

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

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, June 14, 2017
9:30 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILL 170464 - An ordinance authorizing the
Parks and Recreation Commissioner and the
Procurement Commissioner, on behalf of the
City, to execute a Concession Agreement with
Treetop Quest, Inc., or its wholly-owned
subsidiary, for an aerial adventure park in
West Fairmount Park...

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
3 morning. This hearing is called to
4 order. This is the public hearing of the
5 City Council Committee on Parks,
6 Recreation and Cultural Affairs, and the
7 purpose of this public hearing is to hear
8 testimony on Bill No. 170464.

9 I want to recognize the
10 presence of a quorum of Committee
11 members. Those members in attendance are
12 Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr., Councilman
13 David Oh, and Councilman Al Taubenberger.

14 And before we begin, I want to
15 ask Councilman Jones as the sponsor of
16 the bill, do you have any opening
17 comments?

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Just real
19 brief, because we have a member that has
20 to do some things.

21 I just want to say that
22 recreation -- and I'm thanking Madam
23 Chair for her emphasis on making sure
24 that young people in the City of
25 Philadelphia get a variety of

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2 opportunities to experience different
3 forms of recreation, and today we're
4 talking about an outdoor treetop
5 adventure, which deals with zip lines and
6 things like that, and it is an affordable
7 way to spend a day, learn about nature,
8 and we're excited to utilize the park in
9 the way I believe that our founding
10 fathers of the park system really wanted
11 us to do, and I'm excited about it.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

13 Well, thank you very much.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

15 Madam Chair.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: We'll now

17 have the Clerk read the title of the
18 bill.

19 THE CLERK: Bill No. 170464, an

20 ordinance authorizing the Parks and
21 Recreation Commissioner and the
22 Procurement Commissioner, on behalf of
23 the City, to execute a Concession
24 Agreement with Treetop Quest, Inc., or
25 its wholly-owned subsidiary, for an

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2 aerial adventure park in West Fairmount
3 Park, all under certain terms and
4 conditions.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
6 very much. And can we have the Clerk
7 please call up the first witness to
8 testify.

9 THE CLERK: Mark Wilken.
10 (Witness approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
13 morning.

14 MR. WILKEN: Good morning.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Please
16 state your name for the record and begin
17 your testimony.

18 MR. WILKEN: Mark Wilken.

19 Good morning, Chairwoman Bass
20 and Committee members. My name is Mark
21 Wilken. I am the Director of Business
22 and Event Development for Philadelphia
23 Parks and Rec. I appear before you today
24 concerning Bill No. 170464, authorizing
25 the Parks and Recreation Commissioner and

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Procurement Commissioner, on behalf of
the City, to execute a Concession
Agreement with Treetop Quest,
Incorporated, or its wholly-owned
subsidiary, for an aerial adventure park
in West Fairmount Park.

The initial term of the
Concession Agreement is ten years, and at
the City's option, two renewal terms of
five years each are available.

Approval of a long-term
Concession Agreement will enable the
concessionaire to make a substantial
capital investment to build and operate
the aerial adventure park. The
concessionaire will invest \$550,000 to
make -- to build the park and restore the
forest and spend additional funds to
operate and maintain the park as a
high-quality, family-friendly
recreational amenity. The concessionaire
would also implement initiatives and
programs to enhance the park experience
and make it more accessible to all park

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2 patrons.

3 Highlights of the aerial
4 adventure program include efforts to hire
5 local (approximately 25 positions per
6 year), restore the forest and remove
7 invasive plants, create and maintain new
8 public trails with environmental
9 educational signage, volunteer in annual
10 park cleanups, reinvest the revenue
11 generated from the program back into the
12 park, and provide 1,000 free vouchers
13 annually for Philadelphia youth
14 distributed through Parks and
15 Recreation's summer camp program.

16 This concession program is
17 consistent with Parks and Recreation's
18 efforts to provide quality recreational
19 amenities and programs for youth.

20 Thank you. I'm happy to answer
21 any questions you may have.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
23 very much for your testimony. It sounds
24 like a fantastic plan and opportunity for
25 the citizens of the City of Philadelphia.

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2 Councilman Jones just said he's going to
3 help me go down the slide. We'll see.

4 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
5 think we'll all be there.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: We'll all
7 be there. It sounds like fun for
8 someone. I'm scared to death.

