

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, November 19, 2019
2:28 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

RESOLUTION 181014 - Resolution calling for the
Council Committee of the Whole to convene
public meetings and public hearings pursuant
to the Educational Supplement of the
Philadelphia Home Rule Charter...

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
3 afternoon. We're going to get started.
4 Thank you.

5 This is the public meeting and
6 the hearing called to order. I recognize
7 the presence of Councilmembers -
8 Councilmember Blackwell, Parker, Domb,
9 Greenlee, Gym, Taubenberger, Jones, and
10 Bass. Thank you all very much.

11 This public meeting and hearing
12 of the Council, of the Board of
13 Education, and the Mayor are for the
14 purpose of coordinating our activities
15 for the improvement and the benefit of
16 public education in Philadelphia, as
17 required by Section 12-209 of the Home
18 Rule Charter and Council Resolution
19 181014.

20 Mr. Christmas, can you please
21 read the title of the resolution.

22 THE CLERK: Calling for the
23 Council Committee of the Whole to convene
24 public meetings and public hearings
25 pursuant to the Educational Supplement of

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2 the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter to
3 review the administration, management,
4 operations, and finances of the School
5 District and adopt plans to coordinate
6 the activities of the Board of Education,
7 the Mayor, and the City Council for the
8 improvement and benefit of public
9 education in Philadelphia.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11 Thank you, sir.

12 Seated here with me today are
13 Mayor James Kenney; the Board of
14 Education President, Joyce Wilkerson;
15 Board Vice President, Wayne Walker;
16 School Superintendent, Dr. William Hite;
17 Board members Julia Danzy, Leticia
18 Egea-Hinton -- I'm sorry. Mr. Christmas
19 gave me a briefing prior to and I still
20 figured out a way to screw that up. I'm
21 sorry -- Mallory Fix Lopez, Lee Huang,
22 Maria McColgan, Chris McGinley, and
23 Angela McIver.

24 I would like to welcome you all
25 here today for our partnership meeting

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2 and our public hearing.

3 Today's agenda will go as
4 follows: First, Mayor Kenney will be
5 recognized for remarks, then the Board
6 President, Joyce Wilkerson, will be
7 recognized for the purpose of introducing
8 Board members and the Superintendent.

9 The Board will make a presentation on its
10 key accomplishments in the 2018-2019
11 school year, and Dr. Hite will then
12 present on the District's major
13 accomplishments in 2018-2019. We will
14 then have questions and comments from the
15 Councilmembers, followed by public
16 testimony and adjournment.

17 Thank you very much for your
18 participation. This continues to be a
19 good day for the City of Philadelphia and
20 its ability to have local control over
21 its School District. So I want to thank
22 everybody who participated in that very
23 significant process. I particularly want
24 to thank my good friend Councilwoman
25 Jannie Blackwell who pushed that way, way

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2 back when nobody thought it was possible.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
4 you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
6 Thank you, Councilwoman.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
8 you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: At
10 this point, I would like to recognize our
11 Mayor, James Kenney.

12 MAYOR KENNEY: Thank you very
13 much.

14 Good afternoon, everyone, and I
15 want to thank you, Council President
16 Clarke and members of City Council, for
17 the opportunity to speak today alongside
18 members of our Board of Education and
19 leadership of the School District of
20 Philadelphia at this biannual meeting
21 supported by the Education Supplement of
22 the Home Rule Charter.

23 This meeting is a reminder of
24 how many people already are willing to
25 come together to create a better

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2 education system for all of our kids. We
3 know that their success and our city's
4 success depend on it.

5 It's up to us, the adults in
6 the room, to put our minds and resources
7 together to ensure that our kids have the
8 quality education that they deserve. I
9 want to thank everyone here today for
10 their commitment to this shared cause.

11 Over the last several years, we
12 have made great progress in establishing
13 stability for the District and setting
14 the stage for progress. Our
15 Administration, with the support of City
16 Council, allocated \$1.2 billion in
17 General Fund contributions to the School
18 District over five years. This is over
19 \$700 million in new contributions because
20 of the commitment we all made last year.

21 This funding has helped our
22 schools to build upon the progress
23 they've made under the leadership of
24 Superintendent Dr. William Hite and his
25 team. The School District has doubled

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2 the number of high-performing schools in
3 Philadelphia since 2014. And in
4 September, the U.S. Department of
5 Education recognized two Philadelphia
6 public schools among this year's National
7 Blue Ribbon Schools, a distinction that
8 goes to less than one percent of schools
9 nationwide.

10 With the additional funding
11 from the City, the District's financial
12 outlook is stronger too, enabling the
13 Board to vote last month to authorize
14 borrowing \$500 million for more capital
15 improvements to our school buildings.

16 The well-being of our students
17 and staff is a priority that we all
18 share, and we'll continue to work with
19 the District as they invest in our
20 facilities to bring them into the 21st
21 century after decades of disinvestment
22 and devastating cuts.

23 In addition to new funding and
24 stable finances, our partnerships are
25 stronger than ever. When we began the

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process of returning schools to local control two years ago, one of the many benefits we anticipated was a stronger, collaborative relationship between the City and the School District and better alignment of services to our city's children.

I'm pleased that the work we do together has generated so many opportunities for children and families. For example, earlier this year, DHS put out a \$23 million RFP for out-of-school-time programs that align with the District's goals. Thanks to the unified vision behind the funding opportunity, today there are quality OST programs in schools and community sites that add tremendous value to our children's academic experiences and contribute to their personal growth.

In addition, the City's PHLpreK program has helped over 6,000 children prepare for kindergarten and benefit from the District's targeted investments in

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early literacy. Together, we've also established 17 community schools, serving nearly 10,000 children and their families. These schools address barriers to attendance and promote strong family and community engagement through expanded services, including OST, adult education, arts and culture events, and more. And a partnership between the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, Drexel University, and the School District has brought the STEP Support Program into 22 schools, each receiving a licensed social worker and three behavioral health specialists to support children and connect them to appropriate services. The District and DBH are now working together to restructure behavioral health services in all our schools as soon as the next school year.

The City's Office of Workforce Development and the District's High School Office are also partnering to

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create a robust career-connected learning system. This system will support the District's plan to ensure that all high school students can engage in real-world experiences that expose, prepare, and connect them to in-demand careers.

The City and District jointly released an RFP to inform the design of a system that will make it easier for students to connect to the jobs and for employers to connect to the schools.

We've also continued to build civic engagement and public support for our schools. Through the Philadelphia Reading Coaches program, hundreds of residents have volunteered their time to read one on one with young students and develop their confidence and enjoyment as readers. And this year marked the fund for the School District of Philadelphia's second annual Dress Down Philly Public Schools fundraising event as well as the inaugural Philly Homecoming Weekend for District Alumni.

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2 Looking ahead, we are going to
3 double down on our progress through new
4 initiatives and greater collaboration
5 amongst the City, the School District,
6 and the post-secondary partners like our
7 Community College of Philadelphia. Today
8 we can ensure that all children have
9 access to great schools in their
10 neighborhood. When all our students
11 succeed, our city thrives and becomes a
12 better place to live, work, and play.

13 Our Administration has made
14 education a top priority over the last
15 four years, and we're still committed to
16 that vision for our city.

17 I'm very grateful to City
18 Council and our city's residents for
19 joining us and, quote, being part of the
20 District's progress, end quote, and look
21 forward to our continued work together.
22 I'm especially grateful to our dedicated
23 teachers, counselors, nurses, support
24 staff, administrators, and OST and pre-K
25 providers who are on the ground every day

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2 providing quality education, engaging
3 environments, and valuable services for
4 our kids.

5 Similarly, I want to thank our
6 partners including PFT, SEIU 32BJ, and
7 CASA for their leadership on behalf of
8 students and staff. The same goes for
9 our School Board members, including
10 President Joyce Wilkerson, who are
11 dedicated to strengthening our entire
12 system of public schools, including
13 District-run and District charter
14 schools.

15 We are also fortunate to have a
16 local legislative delegation and a
17 Governor who are committed to improving
18 our education system. As I've said many
19 times, our children deserve every
20 opportunity to reach their God-given
21 potential, and I believe our combined
22 efforts will continue the meaningful
23 progress we have made over the last few
24 years.

