

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

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, October 17, 2017
10:20 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILL 170673 - An ordinance authorizing the
Parks and Recreation Commissioner, on behalf
of the City of Philadelphia, to enter into an
agreement for the use of Cobbs Creek Golf
Club...

BILL 170724 - An ordinance amending Title 15
of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Parks and
Recreation," by requiring the public posting
of hours of operations for libraries and
recreation centers...

- - -

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COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

morning. This hearing is called to order. This is a public hearing of the City Council Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs, and the purpose of this public hearing is to hear testimony on Bill No. 170724. Bill No. 170673 is being held at the request of the sponsor.

And I want to recognize the presence of a quorum of Committee members. To my right, we have Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr., Councilman Al Taubenberger, and Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez.

And do any of the Committee members have opening remarks?

COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, Madam Chair, and good morning.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good morning.

COUNCILMAN JONES: We will be holding Bill No. 170673 until some details are worked out about the bill.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very good.

3 Thank you, Councilman.

4 And I want to have the Clerk
5 read the title of Bill No. 170724.

6 THE CLERK: An ordinance
7 amending Title 15 of The Philadelphia
8 Code, entitled "Parks and Recreation," by
9 requiring the public posting of hours of
10 operations for libraries and recreation
11 centers, all under certain terms and
12 conditions.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And if we
14 could have the first witness come forward
15 to testify.

16 THE CLERK: Orlando Rendon,
17 Deputy Commissioner of Programs,
18 Philadelphia Department of Parks and
19 Recreation.

20 (Witness approached witness
21 table.)

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:
23 Good morning.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
25 morning. If you could state your name

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2 for the record and proceed with your
3 testimony.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:
5 Orlando Rendon.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You can
7 proceed with your testimony.

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:
9 Good morning, Chairwoman Bass and
10 Committee members. My name is Orlando
11 Rendon and I am the Deputy Commissioner
12 of Programs with Philadelphia Parks and
13 Recreation. I appear before you today on
14 behalf of the Department in support of
15 Bill No. 170724 sponsored by Councilwoman
16 Bass.

17 As proposed to be amended, the
18 bill will authorize Philadelphia Parks
19 and Recreation to issue rules and
20 regulations for posting the program
21 schedule and hours of operation and
22 programming at recreation centers.

23 Philadelphia Parks and
24 Recreation manages over 150 recreation
25 centers throughout the City of

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Philadelphia. These recreation centers provide a variety of programming for the surrounding communities ranging from after school and summer camps to exercise classes and are adjacent to amenities like ball fields and skating rinks. Each center has their own programming schedule, which typically operates between the hours of 1:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the fall, winter, and spring and from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the summer.

Currently operating hours and program schedules are posted inside each recreation center. This information is also listed on our website and social media accounts. Under the amendments to this bill, developed collaboratively between the Councilwoman's office and Parks and Recreation and the Free Library, we will codify standards for posting of hours and schedule changes in regulation. As a result, we anticipate that starting January 1st, 2018 we will

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2 post signage outside of recreation
3 centers listing the hours of operation
4 and general program schedule.

5 We are grateful to Councilwoman
6 Bass for introducing this bill and for
7 working with our department to ensure
8 Philadelphians are informed about our
9 service offerings and our hours.

10 Thank you for your time, and
11 I'm happy to answer any questions you may
12 have.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
14 you very much for your testimony and
15 we're so happy to have the support of the
16 Administration on this. And this was a
17 bill that I authored in response to a
18 number of different issues that we were
19 having, not just in my district but
20 throughout the City of Philadelphia,
21 including an unfortunate incident at a
22 rec center, which I'm not going to name,
23 but in the Northwest where there were
24 some folks who were using a rec center,
25 who had the appropriate permits, and

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there were some other folks from the community who felt that they should have had access, and I think that something as simple as the posting would have made a difference to de-escalate the situation which evolved and turned into something really, really ugly.

So just having information I think goes a long way to helping people understand when a center is available, when it's not available, who will be using it and so forth. And so if I'm interested in taking a yoga class right now at a rec center in my neighborhood, I have absolutely no idea when it is, where it is, what part of the building, what classroom, whatever, who is the instructor. And as much detail as possible I think will be very, very helpful.

We had a conversation with Commissioner Ott-Lovell and they had a great conversation about this particular matter, making sure that hours were

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2 posted, that activities were posted,
3 particularly around the Lonnie Young
4 incident, which most people are very
5 familiar with. Over the summer we had a
6 gathering of young people who felt that
7 they didn't know what was going on,
8 didn't have information, didn't know what
9 kind of activities were being offered and
10 when the gym would be available and
11 things of that nature, some really basic
12 simple facts. So when she and I talked
13 about a number of different things that
14 we could bring to the table and offer
15 remedies for that situation, this was
16 one. It's a smaller one, but nonetheless
17 we think that it's an important one so
18 that folks have, again, really basic
19 information about what is available, what
20 is happening and that sort of thing.

