it is still one of the
14 hardest most emotionally challenging
15 jobs within City government. Over the
16 last two years, we have lost
17 approximately 20 dispatchers and have
18 struggled to find qualified applicants
19 to fill the positions resulting in low
20 staffing and mandatory overtime.

21 Right now we have eight
22 vacancies. We often have to call in
23 people from home to cover shifts
24 affecting their home lives taking away
25 the much-needed rest time from our

1 stressful work environment. To help
2 with the demands and stress from the
3 position, we have implemented several
4 interventions to do what we can to help
5 our dispatchers to process the tough
6 things they see and hear every day.

7 Just a few months ago, we
8 gave our dispatchers free access to
9 NeuroFlow, a monthly subscription
10 service that promotes positive mental
11 health and stress management practices.
12 Additionally, they have access to the
13 Department's employee assistance
14 program, which offers peer counseling
15 and general resources that promote
16 overall wellness.

17 Again, I would like to thank
18 you for your attention to our
19 dispatchers and I or Angel are happy to
20 answer any questions that you may have.

21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: I want
22 to thank you so very much for your
23 testimony and want to acknowledge for
24 the record that Committee members to my
25 left, Councilwoman Katherine Gilmore

1 Richardson and to my right,
2 Councilwoman Helen Gym, and I want to
3 thank you both for joining us.

4 Let me just state for the
5 record, Deputy Commissioner Murphy,
6 thank you for referring to our
7 dispatchers as the first of the first
8 responders. That perfectly to me
9 captures what it is that they do. Let
10 me just note for the record when you
11 are walking us through the recruitment
12 and the hiring process, Inspector
13 Gillespie, and this is important for us
14 to get it on the record as Chairman
15 Jones mentioned in his opening
16 comments, that ultimately for us we
17 want the data collected today to help
18 us as we work through the City's budget
19 process.

20 You talked about this Rule of
21 Two. And as Councilwoman Katherine
22 Gilmore Richardson knows from her 10
23 years of Chief of Staff here in this
24 body and all of my colleagues, we've
25 talked about the challenge of this

1 civil service ruling relative to the
2 Rule of Two that it has had on the
3 City's ability to attract, hire and
4 retain employees.

5 Tell us, if you will, because
6 this is the first time I think that we
7 will be getting on the record the
8 impact that the Rule of Two is
9 potentially having on the public safety
10 of Philadelphia, as it is hindering the
11 hiring process, that is, delaying the
12 process.

13 Explain to us, if you will,
14 for the record the impact that the Rule
15 of Two is having on Philadelphia's
16 ability to hire and retain.

17 MR. GILLESPIE: Yes,
18 Councilwoman. If I may, I'd like to
19 turn it over to Sergeant Little who is
20 directly involved in our hiring
21 practice and she will be the best one
22 to give you that information.

23 MS. LITTLE: Good morning.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Can you
25 pull the mic closer, yes.

1 MS. LITTLE: So what we
2 experience with our hiring practice is,
3 as the Inspector testified in his
4 testimony there, if we have say 10
5 vacancies, what they give us with the
6 Rule of Two is one and a half people
7 for those vacancies, so we would get 15
8 names.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: For the
10 record, how do you get one and a half
11 people?

12 MS. LITTLE: Right. So if
13 you only have one vacancy, they're
14 going to give you two names to
15 interview for your selection. We never
16 have that most. So what happens is if
17 we have 10 vacancies, we get 15 names.
18 That equals one and a half for that
19 vacancy. So then during the interview
20 and selection process, as those names
21 fall on the list, that's how we
22 interview them in order.

23 If people fall next to each
24 other on the list, they get compared to
25 each other. And that comparison

1 sometimes holds us up if the person --
2 for our position they have to go
3 through a background check. So if they
4 fall into a position where they don't
5 necessarily meet -- are acceptable for
6 our position, we then compare them to
7 the person in front of them and the
8 person behind them and it causes us a
9 problem and we have to select one of
10 them even if they don't meet our
11 requirements.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: One of
13 the things that the Inspector noted in
14 his testimony is that there's a
15 three-step process that consists of a
16 written, a voice and a typing test. So
17 I want to particularly focus on this:
18 For the written, voice and typing test,
19 are all of them happening on the same
20 day? And if not, you tell me in your
21 opinion is it your professional opinion
22 that they could happen on the same day.
23 Thus, condensing the amount of time
24 that it takes to get through that
25 three-step process.

1 MS. LITTLE: So currently the
2 way the process works, Central
3 Personnel schedules a written test on a
4 particular day. And I think they allow
5 about four hours for that written test.
6 Some people may take all four hours.
7 Some people may be able to get done it
8 quicker. And then from that test,
9 people that pass it are placed on a
10 list.

11 From that list, then Central
12 Personnel brings them in for a typing
13 test, a typing test and a voice test on
14 the same day.

15 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.

16 MS. LITTLE: So the written
17 test is one day and then the typing and
18 the voice test are at a later date.

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Right.
20 And I know several of my colleagues
21 have many questions. I want to ask you
22 this: The issues mentioned concerning
23 hiring, they rarely allow us to reach
24 our current cap of 278 dispatchers.
25 Now, as a result we have an average of

1 staffing level of about 248.

2 As of today I want you to
3 tell me how many dispatchers do you
4 have? I'm not talking about clerical
5 staff and/or trainees, but very
6 specifically how many dispatchers?

7 MS. LITTLE: Currently, we
8 have 252, but that does include
9 approximately 15 trainees.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So 15
11 trainees?

12 MS. LITTLE: Yes. And it
13 also includes the administration staff,
14 the people that are in 5 platoon that
15 are dispatchers.

16 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So
17 again, of that 252 you said 15 are
18 trainees. And how many of them
19 approximately are administrative staff?

20 MS. LITTLE: I think we have
21 approximately I'll say 18 to 19, but I
22 think I have to confirm that number.
23 Between all of our roles in 5 platoon,
24 we have the administrative staff, we
25 have people that do audio reproductions

1 that are dispatchers, we have trainers
2 that are dispatchers that are assigned
3 to our training unit and we have staff
4 that also participate in the mobile
5 data computer program.

6 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.
7 So to me, and this is just my dirty
8 math, that was equal to 218. So 218
9 dispatchers, and you said our current
10 cap is 278?

11 MS. LITTLE: Correct. So all
12 the other staff that we mentioned in 5
13 platoon that are administrative and
14 audio reproduction, they don't work in
15 the 911 center on a daily basis.
16 However, they do work in an overtime
17 basis. They are utilized for overtime.

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER:
19 Finally, Councilman and Chairman Jones
20 mentioned earlier in his opening
21 remarks that when we toured, we saw a
22 high number of women who were also
23 actually minority women. Do we know,
24 one -- and if you don't have it now,
25 that's fine. Do you have the

1 demographics for those out of that
2 again approximately 218, the dirty math
3 of just the dispatchers, do you know
4 the demographic makeup there?

5 MS. LITTLE: I don't believe
6 we have that with us today,
7 Councilwoman.

8 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.
9 And if you could just forward that to
10 both Chairman Jones and I, that would
11 be greatly appreciated. And we would
12 like to note the number of single
13 mothers, the number of single mothers
14 who are working as dispatchers, and
15 particularly as it relates to the
16 mandatory overtime that is potentially
17 a challenge for the Department because
18 we're not at our complement and thus
19 impacts public safety, so we want to
20 make sure we get that on the record.
21 Chair now recognizes Chairman Jones.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: So the
23 best ability is availability. In other
24 words, if people are available to work,
25 then that's a good thing and we want to

1 kind of look at some of the
2 circumstances that deal with that. So
3 we would like to in addition look at
4 some of the time utilization.

5 If people are calling out
6 because they have responsibilities and
7 stuff like that, those are things we
8 can address, that's number one. Number
9 two, what is your overall turnover
10 annually? Meaning, how many people do
11 you lose because of some of these
12 demanding hours, some of the stressors
13 that go with it and some of the I
14 can't, I have to choose between my
15 child and my job. Those are difficult
16 choices.

17 As we did in our trips to
18 other counties, in comparable counties,
19 give me some comparable call centers
20 and are we paying as much? Do we have
21 as many complements by way of available
22 call responders? How do we manage
23 compared to New York, Baltimore, D.C.
24 and other municipalities? Either one
25 of you can take on that.

1 MR. GILLESPIE: At this time
2 I don't have the statisticals or the
3 statistics on that. We do feel that
4 our dispatchers are underpaid and
5 deserve more pay. Right now at our
6 attrition rate of three per month, that
7 would equate to 36 dispatchers a year
8 that we would be losing, but it seems
9 like more. We're consistently working
10 at approximately a 30-dispatcher
11 deficit. Currently, we're 26
12 dispatchers down.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: And when
14 you lose them, do you lose them to
15 other opportunities within the City or
16 the Commonwealth? Have you looked at
17 an exit interview and said why are you
18 leaving?

19 MR. GILLESPIE: Quite a few
20 have taken demotions to other units
21 within the Department which carries a
22 decrease in pay and they have to note
23 that that's acceptable to them when
24 they do that. Other avenues for them
25 are to go to Central Personnel to take

1 other tests for other departments. We
2 recently lost people to L&I, the Health
3 Department and such. And again, what
4 I'm seeing there it's mostly for a
5 nonshift type of work atmosphere. It
6 also carries less stress.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we have
8 to look at all of those factors and
9 figure out incentives to try to keep
10 your seasoned people, because you have
11 an initial training but then, I would
12 imagine people who are seasoned that
13 have dealt with different levels of
14 calls have different response times for
15 assistance in where they should connect
16 people. I guess what I'm asking, when
17 do you know if you have an A-level
18 employee that you really want to keep
19 there? How long does it take to
20 develop that?

21 MS. LITTLE: I can just kind
22 of speak from a little bit of personal
23 experience. After a full year, they
24 move up from a trainee to a full
25 dispatcher and it really depends on the

1 person. Some people right after that
2 first year we know we can use them to
3 train other people, and then there's
4 some that struggle a little more with
5 it. They take a little longer, so I
6 really think it's an individual thing.
7 I don't think that we can put a
8 timeline on it. Some people are a lot
9 quicker than other people.

10 And I know -- as the
11 Inspector said, most of the people
12 there do their best. I mean, all of
13 them I think do their best really.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: I guess
15 what I'm trying to say is there is a
16 capital and time investment that you
17 make into establishing that performance
18 level and then only to lose it is an
19 actual quantifiable loss to the
20 Department, so we have to figure out
21 how much is that and how much can we
22 incentivize people to stay and that's
23 the spirit of my question.