25 Last week I met our two new

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2 School Board student reps, Doha Ibrahim
3 from Abraham Lincoln High School and
4 Imere Williams from Boys Latin of
5 Philadelphia Charter School. I was blown
6 away by how bright and how passionate
7 they are about serving their fellow
8 students.

9 While this may not seem like a
10 big deal, it is in the context of where
11 we were just two years ago this week when
12 the SRC voted to disband. Now we have a
13 more robust and diverse Board with
14 student voices at the table.

15 Everything that we are working
16 to achieve is for our students, and I am
17 proud that they are part of the important
18 decisions being made around their
19 education. They deserve all of the
20 resources and supports that we can
21 provide and then some more. And I'm
22 looking forward to continuing to work
23 alongside members of City Council, the
24 School District, and the Board, who are
25 equally committed to our students.

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As many of you know, I've been in over 200 school visits since becoming Mayor. I always say it's my favorite part of my day and favorite part of my job, and that's the truth. When I think back of what I've learned from kids from these visits, it's really simple. Our kids are perfect. They're smart and they're talented, and they deserve all the resources and supports that we can provide to them.

So I'm very proud to work along with members of City Council, the School District, and the Board, who are equally committed to our students. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you to accelerate our progress and ensure we have quality public schools in every neighborhood. And I sincerely want to thank all involved, City Council, the Board of Education, Dr. Hite, his staff, Council President, our Philadelphia delegation, and Governor Wolf for all of the attention and help they are bringing

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2 to this very, very important task.

3 We still are a very poor city,
4 and the only way out of poverty is
5 education, and I think we all understand
6 that and agree to that, and we need to
7 support and fund our education in order
8 to make -- our education system in order
9 to make it effective.

10 So thank you, Mr. President,
11 for allowing me to be here today.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and thank you for
14 your continued commitment throughout this
15 process, and I fully anticipate an even
16 stronger commitment as we move ahead.

17 At this time, I would like to
18 recognize the Chair of the Board, Joyce
19 Wilkerson, the President.

20 MS. WILKERSON: Good afternoon.
21 Thank you, Council President Clarke and
22 members of City Council for hosting us
23 here today and for your ongoing support
24 and unprecedented financial support.

25 Mayor Kenney, thank you for

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2 your continuous support and for being
3 here with us this afternoon.

4 I will be recognizing the
5 Councilmembers as they make their
6 presentations and will be taking it out
7 of order -- I'm sorry; Board members.
8 Nothing personal -- and taking it out of
9 sequence. Board members are volunteers
10 and they have day jobs that they have to
11 go to, and so we'll be doing our Student
12 Achievement presentations first so they
13 can get back to their jobs.

14 I also want to express
15 gratitude to all of you for your support.
16 We know that a strong public education
17 system requires the commitment of the
18 entire Philadelphia community, and could
19 not be possible without the leadership
20 and support from every person in this
21 room. We want to thank everyone here for
22 your tremendous support for Philadelphia
23 schools.

24 Today we as a Board will take a
25 few moments to share about the work we've

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2 done over the last year and to focus on
3 our time ahead. We'll then turn it over
4 to our Superintendent, Dr. Hite, to
5 provide key updates on the work at the
6 School District.

7 And I'm going to jump ahead to
8 the Student Achievement Committee. The
9 Board has four committees - a Policy
10 Committee, a Public Participation
11 Committee, a Finance and Facilities
12 Committee, and a Student Achievement
13 Committee, and the Student Achievement
14 Committee is chaired by Drs. Angela
15 McIver and Chris McGinley, and so I'll
16 turn it over to them.

17 DR. MCGINLEY: Thank you.

18 The Student Achievement
19 Committee is always driven by looking at
20 how well we are doing to serve the
21 children of the City, and since September
22 2018, the Student Achievement and Support
23 Committee has held 18 hours of public
24 meetings and has discussed in depth 27
25 topics, including early literacy, teacher

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2 recruitment and retention, the curriculum
3 engine and instructional core, the
4 comprehensive District-wide plan, the
5 Every Student Succeeds Act,
6 recommendations for the '19-'20 school
7 year and the 2020-'21 school year
8 calendar, multicultural programs and
9 curriculum, comprehensive school
10 improvement, and additional targeted
11 supports and improvements, and the
12 planning process. We've also examined
13 special education programs and
14 initiatives. And the Student Achievement
15 Committee in the remaining months of this
16 year is focusing on the impact of our
17 athletic programs, our extracurricular
18 activities, and out-of-school
19 partnership.

20 In addition to focusing on the
21 traditional public schools, we spent a
22 great deal of time dealing with or
23 working with the authorization of charter
24 schools, and that is quite a
25 time-consuming process.

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2 Before the Board takes action
3 on major expenditures, the Student
4 Achievement Committee reviews the intent
5 and purpose of the proposed expenditures
6 before the item is forwarded to the full
7 Board for consideration.

8 DR. McIVER: Thank you.

9 So another big piece of the
10 Board is transparency and accessibility
11 and want it to feel different to the
12 public. So that is a big goal. We have
13 invested a significant amount of time and
14 energy into this, and in this role, we've
15 held 61 public meetings, four committees,
16 developed four committees, launched
17 social media campaigns to provide more
18 accessibility and transparency, and
19 introduced a new board management system,
20 and a big piece is the new Community
21 Advisory Council. We believe that our
22 work depends on building public trust,
23 and we are working very hard to earn
24 this.

25 MS. WILKERSON: Thank you.

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2 We'll now go back to the
3 pre-established sequence. Dr. Julia
4 Danzy is one of our co-chairs of our
5 Public Participation and Public
6 Engagement Committee and she's going to
7 be speaking next.

8 MS. DANZY: As the Mayor spoke
9 earlier, we have, for the first time,
10 have students on our Board, and we are
11 incredibly proud. Our student Board
12 representatives have performed for the
13 Board. Last year our student Board
14 representatives, Julia Frank and Alfredo
15 Practico, committed to going to where the
16 students were. They attended school
17 visits, choosing schools in a variety of
18 different neighborhoods across the City,
19 and in fact, in some of our most
20 contentious votes that we had to take,
21 they were the ones that went out there to
22 talk with the students to find out what
23 was their opinion on what was what,
24 particularly as it related to how they
25 come in and our security mechanism.

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This year's students, Doha Ibrahim and Imere Williams, will not only continue this work, but hope to expand upon it to include such things as increasing voter registration. We have a great emphasis on the civic responsibility of our students.

Partnering with the District on the work they are doing around establishing a mentorship program and safe spaces for students, and ensuring all students have access to library cards, to name a few.

It is the commitment of the Board of Education to give our student representatives the space and place to use their voices where they believe most important. Not only has it been an honor to serve with these young people, we have also been proud to learn that Philadelphia's a leader in having students serving with the Board.

We have shared about the work of our students, whether it's of the cities and districts, hoping to replicate

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2 this structure. And I must say it has
3 really been an honor. We have been
4 impressed with them, and it just
5 reinforces how well and how good students
6 we have out in our School District.

7 MS. WILKERSON: Thank you, Ms.
8 Danzy.

9 Our next presentation is by Lee
10 Huang, who is co-chair of our Finance and
11 Facilities Committee.

12 MR. HUANG: Thank you, Madam
13 President.

14 A core priority of the Board is
15 transparency. To increase the
16 transparency and enhance access to our
17 work, we established four Board
18 committees that meet in public so hot
19 topics and critical decisions can be
20 presented and discussed in public before
21 we take action on them at our regular
22 action meetings.

23 Committee meetings have also
24 given us a chance to have increased
25 dialogue with those who attend. Unlike

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2 at action meetings, committee meetings
3 can be a more informal space where
4 speakers' questions can be answered and
5 discussed on the spot.

6 While we have much learning to
7 do, committees have served as our main
8 tool for engaging with the many
9 challenges facing the District.

