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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
PUBLIC HEARING AND PUBLIC MEETING
BEFORE COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC HEALTH & WELFARE

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, December 13, 1999
10:55 a.m.

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RES. 990615 - Authorizing the City Council's
Committee on Public Safety to hold a public
hearing to investigate the possibility of changing
the existing procurement process for salvors that
pick up abandoned automobiles through a
procurement process that creates or requests a
proposal system for each police district.

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RES. 990775 - Authorizing the Committee of Public
Safety to hold hearings on the efficacy of the
investigation of prosecution of sex crimes in the
City, including, but not limited to, the practices
and procedures of the Philadelphia Police
Department's Special Victim Unit's use of the
non-offense code 2701 and code 2625.

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PRESENT: COUNCILMAN ANGEL L. ORTIZ, Chair
COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN
COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER

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2	I N D E X	
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6	(No appearances by witnesses.)	
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1 12/13/99 PUBLIC HEALTH - RES. 990615

2 P R O C E E D I N G S

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Good morning, good
4 morning. We're Councilwoman Donna Miller,
5 Councilman Jim Kenny and Councilman David Cohen.
6 And this is the City Council Public Safety
7 Committee to hold a public meeting on Resolutions
8 No. 990615 and 990775.

9 Councilman Clarke submitted a report to
10 this committee for which he seeks approval. I
11 will read the report into the record.

12 "I would like to thank Councilman
13 Angel Ortiz in his capacity as Chairman of the
14 Public Safety Committee and all of the
15 Councilmembers for giving me the opportunity to
16 comment on the resolution. Over the past couple
17 of years, Philadelphia streets have been inundated
18 with abandoned automobiles. The Police Department
19 reported in 1998 that over 23,000 abandoned
20 automobiles had been removed. However, many
21 citizens feel that for every car removed, several
22 show up in its place.

23 "Abandoned automobiles create a
24 variety of problems. For many people, they are
25 the most concentrated, visible and pervasive sign

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2 of urban blight. It is not uncommon for abandoned
3 automobiles to serve trash receptacle, a hideaway
4 for drugs and weapons, a target for vandalism,
5 and, sadly, a fire hazard. Worse yet, while many
6 of these cars are concentrated in several
7 neighborhoods throughout the City, few
8 neighborhoods do not have abandoned automobiles on
9 its streets.

10 "Three sets of overlapping sets of law
11 regulate the removal of abandoned automobiles:
12 the federal consent decree, state law, and local
13 law. A cohesive approach should be taken to
14 streamline the existing laws to remove any
15 disincentives that the current system places on
16 salvagers. Mayor Rendell and State Representative
17 Evans' proposal to raise the fees that State law
18 allows for towing abandoned automobiles is a step
19 in the right direction. Moreover, the City
20 Solicitor's promise to vacate the federal court
21 consent decree also helps to simplify the maze of
22 existing laws.

23 "From a municipal and administrative
24 standpoint, I propose two major changes. First,
25 abandoned automobiles should be viewed as a

1 12/13/99 PUBLIC HEALTH - RES. 990615
2 sanitation problem with criminal side effects
3 rather than a criminal problem with sanitation
4 side effects. All too often, these cars
5 constitute the largest type of bulk trash on the
6 streets of Philadelphia. This paradigm shift
7 should take the primary responsibility of taking
8 abandoned automobiles out of the hands of the
9 Police Department. Such a change would give the
10 Police Department more officers to help with
11 crime-fighting efforts.

12 "One of the current emphases of the
13 existing law is to protect victims of stolen
14 cars. However, the Police Department can easily
15 distinguish between stolen cars and abandoned
16 automobiles. Therefore, it is possible to
17 simultaneously protect the interest of the victims
18 of stolen automobiles without affecting the City's
19 ability to remove abandoned automobiles.

20 "Second, this process requires a
21 greater deal of coordination between City
22 departments. Police operations, like Sunrise,
23 derive much of their success from the strong,
24 efficient coordination of multiple City
25 departments.

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2 "One current loophole in the process
3 shows the impact of this process. For example, if
4 an abandoned automobile is on a privately-owned
5 vacant lot and filled with trash, then the
6 abandoned auto officer may not site the car,
7 because it is on private property. For the same
8 reason, the Sanitation Department will also refuse
9 to clean the car. Compounding the problem, the
10 salvager will not remove the car because it
11 contains debris. Therefore, the car can sit for
12 years without being moved. Greater coordination
13 amongst City departments will create a more
14 proactive environment to stop the flood of new
15 abandoned automobiles and the more efficient and
16 expedience removal of existing abandoned
17 automobiles.

18 "My current proposal, as embodied in
19 this resolution, is to create a Request for
20 Proposal process for each police district.
21 Currently, salvagers pick and choose the vehicles
22 that they want to remove. This proposal would
23 give a set fee for salvagers to remove all of the
24 cars in a particular district. Commissioner
25 Applebaum of Procurement testified that this

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2 proposal is feasible and could be implemented
3 today. Therefore, someone would be immediately
4 accountable for any abandon automobile on the
5 street.

6 "The process of improving the way the
7 City deals with blight is an ongoing one, and I
8 would hope that this problem will be dealt with in
9 this manner."

10 A more full set of recommendations will
11 be given to Council on Thursday from Councilman
12 Clarke, and we will have that approved at that
13 session.

14 Do I hear a motion for Councilman
15 Clarke's proposal to be approved.

16 COUNCILMAN COHEN: So moved.

17 (Duly seconded.)

18 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Councilman Clarke's
19 proposal having been moved to be reported out of
20 this committee and before City Council, having
21 been moved and seconded, I ask for a vote.

22 All those in favor say aye?

23 Nay?

24 The ayes have it.

25 On Friday, I handed out at the meeting

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2 of City Council's Committee on Public Safety
3 initiatives on Resolution 990775, and these --
4 some of the initiatives included a review of the
5 cases for the past five years assigned to the
6 investigation of persons, Code 2701, and the
7 medical transportation Code 2625. There's been an
8 agreement to develop a new classification coding
9 category within the system. And the Women's Law
10 Project and Women Organized Against Rape support
11 having a person of choice with them throughout the
12 processing of the complaints.

13 The public safety committee is
14 particularly appreciative of all of my colleagues
15 who participated in the hearings and of the Police
16 Department's commitment to working with the
17 advocacy groups to improve the response to sex
18 crimes.

19 Therefore, based on the testimony and
20 all of the information provided at the public
21 hearing, I ask for a motion for the Committee on
22 Public Safety to recommend the approval of this
23 resolution of the entire Council at its stated
24 meeting.

25 COUNCILMAN COHEN: So moved.

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2 (Duly seconded.)

3 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Resolution No.

4 990075, having been moved to be voted out of
5 committee with a favor recommendation, do I hear a
6 vote?

7 All in favor, say aye?

8 Those against?

9 The ayes have it, and the committee
10 report on Resolution 990775 will be presented
11 before Council at it next session.

12 Thank you all.

13 (Adjourned at 11:10 a.m.)

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RE: COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND
WELFARE

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JOSEPHINE CARDILLO,
Registered Professional Reporter