9 Councilman Taubenberger has a
10 question.

11 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: A
12 couple of really quick questions. About
13 how many people can this handle like per
14 hour? How many kids can go through this
15 system?

16 MR. WILKEN: Sure. The way
17 it's designed, it's a timed course. So
18 all reservations are made online so they
19 can handle capacity so as not --

20 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: So
21 you must have a reservation?

22 MR. WILKEN: Yes. That way
23 they can control people coming in and out
24 so it's not overwhelming the course. So
25 probably per hour, probably 30 to 40

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2 people per hour can kind of go through
3 this -- it's a two- to three-hour course
4 experience. So they try to time it so
5 there's not too much overlap.

6 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: How
7 long is it?

8 MR. WILKEN: Two to three
9 hours.

10 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Oh,
11 really? So you're in this whole thing
12 for two to three hours?

13 MR. WILKEN: Yes. And it's an
14 experience where you're really trying to
15 pay attention to your surroundings, and
16 it's meant to challenge you. And we find
17 that people find it a really good
18 opportunity to build up self-esteem, and
19 when they finish, they feel a real sense
20 of accomplishment and achievement. So
21 we're excited to provide that experience
22 to Philadelphians.

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: One
24 of the things I like as someone who has
25 studied agriculture and was a landscaper

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2 at Friends Hospital, ran the operation
3 for three and a half years with a
4 Bachelor of Science in agronomy from Penn
5 State University, is the fact that you're
6 going to help remove some invasive
7 species, and I know they're a difficulty
8 in a large part of the park. So I think
9 that's a great thing.

10 The last question I have, and
11 it's just an approximate. What would the
12 sense of the cost be for this?

13 MR. WILKEN: It ranges
14 depending on age level. So for a kid,
15 it's probably more like \$20 to \$30. An
16 adult, it could range \$30 to \$45.

17 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: But
18 then again you're going to be there for
19 two to three hours.

20 MR. WILKEN: Yes. Correct.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
22 will there be monitors somewhere around?
23 You have a bunch of kids in a tree. That
24 could lead to some horseplay going on
25 here.

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2 MR. WILKEN: In terms of
3 safety, there is staff on site there --

4 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Well,
5 not on site, but someone watching?

6 MR. WILKEN: Yeah. They're
7 actually below the canopy. So they're
8 watching. There are different sections
9 that they observe, and also throughout
10 the course, you're hooked into a
11 carabiner and you can't detach from it.

12 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: What
13 was that?

14 MR. WILKEN: A carabiner. So
15 it's a system that doesn't allow you to
16 be detached from the actual rope course.
17 So the entire time you're connected to
18 the course through a rope, and the
19 carabiner is a mechanism to keep you
20 hooked in through the entire experience.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER:
22 Wonderful. Okay. Thank you.

23 Madam Chair, I'm finished with
24 my questioning. Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,

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2 Councilman.

3 Any other questions, comments?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is there
6 anyone else here to testify on this bill?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
9 you very much for your testimony.

10 MR. WILKEN: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: If there's
12 no one else to testify on this bill, this
13 concludes the public hearing on Bill No.
14 170464. We'll now go into a public
15 meeting to consider the action to be
16 taken on this bill.

17 And I want to recognize
18 Councilman Jones for a motion on Bill No.
19 170464.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
21 Madam Chair. I move that Bill No. 170464
22 be moved from this Committee with a
23 favorable recommendation and further move
24 that the rules of Council be suspended to
25 allow first reading of this bill at our

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2 next session of Council.

3 (Duly seconded.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been

5 moved and properly seconded that Bill No.

6 170464 be reported from this Committee

7 with a favorable recommendation and

8 further moved that the rules of Council

9 be suspended to permit first reading of

10 this bill at the next session of Council.

11 All of those in favor please

12 signify by saying aye.

13 (Aye.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Anyone

15 opposed?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The ayes

18 have it and the motion carries, and Bill

19 No. 170464 will be reported from this

20 Committee with a favorable

21 recommendation, with a request that the

22 rules of Council be suspended to permit

23 first reading at the next session of

24 Council.

25 This concludes the public

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2 meeting on the bill, and if there is no
3 further business before the Committee on
4 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs,
5 thank you very much for your attendance,
6 and this meeting is adjourned.

7 Thank you.

8 (Committee on Parks, Recreation
9 and Cultural Affairs concluded at 9:40
10 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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