

1 VOLUME II

2

3 COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

4 PUBLIC MEETING

5 BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON LAW AND GOVERNMENT

6 - - -

7 Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
8 Tuesday, December 9, 1997
10:25 a.m.

9 - - -

10 RES. 970558 - Authorizing the Council's Committees
11 of Licenses and Inspections and Law and
12 Government to conduct an investigation into the
Section 8 Housing Program.

13 - - -

14 PRESENT:

15 COUNCILMAN DAVID COHEN, Chair,
Law & Government

16 COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY, Chair,
Licenses & Inspections

17 COUNCILMAN RICHARD T. MARIANO
18 COUNCILWOMAN JOAN L. KRAJEWSKI
19 COUNCILMAN MICHAEL A. NUTTER
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO
20 COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO
COUNCILMAN ANGEL L. ORTIZ
21 COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILWOMAN HAPPY FERNANDEZ

22 - - -

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: The recessed hearing
3 of the Committees on Law and Government and Licenses
4 and Inspections is now in session.

5 The Chair calls on Councilman Ortiz
6 for a few remarks.

7 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman.

9 During the last year, year and a
10 half, this city, we have had an increasingly sore
11 point growing across city neighborhoods.

12 It has been an issue of
13 misunderstanding, of misinformation that has grown
14 into a very divisive, very dangerous issue among the
15 city residents.

16 It has torn neighborhoods, it has put
17 neighborhoods into discussions that sometimes have
18 become very hostile, very divisive, very demeaning
19 at times.

20 In this Council we decided that we
21 were going to assume some leadership to begin
22 channeling this debate towards a course that would
23 bring us to resolution, that would begin to heal the
24 process and begin to fix whatever problems there
25 were in a program that most, the big majority, of

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people who are involved in the Section 8 issue believe is an important program for low-income and moderate-income people of this city.

It is a program that is needed in order for this city to answer the need for affordable housing for its people and in order to prevent homelessness from growing to ever-increasing proportions.

It is a program that is needed in order to give some dignity to people and some respect, so that they can begin to get their lives together and enter into the mainstream of our society here in Philadelphia.

But it is also a program that people with bad intentions can use to divide and create friction and bring issues of race and class into a debate where they do not belong.

It was a very difficult issue to take on. And many people said that this Council should not enter into the fray.

But we were elected to assume leadership positions on hard issues, and begin to give direction and to channel the debate, as I said at the beginning, towards the positive side of the

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2 discussion, not the negative.

3 That's why Councilman Kenney and I,
4 together with David Cohen, began talking. Because
5 we were afraid of the tearing apart that
6 misunderstanding, misconceptions, the myths that are
7 created about a program, the problems that those
8 things can create.

9 We want to be part of that solution.
10 We want to be engaged in the debate, no matter how
11 heated it gets.

12 We wanted the Administration to be
13 engaged in that debate. We wanted the Mayor to be
14 engaged in that debate.

15 We didn't want to hold a discussion
16 with the Mayor on this issue through newspaper
17 columns and newspaper comments.

18 This body has acted responsibly
19 throughout the last six years. I think it merits a
20 greater degree of support and respect than what it
21 has gotten.

22 You cannot be afraid to discuss the
23 issue. We cannot be like Henry Kissinger during the
24 Vietnam War and say, "I have a plan to end the
25 Vietnam War," and never coming forward with that

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2 plan.

3 You cannot be trying to develop
4 public policy behind closed doors. Public policy is
5 developed in a republic, in a democracy, through
6 open debate among its people, among the legislature,
7 and the executive branch.

8 And there is the right of the
9 citizens to know what the leadership is thinking
10 about the issues that concern them.

11 Rather than angry, I am extremely
12 disappointed at the attitude that has been taken by
13 the Administration.

14 It is calls that go unanswered,
15 letters that do not get a response, issues that are
16 not engaged. I don't believe that we can continue
17 along that road.

18 This issue, specifically this issue,
19 because of the underlying passions that are involved
20 in it, is much more important to the future of this
21 city than the Kvaerner contract is.

22 Because either we learn to live
23 together, or we don't have a city. And this issue
24 presents us with basically that question.

25 Can we come forward with policies

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2 that bring us together, that breaks down the
3 barriers that divide us and the misconceptions that
4 formed many of our opinions.
5 The Kvaerner deal is about billions
6 of dollars, and people who are rich who will be
7 getting richer and richer.
8 This issue deals with the very fabric
9 of our city, of our neighborhoods. Can we, as
10 political leaders help this process along, to come
11 together and get our city back talking to each
12 other, and not shouting at each other.
13 We need the Mayor here. We need the
14 Mayor in this debate openly; not talking about some
15 plan that is somewhere in the future.
16 We are talking about issues that are
17 happening every day, every night, in different
18 neighborhoods across the city.
19 And this Council has always been the
20 forum for the people of Philadelphia to come and air
21 their grievances, their anger, and their hopes.
22 And I think at this time we in
23 Council are acting to fix and put that hope
24 together, and bring our city to a place where we can
25 move forward neighborhood and neighborhood arm in

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2 arm, not separate and divided.

3 So although I am disappointed and
4 angry that the Administration is not here, this
5 Council will act and this Council will do what it
6 has to do and act responsibly along those issues.

7 And I know that the people who are
8 here, the Councilpeople who are here, join me in
9 this, on this.

10 And I believe that we will come up
11 with the right solution. Because the people who are
12 involved in this Council on this issue believe that
13 we have the ability to come together.

14 Thank you, Mr. President.

15 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.

16 Councilman Kenney.

17 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 I just want to add a few comments to
20 what Councilman Ortiz has already said. However, I
21 want it to approach it from another direction.

22 And I believe that approaching it
23 from this direction, along with Councilman Ortiz'
24 direction, will bring us somewhere to a middle
25 ground, a fair and equitable middle ground.

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2 Let me first say for the outset that
3 people in this city and in this country have a right
4 to live anywhere they choose. They have the right
5 to have an opportunity to live anywhere they
6 choose.

7 And one of the problems or one -- I
8 don't know if it is a problem -- but one of the
9 circumstances that affect our city is that through
10 history on other issues, our city is a city of
11 neighborhoods. And often that means that
12 neighborhoods are either all one color or all one
13 ethnic group.

14 And as time goes on and our society
15 changes and we evolve as a society in this city,
16 changes take place. And they are not always easy
17 changes.

18 People who have lived in
19 neighborhoods for many, many generations, black and
20 white, Hispanic, have certain attitudes and morays
21 about where they live and the type of society and
22 the type of neighborhood that they want.

23 We need to find a way to allow people
24 to move into those neighborhoods, to move into our
25 society as a group together as Philadelphians.

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2 And I don't think that any reasonable
3 person in this city or otherwise would begrudge or
4 would not want to help people who are truly in need
5 find adequate, decent housing in neighborhoods and
6 in homes that they choose to occupy.

7 I think we need to make sure that we
8 protect people from ignorance and from hatred. That
9 we move swiftly to remove those people who would use
10 their prejudices and ugliness to make the
11 neighborhood an ugly place, to make people feel
12 uncomfortable and unwanted.

13 But I also think it is important,
14 when we are running a governmental program with tax
15 dollars, that we have understandable rules and
16 regulations and process for all the people in this
17 city to follow, both the people who live in the
18 neighborhoods who are homeowners, people who live in
19 the neighborhoods who are renters, people who live
20 in the neighborhood who occupy scattered site public
21 housing units, public housing projects, public
22 housing developments, and Section 8 tenants.

23 We need to have an understanding that
24 civility and decency is paramount to all of us
25 getting along together in every neighborhood in this

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2 city.

3 I have said before at the last
4 hearing -- and I will reiterate now -- the vast,
5 vast majority of people who participate and live in
6 Section 8 housing are decent, honest, hard-working
7 people who contribute to our society in the best way
8 that they can.

9 And we need to move together to make
10 them even more productive citizens, to allow them
11 to, hopefully, one day own their homes.

12 Which I think is something that we
13 all should be moving forward in trying to assure, is
14 home ownership opportunities for everyone in our
15 city.

16 But I think what happens is that when
17 the rules are not understood, when there is not an
18 understandable process for complaint about the small
19 group of people, both tenants and landlords, who do
20 not behave properly, who do not understand and
21 respect the social morays of the community when it
22 comes to simple things like the ability and
23 knowledge that is needed to run a home, how to keep
24 a home up, what to do with your trash, how to make
25 sure you make your children behave, how we can

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2 interact with each other, all these issues need to
3 be discussed.

4 They are very important issues, and
5 they become very sensitive because of the issue of
6 race that often and sadly raises its head in a very
7 ugly and insensitive way.

8 I think the vast majority of the
9 people who live in the city are decent people. We
10 interact with each other every day.

11 We come into Center City and the
12 neighborhoods and work together side by side. We
13 eat in restaurants together. We go to the sporting
14 events and enjoy ourselves together.

15 And we can learn to live together as
16 long as people who participate in the program --
17 landlords who participate in the program and all of
18 the community together as a whole -- move forward in
19 a positive way to weed out those who are not
20 behaving, who are not behaving appropriately, to
21 weed out landlords who are not holding up their
22 responsibility as landlords and property owners, and
23 we need to weed out the bad eggs in the neighborhood
24 who because of race and race hatred make it
25 difficult for people to live where they want to

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2 live.

3 And I think if we attack those issues
4 on every level, we will be very successful in making
5 our neighborhoods stable, decent places for
6 everybody to live.

7 One comment I have relative to the
8 Administration's lack of participation in this
9 proceeding is that I am too disappointed because the
10 Mayor is such a strong and good leader, because he
11 has the ability to articulate and to understand and
12 to make people feel comfortable that we are moving
13 forward in a positive way.

14 His not being here today, or having
15 someone responsible for speaking for him, I think,
16 is very sad. Because the Mayor and his people offer
17 so much to this kind of issue and this kind of
18 discussion.

19 And I think it is sad today that he
20 is not here. I hope, hopefully, that as we move
21 forward with this, he will have more to say in a
22 positive way, which I know he will.

23 And with that I would like to turn it
24 back to Councilman Cohen and thank you all for being
25 here today.

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CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.

Just a couple of observations.

The two issues that have been talked about by Councilmembers Ortiz and Kenney are of great concern, the issue of Section 8 housing.

We think that the debate has moved in a healthful direction. There was a lot of concern expressed when we first announced Council hearings that they were going to be wild, riotous sessions.

Instead what occurred were meaningful sessions in which people voiced their honest views.

They were different. There are disagreements, but we are on our way to the beginning of some constructive thoughts that we think will strengthen the Section 8 program.

With respect to the second aspect, the Mayor's participation, I will speak a little bit as a senior.

I have been in city government since the beginning of 1968, served under many mayors. I can't ever remember a Mayor rejecting an invitation from a City Council committee to come and to discuss whatever issue it was.

That was one of the things that made

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1 us feel that Philadelphia was a real flower of
2 democracy. And that was actually the case, whether
3 or not the Mayor was of the kind that we felt would
4 really add to the discussion.

5 Councilman Kenney has attributed much
6 good to the Mayor. And I think all of us would
7 agree. He is a great cheer leader. And we don't
8 understand his withdrawal from the public.

9 We think the Mayor's Office has much
10 to contribute. We might agree with the Mayor; we
11 might disagree. Some of us would agree, some of us
12 would disagree, and then there could be a debate all
13 throughout the city.

14 But, instead, the Mayor has, for
15 reasons unbenownst to us, chosen to be silent on
16 this issue. And he is the one who is going to have
17 to explain that sooner or later.

18 We think the debate loses some
19 vitality by the lack of participation by the Mayor.
20 But, as Councilman Ortiz said, the problems exist,
21 they have got to be dealt with.

22 And City Council is the legislative
23 body of the city, and we intend to go forward on
24 this matter.
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2 Today we have as our first speaker a
3 man who --
4 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Just a few
5 words.
6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Before I
7 introduce -- I don't know whether to call you
8 Councilman White or Commissioner White, or
9 Representative White.
10 Before that, Councilwoman Krajewski.
11 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you,
12 Mr. Cohen.
13 I don't know who I am addressing
14 right now because I don't see anyone from the
15 Administration. I do see John White over there.
16 But right now I really --
17 CHAIRMAN COHEN: He is not from the
18 Administration, so far as I know.
19 At least not today; right?
20 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Right.
21 But I just want it on record that I
22 feel that Section 8 is just completely out of
23 control.
24 When Section 8 was first formed, I
25 understand it was a good program. It was to help

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2 our senior citizens, our handicapped, or whatever.
3 This today, I believe, is an economic issue.
4 We state, yes, we have a right to
5 live wherever we chose. Yes, as long as we pay.
6 That's my feeling. I speak for the people who feel
7 this way.

8 I believe in the American dream.
9 When you live somewhere, you want to move up, you
10 have to pay. I speak for the voices out there who
11 feel that way, with the economics, the property
12 values.

13 I myself would love to live in
14 Torresdale, or Chestnut Hill, but I cannot afford
15 that. So no one can tell me I have a right to live
16 there, because I don't have that right unless I am
17 willing to pay and I can afford it.

18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: All right. I think
20 we are ready for the debate.

21 And the first part of the debate this
22 morning is going to be an educational lesson.
23 Because John White comes to us with many years of
24 experience in all phases of government, and
25 particularly in housing.

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2 Councilman, we will address you as a
3 colleague. We are delighted to have you present
4 here today.
5 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. President,
6 Mr. Chairman.
7 CHAIRMAN COHEN: And you are still
8 going to have to give your name first for purposes
9 of the record.
10 MR. JOHN F. WHITE, JR.: Yes, sir. I
11 am John F. White, Jr., a private citizen, former
12 Executive Director of the Philadelphia Housing
13 Authority.
14 Mr. Chairman, I am really delighted
15 to have been invited to participate in the
16 discussion this morning.
17 Let me say from the outset that my
18 prepared comments were not ready for distribution.
19 They will be mailed to you, as Chair of the
20 committee. And you can distribute them to your
21 fellow members and staff of the Council as you would
22 see fit.
23 CHAIRMAN COHEN: That will be done.
24 MR. WHITE: At the outset, let me say
25 that I want to reserve the overwhelming majority of

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2 my time to try and respond to the questions that
3 members of this committee may have regarding the
4 Section 8 program as I would understand it.

5 Now, that's dangerous. It is
6 dangerous because I am the former Executive Director
7 of the Housing Authority.

8 And nothing that I say in response to
9 any of the questions or any comments that I make
10 should in any way be construed to be determined to
11 be the current policy or attitude that the Housing
12 Authority is taking on this particular issue. And
13 it is very, very important.

14 My colleagues at the -- my former
15 colleagues at the Housing Authority are good,
16 hard-working people. A lot of you know a lot of
17 them who work there.

18 And you know that they share the same
19 concerns, both for neighborhoods and for the
20 residents that they serve, whether that's in the
21 public housing venue or in the Section 8 venue.

22 They are just as concerned, and spend
23 their professional lives and careers trying to be
24 responsive to the issues, the concerns, the problems
25 that are brought before them from various quarters,

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whether it is Councilmembers, civic leaders,
individual tenants, landlords, everyone. It is a
difficult job.

Secondly, I want to indicate to you
that when these hearings were first announced, I
indicated publicly that then, as the Executive
Director, that we welcomed the opportunity to
further educate the public through this forum, those
Councilmembers and staff who have a particular
interest, into how the Section 8 program works.