21 So I just really want to thank
22 the Administration for working with us on
23 this and for being so understanding.

24 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:

25 Appreciate it.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

3 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any other

6 questions by the Committee?

7 Councilwoman Sanchez.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Good

9 morning. Good morning. Is there any

10 standard around what the signage is going

11 to look like? Do we have a sample of

12 what that's going to look like?

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: We do not

14 right now have a sample of what the

15 signage is going to look like, but we

16 look forward to working with the

17 Administration to provide that, and we'll

18 certainly circulate it to the Committee

19 and to all members for feedback.

20 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Councilman

23 Jones.

24 But before that, I want to

25 recognize the presence of Councilman

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2 David Oh.

3 Councilman Jones.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
5 Madam Chair. First of all, thank you for
6 bringing this issue to light. As I read
7 your bill, I had two instances where this
8 might have made a big difference. One
9 was in the Blue Bell section, and that
10 borders your district and a nice section
11 of the park and is sought after by a lot
12 of people to have family reunions, and
13 two different neighborhoods kind of
14 converged at the same time, not knowing
15 the rules and regulations on permitting
16 and things like that, and that caused a
17 great deal of confusion, to say the
18 least, and borderline chaos, to say the
19 most.

20 The second one is that there
21 are sections within Philadelphia that
22 have been in the park discovered by not
23 only people from Philadelphia but people
24 from surrounding communities, Bucks
25 County and Montgomery County, and that's

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fine, we want them to come in. But a lot of times the facilities are leased out way in advance and the neighbors adjacent to those facilities have no clue as to when a baseball club is going to be there and so little league practices conflict with already permitted events.

So I think this scheduling and making it public is a preventive measure to avoid conflicts, and I thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
Thank you, Councilman.

Councilman Taubenberger.

And also we want to recognize the presence of Councilwoman Cherelle Parker.

COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Madam Chair, thank you very much, and I would like to thank you for your leadership on the issue. I think the idea makes a lot of sense and in some ways in reality probably is really long overdue. I think this is a great idea, and I'm all for that.

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2 I do have one question from the
3 answer. And of course the question was
4 also what would the signs look like. Is
5 there any sense of the size of these
6 signs?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:

8 Well, I believe a few months ago we made
9 it a standard practice to take
10 programming schedules for permitted
11 fields and for programming that occurs
12 inside the rec center and have it on a
13 board internally inside the rec center.
14 We're looking to see if we can bring that
15 out and perhaps using a plexiglas method
16 on the door, so even if it's out of
17 operating hours, anyone can come up to a
18 center and see what's occurring at the
19 center inside and out during day or
20 night.

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: It
22 would make a lot of sense, and the more
23 people -- I know as a young person
24 growing -- I was young at one time --
25 growing up near Jardel Rec and we

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actually had an organized soccer team that actually played in a league. Most of the kids were from the neighborhood, but it was important when we were on that soccer field that for that time period, that was ours, and if you wanted to start a pick-up game, it had to be afterwards, and we were always very accommodating as well. You can challenge us and then we'll play right then and there. But the fact is, I think the more people know about it, it can prevent a lot of --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER RENDON:

And it was exactly for that purpose why we have the programming plans inside, so that people knew beforehand, before they said, Well, could I apply for a permit for this particular field at this particular time. I already see that it's being utilized and have to figure out a different schedule. So it was to avoid all those conflicts as well.

COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I

think it's great common sense.

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2 And, Councilwoman Bass, thank
3 you again.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You're very
5 welcome. Thank you.

6 Councilwoman Parker.

7 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Yes.

8 Thank you. Thank you, Councilwoman Bass,
9 and I want to also note for the record
10 that the solutions to some of our
11 challenges are not as complex as some
12 people would like to believe. This is
13 simplicity, right? And although the
14 schedules are usually posted inside, if
15 you don't know, if you're new to the
16 neighborhood, if you're trying to access
17 services for your family, now in a very
18 transparent, visible way you will be able
19 to know what those activities are.

20 In addition to that, I am
21 thinking about Rebuild, and although we
22 have a great demand, if all goes well and
23 parks, rec centers, and libraries across
24 the City of Philadelphia are renovated
25 and new ones are built as we are

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2 proposing, I would dare say we're going
3 to see an even greater demand for those
4 services and access to the what's,
5 when's, and where's is going to be
6 extremely important. So, Councilwoman
7 Bass, thank you for your leadership on
8 this issue. I know my people in the
9 Ninth District will benefit.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
11 you. Appreciate that.