24 MR. MURPHY: So, sir, to
25 answer your first question related to

1 their pay as compared to other cities,
2 we don't have the information that's
3 compared to other cities, but they make
4 considerably less than Bucks County and
5 that makes that job more attractive.

6 I don't know, Councilperson,
7 if you had an opportunity to walk
8 through the Fire Department's fire
9 communication call center, but it's in
10 the basement of Fire headquarters. So
11 some of -- the only opportunity they
12 get to see daylight is when they take
13 their 15 to 20 minutes just to go take
14 a break or take a smoke.

15 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Can you
16 repeat it?

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you
18 repeat it?

19 MR. MURPHY: Sure. So our
20 call center is in the basement of Fire
21 headquarters and obviously, it's a
22 basement so it's windowless so they sit
23 for the majority of their day in this
24 highly stressful environment and the
25 only time they get to see whether it's

1 gotten colder, gotten warmer, go out to
2 take a cigarette break or just go out
3 to stretch their legs is when they come
4 up out of the basement for 15 minutes.
5 They can have multiple breaks but it's
6 still -- the environment itself, it's
7 not really conducive to feel openness
8 and just working under those stressors
9 that they work under.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
11 Madam Chair.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Just
13 quickly I want to ask you, you
14 mentioned, Inspector, in your testimony
15 you talked about PEMA and rules, the
16 just sort of 10-second rule, right, in
17 terms of our answering calls. And
18 Chairman Jones talked about how does
19 Philadelphia compare. I would be
20 thinking in the top 10 big cities, but
21 when Fire mentioned Bucks County in
22 terms of regionally, tell me how do we
23 fare in terms of the five counties
24 regionally, would you say that in terms
25 of what we are paying and "any

1 incentives" that we are offering that
2 we are at the bottom of the pack,
3 forget the top 10, but the five
4 counties, that's Bucks, Chester,
5 Delaware and Mont. Co., are we at the
6 bottom of the barrel?

7 MR. MURPHY: The only that I
8 can answer to right now is what's
9 happening with Bucks County as related
10 to what our starting salaries are for
11 Philadelphia County. I can get that
12 information.

13 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Yes.
14 If you could, just forward to both of
15 the Chairs at a later date that
16 information. The Chair is now going to
17 recognize Councilwoman Gilmore
18 Richardson and then Councilwoman Gym --
19 oh, Councilman Johnson, thank you
20 because you got here super early.
21 Thank you so much.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I was on
23 time.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: You
25 were super early.

1 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
2 you, Madam Chair. I just had a quick
3 question regarding the work environment
4 and the conditions. So from a union
5 standpoint, it sounds like a union
6 versus management issue where I'm all
7 pro-union for workers so it seems like
8 there should be some type of
9 negotiation and discussion with
10 management regarding the work
11 conditions of the workers that are
12 doing really critical and important
13 work, can you give me an update or
14 overview of what that process looks
15 like or when negotiations are coming up
16 and who the negotiations are with?

17 MR. GILLESPIE: Councilman,
18 we regularly meet with District Council
19 33 and District Council President Frank
20 Halbherr and the associated
21 shopstewards.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And a
23 negotiation with management would be
24 with who?

25 MR. GILLESPIE: I'm sorry,

1 sir?

2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And the
3 negotiations would be with what
4 individual?

5 MR. GILLESPIE: At that point
6 it's collectively between the
7 individuals I just mentioned and the
8 people that are sitting with me today.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON:
10 Understood.

11 MR. GILLESPIE: We will
12 discuss any issues that are current and
13 projecting out. We try to keep each
14 other informed.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So when
16 is the next contract negotiations
17 coming up, this year?

18 MR. GILLESPIE: (Nodded
19 head.)

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Please
21 keep the members of the Committee on
22 Labor and Civil Service and Public
23 Safety just so we're aware obviously.
24 We're just in support of workers and
25 work environment. But the work that

1 you're doing is critically important as
2 public servants. It is not a fly-by-
3 night job that these individuals are
4 doing.

5 And so, when you talk about
6 people's lives are in danger and evil
7 things that happen could be prevented
8 based in part -- I remember when I
9 served as a state rep in the House with
10 my colleague Madam Chair and I remember
11 meeting with some hospital workers
12 because they were working like doubles
13 and super overtime shifts and they were
14 talking about how they were having an
15 impact on how they were treating their
16 patients. This is with SEIU, right.

17 And we're talking about some
18 dangerous things happening to patients
19 because you have people being totally
20 overworked, short breaks, right. And
21 so, this is a very sensitive issue when
22 it comes to helping individuals and
23 most importantly, people who are I
24 believe critically important public
25 servants, so just please keep the

1 Committee members just abreast of this
2 process moving forward. Thank you,
3 Madam Chair.

4 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
5 you, Councilman Johnson, and thank you
6 for referencing, Councilman, that again
7 the national issue but statewide issue
8 relative to mandatory overtime and
9 people who work in positions that call
10 for high levels of stress. Chair
11 recognizes Councilwoman Katherine
12 Gilmore Richardson.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
14 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you,
15 Madam Chair. And thank you to both
16 Committee Chairs and to all of you for
17 being here this afternoon. But
18 particularly to our first, first
19 responders, thank you for the work that
20 you do.

21 As Chief of Staff to
22 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown
23 several years ago, we brought our team
24 to your location at 3rd and Spring
25 Garden and we visited with the

1 dispatchers in the basement where the
2 old switchboard is and still lights up
3 occasionally and we saw the work that
4 you do on a very intimate basis. So I
5 just want to thank all the dispatchers
6 especially for being here.

7 But I wanted to go back to
8 one of your questions relative to the
9 recruitment process, specifically where
10 you talk about both Police and Fire
11 hiring from the same list. Do you
12 think at any time it would be
13 advantageous to the hiring process to
14 give the Police Department and the Fire
15 Department the ability to have and call
16 from separate lists?

17 MR. GILLESPIE:

18 Unfortunately, we do not have an
19 opinion on that right now. The numbers
20 that we draw off of that list -- and
21 let me back up. Previously, 311 also
22 took dispatchers off of our list and
23 that created a problem as they're being
24 interviewed by one agency, they're not
25 allowed to be interviewed by the other.

1 So now 311 has their own call-taking
2 agent list or test.

3 And for us in the Fire
4 Department, we draw a lot more off of
5 that list so there really isn't that
6 much of a difference for us. So if it
7 stands the way it is, that's fine. If
8 there could be two lists, that would
9 also be fine.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: Okay. And, Madam Chair,
12 I'll wait until we receive additional
13 testimony to revisit that question
14 again. But I think relative to the
15 recruitment process in dealing with the
16 civil service regulations that we need
17 to look at particularly around the Rule
18 of Two and your inability to be able to
19 choose from the list to fill the
20 vacancies that you have. We need to
21 look at how we can potentially split
22 those lists. Thank you so much.

23 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Chair
24 wants to thank Councilwoman Katherine
25 Gilmore Richardson. And just to note

1 for the record, Councilwoman, I did
2 introduce legislation along with
3 several members of Council last year to
4 in essence look at that Rule of Two,
5 but I'm sure that each of you and
6 particularly for the benefit of the
7 public who are watching at home a very
8 complex issue to deal with, because to
9 be quite frank there's a lot of
10 politics associated with it and a lot
11 of differing opinions associated with
12 our labor, our union, our leadership.

13 You can get a perspective,
14 but then as we listen to your testimony
15 here today which is why, Inspector, I
16 particularly wanted to get it on the
17 record. This is the first time that we
18 have heard of the Rule of Two from the
19 perspective of potentially impacting
20 the public safety of the City of
21 Philadelphia in helping to ensure that
22 you have a very effective, efficient
23 and expeditious process as it relates
24 to the hiring of the dispatchers that
25 you need to maintain the complement.

1 And so, with that in mind I
2 just want to note for the record and I
3 know he's going to be on the next
4 panel, but when we hear from Frank at
5 the union and I know the number I had
6 come up with was my dirty math as I
7 call it, was 218 and this was
8 specifically relative to dispatchers
9 and not administration and/or trainees.
10 And he's going to give this in his
11 testimony.

12 I'm only mentioning this now
13 because I know some of our officials
14 have to leave, but he notes that by his
15 calculation there are 69 dispatchers in
16 Quad 1; 70 dispatchers in Quad 2; 67
17 dispatchers in Quad 3. And then he
18 notes 15 clerical, 23 trainees for a
19 total of 248 employees.

20 But here's the caveat that I
21 want to get on the record. If you're
22 looking at just dispatchers, then we're
23 only at 206. He notes that there are
24 currently four dispatchers who are out
25 on family leave, medical for a total of

1 210. He says so really, and I know it
2 may be a little bit of a dispute
3 relative to the numbers, but before you
4 leave I wanted to get this on the
5 record, he notes that we really have
6 210 dispatchers when we are budgeted
7 for 278 and really need 335.

8 So let me just -- I was an
9 English teacher, not a math teacher so
10 you all just bear with me when I take a
11 little second here. We budgeted for
12 278. He says we only have 210 so that
13 would leave us with 68 vacancies. And
14 then he says we really need 335.

15 I'm not going to ask any of
16 you to comment on that. What I am
17 going to note for the record and I
18 appreciate Councilman Johnson noting
19 that collective bargaining obviously
20 will take place as contracts will
21 expire in June, but we are going to be
22 working extremely hard in order to put
23 these issues on the front burner to
24 ensure that while you're going through
25 that process, that this complement is

1 taken into consideration. Chair right
2 now wants to recognize Councilwoman
3 Gym.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
5 very much, Madam Chair, and thank you
6 very much, Inspector Gillespie and
7 Deputy Commissioner Murphy. We really
8 appreciate your support and work and
9 presence today. In a matter of as both
10 of you have noted in terms of our
11 dispatchers being on the front lines of
12 the front lines in a matter of life and
13 death, I do want to go on the record
14 and say that I support a pay raise, I
15 support a lower workload and I support
16 significant measures to make sure that
17 we meet all of the needs of our
18 community really, especially in an age
19 of coronavirus and especially in an age
20 where we have serious issues about our
21 own staffing and making sure that our
22 own employees are being taken care of
23 and are in a safe place.

24 We know that our 911
25 dispatchers are incredibly important

1 right now, so that's number one. I
2 appreciate the numbers, but I think one
3 of the more significant ones is that
4 FEMA requires the City of Philadelphia
5 in order to receive appropriate funding
6 to meet a threshold of 90 percent
7 response time under 10 seconds; is that
8 right?

9 MR. GILLESPIE: That's an
10 industry standard and then there's
11 categories beyond that with where it's
12 like in 5-second increments.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Right.
14 And then in 2019, we fell below the 90
15 percent?