I know, certainly hope, that at some
point the official staff of the Housing Authority,
either independently or as a part of the
Administration, will have the opportunity to present
to you all of the technical aspects of this program
and how it operates.

Finally, I am encouraged by some of
the things that I heard from members of this panel.
Some of the things; not all.

And I say that understanding that we
represent this city. Whether it is at the district
level or on an at-large basis, we are to be
representatives of the people. And that's duly
respected.

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2 I think you are right on target when
3 you talk about the problems that families, some of
4 the families -- and, Councilman, I want to say some
5 of the families, as you indicated -- do have and
6 that they bring with them. That's real, and I think
7 that it has to be addressed.

8 I might respectfully suggest that to
9 simply focus on PHA and what PHA does really does
10 miss the mark. And I will respond to any questions
11 that folks have about that as we move forward.

12 With respect to where people can
13 live, people do have the right to live anywhere they
14 choose.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. WHITE: What distinguishes where
17 people live is their wherewithal.

18 And the federal government decided, I
19 believe in 1974, that the Section 8 program, through
20 the federal subsidies, was to provide people with
21 the wherewithal to exercise their right to live in
22 any neighborhood, in any region, in any borough or
23 township or county of their choosing.

24 That brings with it problems. And
25 all too often those problems are focused back on

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that local governmental agency or entity to resolve.

As you continue this discussion -- and I really do hope that this committee will continue its discussion, and that this will not be the last time that you convene in public to address this issue -- unfortunately, you cannot ignore the issue of race, ethnicity, and class.

People who complain about the Section 8 program, quote, unquote, are not all white. There are black folk, black communities across this city, who have the same concerns. But nor is the program all black.

You are focusing on one program, the Section 8 program that is administered by the Philadelphia Housing Authority. I hope some of you realize that there are four Section 8 programs, not one.

There is one program, the largest of which is administered by the federal government, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, that provides Section 8 support to families moving into another form of project-based assistance.

That program has been used to assist

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2 immigrants to this country to find adequate housing
3 in neighborhoods throughout this city. It has been
4 used to upgrade living conditions in publicly owned
5 and privately owned financed projects to provide
6 housing for people in this city. No one talks about
7 that.

8 You have the TRAC program, the
9 Transitional Assistance Program, that is
10 administered by the City of Philadelphia through the
11 Office of Emergency Services. It is a program that
12 receives Section 8 certificates with no oversight by
13 the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

14 This is a program to assist people in
15 making the transition from homelessness to either
16 home ownership or rental occupancy.

17 It is purely within the jurisdiction
18 of the City Council of the City of Philadelphia and
19 its city government to provide that oversight. PHA
20 has absolutely nothing to do with it.

21 You have the Project-Based Assistance
22 Program, which is a partnership between the
23 Philadelphia Housing Authority and the city, where
24 selected profit and not-for-profit entities apply
25 for Section 8 certificates in order to meet certain

The subsidy that these not-for-profit and for-profit entities receive relative to Project-Based Assistance are sometimes the determining factor as to whether or not a block, a project, a group of homes are in fact renovated and reoccupied in many of the blighted neighborhoods of this city.

We are not only guided by the law with respect to fair housing and the establishment of the Section 8 program; but we are also guided by regulations that are established by the federal government, as well, that tell that agency what it can and cannot do with respect to occupancy and with respect to the way in which we interact with our landlords.

So that if a person needs mental

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2 health assistance, if they need drug or alcohol
3 treatment, the Housing Authority cannot provide
4 those services directly.

5 They must refer to other agencies in
6 our city, in our communities that provide those
7 services. So they don't even have the wherewithal
8 to meet that demand.

9 Law enforcement, which I know is a
10 big issue for many of the members on Council as you
11 talk about the Section 8 program.

12 The Philadelphia Housing Authority
13 Police Department have absolutely no jurisdiction
14 beyond public housing properties owned by the
15 Philadelphia Housing Authority.

16 A private landlord who rents to an
17 eligible Section 8 tenant is not governed or
18 overseen by the Philadelphia Housing Authority
19 Police Department; it is the local police department
20 that have that responsibility.

21 So as you talk about how you can
22 begin to address some of these issues and concerns
23 and problems as have been brought to your attention
24 and as you know them because of your interaction
25 with your constituents, I beg you not to take the

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shortsighted, quick-fix approach to this.

This is indeed a complex problem that has not been ignored for years, that has not been ignored simply until Council has moved forward, as you have, in introducing the resolution to conduct these public hearings. The Housing Authority has been focused on these issues for a very, very long time.

And, quite frankly, I hope that at the conclusion of these deliberations what this body will decide, what this body will decide, is that those agencies within the jurisdiction of the City of Philadelphia and those agencies that are impacted directly by state and federal funding will work in a more cohesive and cooperative manner to not only protect, or not only to meet the needs of this city's poorest citizens, but also to protect the interests of people who live in the selected neighborhoods throughout our great city.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very much,

Mr. White.

Councilman Kenney.

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2 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 Thank you, Mr. White, for your
5 attendance and for your thoughtful commentary and
6 testimony.

7 I want to give you an example of a
8 problem, specific problem, without names and without
9 addresses, that elected officials like myself
10 encounter and explain to you my efforts in an effort
11 to resolve the problem, and some of the obstacles I
12 faced.

13 I know a lot has to do with process,
14 what happens in a neighborhood when and if there is
15 a problem, and what opportunities people have to
16 resolve that problem either through interaction with
17 each other or through outside agencies or the police
18 department or whatever.

19 In South Philadelphia, not too far
20 from where I live, on a small row-house street,
21 there is a Section 8 tenant who is a young woman.

22 And for purposes of discussion, it
23 was not an interracial situation. It was two
24 majority, a white woman and predominantly white
25 neighbors.

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2 She is a young woman in her mid 20's,
3 almost 30 years old, whose father owned the
4 property.

5 The father lives in Packer Park, in a
6 very nice part of the city. And he converted that
7 property to a Section 8, the fourth -- the number
8 our -- Section 8, PHA No. 4, as you explained it,
9 and was getting approximately maybe seven-something
10 a month for the property where his daughter lives.

11 The daughter had severe drug and
12 alcohol problems. And not only was a disruption
13 herself to the community, but was engaging in what
14 we call a party house.

15 So that the young men in the
16 neighborhood would come and drink there during the
17 evening and create a stir. And the Philadelphia
18 Police, of course, would be called, and they would
19 come. A disorderly house type of operation. This
20 went on for approximately two years.

21 And your staff was very helpful in
22 trying to give us guidance on what it is we could do
23 to both build a case to explain to the surrounding
24 neighbors why this was happening, and also to make
25 some explanation as to why a father, who wouldn't

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1 want this daughter living in his own house, had
2 foisted this individual on the rest of the
3 neighborhood.
4

5 We were told at the time that the
6 predominant problem or discussion should take place
7 between the elected officials, the neighbors, and
8 the landlord.

9 That this was basically a violation
10 of the lease, and the landlord was responsible for
11 moving that particular tenant out.

12 But because of the fact that the
13 daughter was the tenant, he was in no rush. Of
14 course she wasn't living in Packer Park with him, so
15 he was in no rush to end this relationship because
16 he was getting the money and, secondly, because she
17 didn't have to live with him.

18 In that circumstance, what would be
19 the appropriate method for the neighbors, the Civic
20 Association, the elected officials to confront this
21 problem, to remove what is obviously a disruption?

22 Because I viewed, I sat outside with
23 the police one evening, and listened to the noise
24 and the foul language and the drinking.

25 And she was in the middle of a block,

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2 so everything that happened involved every
3 neighbor. And it wasn't just Fridays and Saturdays;
4 it was Monday through Sunday.
5 What would neighbors do in that
6 case?
7 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Mr. White, just
8 before you begin, let me introduce the members of
9 the committee that are here, Councilwoman Blackwell
10 to my extreme right, Councilman Nutter, Councilman
11 Kenney, I am Councilman Cohen. To my left,
12 Councilman Ortiz, Councilman Rizzo, Councilwoman
13 Krajewski, Councilwoman Fernandez.
14 The moment another Councilmember
15 comes here, we will have a quorum, and we can do
16 what we want with the vote, we will have an absolute
17 majority.
18 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: We could approve
19 the Kvaerner deal.
20 CHAIRMAN COHEN: And we will solve
21 all problems.
22 Thank you very much. Excuse me for
23 interfering.
24 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
25 I always, when I was here, enjoyed those meetings of

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2 the Council of the Whole. They were intriguing.
3 Formally, probably you were told
4 exactly what you could do.
5 As you know, and I think as a part of
6 that frustration, it is a contractual relationship;
7 PHA with the landlord, the landlord then with the
8 tenant.
9 The unfortunate circumstance, before
10 the actual Housing Authority could directly
11 intervene, there would really have to be some
12 violation of law.
13 For example, if the individual were
14 arrested for disorderly conduct, for drugs or for
15 alcohol, then PHA, I believe, would have some sound
16 grounds for moving to terminate that person from the
17 program.
18 And I emphasize terminating them from
19 the program.
20 PHA cannot terminate that lease.
21 That private landlord could just as well decide that
22 they are not going to accept the subsidy coming from
23 the Section 8 program, leave that daughter in that
24 house, and continue to receive rent directly from
25 that daughter or eat the loss.

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1
2 But there is nothing that PHA could
3 do formally to terminate that lease or the
4 relationship between the tenant and the landlord,
5 other than in the case of a conviction or mounting
6 evidence, that the person has in fact violated the
7 family responsibilities that are associated with the
8 program, to terminate them from the program.

9 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Should there be?

10 MR. WHITE: I think that you have
11 conflict resolution measures in various capacities
12 throughout this city, whether it is through the
13 Human Relations Commission, the police department.

14 When folks can't get along, you know,
15 generally speaking, through the police department
16 and through the Human Relations Commission, there is
17 a conflict resolution process or procedure.

18 Something similar to that, working
19 with the Housing Authority in the Section 8 program,
20 I think, would deserve some merit.

21 Be careful. Because, again, the
22 Housing Authority cannot be perceived in any way, as
23 you already know, of violating, quote, those
24 rights. Understanding the rights of the neighbors,
25 Councilman. I am trying to anticipate that.

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2 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: And that's why --

3 MR. WHITE: But the conflict
4 resolution procedures that you currently have
5 through the police department and through the Human
6 Relations Commission should and could be used to
7 bring about a resolution to that problem.

8 And it has been rare that that
9 process has been used on behalf of the Section 8
10 program.

11 It has been used. It has also been
12 used with respect to your scattered site program in
13 public housing. But it has not been used broadly.

14 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Part of the
15 difficulty that we face is, I look at this as a
16 two -- well, every circumstance is different.

17 And the Conflict Prevention
18 Resolution Unit and the Human Relations
19 Commission -- and actually the first agency I
20 called, always, when any of this issue comes up, is
21 the Human Relations Commission.

22 I like and respect Kevin Vaughan very
23 much and the members of that commission, and I
24 always ask for their assessment.

25 Would you please, folks, go out, do

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an assessment, and tell me what you really think about the circumstance.

Because I know when it comes to CPR and other things, that they need to protect people who others are attempting to run out of the neighborhood because of the color of their skin, because of their class, because of those issues. This is not that circumstance that I give you. And this anecdote may be isolated.

But what happens with the anecdote that I gave you is that the surrounding community -- and this is, again, not a racial situation -- the surrounding community begins to portray Section 8 as that woman who is feeding that beer to those teenagers Monday through Sunday; that father who is getting \$700 a month for a property he probably couldn't rent for \$500 a month. And that's what the program is stamped with, and it is unfair.

And what happens is that people resist it, they resist, where Section 8 has become a negative word. And that's sad, because it really shouldn't be.

My question is, if there is such a small group of people that are really causing this

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2 problem, why is it so difficult for us to remove
3 them from the program and to let the next decent,
4 well-deserving, good person move into that
5 property?

6 MR. WHITE: Because of the strict
7 rules that are imposed on the Housing Authority that
8 prohibit the Housing Authority from, quote,
9 regulating the behavior of the tenants who have no
10 contractual obligation to that agency, but one with
11 the landlord.

12 That's why I suggested the conflict
13 resolution procedures that are imposed. It used to
14 be the Crisis Intervention Program that I guess my
15 dad was involved with, and Benny Swans to some
16 extent was also involved in. And that's not race.

17 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: I agree. Because I
18 have dealt with them before.

19 And what I find, the difficulty with
20 CPR is that they usually get into the circumstance
21 to resolve it, not to prevent it.

22 And one of the things that I have
23 asked, for example, when I have an interracial
24 situation, where I may have three, two or three,
25 ugly, you know, prejudiced white people who say

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2 nasty things to an African-American woman who moved
3 into the street for the first time, what happens
4 sometimes is that that tenant, for example, moved in
5 with their landlord at 12 o'clock at night on a
6 Wednesday.

7 Now, you have no control over that
8 process. But understand my problem.

9 My problem is, listen to my problem.
10 Here is my problem. I would like to have the
11 opportunity, in advance, as a decent person, to be
12 able to go into that street, to get the eight or ten
13 decent neighbors, to have some prior interaction so
14 that we can begin our process of preventing the
15 ugliness before it happens.

16 MR. WHITE: There is a procedure
17 already in place to do that.

18 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Well, not with some
19 of the landlords, respectfully.

20 MR. WHITE: No, not respectfully with
21 respect to me or my former capacity.

22 The Human Relations Commission
23 already does that. Both the local and the state
24 Human Relations Commission are mandated and have as
25 a part of their mantra to do just that.

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2 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: They tell me they
3 suggest that kind of interaction to the landlords,
4 that don't necessarily follow that.

5 MR. WHITE: Councilman, I will tell
6 you that the Human Relations Commission, both at the
7 local level and the state level, have been directly
8 involved with the Section 8 program, the Housing
9 Authority, and private landlords, and those tenants
10 on that very issue.

11 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Is there a
12 requirement for the landlords to follow some
13 procedure, or to be involved with Human Relations or
14 CPR or anything else?

15 MR. WHITE: How do you require it?

16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Through
17 regulation.

18 MR. WHITE: Regulations are
19 established by the federal government.

20 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Well, again, I am
21 not looking for you to wave a wand and say all these
22 problems are going to go away.

23 MR. WHITE: I did that for four years
24 when I was at PHA.

25 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Touche. Touche.

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2 What I want to do is to get input
3 from you so we know who to go to to try to make
4 those changes both structurally and legislatively,
5 so that we can have a process that people are
6 comfortable with.

7 MR. WHITE: And I am suggesting to
8 you you have the vehicle. What you don't have, I
9 guess, is the law or the regulatory authority to
10 mandate or to impose that on a private landlord.

11 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilman Nutter.

14 And let the Chair introduce
15 Councilman Mariano, who gives the body here a total
16 majority.

17 Councilman Nutter.

18 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Good morning,
19 Mr. White. Thank you for coming this morning to
20 share information.

21 I had planned to start with another
22 question, but I wanted to follow up on the example
23 that Councilman Kenney shared.

24 One of the problems, I think, in all
25 of this discussion, from prior to the first hearing,

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1 in the first hearing, and now in this hearing, is an
2 apparent distinction that some people, I guess, make
3 in their minds as to the appropriate application of
4 laws and remedy as it relates to Section 8 tenants
5 versus anyone else who is a renter, or in some cases
6 a homeowner, in the City of Philadelphia.

7 And it seems to me that there is one
8 body of law in this city, there is generally one set
9 of procedures that agencies follow, but without
10 distinction made to whether someone is a Section 8
11 tenant or not.