10 We also started our time
11 together listening and learning from the
12 community in a Board listening tour.
13 From these meetings, four clear
14 priorities became clear, which are now
15 the four priorities that have guided our
16 work to date, and these are student
17 achievement, transparency and
18 accessibility, one system of quality
19 schools, and financial stability. These
20 priorities guided our work last year and
21 allowed us to focus our energy.

22 MS. WILKERSON: I confess to
23 have gotten everything out of sequence.

24 We'll now hear from Ms.
25 Egea-Hinton on fiscal stability,

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2 financial stability.

3 MS. EGEA-HINTON: I am one of
4 the co-chairs of the Finance and
5 Facilities Committee. In the end, none
6 of our goals will be possible without
7 maintaining our financial stability. We
8 have to find new ways to invest in
9 schools and make sure we're using money
10 wisely. Our fourth and final priority is
11 maintaining that financial stability.

12 We have used our Finance and
13 Facilities Committee as an opportunity to
14 educate the public on various topics,
15 which include facilities maintenance, the
16 five-year budget, as well as charter
17 financing. We have also requested and
18 received reports from the District on
19 lead paint stabilization, plaster repair
20 projects, design and construction
21 projects, environmental remediation, as
22 well as major updates such as salary
23 increases for the 32BJ employees,
24 Guaranteed Energy Savings Agreement
25 Project, the review of surplus

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2 properties, planning for relocation of
3 the Science Leadership Academy and Ben
4 Franklin High School, construction
5 changes in terms of the process for
6 ordering, inclement weather planning,
7 planning for the new school on Ryan
8 Avenue, and updates on the potential
9 sales of the Whittier and Belmont
10 buildings.

11 We have done things like write
12 op-eds and go on radio shows to reach a
13 wider audience on the Board's business
14 related to District finances and
15 encourage parents particularly and family
16 members to have an active role in the
17 budget process, which they have had, and
18 hopefully this year will continue to do
19 the same.

20 MS. WILKERSON: Thank you.

21 I'll now ask Ms. Fix Lopez to
22 present Dr. McColgan's portion.
23 Dr. McColgan is not here. She ends up
24 commuting from her job in South Jersey,
25 and it's just a real commitment and a

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2 challenge for her to make all these
3 events.

4 So Ms. Fix Lopez.

5 MS. LOPEZ: So we're going to
6 do a comprehension check first, because
7 we're going to jump back to the beginning
8 and do a quick overview of what we talked
9 about and then I'll go forward. That
10 sounds like a teacher, right?

11 Okay. So I'm Mallory Fix
12 Lopez, co-chair of the District
13 Partnership and Community Engagement
14 Committee. Before we go forward, I want
15 to make sure that we're all aware of what
16 we have accomplished in 2018-19 and then
17 we'll take a look forward.

18 So we brought student voice
19 directly to the Board of Education. This
20 year and last we ran a citywide
21 application process to select two student
22 Board member representatives, which
23 you've already heard about. And from
24 that, you've already heard about our four
25 committees. The one committee, as

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2 President Wilkerson said, that we haven't
3 heard about yet is the Policy Committee.
4 Since my script has changed completely,
5 let me find it.

6 So priority number three is --
7 Dr. McColgan is the chair of this
8 committee, which is Policy. So one thing
9 we have heard again and again is that
10 parents, teachers, and community members
11 don't care about the differences between
12 District schools and charter schools.
13 They just want their children to have
14 equitable access to good schools. Even
15 though our role as a governing body is
16 different between charter and District
17 schools, we have to see this as one
18 system of schools and make choices that
19 allow every child to have access to
20 quality schools. That requires a focus
21 on quality access and funding.

22 So through the Policy
23 Committee, we are working to adopt
24 policies that create one unified system
25 of quality education. Our Policy

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Committee has reviewed 49 policies to be recommended to the full Board for adoption. And this committee is committed to reviewing each of the existing policies to assure that all Board policies are current, streamlined, and readily available. And we have quarterly meetings to review the Board policy manual and provide recommendations to the full Board.

Before adopting any recommended policies, the Board had the opportunity to hear from stakeholders at least three times, at the committee meeting when the policy was on the agenda for its first reading and when the policy was on the agenda for its second reading.

Through the process, we heard a variety of stakeholders whose input and feedback was an integral part of our review. And looking ahead, this committee will continue to review Board policy manual and receive periodic updates on the implementation of policies

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2 to ensure we are using the four Board
3 priorities to drive our work.

4 And so looking forward, one
5 of -- looking at the key priorities for
6 2019-2020, which is what we're spending a
7 lot of our time on and really excited
8 about, as we look ahead of the year to
9 come, we are focusing on building on all
10 that we have learned and done. We are
11 proud of the work that we have
12 accomplished in our first year in these
13 roles, but I know we believe that we can
14 all do more. And so this upcoming year,
15 we will be working to narrow our goals
16 and elevate conversations about student
17 achievement. At the same time, you can
18 expect to hear us getting louder as
19 advocates for a revised charter school
20 law that focuses on supporting quality
21 charter schools. And we will be out
22 widening our reach through the work of
23 our Parent and Community Advisory
24 Council. This Council is new. One of
25 the things we did this year was spend a

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lot of time on thinking about how we're going to use that Council for a wider reach. An example would be we had a meeting last week with our Council. They brought feedback from the community, and it happened to be that we were also visiting school that week. So it was kind of a nice collective process.

Upcoming we'll be going out with the Council more to talk about policy and get feedback on policy from the community, as well as once we have goals, going out to the community to get feedback as well with our Councilmembers.

And, finally, and this will be the topic of Dr. Hite's testimony, we have been deeply concerned by the unexpected and unacceptable environmental challenges facing our facilities.

Dr. Hite will be talking to you today about a plan for addressing these concerns, and we as a Board will be holding the District accountable for sticking to the plan and making sure that

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2 it works.

3 MS. WILKERSON: Thank you.

4 And expanding on the work of
5 the policy, the Council, is Vice
6 President Wayne Walker.

7 MR. WALKER: Thank you, Madam
8 President.

9 We recognize that we serve and
10 represent a vast number of communities.
11 In accordance with the Home Rule Charter
12 and in order to increase our connection
13 to diverse communities, we established a
14 Parent and Advisory Council. This
15 Council consists of 12 community members
16 from across Philadelphia, and they come
17 from a wide array of backgrounds,
18 parents, charter and District schools,
19 former educators, teachers, community
20 advisors.

21 This year these Council members
22 have been out in their communities
23 sharing information about matters that
24 come before the Board, and they bring key
25 information back to Board members. We

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2 are grateful for the dedication of these
3 individuals and look forward to
4 continuing to grow their work.

5 MS. WILKERSON: Thank you, Vice
6 President Walker.

7 We have upcoming meetings that
8 we invite the public to attend. They're
9 listed there on the board. And with
10 that, we invite you to those meetings,
11 and now I'll turn the floor over to
12 Dr. Hite.

13 DR. HITE: Thank you, Madam
14 President.

15 Good afternoon, Mayor Kenney,
16 Council President Clarke, Councilmembers,
17 Board President Wilkerson, and all of the
18 other Board members. Thank you for the
19 work that you do. And I think it goes
20 without saying that -- and Joyce talked
21 about it already, but the commitment that
22 this group of individuals has made as
23 Board members is greatly appreciated and
24 an example of individuals who are serving
25 a pretty significant and very important

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civic role. So I thank you for all of
the time and energy that you put in to
helping us address all of the issues and
challenges that face us.

Thank you again for the
opportunity to talk about the School
District and, importantly, about the
conditions of our schools. We've made
some progress. The challenges we're
facing and what we can and will do better
and differently is what I plan to talk
about today. I'm also going to add where
we need everyone's help.

So to begin, we're in the midst
of a transformation. Seven years we've
transformed from a state of financial
crisis, school closings, massive layoffs
in key areas, including operations,
minimal capital investments to buildings
we know are on average more than 70 years
old and in dire need of repair. We
transformed from that set of
circumstances to a district that is
making steady progress, academic

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achievement is increasing, doubled the
number of highest performing schools, and
cut in half the number of schools
performing at the lowest quartile.