16 MR. GILLESPIE: Yes, ma'am.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And
18 I think that's part of why we're here
19 is that we are in this situation where
20 whatever issues we may have around
21 civil service, whatever issues we may
22 have around recruitment, et cetera, et
23 cetera, that we are now in a situation
24 where we are below what would be
25 considered safety standards for

1 industry in terms of the safety and
2 health and life circumstances of our
3 own residents.

4 Whether or not we agree on
5 the numbers, 210 out of 278 that is
6 budgeted means that we're at 75 percent
7 capacity. If you were to take 210 out
8 of the 335 that might be recommended,
9 we're at 62 percent capacity, so this
10 is a very, very serious issue. And I
11 want you to know that we want to be
12 partners with you on this.

13 I am also incredibly
14 conscious of the difficulties around
15 civil service. So, Madam Chair, I
16 think one of the issues that we got
17 here is that we are dealing with our
18 Police Department and with our unions,
19 but really one of the situations is
20 that our 911 dispatchers are civilians,
21 we have to talk about civil service.

22 We are dealing with the same
23 thing with the Police Department and,
24 for example, school safety officers who
25 monitor trafficking, and school

1 crossing guards, et cetera, et cetera,
2 where we're also again significantly
3 below capacity even though need is
4 still in existence. It's also a
5 budgeted position. So we're going to
6 need to significantly reframe our
7 conversations about how we're looking
8 at emergency situations, and especially
9 situations where we're significantly
10 below where we need to be and what it
11 means about civil service guidelines.

12 I just think that that's got
13 to be part of our conversation I really
14 appreciate, and I know that my
15 Councilmember who has dealt with this
16 for I'm sure a little bit longer than I
17 have understands it.

18 I think one of my questions
19 for Inspector Gillespie has to do with
20 some of the conversations I think have
21 been hinted at with my colleagues but
22 also has occurred in my own discussions
23 with your own employees in situations
24 where we are trying to fill positions,
25 and it's challenging under even normal

1 circumstances. We have a budget and
2 all of that, but I've often felt like
3 the big advocates for this position are
4 the individuals who occupy that
5 position.

6 So individuals who are
7 currently in that position who say
8 that, hey, this is like a heroic job,
9 like this is a wonderful experience,
10 you should really get involved, it's
11 really great, you can have this and
12 this kind of qualifications. But I
13 know that in my conversations with a
14 number of the employees and wondering
15 what conversations have gone on in the
16 Police Department, concerns about
17 overtime, concerns about the ways in
18 which predominantly female
19 African-American workforce is treated
20 by entities within the Police
21 Department, in particularly supervisors
22 who are not civilians themselves but
23 are officers, how they're treated has
24 been a big concern.

25 And so, has the Department

1 reviewed sort of discussions, training
2 manuals, anti-harassment trainings,
3 other types of measures that improve
4 the actual relationship between
5 supervisors there and your 911
6 dispatchers?

7 MR. GILLESPIE: The
8 Department goes through a regular
9 training. And when we meet with
10 District Councilmembers of DC 33, we
11 discuss things in that nature on a
12 regular basis, we monitor anything of
13 the equal opportunity or otherwise
14 discriminatory nature will not be
15 tolerated.

16 In fact, a few individuals
17 have been sent up to Internal Affairs
18 and Internal Affairs gets involved with
19 investigations. We monitor that. The
20 supervisors are sworn as opposed to
21 civilian. Part of that is the fact of
22 bringing forth the knowledge of the
23 street and what may be needed out
24 there. If there's any problem that's
25 brought forth, it's dealt with

1 directly.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: One of the
3 questions I have is, is it usually
4 dealt on a one-to-one basis like
5 there's an individual who has an issue
6 with an individual as opposed to a
7 climate-based issue, because part of
8 one of the things we noticed around
9 harassment, especially around gender or
10 anything like that or race, it's
11 usually not defined solely by a
12 one-to-one kind of situation.

13 It's usually defined by a
14 structural imbalance around power
15 dynamics or status or whatever kinds of
16 establishment. And so, are there
17 efforts by the Department to as a group
18 talk to supervisors or those who go
19 into the call centers to ensure that
20 there's not just a one-on-one this is
21 how you handle it, but more of a
22 discussion about anti-harassment work
23 or what does gender discrimination look
24 like, how do we talk and improve our
25 modes of communication?

1 MR. GILLESPIE: I believe
2 that's an ongoing process for the
3 entire department starting with sexual
4 harassment and so on for the commanders
5 and for the general membership of the
6 sworn, so there's continuous training
7 on that.

8 As far as -- the fact that we
9 have a large volume of individuals who
10 are working for us, there is a variety
11 of issues that we deal with. It can be
12 a one-on-one. It could be a group
13 situation. It's normally handled by
14 the supervisor and that individual or a
15 couple of individuals. Depending on
16 the nature of that, it could grow from
17 there to the point that it either goes
18 to the command staff to handle or over
19 to Internal Affairs depending on the
20 nature of the situation.

21 We also have discipline
22 that's produced from that starting at
23 verbal counseling to written counseling
24 to formal charges, and we have a check
25 and balance process with that and the

1 fact that Captain -- Commanding Officer
2 Police Radio that's sitting behind me,
3 Captain Appleton, would take charge of
4 that. And then as a check and balance,
5 myself and Chief Inspector Cochrane
6 would review it to see if it is worthy
7 of formal disciplinary action or give
8 direction as needed.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That's
10 helpful. And again like I said, I
11 think the call center is an extremely
12 stressful situation. There's no
13 question about that. People are put
14 under enormous pressure to respond
15 quickly, appropriately, politely,
16 urgently.

17 But I know one of the areas
18 that we've been looking at is just
19 ensuring that workplace environments
20 are conducive and helpful and also
21 occasionally reviewing what happens
22 outside of hyper-individualized
23 interactions, like is this a climate
24 that we want, do people feel like this
25 is a healthy environment when we do or

1 deal with situations of
2 life-threatening nature in which there
3 might be enormous trauma that's
4 experienced by everybody in the call
5 center who might have listened,
6 witnessed or been part of it, are there
7 efforts to bring together people to
8 heal rather than to blame or to kind of
9 take it out on one another.

10 I am very, very sympathetic
11 to all of that, but just trying to
12 think about different methods
13 internally that the Police Department
14 can do to ensure that people are being
15 heard.

16 MR. GILLESPIE: So again,
17 when we meet with District Council 33
18 and their members, we discuss various
19 things to include -- if an individual
20 has experienced certain things or the
21 group as a whole, we always stress that
22 we're working towards a fair and equal
23 working environment.

24 Part of that is that we're
25 monitoring what each individual

1 dispatcher does as far as a percentage
2 of call-taking to make sure that one
3 person's not working harder than the
4 other individual. In an instance where
5 we have a chaotic type of situation,
6 not only do we have literature posted
7 up on bulletin boards throughout the
8 call center, we also have our
9 supervisors monitoring that individual,
10 offering EAP.

11 We have numerous avenues of
12 approach both through the sworn side
13 and the civilian side, in addition to
14 the fact that we can reach out beyond
15 that to Penn Behavioral Health and
16 such. And that's in the unfortunate
17 incidence of a police shooting, officer
18 shot, things of that nature we're
19 particularly concerned.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yes. And
21 again, I want to express how serious
22 that I think many of those
23 environmental situations are. I would
24 just encourage you to also consider
25 that sometimes discussions between

1 unions and institutionalized agencies
2 are not the only means by which to
3 review climate, that actually
4 third-party entities can come in and
5 take a look so it doesn't have to feel
6 like it's a combative or a union-based
7 issue or a grievance but actually is a
8 matter of a healthy climate for
9 everybody. I think that's part of what
10 we're talking about when we talk about
11 how to improve a professionalized
12 climate.

13 Has there been any discussion
14 about improving the actual physical
15 location of the call center? We heard
16 testimony from Deputy Commissioner
17 Murphy that it is a pretty, you know,
18 considering what people have to deal
19 with on a regular basis, it can be
20 really hard if people are there on
21 significant overtime to be in that
22 basement area.

23 MR. GILLESPIE: For us, we're
24 on the second floor of Police
25 headquarters --

1 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay.

2 MR. GILLESPIE: -- so there
3 is light filtering in. As mentioned in
4 testimony, in 2018 we did a complete
5 revamp of the second floor call center
6 where we stripped it down and cleansed
7 it. We even brought in outside
8 cleaning services in order to make sure
9 we've gotten everything that we can be
10 possibly get.

11 We're limited in the fact to
12 having to work in that space and the
13 requirements with that. When we
14 move -- even when we outfitted that
15 room, we took into consideration the
16 colors of the furniture, the carpeting
17 and stuff introducing blue hues which
18 is supposed to be a calming effect and
19 things of that nature. So we did the
20 best we could with the space we had and
21 the availability of funds. When we
22 move to the 400 North Broad, we've been
23 able to improve on that type of
24 atmosphere.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

1 And one last question which is what's
2 the average amount of overtime that the
3 911 dispatchers --

4 MR. GILLESPIE: I'm sorry?

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Average
6 amount of overtime per week maybe for a
7 dispatcher currently?

8 MR. GILLESPIE: I don't have
9 that figure. But as mentioned, at any
10 given tour we cannot staff without
11 overtime. I have figures from back in
12 2016 where we asked for an increase in
13 the staffing levels and myself and
14 Sergeant Little were involved in
15 calculating that. That's where we came
16 up with the figure of 335. But at that
17 time, we were spending approximately
18 \$2.5 million in overtime.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And are
20 the dispatchers aware ahead of time
21 that there will be overtime? Is it a
22 planned and scheduled overtime or is it
23 something that's unexpected?

24 MR. GILLESPIE: Overtime is
25 again on a daily basis per tour, so

1 there's an overtime book where they can
2 sign up for overtime. In lieu of that,
3 we also have a hiring process where we
4 contact the personnel that are on their
5 first day off followed by the people
6 who are on their second day off, and
7 the reason for that is budgetary
8 concerns. If you hire somebody on
9 their second day off, it creates double
10 time as far as salary. And then
11 subsequently, the very last thing that
12 we do is institute mandatory overtime.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. I
14 mean, one of the things that we worked
15 on, Madam Chair, is making sure that we
16 have fair scheduling for folks. And
17 so, you and I and others have heard for
18 a while about how difficult it is to do
19 daily time management on the job, so
20 we'll keep talking about this but I'll
21 look forward to hearing from the next
22 panel as well. Thank you very much,
23 Inspector.