12 In the case that the Councilman
13 shared with us, as he was relating the story, I
14 began to wonder, well, what procedure do we follow
15 for the non-Section-8 tenant who engages in the same
16 behavior with their non-Section-8-participating
17 landlord.

18 They should be the same. If it is
19 bad behavior, it is bad behavior, and we should have
20 a process.

21 The fact that the person happens to
22 participate in the program, I assume that PHA and
23 the appropriate agencies will take whatever action
24 is necessary against the participating property
25

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1
2 owner.

3 But that doesn't necessarily solve
4 the problem between the property owner and the
5 tenant because of their bad behavior.

6 And I guess your general response
7 was, even if the property owner was thrown out of
8 the Section 8 program, decided to maintain a
9 lease/rental relationship with, in this case, even
10 the daughter, I assume that person will continue to
11 engage in their bad behavior. Now they are
12 completely out of the program.

13 For me the bottom line of all of this
14 has been, what do we do with people who break the
15 law?

16 In my office, in the neighborhoods
17 that I represent, Wynnefield, Overbrook, Roxborough,
18 Manayunk, East Falls, part of West Philadelphia,
19 part of North Philly, and part of West Mt. Airy, I
20 get complaints about similar incidents, some worse,
21 some better, all generally bad.

22 Virtually none of those complaints
23 have anything to do with anyone who is involved in
24 the Section 8 program. But people are still upset
25 about the kids, the trash, barking dogs, and

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2 everything else that goes on.

3 And if we can't solve those problems
4 generally, I don't expect how we are going to solve
5 them in the narrowest of cases involving 11,000
6 units of rental housing in a city that has over
7 200,000 units of rental housing.

8 And we don't seem to have an answer
9 for the other 200-some-odd thousand people
10 throughout the city, notwithstanding whether they
11 are Section 8 tenants or not.

12 MR. WHITE: May I, Mr. Chairman.
13 Mr. Chairman, though that wasn't a
14 question, I would like to make just one brief
15 comment in response to that.

16 What Councilman Kenney and I were
17 talking about, and as you heard and understood, with
18 respect to conflict resolution, the Conflict
19 Resolution Units of the police department and the
20 Human Relations Commission are engaged in trying to
21 resolve those differences amongst neighbors,
22 regardless of whether they are in the Section 8
23 program or not.

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Right.

25 MR. WHITE: And I think maybe the

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1 question to be posed is whether or not the program
2 is actually reaching the folks who it needs to
3 reach, are people aware of it as a place where they
4 can go to resolve differences of opinion amongst
5 neighbors.
6

7 And to the extent that folks become
8 more aware of it, I think you may see and witness a
9 heightened participation on the part of those member
10 agencies in trying to resolve some of those
11 differences.

12 But the rules should be the same.
13 And I did not mean to imply by my response to
14 Councilman Kenney that there is a different standard
15 or a different set of rules that ought to be applied
16 when conflict exists between parties who may be
17 involved in the Section 8 program versus neighbors
18 who may be not.

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: No, I didn't take
20 that to be your implication. Couple of questions.

21 I am going to ask you a couple of
22 questions based on the 24th Code of Federal
23 Regulations, Chapter 9. And I am reading from the
24 May 1, 1996, Edition.

25 MR. WHITE: I really don't believe

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2 you are doing this to me this morning.

3 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, I think
4 that you will have some general -- I think you will
5 be more than fine.

6 In Section 982.202, it talks about
7 how applicants are selected, and there are some
8 general requirements.

9 But in one of the sections it
10 specifically discusses prohibited admission
11 criteria. And the first is family suitability for
12 tenancy.

13 And that reads, "The owner selects
14 the tenant. The owner decides whether the family is
15 suitable for tenancy. The Housing Authority
16 decision whether to admit an applicant to the
17 program may not be based on an applicant's
18 suitability for tenancy.

19 "The Housing Authority may deny
20 assistance to an applicant because of drug-related
21 activity, criminal activity, or violent criminal
22 activity by family members," and then you are
23 directed to see Section 982.553.

24 Mr. White, is it your recollection
25 from your time at PHA that that section is still

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2 accurate and current?

3 MR. WHITE: Yes, it is.

4 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: And, so, what is
5 PHA's role and responsibility in the Section 8
6 program as it relates to whether a tenant can
7 participate in the program?

8 MR. WHITE: It is purely to determine
9 their eligibility based on their income, no record
10 of some specific items, for example, criminal
11 activity, failure to pay rent in another residence,
12 most often public housing.

13 Having been evicted from a Public
14 Housing Authority would also lead to you not being
15 accepted in the program. But it is basically to
16 determine the eligibility.

17 PHA, through the Section 8 program
18 that it administers, Mr. Chairman, is not permitted
19 to screen applicants beyond determining their
20 eligibility.

21 The question of suitability is solely
22 the responsibility of the landlord, and not the
23 Authority itself.

24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: In Points 2 and
25 3, same section, there are items entitled Before the

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2 Family Lives.

3 And that reads, "Admission to the
4 program may not be based on where the family lives
5 before admission to the program. However, the
6 Housing Authority may target assistance for families
7 who live in public housing or other federally
8 assisted housing."

9 And the section is No. 3 that reads,
10 "Where Family Will Live: Admission to the program
11 may not be based on where the family will live with
12 assistance under the program."

13 Are those regulations still in
14 effect?

15 MR. WHITE: Yes, they are.

16 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: A question has
17 been raised about, or an allegation, a charge, has
18 been raised with regard to the rents, that
19 various --

20 MR. WHITE: I'm sorry; to the rents?

21 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Rents that
22 various landlords charge. That they are, in some
23 cases, excessive, that they are gouging people.

24 And it is my understanding that there
25 is something in the Definition section that talks

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2 make that allegation, they are not talking about the
3 Section 8 program administered by the Philadelphia
4 Housing Authority.

5 Whenever PHA wants to pay a
6 particular -- whenever PHA agrees to a particular
7 rent, that must meet the rent reasonableness
8 standard that is established by the Department of
9 Housing and Urban Development.

10 The local office of HUD reviews those
11 rents to make sure that they are, in fact, within
12 the FMR criteria.

13 If an exception is being made, that's
14 a different story. But I would suggest to you that
15 on the PHA-administered program, exceptions are a
16 rarity.

17 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Let's talk about
18 exceptions.

19 When you talk about exceptions, are
20 you talking about exceptions that are generally
21 granted in the other three programs, or are we
22 talking about a specific exception in the
23 PHA-administered Section 8 program?

24 And how would a person go about
25 getting an exception? And could you give us some

In a Project-Based Assistance

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2 Program, there are some -- I don't know how many --
3 rents that are in excess of 150 percent of the fair
4 market rent.
5 How that is determined, why that is
6 determined, I am not in a position to say.
7 There is a national debate in
8 Washington, D.C., in Congress, on that very issue.
9 But that issue focuses primarily on the
10 HUD-administered Section 8 program, not Housing
11 Authority Section 8 programs.
12 Where the question has been raised
13 over and over again, whether or not HUD, at the
14 federal level, is in fact a little too lenient with
15 respect to the granting of rental subsidies to
16 private landlords participating in their programs,
17 but not as it relates to Housing Authority
18 programs.
19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you.
20 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
21 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
22 Councilman Rizzo.
23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman.
25 MR. WHITE: Good morning,

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1
2 Councilman.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Mr. White, thank
4 you for being here today. My comments are going to
5 pick up on something that you said.

6 In reference to trying to avoid
7 conflicts, could you explain, many of the complaints
8 that I hear from residents that live in the area of
9 Section 8 housing is the problem with some of the
10 behavioral problems.

11 And when people come from, come into
12 a single-family Section 8 property, you know, it is
13 not easy to maintain and understand and operate a
14 property. You know, just trying to figure out the
15 recycling days from the trash days.

16 And many of the things that I think
17 aggravate some of the neighbors are sheer, in many
18 cases, honest mistakes. They don't know to take a
19 screen window out and put a storm window in, or you
20 don't put the trash out the day before.

21 From your experience, what do you do
22 to try to educate people that for their first time
23 in their lives have owned a home, or live in a
24 home? From your experience, what did you do?

25 And if you have any recommendations,

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2 especially in that area, for the future, I would
3 like to hear.
4 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: If I could admit
5 for the record, every now and then I forget when my
6 recycling is supposed to go out, too.
7 I check with my next-door neighbor;
8 he is always on the schedule.
9 (Applause.)
10 MR. WHITE: Councilman, I happen to
11 live in the same neighborhood that Councilman Nutter
12 lives in.
13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Don't look for his
14 to be out.
15 MR. WHITE: We can't figure out which
16 Friday it is really going to be. We will work on
17 that.
18 There is an orientation that the
19 Housing Authority conducts with all eligible and
20 prospective Section 8 tenants. And it speaks to
21 basic kinds of home housekeeping, values of
22 neighborhoods and neighbors. But beyond that, very
23 little happens.
24 I want to go back, though. Because I
25 think that at the point which you start in raising

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2 your question, it is already too late.

3 And this is the sensitive area. And
4 it is a sensitive area for every one of you, for
5 this Administration and, quite frankly, for the
6 taxpayers of this city.

7 The policy was established in 1988
8 that in order to address the burgeoning problem of
9 homelessness and people living in shelters, that the
10 Section 8 program, along with the housing, Public
11 Housing Program, would become the housing of last
12 resort for those individuals who are entering the
13 shelter system in the city.

14 The arrangement was that
15 city-certified shelters would be the only way that
16 someone could gain access to public housing, from a
17 shelter.

18 Whether it is the Section 8 program
19 or the regular Public Housing Program, it had to be
20 a city-certified licensed shelter. Why?

21 At that time the debate was around
22 these issues. Since they are with us for, quote, 30
23 days, we are able to determine whether they are
24 ready to live on their own or not.

25 We can tell you whether they have

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2 engaged in drug and alcohol. We can tell you
3 whether they have engaged in any criminal activity
4 over the last 30 days.
5 They are required to save a certain
6 amount of money. We can tell you if they saved
7 their money. We can tell you if they got up in the
8 morning and made up their bed.
9 And because we can tell you those
10 things, we then think that those individuals that we
11 are referring to you are, in fact, ready to live
12 independently.
13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Is that when you
14 use that magic wand?
15 MR. WHITE: That's when we use the
16 magic wand.
17 Even though in many of the shelters
18 people are receiving services, those services do not
19 follow that family once they leave that shelter.
20 So the kind of supervision that one
21 may be under with respect to their substance abuse
22 problem doesn't follow them once they come into the
23 Section 8 program.
24 The person who stands there and makes
25 sure, in fact, that they are actually saving their

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1 money so that they can pay whatever to make a
2 downpayment on their rental assistance is not there
3 anymore.
4

5 The person who needs guidance in
6 raising their children, either through DHS or
7 through other independent agencies, once that person
8 leaves that shelter system and is accepted into the
9 Section 8 program, those services don't follow them
10 anymore. And it is important that we keep that in
11 mind.

12 You know the demographics of the
13 homeless population. You know the needs and the
14 issues and the problems that they face.

15 But, somehow, after you spend 30 days
16 in that shelter, all those problems have gone away.
17 Well, it is not true.

18 We didn't sit there and be quiet
19 about that. In fact, early in 1994 there were
20 meetings that were held between myself personally
21 and Bill Parschal and John Kromer, where we talked
22 about that issue.

23 And we talked about the need to do a
24 better job of making sure that the services that are
25 needed and provided for those families while they

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2 are in shelter continue with them after they leave
3 that shelter and enter one of the two programs that
4 the Philadelphia Housing Authority was responsible
5 for, Public Housing and Section 8.

6 In a letter that I sent to Bill
7 Parschal in July of 1994, in support of their
8 application for McKinney Act Funds, which is a
9 flexible funding line for housing programs, for
10 homeless assistance that the city applies for on an
11 annual basis, and is a major part of your shelter
12 system funding program, we indicated to them in
13 Point No. 4 how delighted we were that we had
14 reached agreement that they would be providing those
15 services for those residents once they left that
16 shelter and were entering the public housing
17 programs.

18 Everybody agreed it was necessary.
19 Unfortunately, Councilman, it did not happen.

20 And what I said, Mr. Chairman,
21 earlier is, you go through this discussion and this
22 dialogue, and you begin to see just what this fabric
23 is, how it is actually knitted together.

24 All of us will come to understand
25 that PHA is not an island unto itself; that there is

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2 a cause and effect for everything that happens in
3 this program.

4 If we are taking people out of
5 shelters and accepting them into the program, whose
6 responsibility, then, is it to make sure that the
7 supports that made that person, quote, ready to live
8 independently are in fact in place to assure that
9 they are living independently?

10 That's a big question. And it is a
11 serious dilemma that you, as Councilmembers, and
12 that the Administration are going to have to
13 address.

14 You cannot, you cannot, establish
15 neighborhood conditions as a priority, and then
16 deprioritize the neediest citizens of this city. It
17 can't happen.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. WHITE: At some point, at some
20 point, at some point you are going to have -- you
21 are going to face the music, just like this body has
22 decided to face it today and through your previous
23 hearings. It cannot continue.

24 And you can debate whether it is
25 right or wrong, and you can debate whether you want

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2 you continue to do that?

3 MR. WHITE: Because the arrangement
4 that has been worked out between the shelter system
5 and the Housing Authority is that the Office of OES
6 is responsible for making sure that that does not
7 occur, that that's why they are certified as being
8 homeless; that's why.

9 And this is something that's been
10 emphasized over and over again, at least in the
11 tenure that I have been there.

12 It was one of the primary reasons why
13 we began to have that dialogue with OSHA at that
14 time, now OES.

15 I don't believe that that continues
16 to be the case, I really don't.

17 But you can't afford at this point,
18 in my view, to change that policy, unless you are
19 also willing -- and I am not talking about you as an
20 individual, Councilwoman, as you know -- unless you
21 are also willing to look at where the money is going
22 to come from to expand your shelter system.

23 PHA provides 400, 400 housing
24 opportunities to people on an annual basis, on
25 average, in this city. The overwhelming majority of

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2 them are coming out of your shelter system.
3 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Well, do you
4 have evidence that this is not happening anymore?
5 MR. WHITE: What's the evidence?
6 What's the evidence that it is?
7 There is nothing to refute, other
8 than to say that the city's responsibility is to
9 make that determination.
10 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Well, I
11 guess I am not following.
12 If the word gets around that the best
13 way to get Section 8 housing is to be in a shelter,
14 why wouldn't that be an incentive?
15 MR. WHITE: With all due respect,
16 people want to get out of shelters.
17 VOICE: Thank you. Thank you.
18 (Applause.)
19 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: I know
20 that. People also want to get Section 8
21 certificates.
22 MR. WHITE: No; people want a place
23 to live. People want --
24 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: To some
25 people, a Section 8 certificate is a way to be able

MR. WHITE: Maybe my experience is

But as I visited shelters and talked the importantly, when people have called and find out why they haven't moved up on the waiting list or why they haven't moved up on the public Housing waiting list, and they are told they don't meet any of the four criteria that the Authority recognizes --

Now, can you find an example of an
made that choice? Probably. But I
y example that you find of someone who
sion, there are probably thousands of
ided that it would be better for them
family or move from house to house than
ne of the shelters that are currently
e City of Philadelphia.

COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: I agree with

COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: So it is not

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2 happening, and I don't think there is proof that
3 that is happening.
4 And unless we can substantiate an
5 allegation of that sort, then all we do is to
6 promote and keep on promoting this rumor and this
7 myth that poor people go into shelter in order to
8 get Section 8 housing.
9 It is not happening.
10 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: That's good
11 news, and I am glad to stand corrected.
12 My second question --
13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Do you agree with
14 that, Mr. White?
15 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: He said he
16 had no evidence of that happening.
17 MR. WHITE: I have no evidence of
18 that happening.
19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: You agree with what
20 Councilman Ortiz said?
21 MR. WHITE: Except he spoke of it in
22 a very definitive not happening.
23 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Yes.
24 MR. WHITE: I have been around
25 government long enough to know, I don't have any

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2 evidence that it's happening.
3 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Very good.
4 (Applause.)
5 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: The second
6 issue -- and, again, I would like your view and
7 numbers on this -- with some of the conversation
8 going on in previous hearings, someone could be led
9 to assume that all of Section 8 housing is a
10 problem.
11 And I think some of the data brought
12 up in some of the other hearings was, sometimes
13 people thought a neighbor who was a problem neighbor
14 was a Section 8 resident, and, in fact, they were
15 not.
16 So if there are approximately 8500
17 families living in Section 8 housing -- is that your
18 best estimate at the number?
19 MR. WHITE: There are 11,000; 3500 of
20 which are senior citizens.
21 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Okay.
22 Of those, do you have any records, or
23 does the Human Relations Committee have any records,
24 of how many complaints there are about actual
25 Section 8 residents?

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2 What I'm trying to get at is, you
3 know, if it is 100, and it is in your neighborhood,
4 it is still a problem.

5 But I wanted to get your best
6 estimate of the numbers or percentage of reported
7 problem tenants who are actually Section 8.

8 MR. WHITE: The specific number would
9 better be offered by the Housing Authority
10 representatives themselves, and I wouldn't dare try
11 to guess at what that is.

12 But they will know, and they will be
13 able to respond to the specifics of that question.

14 What the public --

15 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: That's when
16 they come. I thought maybe you would be able to
17 share your best understanding.

18 MR. WHITE: I am here today to do
19 that.

20 With what is of public record, I
21 believe that between July of 1996 and May of 1997,
22 there may have been 800 residents, tenants, who were
23 terminated from the Section 8 program.

24 That does not mean that that happened
25 because there were complaints from neighbors. That

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2 could have happened as a result of inspections to
3 their property and things of that nature,
4 convictions, things of that nature.

5 But more than 800 people were
6 terminated from the program over that 12-month
7 period.

8 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: That year
9 was?

10 MR. WHITE: 1996 to 1997.

11 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: And my last
12 question was, in terms of training or supports, you
13 alluded to the supports you think would be needed to
14 help people make a positive transition if someone
15 had not been a tenant before, maybe been just in a
16 family, a younger person.

17 What is your understanding of what
18 PHA did do, even with the constraints of its budget,
19 to assist any Section 8 housing tenants?

20 MR. WHITE: Beyond the orientation
21 that is provided, the Housing Authority operates
22 something that is referred to as the Family
23 Self-Sufficiency Program, where Section 8 residents
24 are invited to participate in job skill, job
25 experience programs that hopefully lead to full-time

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1
2 employment.

3 We adopt -- our belief was that the
4 best way to really inspire independence was with a
5 job.

6 And to the extent that we could
7 contribute by providing work experience at PHA sites
8 and in PHA offices and in the private sector, we
9 thought that we were making a leap forward in
10 helping that person to achieve independence and
11 self-sufficiency.

12 In addition to that, the sessions
13 that are held with those residents, prospective
14 tenants, before they are issued the Section 8
15 packet, allows the Authority to make sure that those
16 prospective tenants understand the rules that the
17 Housing Authority is to be guided by and how those
18 rules impact on them.

19 The same thing is held for landlords,
20 where landlords are invited in. Not only the new
21 landlords, but invitations are extended to current
22 landlords, so that they can be fully made aware and
23 reminded of the various rules, the regulations, the
24 guidelines that PHA is imposing on them in this
25 particular jurisdiction.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilwoman
3 Fernandez --
4 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Just one
5 last minute.
6 If you say they are invited in, are
7 they required, or just invited to come if you want?
8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Very briefly.
9 MR. WHITE: They are not required.
10 In either case, they are not required.
11 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilwoman
12 Blackwell.
13 COUNCILWOMAN FERNANDEZ: Thank you.
14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman.
16 I certainly am delighted to have
17 Mr. White here. And we thank you for your courage
18 and for all the facts, the information that you have
19 brought to, quote, unquote, set the record straight
20 on the whole Section 8 issue.
21 I am concerned because -- and it was
22 when my colleagues scheduled the hearing -- because
23 public perception would indicate that we have a
24 bigger problem than we do.
25 Let me ask you, do you agree that we

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2 have buildings, major buildings, in even Center City
3 where this program is used, irrespective of PHA and
4 other entities, where it is used, it is used well,
5 it is used for senior citizens and other people? I
6 mean buildings on Walnut and Chestnut and Market
7 Street, where this operates well.
8 Would you not agree?
9 MR. WHITE: Yes, ma'am, I would.
10 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And wouldn't
11 you also agree that we have a minority of problems,
12 a small number, relative to the entire Section 8
13 program, where there are problems?
14 MR. WHITE: I think that that is
15 generally agreed to not only by myself as an
16 individual, but by the majority of the members of
17 this Council, as well.
18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
19 We are concerned. I just received a
20 copy of an ugly letter that was sent to Mr. Reeves,
21 with all kind of threats about bombing houses of
22 elected officials and other people with regard to
23 anybody moving people into Section 8 programs.
24 And I think this is the dangerous
25 trash that the law enforcement authorities need to

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2 need Section 8 for everybody who wants it, for those
3 in shelter, for those low income, for senior
4 citizens, and all members of the community who might
5 need the extra subsidy.
6 Thank you, Mr. White.
7 (Applause.)
8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
9 Councilwoman Krajewski.
10 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.
11 Good morning, Mr. White.
12 MR. WHITE: Good morning,
13 Councilwoman.
14 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you
15 very much for coming in. And I also appreciate the
16 fact that you are here. At least we have someone to
17 ask questions to.
18 COUNCILMAN WHITE: I'm not sure
19 whether that's good or bad.
20 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: It is good.
21 I am a landlord. Now, can you give
22 me step by step what I would do in order to apply
23 for Section 8? I guess my question is two-fold.
24 And is there any limit to any homes that I have that
25 I can apply for?

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2 MR. WHITE: Is there --

3 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: A limit as a
4 landlord. Like I know there are some who have maybe
5 10, 20 homes that they own that they have for
6 Section 8, that they rent for Section 8.

7 MR. WHITE: Sure. Mr. Chairman, if
8 you would, there is a statistical breakdown on the
9 number of assisted units versus total number of
10 landlords that may be helpful in response to the
11 Councilwoman's question.

12 And if you will allow me to just read
13 that, I would appreciate it very briefly.

14 The number of landlords who own
15 between 1 and 5 properties that are within the
16 Section 8 program, 3,142.

17 The number of landlords which own
18 between 5 and 10 properties that are in the Section
19 8 program, 158.

20 The number of landlords which own in
21 excess of 10 properties that are enrolled in the
22 Section 8 program is 176.

23 The overwhelming majority of Section
24 8 landlords in this city are folks you and I know,
25 they are just like you and I, they are mom-and-pop

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1
2 operations.

3 The situation that you described,
4 though unfortunate, it is a lot of cases. Where
5 parents decide owning that home and maintaining that
6 home is no longer a viable option, they move on to a
7 rental property.

8 I don't know how he got his daughter
9 on the Section 8 waiting list. But they apply for
10 the Section 8 program as a means of supplementing
11 both either mortgage payments and income.

12 But the overwhelming majority of them
13 are not, quote, the big guy. It is the little
14 person that you and I deal with on a daily basis.

15 With respect to what you have to do.
16 First of all, you have to own the property. Second
17 of all, you have to obtain a rental license from the
18 City of Philadelphia. Thirdly, you have to make
19 appropriate application.

20 The property that you own must be
21 inspected and it must pass, quote, housing quality
22 standard threshold that's established by the
23 Department of Housing and Urban Development.

24 Once you have done that, submitted
25 all of the forms and the like, PHA provides owners

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2 with the opportunity to attend monthly briefing
3 sessions for owners, and owners only, during which
4 the program operations, particularly with respect to
5 any regulatory changes that may have taken place
6 prior to the application, are reviewed.

7 The owner begins to participate in
8 the program once that unit has been inspected by the
9 agency and then selected by an eligible family.

10 But, in essence, that is the long and
11 short of it.

12 A lot of forms. But, for the most
13 part, it is ownership, meeting certain housing
14 quality standards, and complying with any other
15 applicable federal regulation regarding the
16 program.

17 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, there
18 has been talk, I don't know how true -- who is the
19 appraiser? How do they come up with the figure of
20 what rent --

21 MR. WHITE: Rent is charged?

22 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Right.

23 MR. WHITE: PHA does the survey on a
24 neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, zip code by zip
25 code, then they further break it down on a

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2 block-by-block basis to determine the fair market
3 rent.
4 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: How many
5 appraisers do you have?
6 MR. WHITE: I don't know,
7 Councilwoman.
8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, what
9 about the inspectors; how often do the inspectors go
10 out?
11 MR. WHITE: The inspector's job is to
12 inspect properties that are in the program for
13 housing quality standards.
14 They inspect every unit on an annual
15 basis. And the Housing Authority, I believe, is in
16 100 -- or was in 100 percent compliance with respect
17 to inspections of Section 8 properties.
18 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Well, would
19 it still be up to that landlord, if we have a
20 problem in that particular house, to take care of
21 that problem, or would it be PHA?
22 MR. WHITE: The landlord.
23 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.
24 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
25 Councilman Ortiz.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Following up on
3 Councilwoman Krajewski's question, do you think the
4 number of inspectors, given the number of properties
5 that are currently in Section 8, is sufficient?
6 MR. WHITE: Inspectors? Yes. I
7 don't think that the inspector staffing ratio is a
8 problem.
9 Someone -- and I hesitate on that,
10 only because I don't remember exactly how many
11 inspectors that there are specifically,
12 Mr. Chairman.
13 But the criteria that I would use to
14 offer that statement is the full compliance on the
15 part of the Housing Authority, with the inspection
16 of properties that are in the program.
17 If the Housing Authority was falling
18 short in inspecting those programs on an annual
19 basis, then there may be some cause for concern.
20 But, as far as I know, the Housing
21 Authority is in 100 percent compliance with the
22 mandate that each unit be inspected on an annual
23 basis.
24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: There are
25 currently 11 inspectors. Has there always been 11

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2 inspectors, or did you have fewer and add during the
3 last year or so?
4 MR. WHITE: I think over the course
5 of the last three or four years, that probably
6 represents some increase in the number of inspectors
7 in the program.
8 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: And the
9 requirement is only for an annual inspection, and
10 that's the regular mandate of the federal
11 government?
12 MR. WHITE: Yes, it is.
13 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Mr. Chairman.
14 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Councilman
15 Mariano.
16 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Mr. White, thank
17 you for coming.
18 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Councilman.
19 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I am glad you
20 resigned as head of PHA, because then you could be
21 with us.
22 Now, he knew I was going to say
23 that. Thank you.
24 I learned something here today,
25 that's why I am glad you came. Four different kinds

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2 of Section 8 in the city. The one that PHA runs.
3 What's the other three?
4 MR. WHITE: One is the Transitional
5 Assistance Program that is operated by the city.
6 The other is the Project-Based
7 Assistance Program, which really is a partnership
8 between PHA and the city.
9 And by a partnership what I mean is,
10 the two bodies. Usually it is the Office of Housing
11 and Community Development and the Housing Authority,
12 both review RFPs, proposals that are submitted,
13 profit and nonprofit entities, to participate in the
14 Project Based-Assistance Program.
15 And then there is a Section 8 program
16 that is administered by the federal government
17 itself, by the Department of Housing and Urban
18 Development.
19 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: With all these
20 four programs, how many altogether?
21 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I thought --
22 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I was next, and
23 you cut in front of me, as usual.
24 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I thought you were
25 going to follow up with a question that I had?

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2 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: No. You were
3 mistaken. I'm sorry.
4 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I didn't yield to
5 you.
6 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I will yield to
7 you, but you yield back to me.
8 MR. WHITE: With all due respect, Mr.
9 Chairman, this is a pro bono appearance by me this
10 morning.
11 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: I understand.
12 Councilman, I want to follow up. So
13 you currently believe that 11 inspectors is
14 sufficient to cover the properties that are under
15 the mandate of PHA in the Section 8 program?
16 MR. WHITE: That's what I believed
17 while I was at PHA, yes.
18 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Okay. I have
19 another question for you.
20 The issue of clusterization of
21 people, of Section 8 tenants, is currently a debate,
22 and I think is the focus of all of the questions
23 that have come up.
24 And it has been put forward as a
25 solution to the problems, quote, unquote, problems

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2 that Section 8 has created in neighborhoods.

3 I would like your opinion on
4 clusterization of the poor. I read a quote in the
5 Inquirer a month ago, or something like that, quite
6 strong opinion that you had, and I would like it for
7 the record.

8 How do you look at that? How do you
9 see it? Is it good public policy? And, if it
10 isn't, why not?

11 MR. WHITE: I obviously don't
12 believe, Mr. Chairman, that clustering of Section 8,
13 or the poor, is a good idea.

14 I think, as I said in the newspaper,
15 I think it is stupid. I think it is a knee-jerk
16 reaction that really does not pose a solution to any
17 of the issues or problems that are being debated or
18 discussed today, within or without the Section 8
19 program.

20 The whole thrust on the part of the
21 federal government is to disperse poverty, to spread
22 it out, to not have it concentrated in specific
23 given areas.

24 We call that choice, for people to be
25 able to decide to live where they want to live. All

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1 the evidence points to that.
2
3 If you look at the public housing
4 policy, HUD is saying to housing authorities now
5 that if you have a public housing development that
6 has more than 300 units in it, and the occupancy
7 rate is less than 90 percent, you are to do an
8 assessment to determine whether it is cheaper to
9 maintain that as public housing, or whether you
10 should, quote, voucher it out, give everybody a
11 Section 8 certificate, and tear it down, and let
12 people go where they want to go.
13 The whole emphasis on mixed income
14 within public housing goes against the notion of
15 clustering.
16 Now, I personally believe that the
17 Mayor misspoke. And if you would allow me -- no, I
18 am not going to do that.
19 I am simply going to say that
20 currently a Housing Authority can allocate up to 15
21 percent of its available Section 8 certificates for
22 project-based use. Not clustering, but for
23 project-based use.
24 That is a standard that is set by the
25 federal government through guidelines.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Can you define
3 "project based," for the record.
4 MR. WHITE: "Project based" would be
5 assisted subsidies that are provided for nonprofit
6 and for-profit entities that are engaged in
7 providing housing for low-income persons.
8 And they apply for these dollars by
9 way of a proposal, jointly submitted to the city
10 Office of Housing and Community Development, and the
11 Philadelphia Housing Authority itself. But there is
12 a cap of 15 percent that can be allocated.
13 Is it worth looking at whether or not
14 more of that 15 -- whether that 15 percent threshold
15 can be raised? Probably so.
16 But, right now, 15 percent is the
17 standard. And I am sure there is discussion all the
18 time as to whether or not 15 percent is the adequate
19 number. Should it be 17, 18? I couldn't tell you.
20 But clustering, bad idea.
21 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilman Kenney.
22 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: On two issues of
23 clustering.
24 I seem like I say this a lot, but one
25 of the most admirable housing developments that I

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2 have seen in Philadelphia for helping homeless,
3 formerly homeless, people, who may have had mental
4 health problems or alcohol or drug abuse problems,
5 is Project Home at 1515 Fairmount.