Schools are being recognized as
national leaders. We had seven Blue
Ribbon schools in that time period -
Hill-Freedman, Penn Alexander, Meredith,
McCall, Greenfield, Carver, and
Greenberg. We've earned an investment
grade financial rating for the first time
since 1977, and we have made strategic
investments to begin restoring critical
staff levels, staffing levels, in some of
the most important areas. We've added
1,700 teachers, counselors, behavioral
health staff, nurses.

We have also made steady
progress to improve conditions in our
schools. We've invested nearly 400
million to renovate classrooms and
modernize basic building infrastructure
since 2014;

Completed a number of major

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2 construction projects, including a \$39
3 million renovation at Dobbins High
4 School, a new livestock center at Saul
5 High School, and continued renovations at
6 Solis Cohen and Wilson Schools;

7 Spent 23 million over the last
8 five years to complete asbestos-related
9 projects in schools, including over 1,400
10 in the last 16 months alone.

11 We've added 112 new cleaning
12 positions and implemented more rigorous
13 cleaning standards, and with local
14 dollars -- and we thank Council for that
15 and additional funding from the state --
16 we fully stabilized lead paint in 32
17 elementary schools, certified another 13
18 as lead safe, and will certify another 26
19 schools by the end of the year and begin
20 the full painting and stabilization at
21 five additional schools during the
22 holiday break.

23 While I acknowledge the
24 improvements we have made, I want to be
25 very clear that what we have done to date

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is not enough. We have made some major mistakes, have fallen short on my expectations in key areas, and have not fully confronted many of the challenges we have faced.

Our students, our staffs, our families, and our Philadelphia community deserve better, and we can and will do better going forward.

Our challenges are not excuses, but rather they are a context in which we all must work to create better conditions.

Some of our largest challenges include old buildings. The average age of the School District's 300 buildings is 70 years old, and we have not invested the money needed for preventative maintenance over the last 15-plus years to keep them in good working order. We have 4.5 billion in diverted maintenance costs.

Tight labor and contractor markets, construction is booming in the

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City and the strong economy in Philadelphia has in some cases limited our ability to recruit skilled painters, electricians, plumbers, steamfitters, and other key trades, and it limits our access to the expert contractors that we need to manage our 220 school buildings.

Under staffing, the scope and quantity of capital projects we are managing has increased dramatically. Since 2012 and through 2018, we average below \$100 million a year in capital spending. In 2018-19, we budgeted 406 million for capital projects, and our staffing levels have not kept pace with this renewed capital growth.

The mistakes we have made have exacerbated our challenges and led to a loss of trust in our ability to provide clean, safe, and welcoming buildings.

We have not filled existing vacancies with urgency and focus, leaving us even more lagging in capacity. We have been reactive and not proactive on

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strategic and responding to issues -- on
strategy and responding to issues, too
often waiting for multiple complaints
before confirming, prioritizing, and
doing needed work.

Our communications to school
leaders, staff, families, and the public
has been inconsistent, incomplete, slow,
and has not included input from the
community. We have not consistently
completed work with a high degree of
attention to detail or quality assurance,
and we have been slow to develop
contingency plans for situations where
there could be potential disruptions.

I know the challenges and
mistakes have made many question our
commitment and our ability to do what's
needed to make all schools clean, safe,
and welcoming, but I am here to make that
commitment as a leader of this District
and explain our plan to address our
challenges, fix our mistakes, and do the
work needed to make schools clean, safe,

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2 and welcoming.

3 The School District has now
4 launched earlier, with the assistance --
5 thank you, Councilwoman Bass and
6 Councilwoman Gym for being present. We
7 launched earlier today an Environmental
8 Safety Improvement Plan that will
9 accelerate the improvement of
10 environmental conditions in our schools
11 by focusing on three critical areas -
12 staffing and capacity, processes and
13 protocols, and communications.

14 Our goal is to make sure every
15 school is clean, safe, and welcoming. As
16 initial actions toward our goal, we have
17 begun implementing the following:

18 We've increased the executive
19 management of operation's functional
20 areas by dividing Operations Department
21 into two functional areas so that each
22 get the attention it needs.

23 We've engaged the District
24 Management Group, an organization that
25 helps school districts implement proven

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2 management techniques to create
3 measurable, sustainable improvements,
4 including interim recommendations
5 regarding organizational structure and
6 span of control.

7 We significantly expanded
8 resources to manage asbestos-related
9 issues, with the goal of eliminating the
10 current backlog of asbestos-related work
11 orders by the start of the 2020-2021 and
12 responding more quickly to new work order
13 requests.

14 We plan to hire additional
15 District abatement staff, response
16 coordinators, a compliance director,
17 project managers, and communications
18 support, hire additional certified
19 asbestos abatement companies and testing
20 firms.

21 We want to strengthen our
22 semi-annual AHERA inspections, and those
23 will now immediately report any imminent
24 hazards immediately to the Office of
25 Environmental Management Services for

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2 follow-up within 24 hours.

3 We plan to create and support a
4 hotline to enable staff to immediately
5 report any environmental concerns. We
6 will evaluate any report of suspected
7 asbestos material within 24 hours and
8 provide a report to the building
9 principal and person reporting the
10 concern.

11 We plan to have our facility
12 area coordinators -- this is happening
13 right now -- and building engineers and
14 principals complete refresher programs on
15 asbestos risk, identification, and
16 reporting processes.

17 Through January, we have --
18 we're going to have every facility area
19 coordinator partner with their principals
20 to conduct an inspection of every school
21 to identify any potential environmental
22 safety concerns. And we'll retain an
23 environmental consultant -- we've already
24 done this, by the way -- to review the
25 environmental scope of construction

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2 projects currently underway and, if
3 necessary, make recommendations to expand
4 the scope to include additional abatement
5 activities.

6 We also plan to hire a program
7 management firm to provide comprehensive
8 project management, design and
9 construction management services, and
10 communications support for the School
11 District's upcoming \$500 million capital
12 program, and form an advisory board made
13 up of the PFT, local trade unions,
14 medical professionals, City Health
15 Department officials, university and
16 health system facility professionals,
17 parents, teachers, and students to review
18 our efforts and identify areas for
19 improvement.

20 In the communications space, we
21 want to engage internationally recognized
22 asbestos expert Dr. Arthur Frank to help
23 educate staff and community with facts
24 about asbestos; develop and follow a
25 discipline process to more proactively

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communicate with any school where design construction and/or any environmental initiatives are planned; and make all school-based environmental test results beyond the current AHERA-related reports available on the District's website and include user-friendly guides on how to read the reports and the results.

We want to proactively engage school communities in the process of identifying and vetting relocation sites whenever an issue requires school relocation.

The Environmental Safety Improvement Plan is supported by the recent borrow of \$500 million for capital work. The funds will support more than 200 capital improvement projects across 141 schools; the construction of three new school buildings - Cassidy, T.M. Peirce, and a new K-8 school on Ryan Avenue; and asbestos remediation and rapid response supports for these capital projects.

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2 As I wrap up, our facilities
3 challenges cannot be quickly or easily
4 solved, and we cannot solve them alone.
5 We need your continued support of the
6 District to implement this plan for the
7 benefit of the children, families, and
8 staff we all serve.

9 I'm committed to have regular,
10 ongoing conversations with you and the
11 public about our progress on this plan.

12 So with that, that concludes my
13 remarks and turn it back over to Council
14 President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16 Sorry for multitasking. Every now and
17 then you got to do more than two, three
18 things at once.

19 Thank you. Thank you very much
20 and, again, thank you so much for your
21 commitment. At this point in time, I
22 would like to ask any members who may
23 have questions of members of the School
24 Board and Dr. Hite.

25 At this point, I recognize

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2 Councilman Jones.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
4 Mr. President and members of the School
5 Board, and thank you for your dedication.
6 I think the salaries are a little high
7 for School Board members, but we'll deal
8 with that during the budget.

9 I guess I'll start with where
10 we are on abatement of some of the
11 environmental issues since you ended with
12 that. I asked this question offline.
13 I'm going to ask it online.

14 Will the new effort to abate
15 some of the hazards within the School
16 District impede upon the regular capital
17 improvement plan that you have that has
18 been on the books for years?