24 MR. GILLESPIE: Sure.

25 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank

1 you, Councilwoman Gym. Let me quickly
2 just ask the Inspector, you mentioned
3 moving to 400 North Broad Street. When
4 do you think that will occur?

5 MR. GILLESPIE: We were in
6 conversation the other day with the
7 Department of Public Property. The
8 infrastructure should be in place
9 approximately December of 2020 and the
10 initial start of move-in would be in
11 January of '21. The expectation is
12 that it be closer to April of '21.

13 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So
14 April of '21 we expect to be in the
15 building?

16 MR. GILLESPIE: In the
17 process. If not, in the building
18 itself.

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: At that
20 time are there plans that Police and
21 Fire will physically be together then
22 or tell me how you guys are expecting
23 that to work?

24 MR. GILLESPIE: Our
25 communication centers will be

1 co-habiting the second floor along with
2 IT's portion of that, the data centers.
3 So this way we can improve our
4 interagency communications.

5 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Great.
6 Deputy Commissioner Murphy, in your
7 testimony, because we went through the
8 numbers from the Police Department, we
9 did get on the record numbers that the
10 union reports. You tell me, in your
11 written testimony you said you have 43
12 dispatchers, 8 supervisors, 1 chief and
13 1 deputy chief.

14 If you were fully staffed,
15 how many dispatchers would you have?

16 MR. MURPHY: That would be a
17 total of 61, Chairperson.

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: 61 if
19 you were at your full --

20 MR. MURPHY: If we were at
21 full staffing.

22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Let me
23 ask you this, Deputy Commissioner,
24 because for the benefit of the public I
25 want them to understand that there's

1 just a little bit of difference here
2 and I want it to be clear. Talk to me,
3 if you will, about the career
4 advancement that's available to fire
5 dispatchers and how does it compare
6 with the Police Department.

7 MR. MURPHY: So as I
8 testified a little earlier, our
9 dispatcher supervisors come from the
10 dispatcher ranks. They're not civil --
11 we're not uniformed. Now, we do have a
12 uniform presence for EMS, both fire
13 suppression in our call center, but all
14 the way up the ladder to chief
15 inspector it starts with -- there's a
16 level of advancement at each position.

17 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: For the
18 public, I want you to think about this.
19 You're a dispatcher. It's already a
20 highly-stressed position and when you
21 are attempting to identify what career
22 advancement is available, the
23 supervisors who govern the fire
24 dispatchers come from the ranks of the
25 dispatchers themselves.

1 So you just want to think how
2 you as a rank and filed dispatcher view
3 and interact with your supervisor when
4 they sort of work their way through the
5 process. There's nothing like someone
6 who you know truly understands what
7 it's like to be where you are because
8 they've come through the process.

9 Would you agree, Deputy Commissioner?

10 MR. MURPHY: I would agree.
11 It's similar to the way we do in the
12 Police and Fire Department. You have
13 more confidence if you know that
14 somebody stepped up through the ranks
15 and achieved a certain level of
16 position because then they can think
17 back to when they were a dispatcher.

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So help
19 me, if you will, and, Inspector and
20 Deputy Commissioner, I'm going to ask
21 both of you to chime in if necessary
22 because for the public that's viewing
23 at home, you've just heard that the
24 supervisors are civilians and they come
25 through the ranks in the Fire

1 Department. However, that is different
2 when we look at the Police Department.

3 Now, someone who's sitting at
4 home is saying to themselves, well,
5 wait a minute, how did it come about
6 that Fire has sort of a different
7 supervisory structure than Police.
8 Tell me how that happened.

9 MR. MURPHY: That happened
10 way before my time, Chairperson. Since
11 time and memorial it's been that way.
12 And I have 32 years with the Fire
13 Department.

14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So for
15 32 years your process has been in
16 place?

17 MR. MURPHY: As far as I
18 know.

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.
20 Inspector, help me, if you will.

21 MR. GILLESPIE: Councilwoman,
22 before my time, there were civilian
23 supervisors in addition to sworn.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So
25 sworn and civilian?

1 MR. GILLESPIE: Correct, but
2 the civilian supervisor position was
3 removed.

4 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: It was
5 removed. So --

6 MR. GILLESPIE: The
7 Department's position would be that the
8 sworn due to the nature of what goes on
9 the street in association with the
10 dispatchers handling the job is the
11 best course of action.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.
13 Inspector, I don't know if you know but
14 in my mind, Chairman Jones, is this
15 something that was negotiated via
16 collective bargaining you think with
17 the Police Department or we're not
18 certain?

19 MR. GILLESPIE: From my
20 recollection, I believe the unions FOP
21 and Lodge 5 and DC 33 were involved
22 with that, but I don't have direct
23 knowledge of that.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Now,
25 one story that was shared with me in

1 preparation for this hearing, you all
2 will remember the tragic Amtrak
3 derailment that occurred and several
4 police dispatchers as a result of that,
5 they were in essence disciplined,
6 right, but the fire dispatchers, they
7 were given a public commendation.

8 And I just said, wait a
9 minute, we're talking about the same
10 crisis, the same stressful jobs.
11 People who are in essence doing the
12 same thing, but police dispatchers in
13 effort get disciplined, but fire
14 dispatchers get commended. Any
15 explanation, so that the logic that I
16 don't understand or something that
17 occurred that I don't get in that
18 instance?

19 MR. GILLESPIE: We are the
20 first ones to receive the information
21 coming through 911 and it's
22 subsequently transferred over to the
23 Fire Department. During that
24 particular incident, a number of our
25 dispatchers did extremely well. Most

1 of them did extremely well. We saw
2 some issues with a few of the
3 dispatchers that we did an
4 investigation, took certain
5 disciplinary action just to ensure they
6 understood what to do the next time to
7 prevent it from happening again.

8 Some discipline was heavier
9 than others. It was in stages of
10 verbal, written or formal. Very few
11 received formal discipline as opposed
12 to overall investigation of the
13 situation. We did submit names to be
14 recognized.

15 At the time, the police radio
16 room dispatchers were the only ones to
17 be recognized in the Police Department.
18 As the other units, it was seen to not
19 recognize the situation for what it
20 was. They didn't want to add more
21 light on the situation, so it was
22 staggered in nature. And I believe
23 since then patrol and everyone else
24 involved, including other dispatchers
25 have been recognized.

1 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
2 you. Let me just for the record thank
3 both of you for your testimony,
4 Inspector, Deputy Commissioner. We
5 want you to know that we fully
6 appreciate and respect your service to
7 our City. The men and women who work
8 with you to serve us and they're
9 running into burning buildings, they're
10 running directly into crime, they're
11 putting their lives on the line on a
12 daily basis and we don't take that
13 lightly.

14 Inspector, I also just want
15 to note this for the record because
16 Chairman Jones and to my other
17 colleagues who are here today, I do
18 note and am excited about the fact that
19 we have a new Police Commissioner,
20 Commissioner Outlaw.

21 I love the idea that she
22 brings a fresh set of eyes to the
23 entire way that we police here in
24 Philadelphia, but I do want to state
25 for the record while we're going to pay

1 very close to attention to this issue
2 relative to the dispatchers for both
3 Police and Fire through this budget
4 process and we're going to be watching
5 collective bargaining.

6 For the record, I don't want
7 anyone in the City of Philadelphia to
8 think that the challenges that we have
9 in the Police Department in particular,
10 that have taken decades upon decades
11 upon decades to develop, that we should
12 expect our Police Commissioner who
13 hasn't even been here for three months
14 to be able to solve all of this with
15 the magic wand.

16 We have to be partners in
17 this area and that means very
18 methodically and not, Councilman Jones,
19 in the sort of, okay, yeah, this is the
20 big sort of grand problem, but how do
21 we very methodically and incrementally
22 work with workers along with the
23 Department to make the changes that we
24 need to ensure that we are effectively
25 and efficiently providing access to the

1 best public safety that we possibly can
2 here in the City of Philadelphia, and I
3 just wanted to say that for the record.
4 Chair recognizes Councilman Jones.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
6 Madam Chair. I just want to say on the
7 other side of the ledger, on the fire
8 side, you're getting your burn building
9 renovated?

10 MR. MURPHY: It's done.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just
12 want on the record --

13 MR. MURPHY: That we talked
14 about.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just
16 want to -- promise made, promise kept.

17 MR. MURPHY: Yes.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: So it's in
19 the O'Neill's area. What's --

20 MR. MURPHY: It's State Road
21 and Pennypack.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we
23 toured that, and they burned that
24 building down 100 times and I don't
25 think it could have done another 125.

1 MR. MURPHY: I don't think it
2 would have taken three or four more
3 burns, but we got the funding that we
4 needed to be able to stop going to --
5 where was it, Lower Bucks County, we
6 met that time?

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes. We
8 had municipal envy.

9 MR. MURPHY: I know.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: They had
11 the better burn center and burn
12 building. So I just want you to keep
13 up the good work. Some of the best
14 training on the East Coast than
15 anywhere happens right up in Pennypack,
16 so thank you for your service.

17 MR. MURPHY: Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Chair
19 recognizes Councilwoman Katherine
20 Gilmore Richardson.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.
23 And I just wanted to say thank you both
24 for your testimony. And I wanted to
25 leave you with this as you go into your

1 collective bargaining. I thought about
2 my experience working in a call center,
3 not as a dispatcher for Police and
4 Fire, but at the Internal Revenue
5 Service dealing with callers who were
6 looking and waiting for their refunds
7 and other tax-related matters.

8 And I thought about this, has
9 there ever been a conversation around
10 providing onsite child care for our
11 police dispatchers so that if they are
12 called for overtime, they have the
13 ability to have a safe space for their
14 children to be onsite with them as
15 well?

16 When I worked at the Internal
17 Revenue Service, we had onsite child
18 care available at that facility that
19 was run by an outside organization, but
20 that could be helpful to a number of
21 the dispatchers that are working in
22 that call center. Has that been a part
23 of any conversation? If not, I ask
24 that it's a part of your ongoing
25 negotiation as you move into the next

1 negotiating period in June.

2 MR. GILLESPIE: At one point
3 it was mentioned, but we will be sure
4 to take that back with us.

5 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Listen,
6 we want to say a special thank you to
7 this panel. We meant exactly what we
8 said. We're going to be working hard
9 and advocating strongly during this
10 budget process for our dispatchers,
11 both Police along with Fire, because
12 you can't do your job adequately if we
13 as a city are not funding these
14 essential positions at the level in
15 which they should so that we are, one,
16 meeting industry standards and that we
17 are not in jeopardy of losing any of
18 the much-needed revenues and funding
19 that you need to be effective and
20 efficient, so we want to say thank you
21 to each of you.