6 In those circumstances, where people
7 seem to do better in permanent housing, when they
8 have the support mechanism there available for them,
9 because if you have been there -- I am sure you have
10 been over there -- that's not transition. Project
11 Home is not transitional; it is permanent housing.

12 MR. WHITE: It is permanent based.

13 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: The opportunities
14 to -- clustering is a bad word. But to have people
15 together who can support each other in their special
16 needs, through employment and other types of
17 operations, in seems in those circumstances to be
18 successful.

19 Would you agree, or no?

20 MR. WHITE: Oh, absolutely.

21 But you will remember when we started
22 this discussion, or at some point during this
23 discussion, I talked about the failure on the part
24 of services following those families once they leave
25 the shelter system.

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2 In the case of Project Home and other
3 Project-Based Assistance Programs targeting the drug
4 addicted or the formerly addicted and the like,
5 those services are there, and they are on-site, and
6 people take full advantage of them.

7 But there is a difference between
8 expanding on Project-Based Assistance in that
9 regard, than in making the blanket statement
10 relative to clustering Section 8 in only certain
11 neighborhoods.

12 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: And I agree.

13 What I wanted to do was make sure the
14 record was clear that potentially you would be
15 supportive of expanding the project-based percentage
16 if it went into projects that assisted people into
17 permanent housing circumstances, where they used the
18 support of the community in their project-based
19 development to help each other do better?

20 MR. WHITE: In truth, Councilman,
21 purely my opinion, it ought to lead to something
22 other than government-supported housing.

23 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: But in some
24 circumstances people are going to be in need.
25 People with mental health problems maybe need that

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1
2 help forever.

3 MR. WHITE: No question. There is
4 not going to be any debate about that.

5 But when you start talking about
6 Project-Based Assistance, and you are making the
7 kind of investment where landlords are getting more
8 than the fair market rent, it would seem to me that
9 there really ought to be something at the end of
10 that rainbow, that there ought to be services in
11 place that help people not just transition from,
12 quote, subsidized housing, but to unsubsidized
13 housing, through private rental or, God forbid, home
14 ownership, where people have an opportunity to own
15 their own homes.

16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: If it were up to
17 me, all these subsidized programs would be funneled
18 into opportunities for people to buy and pay for and
19 own their homes.

20 And the perfect example is the
21 situation in Whitman Park, which was just a
22 horrendous, difficult situation for everyone
23 involved. But because of the home ownership aspect
24 of that program, it is a successful, integrated
25 neighborhood. It works well.

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2 The other question I have on
3 clustering, do you view multiple properties on a
4 particular street, 8, 10, 12, 15 Section 8
5 properties on a particular street, to be a form of
6 clustering that's not driven by the government, but
7 driven by the investor or the landlord or the
8 property owner?
9 Is that concentrating poor people in
10 a specific area?
11 MR. WHITE: Yes, it is.
12 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: And is there any
13 limit on the number of properties on a particular
14 street?
15 MR. WHITE: No, there is not.
16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: And is that a form
17 of clustering that the landlords do as investment
18 strategies?
19 MR. WHITE: As an investment
20 strategy? No doubt. But it is not mandated by your
21 government.
22 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Right. But should
23 we be looking at keeping that from happening, or
24 should we allow the market to do what it will?
25 MR. WHITE: You may be running

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2 hundreds of them at the other level that we don't
3 know. And maybe we could ask them if they ever show
4 up.
5 MR. WHITE: That's correct.
6 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Again, I would
7 like to thank you for coming. And I know it took
8 some intestinal fortitude.
9 Good luck in your future endeavors.
10 MR. WHITE: Thank you, sir.
11 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.
13 I think the answer to Councilman
14 Mariano's question is, there are 8,454 Section 8
15 certificates in the city, there are 1,650 Section 8
16 vouchers, and there are 896 units of Section 8
17 project-based facilities in the city. They total
18 11,000.
19 MR. WHITE: That doesn't include the
20 HUD-operated program.
21 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Right.
22 MR. WHITE: It doesn't include the
23 TRAC program administered by the city.
24 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Right. Those are
25 just the PHA administered.

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MR. WHITE: Involvement, yes.

COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. I know we are in the section on clustering.

I assume, Mr. White -- and I certainly know of your feelings about that particular proposed policy -- in light of those feelings, do you have any suggestions on whether any changes may need to be made to the distribution of the certificates or vouchers, or how people go about locating units, or is it really more a matter of better monitoring of the actual program, figuring out the legitimate gripes or complaints about what those problems may be, and ultimately how do we deal with kind of going back to the initial round of questioning?

How do we deal with issues of tenant behavior, landlord maintenance and upkeep of the properties, in general PHA oversight?

MR. WHITE: I have to disagree with those who would suggest that what is needed is greater oversight of the operation of this program.

And I realize, knowing the activism amongst the members of this Council, that that kind of goes against the grain a little bit.

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2 But you are talking about a program
3 that is recognized across the country as one of the
4 best run and administered Section 8 programs, that
5 has not been the subject of any investigations
6 relative to mismanagement, misappropriation of
7 funds, or failure to meet any of the federal law or
8 regulatory obligations.

9 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, then, what,
10 in your view, is the problem?

11 MR. WHITE: I really think, I really
12 think, that this is borne out of an emotional
13 reaction from people in various neighborhoods -- I
14 would dare say all neighborhoods, but in various
15 neighborhoods -- throughout this city to seeing
16 people now move into their neighborhood, who were
17 not there before, who may not look like them.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. WHITE: Who may not have --
20 excuse me. Who may not be of the same economic
21 standard as them, and people who at the same time
22 are in need of continued support from the
23 governmental agencies which have provided it to them
24 and made it possible for them to move into those
25 particular neighborhoods.

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2 I can't -- I can't -- you cannot
3 overemphasize the need for the services that are
4 provided to those families while they are in
5 shelter, continuing to follow those families into
6 that Section 8 program, into the public housing
7 program, for some period of time after they come out
8 of that shelter.

9 You can't just cut people loose after
10 30 days and think that everything is okay.

11 (Applause.)

12 MR. WHITE: And everybody knows
13 that.

14 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Well, why do
15 those services not follow those individuals?

16 And are we now talking about some
17 lack of coordination between PHA and the City of
18 Philadelphia that, I assume, provides most of these
19 services?

20 MR. WHITE: It is not a lack of
21 coordination; the city just doesn't provide it. It
22 is not a matter of coordination; it is about
23 providing the service.

24 The Office of Emergency Services
25 processes the application for Section 8.

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2 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Maybe we should
3 ordain --
4 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Okay. So you are
5 making a distinction -- I mean, a lack of
6 coordination, that would give one the impression
7 that there are systems in place to do certain
8 things, and the various agencies aren't necessarily
9 communicating about how to coordinate their
10 activities, that's on the one hand.
11 MR. WHITE: Right.
12 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Your statement
13 seems to be that there is no program or policy for
14 there to even be a lack of coordination about; it
15 just doesn't exist.
16 MR. WHITE: That is exactly right.
17 You would be hard-pressed to find any
18 staff person in the Office of Emergency Services,
19 the Philadelphia Housing Authority, or any other
20 entity that's involved in this situation that would
21 not decry the fact that the services that are needed
22 to follow these families out of shelter, into some
23 assisted housing program just do not exist, and they
24 need to exist.
25 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Is the

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1 explanation a lack of funding?
2

3 MR. WHITE: I don't know what their
4 budget is. I am not going to say it is a lack of
5 funding.

6 And the reason I won't say that it is
7 a lack of funding is because, as I indicated
8 earlier, when the city made application as early as
9 July of 1994 for McKinney Act funds, one of the
10 requirements, one of the things that they put in
11 writing to them in support of their application, was
12 the recognition that at that time OSHA was going to
13 begin to enrich the services provided to those
14 families making the transition from shelter to the
15 Section 8 program, and it didn't happen.

16 They got the money. They received
17 the McKinney Act funds. But the services that we
18 had talked about, the services that --

19 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: "They," the
20 city?

21 MR. WHITE: -- didn't materialize.

22 I don't think it is a lack of
23 funding. What it is, is a lack of commitment. And
24 that needs to be revisited. And I think this is the
25 body of people to revisit that commitment.

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2 (Appause.)
3 MR. WHITE: Thank.
4 COUNCILMAN NUTTER: Thank you,
5 Mr. Chairman.
6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
7 Councilwoman Krajewski.
8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Thank you.
9 Mr. White, following our comments
10 about landlords, what do I or the residents do when
11 they have a problem and they cannot get in touch
12 with that landlord? Maybe the landlord lives out of
13 town or whatever it may be. What do they do?
14 Since PHA is paying them, don't they
15 have a responsibility to the neighbors?
16 MR. WHITE: We do. I mean, certainly
17 we have the responsibility to communicate with
18 landlords relative to the problems and issues that
19 are brought to our attention. And we do,
20 Councilwoman. We do.
21 We have been in situations,
22 personally, where we have invited landlords,
23 predominant landlords, in a certain section of this
24 city to meet with representatives of that particular
25 civic association, to talk through their problems,

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face to face, in the board room at 2012 Chestnut Street.

And let me tell you what happened at the meeting. I think you would be interested in this. And I apologize for being so long on this.

It was old home week. They weren't strangers; they grew up together. Their mothers and fathers bought their homes from these people. They rented their properties from these people.

They had already been talking. "Yes, well, I talked to you about this house, and you did fix it. But now it is a problem again."

It was a matter of communicating, communication on their part. But it was PHA that facilitated that meeting between that, quote, private landlord and that civic group.

PHA does that. They have a list of those landlords. They can tell you who the predominant landlords are on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis participating in that program.

We have invited civic representatives to attend briefings with owners, so that they can understand the issues and the concerns that

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1
2 neighbors have raised relative to this program. We
3 have done that.
4 The breakdown, the real breakdown, I
5 honestly believe, consists of confusion around the
6 different Section 8 programs -- because you can do
7 that to PHA. But who do you call about TRAC? Who
8 do you call about the HUD Project-Based Assistance
9 Program?
10 You call me when it is PHA. Well,
11 you did. Who do you call there?
12 You are real good at figuring that
13 out, Councilwoman.
14 (Applause.)
15 MR. WHITE: But I don't know. I
16 don't know that you would get any objection from
17 Manuela Costa or Cally Karris or Fred Purnell, who
18 is now the Interim Executive Director, if you wanted
19 to have an organized, rational discussion with the
20 predominant landlords in your community.
21 And not with that whole community.
22 Because you are not going to get anything done with
23 300 people in a room; you know it and I do.
24 But if there is a representative
25 number from an executive board or an executive

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2 committee, certainly that meeting can be convened,
3 and certainly that dialogue can take place. That's
4 your call.
5 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: I will still
6 stand to my point, it is economics.
7 MR. WHITE: Oh --
8 COUNCILWOMAN KRAJEWSKI: Absolutely.
9 The American dream, and it just seems like it is
10 destroyed.
11 Thank you.
12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: One second for
13 Councilman Rizzo.
14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Mr. White, if a
15 property -- you talk about the annual inspections.
16 If a neighbor believes that there is
17 a discrepancy that's having a negative effect on the
18 community, is there a process for reinspections,
19 even out of cycle?
20 MR. WHITE: Yes, there is.
21 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So what -- again,
22 maybe that's a followup -- if you believe that PHA
23 should be looking at this property six months early,
24 you can call PHA and suggest that, or is that
25 something that they just would dismiss?

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2 MR. WHITE: No, it is not dismissed.

3 You can call, you can request it.

4 And, to the best of my knowledge, in most cases, an
5 inspector will be dispatched to take a look at that
6 property.

7 Keep in mind, there are 11,000
8 Section 8 certificates and vouchers. The inspectors
9 conduct 25,000 inspections on an annual basis.

10 Some of those are -- I'm sorry,
11 25,000 on an annual basis. Only 11,000 of them are
12 what you would call the mandated annual inspection.

13 Some number of the others are in
14 response to complaints and concerns that are brought
15 to the attention of the Authority.

16 But they will be able to -- they can
17 give you all of that.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you, sir.

19 MR. WHITE: And I am sure they will.

20 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Mr. White, let me
21 thank you on behalf of all the members of the
22 committee and on behalf of the Councilmembers who
23 are not present here because they are not members of
24 the committee, but who are in their offices
25 listening, and on behalf of the people of

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1
2 Philadelphia.
3 I think today for the first time we
4 were beginning to get some answers from people in an
5 official position to know answers.
6 MR. WHITE: In a former official
7 position.
8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: We are greatly
9 appreciative for your coming and devoting this
10 amount of time to this public hearing.
11 It speaks well for you, it speaks
12 well for the agency which you have headed for many
13 years. And we wish you the very best.
14 And may we feel free to be in touch
15 with you from time to time on specific matters of
16 interest?
17 Your contribution today, particularly
18 with respect to continued support of the people as
19 they move from shelters into housing, I think, rates
20 with one of the very important pieces of information
21 that Council has obtained during this whole search.
22 It gives us a very good clue as to
23 how we may bring about some very sensitive changes.
24 Thank you again, Mr. White, very
25 much.