19 DR. HITE: No. The regular
20 capital programs must move forward.
21 These abatement efforts are in addition
22 to those things. And where we can do
23 those things as part of the regular
24 capital program is important, but it's
25 not either/or. We have to do both, and

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2 the asbestos work is in addition to and
3 in some cases as part of those current
4 projects. And so the current projects
5 will still move, and in addition, we have
6 to do these critically important
7 abatement efforts both for asbestos and
8 lead.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: So if I
10 understand your response correctly, if we
11 can manage to do this new project and
12 then abate that, that will be considered
13 because of the cost-effective nature of
14 that?

15 DR. HITE: Yes, absolutely.
16 Absolutely. And we are -- and just to
17 expand on it, a part of our new process
18 includes making sure that we are planning
19 and analyzing for any type of hazardous
20 materials as a part of any new project,
21 and so that becomes a normal part of the
22 process moving forward. And so, yes, it
23 doesn't stop important capital plans that
24 we already have in place, but it is in
25 addition to.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Segue a
3 little bit and asking this question. If
4 I heard your testimony -- I listen with
5 my good ear often. If I turn my ear the
6 other way, I'm not listening. But what I
7 heard you say was that the addition of
8 social workers and those staffers that we
9 did not have for a period of time of
10 crisis, we are now hiring. Has that
11 improved climate within our schools?

12 DR. HITE: Yeah, it actually
13 has. I mean, and we are -- and we also
14 are recognizing that -- a couple of
15 points I think that are really important.
16 And we used to have the distinction, the
17 unfortunate distinction in Philadelphia,
18 of having more persistently dangerous
19 schools than any in the Commonwealth, so
20 much so that I think there was an Office
21 of Safe Schools that was actually
22 stationed in the School District
23 headquarters.

24 We're in the fifth year in a
25 row where we have no persistently

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dangerous schools now, but our efforts
have turned more to how do we help
children who are experiencing trauma and
how do we equip educators with the
ability to not only recognize that
trauma, but have the types of tools in
order to address those issues. And so
we're in the midst of training
individuals around restorative practices.
We've worked with Behavioral Health to
determine where we put social workers,
but the whole point is to look at how do
we align and integrate resources that are
available both at the District level and
at the City level so that we're able to
respond more generally to those efforts.

I will also add that we just
also added an individual and it's the
former Deputy Commissioner. It's Kevin
Bethel, who is now over our school safety
operations, and he is going -- his work
since he left the force, since he left
the Philadelphia Police Department, has
really been on focusing on how we

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2 actually disrupt the school-to-prison
3 pipeline and how we think about other
4 ways to engage with young people, and he
5 is starting that work in the District
6 right now.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So he's one
8 of our co-chairs on the Special Committee
9 for Criminal Justice Reform. So you
10 should have led with that, because that's
11 like saying we just got TO and he's going
12 to be on our Eagles team. That's how
13 impactful I think it will be.

14 Finally, and I'll end with
15 this, I'm excited about newly
16 Councilperson-elect Katherine Gilmore,
17 because she's talked about in her
18 campaign literature and dialogues after
19 that that she's dealing with conflict
20 resolution.

21 Talk to me about how all of
22 those things -- are we going to consider
23 doing a conflict resolution course within
24 the public school system?

25 DR. HITE: Yeah. We have quite

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a few programs around conflict resolution now. It's generally at many of the elementary schools, but, I mean, we have to think about how do we train individuals to do that. And we do a lot of restorative practices with the older children, but a lot of conflict resolution and positive behavior interventions at the elementary schools, and we just have to get better at making that a part of what we do more naturally as opposed to an add-on or something. It should be a part of what children experience in a classroom on a regular basis and to teach them how to resolve conflict in ways that don't always result in violence.

And so that's part of what we are training individuals on, but we needed to start with people able to recognize when children have been -- have had a traumatic experience so that we're not providing discipline for something where we should be providing support, and

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making sure that individuals are equipped with the tools in order to do that, and positive -- conflict resolution is one of those tools. It's also something that Kevin Bethel is helping with, and he's training around -- he's retraining all of our school police and really thinking about how those individuals become additional individuals in schools that can help manage conflict and to help teach children how to manage conflict.

COUNCILMAN JONES: There's an interesting movie, Blindspotting, if anybody saw it on Netflix. I encourage you to watch it, and it talks about stereotyping and then conflict resolution as a result of how we see each other and how we deal with confrontation. And if you are an insomniac like I am, Blindspotting is something that I think every student might want to take a look at. It's a little racy, but they watch it anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Thank you.

4 MS. WILKERSON: I just --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
6 sorry. Ms. Wilkerson.

7 MS. WILKERSON: I just wanted
8 to mention that some of the work that the
9 District is now doing around student
10 conduct and how faculty interacts with
11 the students, how staff interacts with
12 the students comes out of the
13 presentations that students made at our
14 Board meetings. We heard time and time
15 again in a conversation that grew out of
16 the metal detectors that too many
17 children felt like they were part of the
18 school-to-prison pipeline, and Dr. Hite
19 and the staff heard that and has really
20 not dealt with it at a surface level, but
21 is prepared to really dig deep in
22 reshaping how it is that we deal with the
23 issues that kids identified.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

25 Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

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2 Dr. Hite, real briefly, before
3 I call on the next member, and we're
4 happy to hear that you all have gone in
5 the market. My assumption is you got
6 some pretty favorable rates right about
7 now with the \$500 million borrowing. And
8 while we're excited about the notion that
9 we're going to finally be able to make a
10 meaningful improvement in our school
11 facilities, it's obviously, from our
12 perspective, because we just embarked --
13 well, not just, but we recently embarked
14 on a similar program with Rebuild where
15 we had a significant borrowing to improve
16 the City's infrastructure around rec
17 centers and playgrounds, and during that
18 debate, we got to a point where there was
19 a significant level of conversation
20 around participation, MBE, WBE, and DBE.
21 And I know it's very early on in your
22 process, but tell me if you have given
23 any thought or what you will ultimately
24 project, not necessarily in terms of the
25 very specific number, but what your

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thinking is around having full participation. We anticipate that it will be a similar level of requirements. I don't know if you all have a project labor agreement or whatever, but it will be a prevailing wage job, is my assumption. Therefore, it will likely be union participation. And as you know, there's been this challenge with respect to getting the appropriate level, with the exception of a couple of unions, high levels of minority participation.

So we want to know, have you given any thought about how we achieve relatively decent numbers? Because I'll just tell you firsthand, that can present a challenge in terms of getting -- particularly in your case where you actually have CTE programs. I think that's an awesome opportunity for you to enhance that program with on-the-job training for those students that are currently going through that process.

DR. HITE: And so do we,

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2 Mr. President, and that's an important --
3 that could actually be an important
4 pathway for children in CTE programs and
5 actually encourage more to move into that
6 space.

7 We've created an apprentice
8 program within the School District around
9 some of our facility and some
10 steamfitters, plumbers, electricians, but
11 we can do a lot more with that.

12 Your question is similar to the
13 question that we get on a regular basis
14 from the Board President, and as a
15 result, we are actually reviewing all of
16 those processes, and we're starting with
17 our procurement policy and rewriting the
18 procurement policy so that we can not
19 only state numbers that are consistent
20 with where the City is, but we have
21 processes to monitor those things.

22 And so we are looking at that
23 as a part of this whole thing, and really
24 we'll come back with a set of
25 recommendations to the Board about a new

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policy that will allow us to expand the
minorities who are employed as a result
of this 500 million. And we do have
project labor agreements at the District,
and they require prevailing wage. And so
all of those things we've been asked to
review and to come up with a set of
recommendations around how do we ensure
that we can have a workforce that's more
representative of both our students and
the citizens in Philadelphia.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Just
a brief recommendation. Having some
knowledge about development given the
district I represent, it's always been
said that the owner of the job will
dictate the terms of what the
participation will ultimately be. If
that particular developer, and in your
case, School District; i.e., the owner of
those schools, said it's going to be 45,
50 percent, then people -- if not, people
that are not prepared to adopt those
strategies, you can just put a big sign

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2 up "need not apply," right? And given
3 the level of interest in these
4 significant high-paying jobs, we think
5 that we can get there.