22 MR. MURPHY: Thank you.

23 MR. GILLESPIE: Thank you
24 very much.

25 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank

1 you. Will the Clerk please call the
2 next list?

3 THE CLERK: Frank Halbherr,
4 Shannon Milteer, Nicole Kemmerer and
5 Franki Rizq.

6 (Panel approached
7 Witness Table.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: As this
9 panel approaches, we're just going to
10 ask each of you to state your name for
11 the record and proceed with your
12 testimony. And, Councilman Jones, I
13 just want to note for the record that
14 the public who's watching, you'll see a
15 side barring here, Councilman Jones was
16 just noting, and in particularly
17 stating for the record, when
18 Councilwoman Gilmore Richardson asked
19 the question, particularly which was
20 notable because we talked about during
21 the testimony that there was a high
22 number of women who were actually
23 serving in these positions and
24 Councilwoman Gilmore Richardson talked
25 about if mandatory overtime is

1 something that is usual there, is child
2 care available. And, Councilman Jones,
3 as an enlightened man, as an
4 enlightened man, I appreciate you
5 noting for the record that that is a
6 value that a woman that can bring to
7 the conversation because of our
8 personal experiences.

9 And he was just saying,
10 Councilwoman Gilmore Richardson, how
11 important it was to inject that with
12 collective bargaining coming up. So
13 thank you for adding that on the
14 record.

15 Thank you. You can state
16 your name for the record and begin with
17 your testimony.

18 MR. HALBHERR: Good morning,
19 Councilmembers. My name is Frank
20 Halbherr. I serve as President of
21 AFSCME Local 1637. On behalf of 911
22 dispatchers, I want to thank all the
23 members of City Council for listening
24 to all of our concerns. These are
25 serious concerns and we're grateful to

1 the entire board.

2 We want to thank Councilwomen
3 Sanchez and Bass for meeting with us
4 and listening to our concerns. We
5 would like to thank Councilwoman Gym
6 who gave us guidance in this and it was
7 invaluable guidance and we are grateful
8 for your help.

9 And last but not least,
10 Councilwoman Parker, Councilman Jones,
11 without you we wouldn't be here today.
12 And taking the tour of 911 radio meant
13 the world to a lot of people. Thank
14 you so much on behalf of all the 911
15 dispatchers.

16 Approximately, four years ago
17 I accompanied Chief Inspector Anthony
18 Boyle, who at the time was the
19 commanding officer of 911 Radio, to a
20 meeting with the Administration's
21 representatives to discuss shortages of
22 manpower in 911 Radio.

23 In this meeting, Chief
24 Inspector Boyle referred to a report
25 that was put together by Police

1 Communications Division that contained
2 data pointing to the need for increased
3 staffing level of 335 dispatchers.

4 This report stated that the cost of
5 this increase would initially be \$2
6 million, but at the time it would
7 reduce the City's expenditures by \$2.5
8 million annually due to a sizable
9 reduction in overtime cost for a total
10 annual savings of \$500,000 annually.

11 The data contained in the
12 Police Communications report
13 highlighted that the City could not
14 only save money, but it could also
15 assure coverage on all shifts and calls
16 being answered in a time limit which
17 meets the requirements in the
18 Pennsylvania Emergency Management
19 Agency, PEMA.

20 As Inspector Gillespie
21 stated, it's 90 percent of calls need
22 to be answered 10 seconds or last for
23 PEMA funding. Since the time of this
24 meeting, staffing levels have continued
25 to plummet causing mandatory overtime

1 on a daily basis. The Police
2 Department states they are currently
3 understaffed by 30 dispatchers. We
4 strongly disagree with how that number
5 is being presented here.

6 We agree, they said 248, we
7 can work with that number. But by our
8 calculation, if there are 69
9 dispatchers in 1 squad; 70 in 2 squad;
10 67 on 3 squad. That comes up to 206
11 dispatchers. Now, there are
12 dispatchers known as 5 squad. They do
13 clerical work, but they are included in
14 mandatory overtime on weekends. They
15 work 9:00 to 5:00 Monday through
16 Friday. There are about 15 of them
17 according to our count.

18 And right now I know Sergeant
19 Little said there was I think she said
20 11 trainees. We actually have 12
21 trainees on 1 squad and 11 trainees on
22 2 squad which brings that to 23
23 trainees. If you're looking at just
24 dispatchers, to us there are only 206
25 with a few out on FMLA.

1 So while we're about 210
2 dispatchers, right now the budget calls
3 for 278 dispatchers. We sat in a
4 meeting with Police not long ago where
5 they were going to ask for an increased
6 budget to 308, so I think it's clear to
7 both sides, I don't think anyone's
8 arguing there's a need here.

9 I want to refer your
10 attention to a report we put together.
11 I'm hoping you have this with you. We
12 had an analysis done that compares
13 Philadelphia to the four nearby
14 counties. I would like to have this
15 report submitted on the record as part
16 of my testimony.

17 As you can clearly see -- now
18 this is based on 225 dispatchers. And
19 how we got this was 248 as the
20 Department said minus 23 comes out to
21 225. We included the administrative
22 staff into this report because they do
23 get mandated on weekends.

24 As you can see, clearly on
25 Figure 1 on the report Philadelphia

1 currently has only 81 percent of its
2 currently allocated 278 dispatcher
3 positions fulfilled while the average
4 across the four counties is 87 percent.
5 Now, North Hampton County is pulling up
6 that average with a 98 percent
7 fulfillment rate, but we are still
8 doing worse than Berks and Bucks which
9 are 85 and 89 percent respectively.

10 If we can look at Figure 2 on
11 Page 2, you will see just how much
12 Philadelphia outpaces the other
13 counties when it comes to the number of
14 calls fielded by an average dispatcher.
15 In Philadelphia, the average dispatcher
16 fielded 10,520 calls compared to the
17 four-county average of 8,136 calls. So
18 suffice to say, the workload in
19 Philadelphia is much greater than some
20 nearby counties.

21 There's more data in this
22 report and I hope you take time to read
23 it. Also, I spoke about a report the
24 Police Department did a few years ago
25 asking for 335 dispatchers. This

1 report, we got this data from
2 government websites, from Tom Tosti,
3 the Executive Director of AFSCME
4 District Council 88 who represents
5 numerous dispatchers in the surrounding
6 counties.

7 We gave this to a young man
8 who was a rogue scholar at Columbia
9 University and a product of the
10 Philadelphia public school system, and
11 he manipulated numbers, came out with
12 333 dispatchers. Two off of the number
13 the Police Department handed in a few
14 years back.

15 In wrapping up my testimony,
16 we believe that issues such as short
17 staffing even by the Police
18 Department's estimates is well under a
19 full complement and results in added
20 pressure from taking more phone calls
21 while working longer hours and
22 inevitably low morale. Couple that
23 with a paramilitary management will
24 leave civilian dispatchers who work for
25 the Philadelphia Police Department with

1 no chance of promotion or advancement,
2 and we believe this situation is not
3 conducive to productivity of a 911
4 dispatcher in the Police Department or
5 for that matter, the safety to the
6 public.

7 Unlike the Philadelphia Fire
8 Department where supervisors are
9 civilians who dispatched for maybe 10,
10 15, 20 years and who worked their way
11 up the ranks, as Councilwoman Parker
12 asked earlier, in the Police Department
13 there's a line of supervisors
14 consisting of corporals, sergeants,
15 lieutenants, I believe captain,
16 inspector and a chief inspector with a
17 number of officers transferring in and
18 out of Police Radio due to departmental
19 transfers and promotions.

20 The chances of disciplinary
21 charges being brought against civilian
22 dispatchers in the Philadelphia Police
23 Department which are mostly charges of
24 neglected duties or insubordination,
25 taking a bad phone call, getting into

1 some words with a supervisor is
2 approximately 10 times greater than
3 that in the Philadelphia Fire
4 Department.

5 We believe this is due to the
6 relationship between experienced
7 civilian supervisors and civilian
8 employees in the Fire Department
9 compared to the relationship between
10 civilian employees and uniform
11 supervisors as in the Police
12 Department.

13 And finally, you talked
14 earlier about the process of hiring.
15 Hiring dispatchers is a tedious process
16 that both management and employees and
17 unions agree there's a problem with.
18 As of today, there were three parts of
19 the hiring process which include a
20 written test, a typewriting test and a
21 voice test which are scheduled for
22 different dates and is very time-
23 consuming.

24 We believe that by
25 incorporating these parts of the hiring

1 process into possibly one day, it would
2 be fair to the applicant, it would be
3 much less time-consuming and it would
4 lessen the resources which are now
5 needed to bring applicants in on
6 multiple occasions. Quickly --

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Codifying
8 all of the testing to try to
9 accommodate it in one, maybe two days
10 would cut down on the vacancy.

11 MR. HALBHERR: It would
12 expedite the process, Councilman. We
13 are always chasing our tail. But as we
14 wait, more people are dropping off
15 while we're waiting for this process to
16 go through. And --

17 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Before
18 we go, we want you to finish with your
19 testimony. So we want to hear
20 everybody's testimony --

21 MR. HALBHERR: I'm sorry,
22 ma'am.

23 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: -- and
24 then we will finish with our questions.
25 Don't worry about it.

1 MR. HALBHERR: Thank you,
2 ma'am. Unlike any other City
3 department, 911 dispatchers deal with
4 life and death issues every day and the
5 added pressure which is now being put
6 on them is unnecessary and we believe
7 that you as a collective body can make
8 our city a safer one for both our
9 workers and our citizens. Again, on
10 behalf of all 911 dispatchers, I thank
11 you so much from the bottom of our
12 hearts.

13 MS. KEMMERER: Good morning.
14 My name is Nicole Kemmerer. I've been
15 a police dispatcher for almost nine
16 years. When I interviewed for this
17 job, it was explained to me that at
18 times we would be kept for mandatory in
19 the case of special events and certain
20 circumstances, for example, a snowstorm
21 and possibly New Year's Eve.

22 At that time, dispatchers
23 were kept maybe once a year or once
24 every two years. Today we are kept
25 once a month due to low staffing

1 levels. Mandatory is not only causing
2 more stress in an already stressful
3 job, but it is causing health issues
4 and low morale in our room.

5 Daily we are not only being
6 forced to work mandatory, but we're
7 also having to do mandatory rotations
8 to help with answering 911 calls due to
9 being understaffed. This means that
10 employees who are scheduled to work in
11 the dispatch side are now having to
12 rotate to the phone room and answer 911
13 calls during their shift. This creates
14 not only a public safety issue, but an
15 officer safety issue as now it's
16 leaving just one dispatcher on each
17 console to handle everything that is
18 going on.