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2 MR. WHITE: Thank you again,
3 Mr. Chairman and members of Council.
4 (Applause.)
5 CHAIRMAN COHEN: And you are free, if
6 there is anything you wish to say in general, you
7 are certainly free --
8 MR. WHITE: No, I am not going to
9 take any more of the time of the members of this
10 Council and those others who may wish to testify.
11 Thank you very much for the
12 invitation.
13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you. And we
14 look forward to the opportunity to have you here
15 again. Thank you.
16 Liz Hersh.
17 MS. LIZ HERSH: I submitted a written
18 letter to the Mayor, which I hope you got a copy
19 of.
20 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Okay.
21 MS. HERSH: Did you get a copy of my
22 letter?
23 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: Yes.
24 MS. HERSH: By the way, for the
25 record, if you have a problem with the TRAC Program,

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2 you can call me.
3 (Appause.)
4 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Give your name for
5 the record, please.
6 MS. HERSH: My name is Liz Hirsch. I
7 am the Executive Director of the Tenants' Action
8 Group.
9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Very good.
10 MS. HERSH: Let me repeat that. If
11 you have a problem with the TRAC program, please
12 feel free to call me. My number is 575-0707.
13 However, I will say that I have not
14 gotten a call from any member of City Council or
15 from any members of communities who have had
16 problems with our program in the four and a half
17 years that I have been there.
18 I would like to share with you a
19 letter that several of us have sent to the Mayor and
20 have shared with members of City Council, and will
21 share with the Philadelphia Housing Authority and
22 others hopefully in a position to make some
23 decisions about Section 8.
24 "Dear Mayor Rendell: We the
25 undersigned are writing to express our support for

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1
2 the Section 8 program.
3 "Section 8 is an essential program.
4 It provides housing to more than 11,000 families who
5 would otherwise not be able to afford housing.
6 "It supports the private rental
7 market and prevents further housing abandonment
8 which Philadelphia can ill afford.
9 "Residents of Philadelphia, like
10 every state in the union, are plagued by
11 unaffordable housing costs.
12 "It takes more than twice the
13 minimum wage, or about \$12 per hour, to afford a
14 one-bedroom apartment at what HUD calls a fair
15 market rent of \$558 a month. In addition, we pay
16 some of the highest utility rates in the country.
17 "A decent place to live is out of
18 reach for many Philadelphians. Section 8 makes
19 housing affordable for them.
20 "Section 8 is not a program which
21 the city could afford to replace. Even if only 25
22 percent of those currently sheltered housed through
23 Section 8 ended up in the city shelter system, the
24 cost would be a prohibitive \$35 million a year to
25 shelter them. This city does not need any more

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2 homeless people on the streets.
3 "Section 8 makes it affordable for
4 many property owners and managers to invest in
5 rental property in the city. Without Section 8 many
6 would be forced out of business. We must make this
7 program work.
8 "Here are our recommendations."
9 Let me tell you who the signers are.
10 Sister Mary Scullion from Project Home; Gloria Guard
11 from People's Emergency Center; Lee Capkin and
12 Whittier Dow from Housing Consortium for Disabled
13 Individuals; Cindy Ferguson for the Community
14 Women's Education Project; Unavee Bruce from the
15 Francisville NAC; Elaine Fox, Director of
16 Philadelphia Health Care for the Homeless; Giona and
17 Michael Gregin-Modugno, Presidents of Piandalazzo,
18 who are property owners and managers; Ronald Maze,
19 who is also a property owner/manager; the
20 Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth; the
21 Fair Housing Council of Suburban Philadelphia;
22 Alicia Christian on behalf of Dignity Housing; Leona
23 Smith for the Employment Project; Jeffrey Best for
24 the Regional Alliance of HUD Tenants; Diane Johnson
25 for the Philadelphia Union of the Homeless; Carol

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2 Tracy for the Women's Law Project; Barbara and Ralph
3 DiCianno, who are property owners and managers;
4 Marie Holliman, who is a manager of Verona
5 Apartments; Habeebah Alli from Raise of Hope;
6 Wallace Nicholson, property owner and manager; and
7 The Coalition to Save Subsidized Housing.

8 Here are our recommendations:

9 First, we think that there ought to
10 be a hotline established for Section 8 that is open
11 for calls 8:00 to 8:00 every day.

12 It ought to be a toll-free number,
13 and it ought to be staffed with some of the best and
14 most senior employees at Section 8, and give them
15 broad authority to investigate and resolve
16 complaints.

17 I don't know if anybody has tried to
18 call Section 8 recently, but it is an extremely
19 frustrating experience.

20 And that's something that needs to be
21 resolved, and I think is a legitimate complaint
22 about the program.

23 At least it is a complaint and
24 experience we have had, and I think something that
25 could be easily rectified.

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2 Immediately hire 20 new inspectors.
3 In my opinion, as someone who administers a Rental
4 Assistance Program, which does not have the kind of
5 problems that this one does, the ratio of inspectors
6 to units is unacceptable.

7 There is no reason to have 1
8 inspector per 1,000 units, especially assuming that
9 it ordinarily takes two to three inspections to get
10 a unit passed and up to the housing quality
11 standards, and that that 11,000 doesn't include
12 complaint-driven inspections during the year.

13 We have a ratio of 1 inspector to
14 about 400 units. We could probably handle more
15 units.

16 But, at any rate, that number is way
17 too low. And I think that's a legitimate concern
18 that should be addressed.

19 A third that's been talked about a
20 lot is to provide social services to tenants who
21 need them, especially as they are leaving the
22 shelter system.

23 Some tenants do need additional
24 support and counseling. I will comment on what
25 Mr. White said about the McKinney money.

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2 Certainly, the McKinney money, there
3 are funds that can be applied for by the city for
4 support services. There is CDBG money. There is
5 city General Fund money.

6 It may be possible to generate
7 additional funds. It may be possible to redeploy
8 existing funds.

9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Do you have any
10 information about the exact amount of the McKinney
11 funds?

12 MS. HERSH: That comes into the
13 city? Last year it was about \$16 million.

14 CHAIRMAN COHEN: It is each year?

15 MS. HERSH: It is each year.

16 We don't yet have the SuperNote that
17 comes, that HUD generates.

18 The way it is divided up there is
19 that there is some funding that goes directly into
20 housing development; that's the greatest majority of
21 the money.

22 Some money goes into supportive
23 services. Some goes into actual rent subsidies,
24 primarily through what is called the Shelter Plus
25 Care Program. And that's a rent subsidy that also

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2 has services, which is not part of Section 8.
3 But I think the money that would be
4 available through McKinney is the supportive
5 services money.
6 And the Office of Housing usually
7 generates that proposal through some sort of open
8 competitive process. And it will be possible to
9 generate supportive services dollars through that
10 process to support people in Section 8.
11 Further, there are city General Funds
12 that are already being used for case management, for
13 people in shelter and leaving shelter. I know that
14 PHMC is providing supportive services with those
15 funds already.
16 Those funds, the way they are
17 utilized, certainly could be evaluated, I think.
18 The other source of support is
19 Community Development Block Grant funds. And I
20 think that certainly this whole issue of how people
21 make the transition out of the shelter and into the
22 community is something that really requires a new
23 look.
24 CHAIRMAN COHEN: All right. Thank
25 you.

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MS. HERSH: We think that there ought to be a screening committee to review applications for Section 8.

I understand that the regulations, the HUD regulations, prohibit Section 8 from actually doing this. But there is no reason why it couldn't be done through OESS and OHCD at this time, while regulatory relief is sought through working with HUD.

But, at any rate, I think that, contrary to some of what has been said, Section 8 and PHA do not work in coordination with the other housing and homeless services to the extent that they should.

It is very, very difficult to get information and to share information with them. And it would be a much more effective use of Section 8 if it were, in fact, part of the continuum of care that currently exists, that functions fairly well.

Our next recommendation is that a mediation program be established, such as alternative dispute resolution, to handle conflicts between neighbors, tenants, and landlords.

Yes, there is a Hate Crimes Unit of

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1 the police department. Yes, there is the Human
2 Relations Commission. By and large what they advise
3 is that people move out of the neighborhood.
4 Sometimes they do some good work.

5 But there is no reason why PHA, or
6 PHA in collaboration with other community agencies
7 or with the other housing agencies, couldn't use,
8 for instance, volunteers to do some kind of
9 alternative dispute resolution.

10 I think that for many reasonable
11 people who have problems with Section 8, one of the
12 problems is that it is very, very frustrating to get
13 your problems solved.

14 You can't get an answer to a phone
15 call. Nobody who you talk to seems to have any
16 authority to solve problems. Well, that's
17 inexcusable.

18 There ought to be a way to get
19 through and to get the problems resolved when they
20 exist. And I think we owe that to the tenants who
21 are part of the program. You know, they need to
22 know that they are going to be supported and
23 assisted, as do the neighbors.

24 So I think that -- we think that some
25

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form of mediation program could be done by volunteers, should be established to help diffuse tension immediately when problems arise.

Explore privatization of administration, of the administration of Section 8. There are models of programs for rental assistance and services that don't have the kinds of problems that Section 8 has.

Maybe it is too big. Maybe it is unwieldy. Maybe there needs to be some more community control. I don't know if privatization is the answer, but it is something that could and should be explored on a pilot basis.

Our next recommendation is that we give up on the clustering idea. I think it is a bad idea. Projects don't work; that's why we are tearing projects down. And I think to implement this idea would be to repeat mistakes of the past.

And, finally, I agree that the homeless priority should not be changed right now. The city simply cannot afford to change it.

There are some things that could be changed. For instance, most residents of shelters do not meet with a case manager and have an

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2 assessment done during their first 30 days of their
3 shelter stay. Usually that doesn't happen until
4 after 30 days.
5 Maybe the Section 8 application
6 should wait until after the 30 days. Maybe it
7 should wait until people are in recovery programs or
8 in transitional housing.
9 Some of us feel that maybe Section 8
10 ought to come as a reward for making progress, that
11 it shouldn't just be granted to everybody,
12 especially given some of the problems. That people
13 really need to be ready to take advantage of the
14 program so that they don't fail and go back into the
15 system.
16 But, at any rate, before a decision
17 is made about the homeless priority, it should not
18 be done in a politically charged, racially charged
19 situation. It should be done by looking at all of
20 the implications, all of the alternatives, and then
21 take a reasoned approach to it.
22 Thank you.
23 CHAIRMAN COHEN: In discussing the
24 latter part, the suggestions you have, are you
25 referring to the city's role and local regulations,

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2 or are you referring to the entire Section 8
3 program?
4 MS. HERSH: In which?
5 CHAIRMAN COHEN: In your
6 recommendations with respect to --
7 MS. HERSH: Well, some are federal
8 regulations and some are local. The homeless
9 priority is locally established.
10 But the regulations that prohibit
11 screening, which I think Councilman Nutter read
12 earlier, is a federal regulation.
13 But there is no reason why the city
14 can't create some kind of screening process prior to
15 the applications going to Section 8, or at least
16 explore that, and also to talk with HUD.
17 We have a very good relationship, the
18 city has a good relationship, with the national
19 HUD. If there is a series of recommendations for
20 regulatory relief --
21 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Apparently so good
22 that the Mayor is able to call them and get their
23 offices not to cooperate with City Council.
24 So we are not sure that that cozy
25 relationship that allegedly exists between the

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2 national Administration and the Mayor, we're not so
3 sure that it is always a good thing, in this case.

4 MS. HERSH: It is certainly something
5 I think that could be taken advantage of, at least
6 to try on a pilot basis.

7 Anything you are afraid to try on a
8 big scale -- and I think that is reasonable -- you
9 can try on a pilot basis and get some relief.

10 HUD is trying to innovate. HUD has
11 reformed itself and reshaped itself over the last
12 several years.

13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Well, the problem
14 with that is that HUD apparently will only listen to
15 the Mayor.

16 And the Mayor doesn't discuss
17 anything with anybody else, and makes his own
18 recommendation, sends them on for HUD to act on, so
19 we don't even know what proposals he has.

20 So I am just indicating there are
21 problems with that.

22 MS. HERSH: Knowing you, Councilman
23 Cohen, you will hold him accountable.

24 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Well, you are going
25 to have to help us find a way to hold him

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1
2 accountable.
3 MS. HERSH: Well, I think it is
4 unfortunate that the Mayor and the city
5 Administration isn't here to hear all of what has
6 been said both in the last hearing and today.
7 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Oh, I am sure they
8 are hearing it. You can be sure that they are tuned
9 in to every word that's being said here.
10 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: But they are not
11 sharing what they are thinking with the people of
12 this Council and the people of Philadelphia.
13 MS. HERSH: Well, that's a
14 disappointment.
15 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Councilman Kenney.
16 CHAIRMAN KENNEY: Just one point of
17 information for you.
18 In May of 1997, I went to Washington
19 to meet with the Chairman on the Subcommittee on
20 Housing, Congressman Lazzio from Atlanta, along with
21 a number of congressional people of both parties.
22 They are open to our recommendations
23 for any type of pilot or new innovative program to
24 help the Administration of Section 8 and other
25 federal housing programs.

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2 They basically said that if we came
3 to them with a reasonable approach, through the
4 Mayor's Office, they would be very happy to allow us
5 to proceed, because they are looking for some
6 solutions themselves.

7 MS. HERSH: Yes, that's good.

8 I mean, I hope that one of the things
9 that comes out of this is that there may be a task
10 force or something created to look at all the
11 different policies and regulations and how they
12 might be modified.

13 Because I think this program is worth
14 fighting for. I think we need it. I also think it
15 needs to be reformed. And how we reform it is going
16 to have major implications.

17 I am a homeowner in the city, as well
18 as an advocate for people who need housing. And I
19 think we have to balance out all of those needs and
20 interests.

21 The only thing is that every one of
22 the people who has signed this letter is willing to
23 sit down and discuss in more detail how these
24 recommendations might be implemented, what the
25 impact of them would be.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Have you submitted a
3 copy of the letter to the City Council?

4 MS. HERSH: Yes, I did. I can give
5 you another copy.

6 And many of us are people who work
7 with this program every day. We can bring in
8 landlords, we can bring in participants.

9 There are a lot of people who have a
10 working daily expertise. And why not have people
11 who know the program sit down with some of the
12 neighbors, the civic associations, as well as
13 participants and landlords.

14 I think there are a lot of areas
15 where we would all agree and can come up with some
16 reforms that would save the program, make it work
17 better, and make sure that we have this resource for
18 people.

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
20 much.

21 The next is going to be a panel. And
22 we appreciate everybody's patience.

23 The next will be a panel of four
24 people, Sabrina Carson, Arthur Green, Habeebah Alli,
25 Esther Bates. Please excuse the pronunciation, if

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1
2 it was off key.
3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Mr.
4 Chairman, while they are coming, let me state that I
5 understand and agree with my colleague that there is
6 some flexibility within this program.
7 I understand, for example, that right
8 now, even some of the funds that we have depended on
9 in this area, for example, the McKinney funds, we
10 are not sure what we will get from them or how we
11 are going to be able to use them this year.
12 So it seems to me that we are going
13 to have to, as a city, reevaluate how we use all
14 funds that deal with homeless and housing, and what
15 we get and how we want to use them for our city.
16 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Yes. And I think we
17 are going to want to know what was done with the
18 funds that were applied for specifically for
19 continuation of support services to the people that
20 went from the shelter to more permanent form of
21 housing, the Section 8 housing.
22 We thank you. Are all four names --
23 three are here?
24 MS. CASIN: Mr. Arthur Green is going
25 to speak in Miss Esther Bates' stead.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Okay.
3 MS. SABRINA CASIN: Good morning,
4 Councilmembers who are still here in Council
5 chambers.
6 My name is Sabrina Casin. I am
7 formerly homeless, and I am the Chair of the Dignity
8 Housing Board.
9 I am a member of the Delaware Valley
10 Union of the Homeless and the Pennsylvania Coalition
11 to Save Subsidized Housing.
12 I wish other Councilmembers were
13 here, just to take a look at the faces of
14 homelessness.
15 When I moved into my subsidized unit,
16 in a working-class neighborhood, the first week that
17 I was there I did not put my trash out. I wanted to
18 address that issue.
19 Not one of my neighbors knocked on my
20 door, but they did call up to Dignity to let them
21 know that I did not put my trash out.
22 I found out that there was a block
23 club. And I went to the President's door, and I
24 asked them when was trash day, when was recycling
25 day, and everything else. But no one came to me.

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2 They were waiting for me to fail.

3 And I think that one of the things
4 that, if we are talking about communities and
5 community involvement, that the community has to be
6 held accountable, also.

7 And when I say being held
8 accountable, I mean reach out to that person,
9 because it could be you.

10 I came from a working-class
11 environment. I became homeless due to no fault of
12 my own, through domestic violence.

13 I did not want to enter into the
14 shelter system. But because I was an abused woman,
15 my abuser knew my family, my friends, and everywhere
16 that I could possibly hide out.

17 So it was either saving my life or
18 humbling myself and entering into a facility that I
19 did not want to go. And I stayed in the shelter
20 systems for seven months. Seven months.

21 My oldest daughter disassociated
22 herself with me because she was a student at Central
23 High. I was an embarrassment to her. But I held my
24 head up high every step of the way because I never
25 lost my dignity.

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1
2 And when I got housing through
3 Dignity, my family and I reunited.