6 So I'm just going to
7 recommend -- we put some very aggressive
8 numbers in our program, and I'm not going
9 to sit here and say it was easy to meet
10 those numbers, but people do at least
11 come to the table saying that we're going
12 to try to meet those goals.

13 DR. HITE: I appreciate that.
14 Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Thank you.

17 DR. HITE: I will add, the
18 other thing that's part of our
19 consideration and part of the challenge
20 is the school code that then also has
21 what we can do within the state statute
22 and what we can't. And so that's another
23 thing that we are trying to work through,
24 but we want to get too a lot more
25 aggressive.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Is
3 the school code governed or monitored by
4 the executive or legislative branch or
5 both?

6 DR. HITE: Legislative branch.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So I
8 think we have had some significant
9 legislators in our city, in Philly
10 delegation, that I think have similar
11 viewpoints about this. So the sooner we
12 get with them, the better, I would think.

13 DR. HITE: Thanks.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Thank you. Thank you very much,
16 Superintendent.

17 The Chair recognizes
18 Councilwoman Gym.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
20 very much, Mr. President. And I want to
21 acknowledge and thank the Board and
22 Superintendent Hite for your comments
23 this morning.

24 So we have been spending a lot
25 of time together, and I appreciate the

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comments that were made this morning
about the commitment around environmental
issues. There's lots of stuff I would
love to talk about today, including like
budgets and school staffing stability,
the renaissance schools program, trauma
and safety supports and truancy, but I do
think that the most important thing I
want to lead with is the facilities
issue, because it is something that is
constant, it's important.

You and I have seen families
and communities who are filled with
passion about the safety of their
children and certainty that things have
to change, but that this is not a place
for us to be like fearful of or not
leaning into. Parents and communities
are our biggest advocates. I said this
earlier. It's amazing that the School
District's population has stabilized in
the last few years. It's no longer
declining. People in some areas of the
City are increasing our school

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2 populations by leaps and bounds. Mayfair
3 Elementary School has 2,200 kids, which
4 is as big as a college campus in some
5 areas.

6 So there are points of
7 opportunity here, and the biggest concern
8 that I hear from parents and school
9 communities is how poor communication
10 strains public trust and the ability for
11 us to find common solutions that can move
12 quickly and with confidence.

13 So I want to talk about a few
14 of the ways in which we could talk about
15 how to rebuild some of that public trust
16 back in. One of them has been to
17 acknowledge the hard work, and I know
18 this is an area that is complicated
19 because you have an environmental review,
20 but I really want to acknowledge the work
21 at the PFT and their environmental
22 specialist, specifically Jerry Roseman,
23 who has an incredible knowledge base
24 around each and every school. He's been
25 very active and proactive about going out

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there reviewing things, obviously with different constituencies, but a common goal in mind, and that is the health and safety of the occupants within that building, and sometimes with hard conclusions at the end of it.

The struggle has been that there's been some question about the District's team and the PFT's team being in coordinated alliance. So is the District open to a formal or some type of written policy that will ensure that the PFT's environmental director is included, a part of reviewing construction projects that are underway to ensure environmental work quality and to protect the health and safety of all the residents within the school?

DR. HITE: Yes. We're working on an agreement right now to actually put that to paper and to actually work with the PFT. They gave some recommendations, and naturally we're working back and forth with those recommendations, but the

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2 answer is yes.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I think that
4 that would be great, because that would
5 be a big step forward in part. The
6 District does have its environmental
7 director. We want to respect that, but
8 it helps to have an independent review,
9 and in the places that we've been in, the
10 parents really do trust a lot of the work
11 that's been brought forward, even when
12 the information has been tough, even when
13 we're not always in agreement, but at
14 least it's a feeling that there is at
15 least a separate review. So I appreciate
16 that.

17 Do you have a policy about
18 construction during school time when
19 children are in the building? This has
20 been another area where, is active
21 construction around lead abatement,
22 asbestos removal, et cetera, et cetera,
23 going to happen when children are in the
24 building during school time? Is the
25 District discussing whether projects need

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2 to happen during non-school hours as
3 opposed to during school hours?

4 DR. HITE: We do. We assess if
5 in fact what can happen during school
6 hours versus what needs to happen and
7 when there are no children -- or what
8 needs to happen with no children in the
9 building. And so we do analyze that.

10 One of our challenges that I
11 did not talk about is the time needed to
12 do many of these projects, and some can't
13 be done at night and we were -- so there
14 were like -- there's a project at Bodine,
15 and one of the parts of that project that
16 they're doing on the outside can only be
17 done in the daylight. It can't be done
18 in the evenings. And so it creates for
19 us -- it would create a longer timeframe,
20 and that's one of the reasons we're
21 looking at and exploring all of our
22 assets to determine what could become a
23 swing space, because to the degree that
24 we can use swing spaces more, we could
25 then accelerate some of the projects, but

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2 it will not accelerate all.

3 So it's not realistic to think
4 no project can be done with children in
5 the building. I mean, the Solis Cohen is
6 having -- it's having a new school built
7 in front of it while children are in an
8 adjoining building next door. But in
9 order to get some of these projects
10 moving, we almost have to do some with
11 children in the building. So to the
12 degree, that we have to make sure those
13 areas are properly sealed, are properly
14 tested, and we're communicating that
15 information properly to the staff and
16 communities and families.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I mean, it
18 would help to have some kind of a
19 threshold in part, because like the EPA
20 has like a Guide to Healthier School
21 Renovations. There's a lot of concern
22 about indoor air quality in a city that
23 has such high rates of childhood asthma,
24 that triggers are happening.

25 And so I think one of the big

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questions that we hear a lot is when we're doing major lead abatement repair, if there's asbestos removal, like is there a threshold at which point you say these things can't be done with children in the building, while recognizing that, look, some things are on a case-by-case basis?

It's really hard for us to -- like if there's a tiny portion, it's not exposed to children, it can be fully sealed off and will not impact air quality, then I think that's an issue, but what we're seeing is that in certain cases, it feels like the construction or the abatement is significant enough that children are being exposed, and there's a lot of concerns about whether and how the District is using any kind of a threshold beyond we're checking it out, or is there an IAQ threshold or something along those lines that we can assure people of?

DR. HITE: Yeah. There are IAQ thresholds that we have to actually

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2 adhere to. And I want to come back,
3 because I talked -- I'm just talking
4 about construction in general. The
5 abatement projects are happening during
6 non-school hours. And so they either
7 happen at night or on the weekends or
8 during longer terms when children are not
9 in the building. So all of the lead
10 stabilization is happening in the
11 evening, and then the school is cleaned
12 after each evening and then the children
13 come back and it's on a -- and then you
14 have to move the individuals out of that
15 space, seal the space, and then test the
16 space before you can reopen it.

17 So the abatement projects are
18 happening when children are not in those
19 areas. They're either in the evenings or
20 on the weekends.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I'd love
22 to keep talking a little bit about how
23 that can be more clearly communicated to
24 families.

25 Does the District have a map of

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secondary emergency locations by region?

I mean, obviously we shouldn't be surprised necessarily some of the things -- we have had years of disinvestment, so one of the things I try not to do is tell people nothing will ever happen or don't -- we just need to fix a problem as they come up. But in certain situations where we see more significant issues, like at Pratt this morning or at T.M. Peirce or certainly the Ben Franklin thing, those are much more significant.

Have you started work on like possible bi-region emergency locations?

DR. HITE: Yes, we have.

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I heard you say swing space, so I'm not sure if that's what you mean by that.

DR. HITE: That's the same thing. I mean, we call it swing space. Now, each school has identified an emergency site that they can relocate to if in fact an emergency happens at that

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2 school. So if there's a power shortage
3 or the water is cut off or the area is
4 declared by the fire marshal not to be
5 safe, then we could move children on an
6 emergency basis to others.