12 And any other comments,
13 questions?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All right.
16 And so if there is no one else to testify
17 on this bill --

18 THE CLERK: There is one more.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

20 Can we have the next witness
21 come forward to testify. I'm sorry.

22 THE CLERK: Joe Benford, Deputy
23 Director for Customer Engagement, Free
24 Library of Philadelphia.

25 (Witness approached witness

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2 table.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

4 Please state your name for the record and
5 begin your testimony.

6 MR. BENFORD: It's Joe Benford,
7 Deputy Director of Customer Engagement,
8 Free Library of Philadelphia.

9 Good morning, Councilwoman Bass
10 and members of the Committee on Parks,
11 Recreation and Cultural Affairs. I am
12 here on behalf of Siobhan Reardon,
13 President and Director of the Free
14 Library of Philadelphia, who is not able
15 to appear today. We appreciate the
16 opportunity to appear this morning to
17 discuss Bill No. 170724, which relates to
18 the public posting of hours of operations
19 for libraries. We agree with you about
20 the importance of keeping our customers
21 apprised of our hours and when they can
22 take advantage of our myriad services and
23 support the bill as it is proposed to be
24 amended.

25 The Free Library currently

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posts its hours in front of every one of
our 54 neighborhood locations. That
signage changes twice a year, in the fall
when we institute fall, winter, and
spring hours, and in June when we post
summer hours. We make every effort to
post those signs 30 days in advance.

Opening and closing hours are also
available on our website freelibrary.org
for every library and every day.

Additionally, closures are shared with
311 on a daily basis in the event that
customers call there.

We make every effort to post
signage in the event of an emergency
closure, but that is not always possible.
If there is police action or too much
snow to access a library, for example,
staff may not have an opportunity to post
a sign. This information is communicated
to 311 as soon as possible.

When we expect a long-term
closure, generally for a building issue,
we follow these same procedures.

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Under Bill No. 170724, the Free Library would issue regulations to codify a uniform policy across all branches regarding public notice of hours. We recognize that notice is important to the City and to each community and, therefore, support this bill without reservation.

I would also like to add that we notify the appropriate Councilmembers of unanticipated closures so that Council offices can provide up-to-date information to constituents. We will also organize community meetings to give citizens an opportunity to ask questions and get additional information about longer closures.

Thank you for your interest in the Free Library. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, I want to thank you and the Free Library. We've had a number of issues around a building closure in particular in my

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2 district, Joe Coleman Library, and you
3 have reached out through a number of
4 different ways, social media, public
5 posting and things of that nature, to let
6 folks know that Joe Coleman was going to
7 be closed. And it's a very much used
8 library. I'm just going to put a plug in
9 and say we need a new one, and we'd love
10 to work with you all on that, but as we
11 move forward, I just want to thank you
12 all for the work that you've done around
13 the posting already, and it's much
14 appreciated by our constituents.

15 So any other questions from
16 members of the Committee?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
19 you very much for your testimony.

20 MR. BENFORD: Thank you.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is there
22 anyone else here to testify?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

25 Seeing that there is none, this concludes

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2 the public hearing on Bill No. 170724,
3 and we'll now go into a public meeting to
4 consider the action to be taken on this
5 bill. And I want to recognize
6 Councilmember Jones for a motion to amend
7 Bill No. 170724.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
9 Madam Chair. I move that the amendment
10 which was circulated to all members on
11 Bill No. 170724 be adopted.

12 (Duly seconded.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
14 moved and properly seconded that the
15 amendment just circulated be adopted.

16 All those in favor of the
17 amendment signify by saying aye.

18 (Aye.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Anyone
20 opposed?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The Chair
23 recognizes Councilmember Jones for a
24 motion on Bill No. 170724, as amended.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you

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2 again, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
3 170724, as amended, be reported from this
4 Committee with a favorable recommendation
5 and further move that the rules of
6 Council be suspended to permit first
7 reading of this bill at our next session
8 of Council.

9 (Duly seconded.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
11 moved and properly seconded that Bill No.
12 170724, as amended, be reported from this
13 Committee with a favorable recommendation
14 and further moved that the rules of
15 Council be suspended to permit first
16 reading of this bill at the next session
17 of Council.

18 All those in favor of this
19 motion will signify by saying aye.

20 (Aye.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
22 opposed?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The ayes
25 have it and the motion carries, and Bill

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No. 170724, as amended, will be reported from this Committee with a favorable recommendation with a request that the rules of Council be suspended to permit first reading at the next session of Council.

This concludes the public meeting on this bill. There being no further business before the Committee on Parks and Recreation and Cultural Affairs, we want to thank you all very much for your attendance.

(Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs concluded at 10:40 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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