4 My daughters are college graduates.
5 I am gainfully employed. I worked my way through
6 Dignity Housing as a tenant, as an employee, and now
7 as the Chair of the Board.

8 But the one thing that I did not
9 forget is where I came from. And I think that
10 that's something that we all need to look at.

11 I am quite sure that some of us have
12 come from humble beginnings, humble, where you were
13 eating beans, hot dogs, or going to your neighbors
14 so you would have a meal.

15 What happened to reaching out and
16 helping a fellow brother? No wonder this City of
17 Brotherly Love wanted to change its slogan.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. CASIN: I guarantee you that
20 there are residents in Section 8 that are
21 undesirable. But there are homeowners that are just
22 as undesirable as people who live in subsidized
23 housing.

24 I had neighbors on my block who were
25 much more trashier, but they owned their homes, and

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1 no one was complaining.
2
3 Subsidized housing works. And there
4 are several components that will make it even
5 better.
6 One, to me, is to listen to the
7 people who have survived subsidized housing.
8 I am offering my services to the
9 restructuring of the Section 8 process because I
10 think that the piece that is missing the most is the
11 people who have been affected by, who have lived in,
12 these programs. You have not listened to them in
13 redoing this program.
14 And I am hoping that when these
15 committees are set up with our Mayor, our future
16 Mayor, our City Council, our housing person John
17 Kromer, or anyone else, that they will consider
18 people who have lived in subsidized housing as a
19 part of the committees to help to shape the new
20 Section 8 program.
21 And, finally, I am truly hoping that
22 this Council can relay to our current Mayor that the
23 people are somewhat disappointed that he could not
24 make this meeting.
25 Because it is clearly needed that our

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2 leader of this city should have taken time out of
3 his busy schedule to hear the pros, the cons, and
4 everything else that is being said.
5 We have to listen to him; he should
6 listen to us.
7 (Applause.)
8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Okay.
9 MR. HABEEBAH ALLI: Good afternoon,
10 honorable Councilmembers. I am so glad that you
11 again kept the appointment for this hearing.
12 I am equally disappointed that the
13 city officials --
14 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Would you bring the
15 microphone much closer to you and identify yourself,
16 your name first.
17 MS. ALLI: Okay. My name is Habeebah
18 Alli. I am representing Raise of Hope Transitional
19 Housing, the Union of the Homeless Delaware Valley
20 Chapter, and the Pennsylvania Coalition to Save
21 Subsidized Housing.
22 As I was stating, I am truly
23 disappointed that our Mayor and our other city
24 officials that are involved with housing could not
25 make it important enough for them to be here today.

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1
2 But I am so grateful that the City
3 Council members who did show up today came out,
4 along with the citizens that represent the various
5 coalitions and subsidized housing units throughout
6 the City of Philadelphia.

7 I am also a formerly homeless mother
8 of four. I am currently living in Dignity Housing.

9 And as I stated a few weeks ago here,
10 though I have been able to enhance my life, it has
11 not been to the degree that I can live in fair
12 market rental situations, nor have I enhanced my
13 life to the degree that I can purchase a property at
14 this point in time.

15 I would like to know, one of the
16 Councilpersons had raised, I believe it was
17 Councilwoman Happy Fernandez, in terms of people
18 going into the shelter system to receive a Section 8
19 certificate.

20 I think a better question would be,
21 why is it that anyone has to go into a shelter to
22 get housing?

23 Why can't City Council institute
24 something that a family is saved before they totally
25 bottom out? No one wants to be humiliated and

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1
2 denigrated to go into the shelter system.

3 If any City Council persons feel as
4 though it is some kind of happy ride or a lovely
5 experience, then perhaps they should have come down
6 with City Councilperson Jannie Blackwell a few years
7 ago. That we had hundreds of people sleeping at
8 12th and Market in the subway systems because the
9 shelters were full.

10 Now, here our city government is in
11 the black. I understand that we are not in the
12 red. But we have closed the shelter in the summer,
13 like people can live in 100 plus, with humidity.

14 People who have all kinds of fiscal
15 ailments, asthma, can't even breathe indoors, more
16 or less outdoors. And we are downsizing the beds in
17 the shelter systems in the winter, but yet this is
18 the place they go to receive subsidized housing.

19 Well, it was a place I went because I
20 had lived four places in one year with four children
21 who had to go to four different schools, and two of
22 them failed, while I worked in the Municipal
23 Services Building in Revenue, handling hundreds of
24 thousands of dollars by day. I slept in the city
25 shelter on the floor by night with my children.

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Where is the pride in that? There was no pride in that.

And though your friends and families will tell you leave that situation, get out of that situation, I was being battered in my home. I had to flee.

And I thank God for Women Against Abuse, but that was only 30 days. So then I had to look at the city shelters, which I am telling you is a half a degree better than a dog kennel. It is nowhere to be.

And when we are instituting these new policies and procedures, call on us, because we have walked in these shoes.

And I realize that I have not arrived to the point that I cannot return to the city shelter systems. And the way the jobs are downsizing, relocating, it is not just the Welfare cuts; there is cuts everywhere.

But one place we cannot do, and no more cuts can happen, is in our housing, whether it be PHA, Section 8, TRAC, whatever it is.

We need to increase subsidized housing, not decrease subsidized housing. And the

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2 Pennsylvania Coalition to Save Subsidized Housing is
3 going to organize and take it to Washington, D.C.,
4 HUD headquarters, where we need to have it.
5 Yes, we can address it here locally.
6 But the danger is, I am afraid, that the politicians
7 at the federal level are considering something like
8 clusterizing people.
9 Now, concentration camps didn't work,
10 and it will not work again.
11 And you will have blood in your
12 chambers before we will allow our people, just
13 because we are poor, to be treated less than human
14 beings.
15 (Applause.)
16 MS. ALLI: And this is not a threat.
17 I am not a violent person.
18 But putting me and my babies in the
19 street, as with any person in this city, is a
20 violent act.
21 Now, we can pick up arms where we go
22 to fight for our country. But right now we have to
23 pick up arms to fight for ourselves to live, to eat,
24 to have dignity.
25 (Applause.)

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2 MS. ALLI: To live in a warm place in
3 the winter, to have a kitchen with modern
4 facilities.

5 There was a woman in the subways at
6 12th and Market a few winters ago who asked me for
7 some money. And I am a sucker; I give it to her.
8 Because anything I get, the creator gives to me.

9 And I said to her, "Well, what do you
10 need it for? Don't use it for drugs." And this is
11 a woman, a caucasian woman, who looked like she had
12 a good life at one time. She appeared to be an
13 educated woman.

14 And I said to her, "Why do you need
15 this?"

16 She said, "Because I am having my
17 menstrual cycle, and I don't have any sanitary
18 napkins."

19 Now, I don't mean to be vulgar or
20 lewd. But we understand that this is a normal body
21 function.

22 Does anyone think about the woman who
23 has her time of the month, who lives in the street
24 in the summer because the city has nowhere for her
25 to go?

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1
2 You put gates around City Hall at
3 nights. Used to come into City Hall to use the
4 bathrooms; that isn't happening anymore. We are
5 gating off the subway corridors. What are the
6 people to do?

7 Where you as our representative have
8 to work with us to come up with solutions. We are
9 not asking you just to make the solutions. We are
10 saying we are making ourselves available to assist
11 in the solutions.

12 We are saying that we are in need of
13 jobs. When you want to hire inspectors to come and
14 inspect these places and different things of that
15 nature, look at some of the people who have been
16 through the process, who are still humane enough to
17 have still enough compassion left in them to realize
18 at one time they was on the other side of that
19 table.

20 Now, I am going to wrap this up. But
21 I appreciate your listening.

22 And the next time that we come back,
23 and the next time you have the pros and the cons,
24 Section 8 was good when it started, it is good now,
25 and it will be good in the future.

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2 Because we will always have a
3 population who will need a helping hand. And as I
4 said before, I believe that it is the 7th
5 Commandment in the Bible, love thy neighbor as
6 thyself.
7 (Applause.)
8 MS. ALLI: We cannot pick and choose
9 our neighbors; we have to just try to get along.
10 Thank you for your time.
11 (Applause.)
12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
13 MR. ARTHUR GREEN: Praise the Lord.
14 First of all I need to -- I'm upset. My name is
15 Arthur Green, and I am a member of the Pennsylvania
16 Coalition to Save Subsidized Housing.
17 And I was here a few weeks ago, and I
18 gave this -- read this elaborate speech. And I
19 don't feel like I want to read that right now.
20 COUNCILMAN ORTIZ: It is still a part
21 of the record.
22 MR. GREEN: I wanted to say
23 something.
24 And, first, last time I didn't get a
25 chance to thank someone. And I want to thank her

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2 today, Miss Jannie Blackwell. I was one of them
3 people sleeping on the ground.
4 (Applause.)
5 MR. GREEN: Look at me today.
6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: You look
7 good to me.
8 MR. GREEN: Look at me today, 100
9 pounds more. I don't have them five pair of pants I
10 had on then. I am clean shaven today. I smell a
11 whole lot better, and I look good. And I live my
12 life fine.
13 Back then, I was drunk every day and
14 didn't care. Why I didn't care? Because nobody
15 else seemed to care.
16 Miss Blackwell, because of you,
17 because of you caring, I began to care. I also
18 brought my woman with me. And today we are
19 celebrating close to five years of recovery.
20 (Applause.)
21 MR. GREEN: And the two blankets that
22 you gave us then, we still have. And they are Downy
23 fresh and folded neatly in the cupboard.
24 To that lady that said that there is
25 a price on where you live, some people will never

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2 have that price. And why? Because there is a
3 sickness in this world, among this human race, that
4 says that one man is better than another.
5 And that's just a fact. And we can't
6 deny it. That's just the way it is.
7 But because of people like Miss
8 Blackwell and the people that are in this room, it
9 will not last forever. Love will rule this world
10 and hate will be devoured.
11 MS. ALLI: Calm down, brother. Take
12 your time.
13 MR. GREEN: I don't believe she had
14 any idea what it means to be homeless. For the
15 people that have been homeless, and to come back
16 like I did, it is miraculous. I think it is.
17 I remember a time in my life I never
18 thought I would be able to be where I am today. I
19 would never be in here once before, and lost it
20 all. But to come back, never. Never.
21 But I am here today. And I am drug
22 free, and I am an activist for other homeless
23 people.
24 I didn't forget where I came from.
25 And for people that have never been there to sit

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2 there and say, "Well, oh, if you don't have the
3 money to be there, you shouldn't be there, it ain't
4 about that." Everybody deserves to have a home
5 somewhere.
6 If a bird can lay his nest where he
7 wants to, if a fox can put a hole where he wants to,
8 why can't a man live where he wants to?
9 (Applause.)
10 MR. GREEN: This is crazy.
11 I know amongst the people in the
12 homeless, we sat in the underground, we respected
13 each other, to watch out for each other's space.
14 And if we had an altercation with one of us, we
15 talked to each other.
16 What's the problem with these
17 so-called people that have it together in their
18 neighborhoods? If you got a problem with your
19 neighbor, you talk to them. What's the problem?
20 The problem is in their mind.
21 Because, first of all, they think they are better
22 than them anyway. And why should I talk to them?
23 They are below me. I have heard it so many times.
24 That lady that just spoke that said
25 about that -- you know what she reminded me of? I

And this Council need to get on

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2 board, regardless of what the Mayor has to say, and
3 do what you know is right.
4 (Applause.)
5 MR. GREEN: Do what you know is
6 right.
7 This Mayor is getting ready to leave
8 this term. He ain't going to be here forever. He
9 is not going to be here forever.
10 But goodness and mercy shall be here
11 forever, and you need to act upon it.
12 Thank you.
13 (Applause.)
14 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
15 much. Thank you. We very much appreciate your
16 coming in.
17 MS. ALLI: Thank you, Councilman
18 Cohen.
19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: The last three
20 speakers we are going to ask to come forward, Harvey
21 Portner, Jean Bund, and Charles Reeves.
22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you
23 for your remarks. God bless you for your strength
24 and your struggle.
25 Thank you.

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2 CHAIRMAN COHEN: This completes the
3 list of speakers that the Chair has knowledge of for
4 today.
5 If anybody wishes to be heard after
6 these last speakers, you will be recognized.
7 MR. CHARLES REEVES: My name is
8 Charles Reeves from Grays Ferry.
9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: What is your name?
10 MR. REEVES: Charles Reeves. I was
11 here two weeks ago testifying --
12 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Charles Reeves.
13 MR. REEVES: -- about a situation in
14 regard to the letters that have been instituted to
15 people in the Northeast about Section 8 and the
16 threat of bombing these people's houses.
17 I spoke then, and somehow somebody
18 here went and wrote something up that I stated that
19 I was going to bring some black men into the
20 Northeast to attack anybody that attack somebody's
21 black family. Well, I want to straighten the record
22 out with that.
23 First of all, my statement was that
24 the people who are running around threatening to
25 bomb people's houses need to understand that they

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1
2 live in houses.
3 My other statement in regard to going
4 to the Northeast was that I am involved with a
5 Committee for Justice. We have been meeting for the
6 last three or four months now.
7 We have decided that whatever area in
8 the city where there is problems at, we would like
9 to go in and try to resolve those problems, not to
10 cause problems or not to exacerbate those problems.
11 Now, last week some nitwit looked
12 into the telephone book, evidently to look up for my
13 address. And they seemed to see C. Reeves there.
14 And they sent a letter to that address, which was a
15 cousin of mine. Her name is Crystal Reeves. My
16 name is Charles Reeves.
17 They sent a threatening letter there
18 threatening to -- threatening me in a way. Actually
19 what they said was, they got some black members
20 involved with their group, and they are talking
21 about bombing unoccupied Section 8 houses.
22 They are talking about bombing, I
23 think, Congressman Borski's office and office
24 realtors. And then they went on to say that if, in
25 fact, they accidentally, I am guessing, bombed a

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2 black person's house, and I brought black guys from
3 Grays Ferry into Northeast, that my house would be
4 blown up or destroyed within 24 hours.

5 Okay? Well, first of all, I want
6 them to know that you can't scare me. And I am
7 going to do God's work, and I am going to say what's
8 right, and I am going to speak out on what's wrong.

9 This whole Section 8 thing is a bunch
10 of racism. That's what it started out as at Grays
11 Ferry. Because I was at the first meeting, when
12 they were talking about marching on people's houses
13 with vigilante groups, when they was talking about
14 setting fire to people's houses and all this other
15 crazy stuff.

16 And Mr. John White was at that
17 meeting. Okay. He can verify what I am saying.
18 Okay.

19 And I didn't speak up then. And I
20 hope the Lord can forgive me, because I should have
21 spoke up then.

22 But this people in this town, with
23 this racist stuff that is going across this country,
24 I say it again, they better wake up and smell the
25 coffee. Because people are doing too bad now, black

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2 folks, poor folks, white folks, Puerto Rican folks,
3 and other folks are doing too bad now to be
4 concerned about these nitwits who want to come out
5 with the Skinheads and all the rest of the dumb
6 stuff they decided to do, this stuff about bombing
7 people's houses.

8 I am sorry. You don't want to mess
9 around with us right now because, see, we are
10 hurting. Okay?

11 And I am going to tell you, I am like
12 this here, by any means necessary, so help me God,
13 if you attack me, you ain't seen nothing yet in this
14 town.

15 So somebody better tell them guys in
16 the Northeast to back off me and stop being so
17 stupid. Because if you want to see Charles Reeves,
18 all you have to do is send the word out, and I will
19 come see you.