19 We have many single mothers,
20 including myself, who have to choose
21 between work and family time and our
22 family life is struggling. I also have
23 many co-workers who have many small
24 children and who take care of elderly
25 family members. When we are mandated,

1 this causes more stress, anxiety and a
2 financial burden as we now need to find
3 someone to care for our loved ones for
4 an extended four hours a day.

5 Personally, as a widowed
6 single mother with a daughter who
7 suffers from mental health issues and
8 who sees a doctor once a week, it's
9 very hard to get her to these
10 appointments or to find someone to take
11 her when I'm mandated. I've had to
12 miss many games, school functions and
13 family events because of mandatory
14 overtime.

15 As 911 dispatchers, we are
16 the first person you speak to on what
17 could be your worst day. We're the
18 ones that send you that help when you
19 need it. However, we're still not
20 classified as first responders. We're
21 the first line of defense for the
22 citizens of Philadelphia and for
23 officers, firefighters and paramedics
24 and our job responsibilities and duties
25 should reflect that. Thank you.

1 MS. MILTEER: Good morning.
2 My name is Shannon Milteer. I have
3 been a Philadelphia police dispatcher
4 for nine years. When I started working
5 at Police Radio, mandatory was utilized
6 for major events, incidents and
7 holidays. Therefore, we would only get
8 mandated once every couple of years.

9 In recent years due to
10 seasoned dispatchers leaving the job
11 for various reasons, losing applicants
12 or during the intense hiring process
13 and new hires that quit in the training
14 stage because they cannot handle the
15 rapid pace and responsibilities that
16 come along with the job, Police Radio
17 remains understaffed and mandatory is
18 happening every day.

19 On a daily basis, there is at
20 least one dispatcher mandated on either
21 of the shifts to cover the low staffing
22 level. Mandatory has become a part of
23 our daily lives. It is not only
24 stressful, but it is causing
25 dispatchers to have health issues,

1 tension between dispatchers and
2 disciplinary action from supervision
3 due to insubordination. It is also
4 causing low morale within the
5 workplace.

6 A few months ago on a
7 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. tour, we had 13
8 dispatchers who were mandated until
9 3:00 a.m. And at 3:00 a.m. when 10 of
10 those 13 who were mandated left, there
11 were no dispatchers to answer the 911
12 calls. Thankfully, there were two
13 dispatchers who were willing to come in
14 at 3:00 a.m. But if there was another
15 unfortunate incident such as the train
16 derailment, there would not have been
17 enough dispatchers to handle the
18 incoming call volume.

19 Dispatchers spend their
20 entire shift dealing with people in the
21 most panic moments of their lives and
22 those people depend on us to get them
23 help. Their lives are dependent on how
24 quickly and efficiently the dispatcher
25 reacts.

1 A majority of dispatchers do
2 not like to work overtime on a regular
3 basis. But when they are mandated,
4 they are being forced to work long
5 hours in which -- I'm sorry, work long
6 hours which can lead to errors from
7 tired dispatchers. The low staffing
8 levels in Police Radio is also a safety
9 hazard for the officers on the street.

10 Dispatchers are rotated from
11 their divisional consoles to answer
12 incoming calls which leaves one
13 dispatcher handling the console during
14 founded assignments, such as shootings,
15 bank robberies, foot pursuits and other
16 situations where officer safety should
17 be the number one priority.

18 There are many single mothers
19 in Police Radio and it is not fair to
20 us to have to choose between work and
21 caring for our families and our family
22 needs on a daily basis. Therefore,
23 mandatory overtime is not only
24 affecting the dispatchers of Police
25 Radio. It affects our families, the

1 citizens we serve and our brothers and
2 sisters in blue. I am here today
3 because it shouldn't take a tragedy for
4 the light to come on and the problem to
5 be solved. Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: To
7 Frank, to --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: We have
9 one more.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: One
11 more, okay.

12 MS. RIZQ: Good morning,
13 ladies and gentlemen. My name is
14 Franki Rizq. I'm a Philadelphia Fire
15 Department dispatcher with 15 years
16 experience. I do thank you for this
17 opportunity to speak with you
18 concerning the mandatory overtime
19 situation caused by the understaffing
20 in our 911 center.

21 The main reason I'm so
22 concerned, this situation is three-
23 fold. Number one is public safety.
24 The Philadelphia Fire Department only
25 has three to four call-takers for the

1 entire city. When some call-takers are
2 working more than 13 hours into their
3 shift, more errors are apt to be made.

4 Also, physically and mentally
5 exhausted workers' compassion and
6 understanding can be compromised. This
7 can lead to less effective life-saving
8 instructions provided to the citizens
9 of Philadelphia. The mass numbers of
10 calls being handled while you're short-
11 staffed or having mandatory overtime
12 staff can lead to vital information
13 being missed.

14 Two, there's also a toll on
15 employees. Mental health stress is an
16 everyday part of our job. When your
17 caller is an 80-year-old man who is
18 unable to physically perform CPR on his
19 fatally ill wife, the immense sadness
20 and frustration doesn't go away when
21 you disconnect from that call; the call
22 when you have to instruct the mother to
23 cut down her son whom she found hanging
24 in order to give CPR instructions if
25 it's not too late. It's one of those

1 calls that lives with you for years.

2 Being understaffed and
3 working in a mandatory overtime
4 situation doesn't allow us a chance to
5 decompress and can depress the most
6 experienced dispatcher. Physical
7 health is another real issue we face.

8 On my platoon alone, four of the eight
9 regular dispatchers take medication for
10 high blood pressure they didn't have to
11 take before starting the job.

12 In addition to high blood
13 pressure, cardiovascular issues and
14 exhaustion rates are higher in 911
15 workers. Employee burnout and turnover
16 rate is very high due to the extreme
17 pressure of our job. We're not even
18 able to count or have the time off due
19 to mandatory overtime. This, added to
20 the unacknowledged PTSD, contributes to
21 a cycle which never ends.

22 I'm also concerned about the
23 toll on families. Employees have
24 children that are left stranded at day
25 care or school when they are mandated

1 for overtime. Employees' children or
2 ill family members are left
3 unsupervised when care can't be found
4 for them. Family structures begin to
5 break down when the primary caregiver
6 isn't there to prepare or serve meals,
7 not being there to help with homework,
8 put your child to bed, give medication
9 or a simple good night kiss leads to a
10 weaker family unit.

11 Families incur additional
12 expenses such as daycare fees,
13 surcharges and missed doctors'
14 appointments and having to hire
15 additional care at this time. Now, the
16 Fair Labor Safety Law established in
17 1938 requires that extra pay be
18 rewarded for extra time work, but it
19 did not impose limits on the amount of
20 overtime worked nor did it prohibit
21 dismissal or other sanctions for
22 declined overtime.

23 This leads to discipline
24 against dedicated public safety workers
25 who have already encountered excessive

1 stress on a daily basis. I am
2 fortunate enough to have civilian
3 supervisors in the Philadelphia Fire
4 Department who have dispatcher
5 experience in stress. These
6 supervisors use corrective discipline
7 when needed.

8 My fellow 911 dispatchers at
9 the Philadelphia Police Department have
10 uniform supervisors with no dispatcher
11 experience and are subject to punitive
12 disciplinary measures. When you face
13 life-threatening emergencies every day,
14 corrective discipline serves to
15 strengthen the 911 system while
16 punitive action serves to lesson
17 morale.

18 Once again I would like to
19 thank you for the opportunity to share
20 the risks mandatory overtime presents
21 to citizens of Philadelphia. Let's
22 work together to ensure public safety,
23 keep dedicated City workers mentally
24 and physically healthy. Let's keep our
25 families strong and make our City

1 proud. Thank you respectfully and
2 thanks for your time.

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
4 you, Frank, Shannon and Nicole. Now,
5 Franki, I like your name so we have
6 Frank and then we have a Franki.

7 MS. RIZQ: The Frank and
8 Franki show, yes.

9 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Franki,
10 for the record because I like -- is it
11 Rizq?

12 MS. RIZQ: It's Rizq. Take a
13 risk, baby.

14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: It's
15 Rizq. Okay. You have the coolest last
16 name in the world.

17 MS. RIZQ: It means gift from
18 God so I'm more with it.

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: All
20 right. One, I want to state for the
21 record, I want to thank you all for
22 your patience. As you will remember
23 when we first talked in the office and
24 I had an opportunity to just hear from
25 each of you talking about your

1 experiences, you are first responders.
2 And I love the way the Deputy
3 Commissioner referred to the fire
4 dispatchers within the Department as
5 the first first responders. And that
6 is the form in which we sort of view
7 you all in the work that you do for our
8 great city.

9 Now, listen, we want to start
10 because we want to get a few things on
11 the record so I want you to bear with
12 us as we go through this because you
13 might say, I said some of that in my
14 testimony but we've got to be very
15 specific and get what we need to get on
16 the record.

17 First to Frank, let me say
18 this, Frank, you'll remember we asked
19 about the regional sort of average
20 calls, how did we compare regionally
21 with different counties. I want to say
22 a special thank you to you for the data
23 that you've compiled that you have
24 together. Usually we are accustomed to
25 the Administration because of their

1 technical capacity of having the
2 ability to compile this kind of data
3 and then present it in such a way that
4 we can get it into the record.

5 So I do want to note for the
6 record, we heard both the Police
7 Department and Fire talk about
8 contracts being up this year.

9 Negotiations will begin. You do need
10 to know that we will be using this data
11 that you provided us today, we will be
12 using this during the budget process as
13 each of our Police and Fire departments
14 come before us during testimony. The
15 stenographer will have a copy of this
16 and she will enter all of this into the
17 public record. So I don't know how you
18 did it but you guys are pretty savvy
19 over there at Local 1637.

20 MR. HALBHERR: Thank you,
21 ma'am. Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Let me
23 ask you this, and I want to be very
24 intentional about this, you heard me
25 and, Franki, you just hit on this

1 question, the difference between having
2 civilian supervisors who've done the
3 work, who've been there, who know what
4 it's like, and you talked about,
5 Franki, because you have civilian
6 supervisors you said that doesn't
7 necessarily mean that fire dispatchers
8 don't sometimes make an error or need
9 correcting, but when you do it from the
10 perspective of --

11 MS. RIZQ: Corrective versus

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: --

13 being punitive. As we talked about
14 what happened with Amtrak, talk to us
15 if you would about what that does for
16 the morale and when your supervisor
17 who's been where you are makes a
18 decision about some corrective action
19 that needs to be taken in your
20 professional role, how is it received
21 by employees?

22 MS. RIZQ: Well, personally I
23 came from Police. I was there for a
24 very short time. And then I went over
25 to Fire so I did get to see a little

1 firsthand, the paramilitary issue
2 versus civilian. We know that when
3 we're being corrected there is a reason
4 for it.

5 We know they're speaking from
6 actual experience than a book of rules
7 or what they think you should do. It
8 does make us stronger as a team. We're
9 very team-oriented. We know that if we
10 have an issue, the supervisor will have
11 it back. If we do have a legit issue
12 or question or we did something wrong,
13 we don't have to be afraid to address
14 it. We're going to get the proper
15 help. We're not going to end up being
16 called up for it. It's just the
17 support -- the less stress you work
18 itself because you're not afraid of
19 punitive discipline, you learn how to
20 do your job right.

21 The morale issue is totally
22 team work. It is a team. We're there
23 to help you. They're there to help us.
24 We don't have necessary, oh,
25 so-and-so's going to have an attitude

1 today, we're in trouble. We have the
2 let's get this done right. Let's get
3 this stronger.

4 Of course, the Fire
5 Department has crazy, crazy
6 emergencies. We don't have the volume
7 the Police do. But when we have
8 something going on of such a high
9 level, the train derailment, the Duck
10 boat that went down, everyone rolls up
11 their sleeves and everyone is in there
12 helping and their experience as
13 civilians makes our team stronger and
14 the work that goes out better and the
15 help gets there faster and more
16 important, the right help is there.

17 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Let me
18 quickly ask you this, ladies, you
19 talked about child care. Councilman
20 Jones acknowledged and Councilwoman
21 Gilmore Richardson mentioned in her
22 line of questioning, tell us what is
23 the common thread that you hear about
24 amongst your largely female staff who
25 are mothers, particularly those with

1 small children who need oversight, how
2 often do you hear women saying, oh, I
3 have to make an adjustment because I
4 know if I don't get there by 6 o'clock,
5 you can get charged by the minute in
6 some instances. How often does that
7 issue come up?

8 MS. KEMMERER: (Inaudible.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Can you
10 pull the microphone closer and state
11 your name for the record?

12 MS. KEMMERER: Nicole
13 Kemmerer. And I would say daily,
14 especially with mandatory overtime now.
15 As much as we're being held and as
16 often as we're being held, it always
17 becomes an issue for child care and
18 even for our elderly loved ones that a
19 lot of our employees are taking care
20 of. They have to find somebody now to
21 either pick them up from day care or
22 pick them up from school so that
23 they're not charged that extra fee, and
24 then they have to pay that person to
25 watch them.

1 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Listen,
2 we've talked about the stress level. I
3 know sometimes it's challenging to go
4 home, trying to just turn off your
5 brains when you leave work. With what
6 you do, and we only feel it a bit,
7 right, with the level of constituent
8 cases that we are asked to solve, so
9 probably about a week ago my entire
10 staff and I, we had to close the office
11 for the entire day because we took a
12 mental health training that was an
13 all-day long training offered by DBHIDS
14 here in the City of Philadelphia.

15 Tell me is there any kind of
16 structural mental health, we will call
17 it -- when I was teaching, they used to
18 call our days professional development
19 days. Are any of those kinds of days
20 built into shifts for you as a part of
21 what you do?

22 MS. KEMMERER: No.

23 MS. RIZQ: I just want to
24 bring to attention that when the Fire
25 Department representatives --

1 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: State
2 your name for the record.

3 MS. RIZQ: This is Franki
4 Rizq, fire dispatcher. I just want to
5 bring to attention when the Fire
6 representatives spoke of the new stress
7 program that was available to us on
8 computer for us to deal with the
9 stress, I'm unaware of it.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So
11 although the Department mentioned it,
12 you as a dispatcher you were unaware --

13 MS. RIZQ: Unaware of it. It
14 might have came down through as a memo.
15 We get numerous memos, but I'm unaware
16 of it. We've never been trained or
17 taught or sat down to actually show
18 where it is, this is what you can do or
19 given time to review it or become
20 familiar with it.

21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: My
22 colleagues have questions. I have two
23 I want to ask you all and anybody can
24 chime in and comment on this. So if we
25 were -- and you all know Mayor Kenney

1 along with our Council President
2 Clarke, members of Council and our
3 Health Commissioner held a press
4 conference yesterday about the
5 coronavirus and the safety precautions
6 that the City is taking.

7 We have since then cancelled
8 the St. Patrick's Day parade.
9 Universities across the country now are
10 talking about having class delivered in
11 an online manner. Do you feel like if
12 the City were right now based on what
13 you've described, if we have a crisis
14 like we've never seen before, something
15 on the magnitude of Amtrak derailling or
16 you remember the officers being shot in
17 Nicetown, do you feel like our 911 call
18 center is able to handle it? That's
19 one question, so think about that one.

20 And then finally, I want to
21 say and I do want each of you to answer
22 this. If each of you could make one
23 policy recommendation, one policy
24 recommended that once you recommended
25 it, you knew the City of Philadelphia

1 would embrace it and enforce it, what
2 would it be? Magnitude of a crisis
3 that we've never seen before, are we
4 prepared?

5 MS. MILTEER: Okay. So as
6 you stated the train derailment and
7 even with the incident with the
8 officers, that's something that we
9 never experienced before. So when it
10 happened, we just kind of pulled
11 together and did what we needed to do
12 to make sure everybody was safe or at
13 least we tried to make everyone safe.
14 So those were incidents that we never
15 encountered before.

16 Since the -- as far as the
17 policy that you were saying, since the
18 incident we haven't even had training.
19 Now that we know that it can happen,
20 we've never had training on, okay, next
21 time this happens if it happens again
22 unfortunately, these are the plans that
23 we're going to have in order. So I
24 just feel like when unfortunate
25 situations come about, after it's all

1 said and done, we should have some type
2 of training to tell us that if this was
3 to happen again, this is what we're
4 going to do.

5 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So,
6 Shannon, what you just described is we
7 know what occurred when we had all of
8 those officers shot in that crisis in
9 Nicetown, we know what happened with
10 Amtrak. Are you telling me that in the
11 case of a crisis like that, there has
12 been no prep and/or training relative
13 to what the standard operating
14 procedures are, because this is what I
15 equate it to. I equate it to fire
16 drills in school. So are they built
17 into on an annual basis or a quarterly
18 basis?

19 MS. MILTEER: So on a regular
20 basis, we get a shooting. On a regular
21 basis, we may get an accident. On a
22 regular basis, we get a domestic, but
23 we've only had one train derailment.
24 So we used the practice that we use in
25 any other situation. But as you stated

1 before, we got disciplined for some of
2 the things that we did, but we didn't
3 know what else to do --

4 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Right.

5 MS. MILTEER: -- because
6 we've never experienced it.

7 MS. KEMMERER: And along with
8 that --

9 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: State
10 your name for the record.

11 MS. KEMMERER: Nicole
12 Kemmerer. We don't have regular
13 trainings. We don't have -- I mean, a
14 training to the Police Department for
15 us is handing us a memo and saying this
16 policy is changing or we're adding this
17 dispatch code or we're adding this in
18 and they hand us the memo and we sign
19 off on it, and that is what is
20 considered training to them. So we
21 don't have regular --

22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Stop,
23 stop, Nicole, right there. Just help
24 me because I'm trying to get it and
25 make sense of what you just said.

1 There's been a change in a ruling or a
2 policy, you get a memo outlining it.
3 Does a supervisor come in and have a
4 meeting to say, you just got a new
5 ruling or a new policy and procedure
6 and this is what occurs?

7 MS. KEMMERER: No. They hand
8 us a piece of paper and say, this is a
9 new policy. And there have been
10 instances where I will ask them about
11 it and ask them, okay, well, I'm
12 reading it this way but this dispatcher
13 is making it this way, and they don't
14 even have a clue and they're reading it
15 a different way, so they can't even
16 clarify it.

17 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So
18 right now, Franki, we want to hear from
19 you because we want to juxtapose
20 process, protocols and procedures,
21 civilian supervisors versus in
22 department. What happens within the
23 Fire department?

24 MS. RIZQ: Franki Rizq. We
25 do have some regular training like

1 every Sunday morning, we have to go out
2 and we have to do -- we have a dry
3 river box run. It's just a practice if
4 there's an emergency on the water that
5 we have to go out, and they take turns
6 with the different platoons doing the
7 same exercise. We know if the event
8 does happen, the protocol they switch
9 the dispatchers around so more
10 dispatchers are familiar with it.

11 However, when we do have some
12 policy, we do also face the memo thing.
13 But when we get the memo, we have to
14 read it, we have to initial it and it
15 basically states that the supervisor is
16 responsible for us understanding it.
17 We're supposed to go to our supervisor
18 for questions and she's responsible for
19 us understanding it. They keep those
20 at the desk also in case we need to
21 refer to it.

22 We did not get further
23 training on other things, but we do
24 have certain things that can occur and
25 we do train for them half regularly.

1 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.

2 Thank you. Chair recognizes Chairman
3 Jones.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So you
5 heard the response from Franki. Is
6 that the same in the Police Department?
7 You get a memo, you acknowledge it, you
8 get an opportunity to ask questions,
9 respond, sign off on it. Is that the
10 same universe?

11 MS. KEMMERER: Not really.
12 Only because like I had just mentioned,
13 when we ask a supervisor or the
14 supervisor that's handing it to us,
15 okay, what are we actually supposed to
16 do with this and how does this actually
17 work, they're not completely trained on
18 it either and they're not aware to be
19 able to explain it to us so that we can
20 input it correctly.

21 Like I had said, there was a
22 dispatch code that was added last year
23 for a new code that we're supposed to
24 use for a certain type of job. And
25 when I had went to the supervisor that

1 handed it to me to ask them for
2 clarification on it, they could not
3 explain it to me any more than what I
4 had read on the paper.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: So when
6 you do a new law, if no one approved
7 it, is it a law at all. If you have a
8 new procedure and nobody understands
9 it, why put it out there. So we're not
10 trying to point fingers. But the
11 reality in Philadelphia is that we're
12 going to get more calls, not less.

13 MS. KEMMERER: Correct.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: You're the
15 first first responders for everybody
16 with a cough thinking it's coronavirus,
17 so you're going to have to be trained
18 in a multitude of responses and
19 forwards. No, we're not going to
20 handle it here, we're going to send it
21 there, but that has to be uniform.

22 So I'm really encouraged that
23 you guys are all going to be in the
24 same location, not in the basement and
25 not on the fourth floor but all kind of

1 learning from each other and responding
2 to things uniformly. I'm encouraged by
3 that. But we don't have a lot of time
4 before things happen.