20 You don't have to go look in no phone
21 dictionary to find out where I live at, and then
22 send a letter, a threatening letter, to some
23 innocent people's houses, scaring them.

24 Because I am not worried about you,
25 because my life is in God's hands. And I will do

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2 anything necessary to make sure that anybody in this
3 town, includes this good Mayor, with his racist-ass
4 self -- and I think he is a racist too, because of
5 his actions, the fact that he is not here. He don't
6 respect the people here.
7 He couldn't come to Grays Ferry to
8 the black community because he didn't respect the
9 black people there.
10 He got blacks down there now, with
11 the preachers and the house people that work for the
12 City of Philadelphia down there now trying to talk
13 about the communities to heal.
14 Well, the lady who was attacked is
15 sitting over there now. Ask her if she heal. These
16 people still threaten her and other black people in
17 the streets up there in Grays Ferry. So there ain't
18 no healing going on.
19 We have this ecumenical group running
20 around talking about everything. They say that we
21 gave some turkey dinners out Thanksgiving. Well,
22 Grays Ferry gave Thanksgiving dinners out for the
23 last five years, over 450 of them. But we don't
24 brag about it because that's the Lord's work. I
25 just thank the Lord that we were able to do it.

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1
2 But somebody please talk to these
3 ignorant guys. Tell them they don't want to even
4 mess with Charles Reeves, because Charles Reeves had
5 enough of them all, in Grays Ferry, Northeast, and
6 way in the other part of the city where they have
7 been attacking people.

8 And I am talking about anybody that
9 is under attack. Because I think it is a disgrace
10 when we live in a city where we have police running
11 all over the police, locking up people for whatever
12 little dumb stuff they can find, but there is nobody
13 dealing with these people who are threatening
14 people's lives.

15 They had the nerve to put the letter
16 on TV two nights in a row. Now, tell me how these
17 other black and ethnic groups in Northeast feel
18 about sleeping in that community at night, when
19 these people are putting a letter on the news
20 talking about blowing up their homes. And nobody is
21 doing nothing about it.

22 Now, I understand the FBI is
23 investigating because the Congressman was
24 threatened. If the Congressman wasn't threatened, I
25 guess the rest of us would be catching hell.

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1
2 I think the City of Philadelphia
3 could be a good city. And I have to agree with some
4 of the people who testified here this morning.

5 The Mayor, the Council, the Police
6 Commissioner, all of them better wake up. Because,
7 see, once this town blows, it is gone for
8 everybody.

9 For the people in Center City, for
10 the new people moving into the city, if this town
11 blows, the whole damn thing is going to blow up, I
12 am telling you. Because people are sick and tired
13 of this.

14 It is bad enough they can't get no
15 assistance. You talk about what we need to do about
16 the Section 8. The John White sitting right here
17 and said it.

18 He had a meeting with the owners of
19 these houses, along with this group out in Grays
20 Ferry. And who was the owners? It was their
21 uncles, their fathers, their cousins, their
22 brothers, their mothers, their fathers. These are
23 the people that are getting this money, getting this
24 \$700, \$800 a month. It is their relatives who are
25 renting the properties to these black folks and the

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2 other people in the Section 8.

3 So if they got a problem, why don't
4 they go to their family and relatives and tell them,
5 don't sell them the houses. All they care about is
6 the almighty dollar; that's their problem.

7 But the other problem is that in
8 Grays Ferry, white folks been selling drugs, white
9 folks been fighting all along, ever since I been
10 there. Police over there, it is still going on
11 here. So it ain't no different.

12 So don't tell me because these people
13 who are trying to bring and lift theirselves up and
14 come and get a house, I am not saying all of them
15 are right. I'm not saying all of them know how to
16 deal with a house.

17 But then we have some people that
18 live a long time, don't know how to deal with a
19 house. Most of the white people in my area came out
20 of the Tasker Homes years ago. And all they did
21 over there was drink and fight. I know because I
22 was there.

23 Now, these same people move two
24 blocks away, and all the sudden they are all
25 homeowners. We know better than that. We know they

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1 have Section 8 houses. We know they have got the
2 other three programs going on Grays Ferry. These
3 programs have been going on for the last 20-some
4 years.
5

6 Out in Southwest Philly, you have one
7 legislator -- I don't know what he is, but I know he
8 is a politician -- this man, I bet you he got at
9 least 30 houses or more under the Section 8 program
10 or scattered site program, and he is a millionaire.
11 But nobody talks about these people.

12 But the one thing we can say about
13 Section 8 houses, the houses are not as bad a shape
14 as some of these landlords, some of these problem
15 landlords, that we can't get nothing done about
16 them.

17 In our area if we call the police and
18 say we have a bad drug house, we can't get that
19 house closed down. Can't nothing be done about it.
20 But still we can get 100, 200 police there because
21 some neighbors say that this neighbor down there is
22 a Section 8 homeowner, and they are not cleaning
23 their property up right.

24 I know, because I have called the
25 police and gave them the drug addict's number. And

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2 we can't get the houses closed down. And the police
3 know every house in the area selling drugs. They
4 know every last one of them.
5 In that white community, we got
6 people over there selling drugs a couple of weeks
7 ago. Killed at least four people in that community
8 within two weeks. I seen nothing about it in the
9 newspaper. The police department is suppressing it,
10 but we know what happened.
11 There wasn't no black folks over
12 there selling no drugs. But I don't hear none of
13 that white community saying nothing about it.
14 Now we have got ten criminals on file
15 in the first time in the history of Grays Ferry.
16 And they are going to trial, for the first time, for
17 attacking a family. And not one person in that
18 community has stood up and said, "Hey, what you all
19 guys did was wrong." But they can jump on Section 8
20 people.
21 Something wrong out there. And it is
22 nothing but racism. And all we are saying is,
23 please check it out. Let the police department do
24 their work, let the Mayor speak about these issues
25 before the state blow up on us.

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2 Thank you very much.
3 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you.
4 (Applause.)
5 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Please identify
6 yourself for the record.
7 MR. HARVEY PORTNER: Good afternoon,
8 Councilman Cohen and Councilwoman Blackwell. My
9 name is Harvey Portner. I am the Admissions
10 Representative of Professional Health Care
11 Institute.
12 And I am here to help Section 8, PHA,
13 the whole nine yards.
14 We have a program at our school which
15 deals with, on an everyday level, homeless. And
16 parroting what Mr. White so eloquently enunciated,
17 let me add that I would like to become part of a
18 pilot program to help monitor those who leave the
19 shelters and go into PHA housing or Section 8
20 housing.
21 We would be very happy to work in
22 conjunction with a Committee of the Whole, or a
23 group from the City Council.
24 I think that we can do a job to
25 follow through what I call the womb to tomb theory.

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1 help, and who probably maybe has fallen into drugs.
2 We don't know just, until you look into the
3 situation, the kind of problems they might have that
4 needs to be helped.

5 And when you think about the children
6 that are coming, that need help because their
7 parents are in trouble, we need to continue doing
8 what we have been doing, and do more of it.

9 In the building that I have, there
10 have been mothers who are coming back from being
11 drug addicts, who are no longer drug addicts, who
12 are being trained the things they are doing wrong
13 towards their children and how to help their
14 children come back as good citizens, who are
15 interested in their education, who want a good
16 life.

17 And not to allow the people to have
18 Section 8 is a tragedy. This city -- and I was born
19 here in Philadelphia, raised in Philadelphia,
20 educated in Philadelphia.

21 And I am not going to talk about
22 Mayor Rendell, because he has been nice whenever I
23 asked him for anything. So I can't go against
24 someone who has tried to help.
25

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2 When people are upset and things are
3 going wrong, you lash out at everyone because you
4 don't know who is helping you.

5 And I will say that, Mrs. Blackwell,
6 I have to give her credit. Because she certainly
7 has been a woman with a big heart, who has tried to
8 help people.

9 And I think that people, you are
10 sitting here, and it upsets me. Because when it
11 rains, we don't have too many people going to the
12 polls.

13 If you ask yourself, did you
14 register? Did I vote? I vote all the time. And it
15 doesn't take much for you to go to the polls. I
16 don't care if it snowed tonight, I would go. I will
17 get to the polls.

18 But I would like to say to you, do
19 not destroy a good program.

20 When you walk around Philadelphia
21 today, you see people -- I used to come in the city
22 and be afraid to walk from one block to the other
23 because there were people sleeping on the sidewalk.
24 And it was the worst thing I had ever seen.

25 I seen it in Haiti, but I didn't

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1
2 expect it here.
3 Now, the little money that you spend
4 to help a person become a good citizen is far more
5 than it would cost you if you didn't help them.
6 Thank you. That's all I have to
7 say.
8 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very
9 much.
10 What part of the city do you live
11 in?
12 MS. BRIDGES: I live in West Mt.
13 Airy, but my place is out there on Parkside Avenue.
14 And it is a nice, clean building, and a building
15 that is well kept.
16 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Where about in
17 Parkside?
18 MS. BRIDGES: 41st and Parkside.
19 Right there at Parkside Avenue. My place is right
20 there on the corner.
21 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Thank you very much,
22 and for your expression of thoughts.
23 MS. CATHERINE CHAVIS: My name is
24 Catherine Chavis. And I want to thank you once
25 again for allowing me to be able to testify as

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2 President of the Catharine Street Tenants
3 Association on behalf of the tenants.
4 When I first moved to Philadelphia in
5 the early '60s, I thought this was going to be a
6 beautiful place for me to stay.
7 I was fortunate enough, at least I
8 put in my mind, to move to Catharine Street, which
9 is the Catharine Apartments. And they have always
10 been subsidized by the government.
11 They were built in 1971 for that
12 particular reason, to provide affordable, decent
13 housing for those who cannot afford to pay the
14 astronomical rents or even purchase a home. In
15 order to do these things, you must have a decent
16 job.
17 For years I had an excellent job,
18 until I was diagnosed about six years ago with an
19 incurable illness that I live with every day. They
20 have no cure for me. And I had to go on my
21 disability two years ago because I could no longer
22 work.
23 And now I am faced with the prospect
24 of becoming another status quo out here called
25 homeless.

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2 I don't think this is fair to me. I
3 don't think this is fair to my mother, who lives in
4 the same complex, by the way, who used to live at
5 Southwark Plaza Projects, which is at 4th and
6 Washington Avenue.

7 And back in 1982 they had garbage
8 piled up to the ceiling. My mother could not get
9 down out of the building; the elevators were not
10 running. They had no heat and no hot water in
11 there.

12 And me and my son would have to go up
13 and down those stairs in order to take food and
14 different things and make sure that she was okay.
15 And nobody should have to live like a dog.

16 I lived in the Midwest, and I am not
17 used to seeing this. I have lived in Los Angeles.
18 And even though there are poor people there, I had
19 never seen people sleep on the street in my life
20 before, until I moved to this supposed to be City of
21 Brotherly Love.

22 And it has become so frustrating and
23 so disgusting for me to look around and see.

24 And I say to people, if you have not
25 walked in these shoes, you don't even really know

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1 what it is all about.
2
3 When you wonder where your next meal
4 is going to come from, when you wonder how you are
5 going to pay your rent, you don't know what it is
6 like.
7 You have to have lived there. You
8 have to have been there before to understand what
9 everybody is saying about this Section 8 program.
10 It is an excellent program, but it
11 has to be monitored more closely.
12 Our landlord, I don't particularly
13 care for them, and they know that, because they
14 don't repair like they should.
15 And if you monitor and see what's
16 going on, then you wouldn't have the problem of them
17 funds being wasted.
18 I want to know -- I have asked the
19 question several times -- how can they send money to
20 Baltimore, Maryland, to some company, to a P.O. Box
21 number, and not know who this person is, and it is
22 being subsidized by HUD? This has been a real joke
23 to me.
24 Now, several years ago, back in 1994,
25 we were promised the Title 6 funds. The government

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1
2 reneged on that.

3 We have tried to go through the city,
4 because we need to have a letter from RDA, which the
5 person over there refuses to give to us, so we can
6 get subsidies from the state. But nobody seems to
7 want to help us.

8 Catharine Street Apartments is a
9 beautiful place. It is in the middle of Queen
10 Village, on Catharine Street. You can come in there
11 and see the apartments. The young women that live
12 in there take excellent care of their places.

13 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Who is your district
14 Councilperson?

15 MS. CHAVIS: Frank DiCicco, who has
16 turned his back totally on us. Okay?

17 I have asked that man many times,
18 many times, since he has taken over, would he help.

19 Congressman Foglietta is the only one
20 from that area who has really been by my side. And
21 I have spoken to Councilwoman Blackwell, and she has
22 tried to assist where she could, also.

23 Senator Fumo has not helped, either.
24 Okay? Our help came, like over the years, from
25 Congressman Foglietta.

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2 And, you know, through all this,
3 since our dreams have been shattered, we have been
4 offered these vouchers and these Section 8
5 certificates, and they tell us, "Well, you can get
6 another place to live."

7 If the real estate people don't
8 consider you as being a viable asset to their
9 business, they will not rent to you. So why do we
10 have to live in deplorable places?

11 CHAIRMAN COHEN: May I make a
12 suggestion to you?

13 There were four Councilmembers at
14 large that attended these hearings, Councilwoman
15 Fernandez, Councilman Ortiz, myself Councilman
16 Cohen, and Councilman Kenney.

17 Each one of us has jurisdiction over
18 that area as a Councilman-at-Large. We generally
19 don't get into the specifics within a district, but
20 our offices are always available for assistance.

21 MS. CHAVIS: Okay. I have sent --

22 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I suggest you write
23 to all four of us, you know, with the same letter,
24 just make copies of it, send it to the four of us.

25 MS. CHAVIS: I want to say

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2 something. I have done that before. I have sent to
3 just about everybody here in City Council to let
4 them know what was going on in Catharine Street.
5 And there has been no response.

6 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Don't just let us
7 know; ask for help.

8 MS. CHAVIS: Well, I did. I asked
9 for help. I asked for help. I told them everything
10 that was going on in Catharine Street.

11 It is a small unit. It is only 32
12 apartments. You would think it was over 2,000
13 apartments.

14 There are seniors in there who cannot
15 afford to go anywhere. There are seniors who are
16 sick and disabled. They are comfortable in that
17 neighborhood. Why should they be forced to go
18 somewhere and they have no transportation?

19 CHAIRMAN COHEN: I think you are
20 right. That's the reason I am making suggestions.

21 MS. CHAVIS: Well, I would like to
22 see you so I can get your phone numbers and
23 addresses again. And I will send another copy.

24 And I have no problem coming to your
25 office, either. Because, like I said, I tried to

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2 one copy, but I will bring another one.
3 Thanks a million for your time. And
4 I know you are going to turn this program around.
5 Because you don't want to see all of us living in
6 here.
7 CHAIRMAN COHEN: Very good.
8 MS. CHAVIS: Have a good day.
9 CHAIRMAN COHEN: That concludes the
10 hearings for today.
11 The hearing of the Law and Government
12 and Licenses and Inspections Committee on Resolution
13 970558 is hereby continued until Wednesday, January
14 28, at 10:00 a.m.
15 There being no further testimony, the
16 session is in recess until that date.
17 (Public Hearing adjourned at 1:10
18 p.m.)
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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of Tuesday, December 9, 1997, were
reported fully and accurately by me, and that this
is a correct transcript of same.

RE: COMMITTEES ON LAW AND GOVERNMENT and
LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

DEBRA A. WHITEHEAD, RPR