5 And so, whether it's a
6 debriefing about a derailment, we have
7 to build that in. We have to go to the
8 secondary call center and do a scenario
9 of what to do if this happens. And
10 that's as important as getting the new
11 hire. The new hire has to be coached
12 up to know what to do and supervisors
13 and the like. So we're thankful that
14 you brought this to our attention,
15 because we go around thinking from a
16 50,000 point of view that everything is
17 wonderful and that what we see on 911
18 on TV is what actually happens, and
19 we're realizing today that it does not.

20 And so, we're not pointing
21 fingers. We're in this together. And
22 so, we want to take what we've learned
23 and kind apply it to resources so that
24 we can actually fix things.

25 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank

1 you, Chairman Jones. Chair
2 acknowledges and recognizes Councilman
3 Maria Quinones-Sanchez. And again,
4 just want to state for the record,
5 Chairman Jones, thank you for
6 reaffirming what we mentioned when we
7 opened, that this is not to be a
8 guilty, shaming or embarrassing
9 hearing. This is a fact-finding
10 hearing about the hiring of the
11 retention, mental health workplace
12 environment and I want to keep using
13 the term that our Deputy Commissioner
14 used, before the first responders of
15 the first responders here in the City
16 of Philadelphia is our dispatchers.

17 I don't care if we're talking
18 about Police or Fire. Our job is to
19 ensure that Fire has the resources,
20 that Police has the resources that they
21 need in order to make sure that they
22 have the complement necessary to
23 provide the most and efficient public
24 service possible.

25 Councilwoman Maria Quinones-

1 Sanchez.

2 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

3 SANCHEZ: Thank you. I just wanted to
4 congratulate everyone here today. I
5 think we started this conversation over
6 a year ago, almost a year. And I know
7 that you ladies were all incredibly
8 nervous about what the process was
9 going to be like. And let me just
10 assure you, as the Chairwoman stated
11 and has been reaffirmed by Councilman
12 Jones, many times we think everything
13 is working. I'm one that loves cop and
14 fire department shows. My friends hate
15 that I love them because they tell me
16 it's not real life. But what you do is
17 real every single day and I just want
18 to thank you because you've been able
19 to apply your skills and just respond.

20 Some of it is because you're
21 moms and you go into that respond mode.
22 If this was going on with my child,
23 what would I do. But I know that both
24 Committee Chair people are very
25 committed to ensuring that from here.

1 We created a workflow process to help
2 improve this.

3 I like the prototype of the
4 Fire Department of having dispatchers
5 go on training scenes. I think that's
6 a great prototype because you've got to
7 see it, what's real --

8 MS. RIZQ: Excuse me. I'm
9 sorry. We don't go on scenes --

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: State
11 your name.

12 MS. RIZQ: We run --

13 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

14 SANCHEZ: For training, the training.

15 MS. RIZQ: We run the
16 training on the radio. So we don't go
17 to physical scenes. We just do it on
18 the radio. We run --

19 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

20 SANCHEZ: No, no, but when you are
21 training, I think a prototype of -- we
22 train police for scenes, we train fire
23 for scenes. Why not have dispatchers
24 look at those protocols, right, and
25 have an opportunity to see this is

1 what's supposed to happen on the scene.
2 You're on the phone with someone,
3 right, and you're saying we've
4 dispatched, this is what's going to
5 happen, just the ability to see that
6 take place. I'm a visual person so you
7 can tell me and I'll read everything.

8 But ultimately, what are the
9 protocols that are supposed to happen
10 on the scene so that as you are on the
11 phone telling someone people are coming
12 to you and this is what's going to
13 happen, the police officer is coming
14 onsite and they will go in. I just
15 think that that helps everybody
16 visualize it. So I want to thank you
17 and assure you that we will create a
18 workflow to help improve the
19 conditions.

20 All of it is not always
21 resources, but it is definitely people
22 resetting and looking at this,
23 particularly as we talk about this
24 coronavirus and all of these other
25 emergencies. And I just want to thank

1 you for your service and congratulate
2 you. It wasn't as bad as you thought
3 it was going to be. And now the work
4 will definitely happen and I want to
5 congratulate you on your courage for
6 stepping up for your colleagues who are
7 in this space.

8 And as a woman and as a
9 mother, I particularly am grateful
10 because I know you have to make really
11 tough choices when you take that OT,
12 that forced OT, versus going home and
13 that is always a tough decision to
14 make, so thank you.

15 MS. KEMMERER: Thank you.

16 MR. HALBHERR: Frank
17 Halbherr. I just want to touch base
18 real quickly on what Councilman Johnson
19 stated about collective bargaining.

20 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Yes.

21 MR. HALBHERR: We are doing a
22 contract for 10,000 employees for every
23 City department throughout the City.
24 It's very difficult. It's usually --
25 as you well know, it's a uniform wage

1 increase because of the collective
2 bargaining unit. That is not in my
3 opinion the process to get higher wages
4 in Police Radio. It is actually a pay
5 appeal.

6 And Inspector Gillespie
7 mentioned about they received \$1500 a
8 few years ago. That stemmed from a pay
9 appeal that this union had over 300
10 dispatchers fill out position
11 classification questionnaires and that
12 \$1500 is actually one step in a pay
13 range. So I believe --

14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Excuse
15 me. Can you restate that for the
16 record? You called it a position
17 classification questionnaire?

18 MR. HALBHERR: Yes, ma'am.

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.

20 MR. HALBHERR: We had to have
21 every dispatcher fill one out to see if
22 they were working out of their job
23 specs. We asked for a two-step
24 increase. They came back and gave a
25 one-step increase which approximately

1 was \$1500. That's how that came back
2 about. All jobs aren't equal is what
3 I'm saying.

4 That's the process that -- we
5 love your help doing collective
6 bargaining, don't get me wrong. So we
7 love your help in collective
8 bargaining. I mean, in this situation
9 there's some jobs that -- I mean, we're
10 short-handed, it's 911 radio. It's a
11 little different. It's a different
12 animal than a lot of other animals.
13 That's the best way I can put it.

14 And last, I want to leave you
15 with this, Inspector Gillespie said in
16 his report according to his numbers,
17 that 248 dispatchers he said, well, a
18 dispatcher gets mandated once a month.
19 If I sat here and heard that, I would
20 think, oh, no harm, no foul, if you're
21 getting mandated once a month.

22 But if you add in that
23 there's 248 dispatchers, that's 8.2
24 dispatchers getting mandated every day.
25 That's a play on words. That's a play

1 on numbers. You can manipulate
2 numbers. It's not one dispatcher being
3 mandated every day if you go by 248.
4 It's 8.2 dispatchers being mandated
5 every day. It's a big difference the
6 way you word it.

7 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER:
8 Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez.

9 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
10 SANCHEZ: I have a job classification
11 question. Have these job
12 classifications as a result of the
13 survey, were they updated, upgraded,
14 reviewed recently?

15 MR. HALBHERR: It was
16 approximately three, four years ago.
17 We had got them bumped up one step. We
18 requested two.

19 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-
20 SANCHEZ: Were any of the job
21 descriptions modified or added?

22 MR. HALBHERR: They were
23 modified for what their duties were.
24 But now, Inspector Gillespie's
25 testimony talked about CPR coming. He

1 didn't mention it, but all 911
2 dispatcher centers will need to be
3 certified in CPR by 2022.

4 Now, I understand a contract,
5 but to me that's a pay appeal that now
6 they're doing CPR working outside
7 their job classifications.

8 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-

9 SANCHEZ: Okay. Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Let me
11 just close and I say thank you so very
12 much for very eloquently and again,
13 Councilwoman Sanchez, prior to your
14 getting up here I commented on the data
15 that Frank actually presented on behalf
16 of Local 1637. And I told him that the
17 data, the way it was compiled, that
18 this is what we're used to getting from
19 the Administration. And to do this in
20 such a very presentable and technical
21 fashion showing the backroom supports
22 and skill set of the workers, this is
23 extremely important and again, it will
24 be entered into the record.

25 I also want to affirm what

1 Councilwoman Sanchez when she noted
2 that not all of the assistance that we
3 can help to advocate for on your behalf
4 are financial as we document it
5 relative to the civil service process.

6 And when I heard when the
7 Inspector, he entered the Police
8 Department, actually walks through how
9 long it takes and whether or not we can
10 sort of put all of the steps in that
11 interview and hiring process together.
12 As we noted very early on in the
13 hearing, those are very tangible and
14 quantifiable measures that we can
15 pursue and that you can see outcomes
16 that don't have absolutely anything to
17 do with dollars and cents.

18 So there will be a
19 comprehensive multi-prong approach on
20 how we can figure out how we can best
21 support you and the workers along with
22 our Police and Fire Departments. While
23 you will be dealing with the collective
24 bargaining -- and we don't negotiate.
25 We can help to get information on the

1 record but one of the things I was very
2 clear, because sometimes, Councilwoman
3 Sanchez, some people make promises like
4 they can deliver, but we as
5 Councilmembers we don't negotiate in
6 collective bargaining. That is what
7 the Administration does along with the
8 workers. But what we can do is the
9 recommendations relative to civil
10 service, try to work from an
11 administrative perspective and a
12 legislative perspective in making some
13 changes that will help the departments,
14 both Police and Fire have a little bit
15 more flexibility in working to solve
16 your problems.

17 So again, we want to say
18 thank you so very much for your
19 testimony. And, Councilman Jones,
20 thank you so very much again because I
21 want to state for the record when you
22 talk about being a visual learner,
23 there is nothing like seeing it and we
24 saw it because you and your staff
25 organized it and I want to say thank

1 you.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
3 Madam Chair. My only conclusion is
4 thank you for your service. And in
5 those dark rooms and in those dark
6 nights, you're stepping up to the plate
7 and being professional. Thank you.

8 MS. KEMMERER: Thank you.

9 MS. MILTEER: Thank you.

10 MS. RIZQ: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Is
12 there anyone else here who would like
13 to testify on this resolution?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Hearing
16 none, this concludes the Joint
17 Committee meeting on Labor and Civil
18 Service and Public Safety. This public
19 hearing on Resolution No. 200036 is
20 recessed to the call of the Chair. We
21 want to thank you all so very much for
22 your testimony. Have a good day.

23 MR. HALBHERR: Thank you.

24 MS. KEMMERER: Thank you.

25 (Joint Committee on Labor and

Civil Service and Public Safety
concluded at 11:10 a.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, hereby certify that the
proceedings and evidence noted are contained
fully and accurately in the stenographic
notes taken by me in the foregoing matter,
and this is a correct transcript of the
same.

Court Reporter - Notary Public

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