7 What we're doing now is
8 identifying other areas with space
9 available that we could then relocate
10 children to more long term if we needed
11 to. One of the -- naturally all of these
12 things come with challenges. We found
13 more environmental issues at one of the
14 places that we had identified as a space
15 that could house another school. And so
16 we have to go in and do the same types of
17 inspections at those places and then get
18 those repairs done so that we could then
19 use those facilities in the event that we
20 had to move whole schools.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. And
22 then there's been some reporting about
23 the issue of some of the problematic
24 contractors that have mismanaged projects
25 and significantly put children at risk.

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I think the Toxic City report talked about Gunter Contractors, which receive millions of dollars from the District, in which one child got carbon monoxide poisoning and there was botched infrastructure fixes at Lowell Elementary School, but Gunter is scheduled to continue working on the roof and other types of things.

Has the District -- and I'm just giving one example, but there are others in which like asbestos repairs are a concern.

Does the District have a protocol for banning contractors who fail to -- do you have a policy in place that is going to allow you to either ban contractors or hold them accountable or do clawbacks or clear stipulations for what happens when contractors violate the terms of their work agreements?

MS. WILKERSON: This is actually a policy that the Board has under consideration now. It was

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presented there are some gaps in the policy that refers to other provisions and they don't necessarily link back in a way that's appropriate, but both in connection with our asbestos abatement work, our everyday construction, our MBE/WBE. We appreciate the need to really strengthen our debarment disqualification processes.

We're also, I know, in our legal department looking to increase our capacity to really move aggressively to claw back funds when that's appropriate or to pursue contract terminations, because we understand that it has been a problem and we need to do better.

So we'd appreciate your input on the policy. It's actively under consideration now. It will be coming up for a first reading in the next month or so and final adoption right at the beginning of the new year. So if you have any input, we appreciate that.

COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That's very

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hopeful, and I appreciate that, and I'm
sure there are other Councilmembers who
also have like a lot of experience in
that area, but I appreciate that, because
I think that's been one of the concerns.
We don't want to allow some of these poor
actors to continue.

My last question is whether the
District has considered adopting a policy
to allow -- I think we may have talked
about this earlier in another meeting,
but for large contractors -- large
construction projects, rather, to have
some type of like a project manager in
place so that we can ensure quality and
completion of construction from start to
finish. I know we have not funded our
Facilities and Operations to full
capacity. I think I asked you for this
before. I would love to see an
organizational chart for the Facilities
and Operations section, both on the
operations side and on the capital side
to some extent.

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2 But this question about whether
3 these projects are being ushered through
4 and can someone be sitting on them,
5 especially when they're large-scale
6 construction projects.

7 DR. HITE: That's part of the
8 restructure of the functional areas in
9 the capital program. And so we could
10 send to you the current structure, but I
11 don't think that structure is going to be
12 the same moving forward. That's why we
13 have engaged the outside consultants to
14 help us look at systems' processes and
15 structure and span of control.

16 All of our capital programs
17 moving forward also include a manager, a
18 construction manager, someone to shepherd
19 that, and that individual is -- and then
20 we actually have to manage the manager,
21 right? So you can't just leave
22 individuals out there, but it's an all
23 hands on deck. But, yes, all of the
24 projects moving forward will have a
25 full-time construction manager.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay.

3 MS. WILKERSON: I want to speak
4 about this, because this is an issue that
5 the Board has invested a fair amount of
6 time on when we were considering
7 borrowing a half a billion dollars, is
8 how are we going to manage it. We can't
9 have it roll out like some of the other
10 projects. And so the District is looking
11 at increasing capacity, contracting out.
12 There have been examples in the City when
13 you bring in additional oversight.

14 Our projects are very
15 complicated. It's four-part bidding.
16 You know, we just have a whole host of
17 requirements, and I think the last
18 several months have been very sobering
19 for all of us, and we're all determined
20 that it move ahead well supervised. And
21 one of the things that the Finance and
22 Facilities Committee has insisted on is
23 that we get a plan, that the plan have
24 deadlines to it so that we'll be able to
25 track carefully whether the District has

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2 the capacity to undertake these projects
3 and also to oversee them as they're
4 implemented.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

6 And, again, I just want to thank the
7 Board and the School District. The half
8 billion dollars in infrastructure
9 borrowing is the biggest investment that
10 we've had since a number of
11 administrations, and I know we're coming
12 out of a long period of disinvestment and
13 attrition and all of that, and as we
14 rebuild, my urging -- and I'm sure my
15 colleagues will share this as well -- we
16 know you can't do it alone. The state
17 does have to pony up. The state has
18 PlanCon. It's got a vehicle for school
19 infrastructure investments. This is not
20 just a Philadelphia problem. It's a
21 problem all across the State of
22 Pennsylvania.

23 If we want to rebuild our
24 towns, villages, communities,
25 neighborhoods, we should be starting with

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public schools. They are a central nexus
for family, for neighborhood, for
community, for jobs, for opportunities,
and for a quality learning experience
that the state needs.

So to the extent that this body
can be incredibly unified going to the
state, going to our Governor and making
it clear and unrelenting and
uncompromising in our demand that there
needs to be money into PlanCon this year
to match the half billion dollar
investment that the School District has
put up and the 50 percent of Philadelphia
public school funds that the City of
Philadelphia has ponied up. This is on
them to do, and to the extent that we can
be partners, vocal advocates, I just
encourage the District to consider the
parents who are frustrated, often angry.
They are your strongest advocates. They
will do anything for their children. We
heard it. They are rooms of full anger,
yes, but they are rooms that start with

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2 love, first and foremost, for their
3 children, for their teachers, and
4 ultimately for their school.

5 So thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
7 you very much.

8 Councilwoman Parker, you're
9 next.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
11 you, Madam Chair.

12 Good afternoon, everyone. Let
13 me just start by lending my voice to the
14 chorus that we heard here thanking this
15 Board. I will dare say that your public
16 engagement and interface with everyday
17 residents in the City of Philadelphia
18 since you all have been established is
19 unprecedented, and just need to say a
20 huge thank you for that. We don't take
21 that lightly, that level of transparency
22 and willingness to sit down and listen to
23 parents and students who are very
24 frustrated about the state of their
25 schools. It takes a lot of courage to

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2 roll up your sleeves and do it. So we
3 want to thank you.

4 And, Dr. Hite, I want to say a
5 special thanks to you, Uri, and all of
6 our team members just for where you have
7 brought the School District of
8 Philadelphia financially. I mean, just
9 out of the red and from the muscle. And
10 while it is so easy for us to talk about
11 what we need in the District and with all
12 of the contributions that this City
13 Council and the City of Philadelphia have
14 contributed to the District, I'm always
15 anxious when people come up with creative
16 solutions about how to generate new and
17 recurring revenue that will help you deal
18 with some of those issues.

19 I'm honored to have had the
20 opportunity to do so in a prior life, but
21 it's with that spirit in mind that I ask
22 you, how are we -- it sounds ancient now.
23 Is the charter school reimbursement line
24 item still a conversation or is that off
25 the table?

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2 DR. HITE: Yes. It's on and
3 then it's off and then it's on again and
4 then it's off. I mean, currently we
5 haven't heard much about that in recent
6 months, and I don't know if it's on the
7 table or off. I mean, I don't know if
8 it's on again or off, but there's been a
9 lot of talk about it, but there's just no
10 money to fund that type of conversation.

11 There was some brief -- there
12 was a brief conversation about doing
13 something around cyber charters and
14 having some monies returned for certain
15 services that they charge full price for,
16 but that has -- I don't think that has
17 moved either. I'm looking at Uri. I
18 don't think anything around that issue
19 has moved at all.

20 MS. WILKERSON: The whole
21 charter school legislation is an issue
22 that the Board and the District are
23 tracking closely. We are in contact with
24 the Governor's Office. The Governor has
25 proposed comprehensive reform. There's

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conversations going on about shorter term initiatives, but this is an issue that's going to, at the end of the day, turn on increasing the pie. There's just not enough money flowing through public education in the Commonwealth, and so it's an ongoing conversation.

COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Please, if you will, keep us posted. We often tell people, and particularly as a member of this body, it is so easy using the bully pulpit of this microphone and the cameras that come in here every Thursday and the group of people who are education advocates come and fill the Chambers and we talk about the needs of the District, and we are usually successful in securing the money, but the muscle, the muscle, the muscle and whether or not you truly have leverage to deliver for the School District of Philadelphia is about whether or not you can leverage funding coming from Harrisburg, because this is the chorus. So please keep us posted on

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2 that.

3 MS. WILKERSON: Well, we will
4 do that. We can do a briefing. There's
5 a lot of different legislative proposals.
6 Some are moving short term, little fixes
7 that might move faster, but we welcome
8 the opportunity to sit down and talk with
9 people about where we are with our
10 charter school program, what's changed,
11 what's going to remain the same, what we
12 project in the future. We welcome that
13 opportunity.

14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Next I
15 want to follow up on Council President
16 Clarke's line of questioning and
17 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown, who
18 was here but had to leave for another
19 meeting, relative to the procurement
20 policy.

21 So, Dr. Hite, I was happy to
22 hear you talk about the internal review,
23 particularly relative to the borrowing
24 and when we think about M/WBEs and the
25 process for how they gain access to

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2 participating in that economy.

3 Tell us, if you will, will you
4 or does the School District interact with
5 OEO here in the City of Philadelphia when
6 we are trying to find firms who are
7 certified, remove all barriers to access
8 and entry for them? What does that
9 interface look like?

10 DR. HITE: Yes, we do work with
11 them and have worked -- they've advised
12 on some policy recommendations that we
13 have moving forward as we try to finalize
14 a new procurement policy. And so, yes,
15 we do interface and work with them.

16 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So in
17 preparation for this meeting,
18 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, for example,
19 had an intern in her office to just walk
20 through the School District's website as
21 if they were looking at it from the
22 perspective of a business owner, a
23 minority business owner who wants to do
24 business with the School District of
25 Philadelphia just using technology, and

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2 she found the following:

3 She said on the certifier's
4 list for the School District of
5 Philadelphia, there were four links that
6 were either broken or did not directly
7 appropriate to the web page that it
8 needed to reach.

9 In addition to that, she noted
10 that there was a procurement event,
11 several listings, and they were like out
12 of date, and multiple links relative to
13 M/WBE policies from the general vendor
14 page, they were broken.

15 So we know Councilwoman
16 Reynolds Brown. She did this to say,
17 hey, can we get someone in the IT
18 department to make sure that we walk
19 through accessing that website to make
20 sure all of those links are live, that
21 that information is available, because if
22 you are new and you're looking at this as
23 a potential opportunity, not having
24 access to that information is a barrier
25 to access.

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2 In addition to that, Dr. Hite,
3 and this is a question you know I always
4 ask every year and it's because I came
5 through the School District of
6 Philadelphia during the Dr. Constance E.
7 Clayton era, and about 40 percent of the
8 teachers in the City of Philadelphia were
9 African American. So I saw women who
10 looked like me. I saw African American
11 men.

12 How are we with our recruitment
13 efforts and particularly getting African
14 American men in our public schools?

15 DR. HITE: This year we were
16 very successful actually in recruiting
17 more minorities as a part of the new
18 teachers who joined the District. It's
19 work that continues, and we are now --
20 there's now an exciting opportunity with
21 PDE, Temple, the Community College,
22 Cheyney, and it is an initiative that
23 looks at young people who are sitting in
24 their classrooms right now and making an
25 investment in that young person's college

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2 cost to allow them to come back if in
3 fact they come back as a teacher here in
4 the School District of Philadelphia.

5 And so what we are trying to do
6 is invest in the young people who are
7 sitting in their classrooms who may not
8 be thinking about teaching as a career
9 choice and trying to provide some support
10 for those individuals to go through
11 college, with the agreement that they
12 would then come back and teach in our
13 district, because we're going to solve
14 this problem with the young people
15 sitting in their classrooms right now,
16 because, quite frankly, they're not in
17 the colleges and universities and we want
18 to make sure we begin to turn that
19 around.

20 We also have to turn around the
21 whole narrative around what it means to
22 be a teacher and how do we make that
23 something that our young people want to
24 pursue versus something that they are
25 trying to move away from. And so we

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have -- we've seen increases in the numbers of individuals who are coming as minority teachers. I think a third of the -- I'm sorry; 25 percent of those who were hired this year were minorities. Not all were male, unfortunately, but we are actively seeking males and we are doing -- we have individuals who are partners with partner universities, the historically black colleges and universities and with all of the colleges and universities around that also send minority individuals -- that have large numbers of minority individuals.

We sent a team to Puerto Rico to recruit individuals, because many of their schools closed. And so we had a large contingent of individuals who were bilingual who were able to come into the School District this year as well.

So we're going to continue with those efforts. Those efforts are extremely important to us, and I'll just add that working with the Mayor's Office

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2 of Education, Otis, Sharif El-Mekki, who
3 is doing some work around black
4 educators, and really trying to do our
5 part to also increase the number of
6 individuals who are going to colleges and
7 universities to become teachers.

8 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank you
9 for that. Finally, I just want to again
10 reinforce the Council President's notion
11 relative to the \$500 million investment.
12 If we don't leverage our students to get
13 access to apprenticeship programs and
14 on-the-job training from those who will
15 be fortunate enough to do business with
16 the School District, it will be a missed
17 opportunity that will be detrimental not
18 just to those students but our city,
19 because that pathway is a pathway not to
20 a low-wage job, but we're talking about a
21 life-changing opportunity to be
22 self-sufficient, and during our budget
23 hearings for the School District, that
24 will be an issue that I will be very much
25 interested in hearing what the School

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2 District's process and progress is like.

3 Thank you, Madam Chair.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
5 you, Councilwoman.

6 Councilman Green.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
8 Madam Chair.

9 I want to thank the School
10 Board for being here and having this
11 conversation, and I want to follow up on
12 some of the questions that my colleague
13 Councilwoman Parker made reference to
14 regarding this new borrowing mentioned in
15 October.

16 For these projects, most of
17 these projects -- I know you're going to
18 be hiring a program management firm in
19 February of next year. Can you give me
20 some nature of these projects? I know
21 many of them are for existing capital
22 projects internally. Are these the type
23 of projects that you'll be growing staff
24 to do or mostly external?

25 DR. HITE: It would be

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2 mostly -- these are -- some will be
3 internal staff projects. Most are
4 probably external. Most of these are
5 probably external, and it includes --
6 yes. Most are external, and then there
7 are multi-site projects in some cases.
8 Some of those could be done by some
9 staff. And then there's some IT projects
10 as well, but it also includes capital
11 project administrative staffing. And so
12 that's part of it.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So I didn't
14 want to make an assumption, but I had a
15 thought process that most of these
16 projects would be mostly external.

17 Considering the pressures
18 regarding the significant capital deficit
19 that the District has and the desire to
20 get these projects done, how will you
21 address the ability to grow capacity for
22 businesses, local-based businesses in the
23 City of Philadelphia, as well as discuss
24 some of the pipeline issues that
25 Councilmember Parker discussed, with the

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2 need for expediency to get these projects
3 done?

4 DR. HITE: Say the last part.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: How will you
6 balance between the need to provide a
7 pipeline in training opportunities and
8 job development opportunities for people
9 coming out of the School District and
10 also people in the City of Philadelphia
11 versus the need for expediency to
12 complete these projects?

13 DR. HITE: I think we have
14 to -- I think what the Councilwoman just
15 talked about and using the \$500 million
16 as leverage to provide opportunities with
17 the ability to learn while they are doing
18 this work and to get into some
19 pre-apprenticeships in work that they're
20 already being trained to do. And I think
21 we've seen that in projects like
22 PennAssist. We've seen it in the
23 pre-apprenticeships that we've created
24 with young people in our CTE programs.

25 But I do think that part of the

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external request is to leverage these
types of things that we want to see --
where we want to increase access for our
young people and talk about the young
people not necessarily completing the
projects but learning a trade and
learning for their certification in a
respective area while they are
apprenticing -- or in an apprenticeship
with individuals who are skilled in those
areas.

And so I do think it's an
opportunity to leverage opportunities for
our young people so that in the future
borrow and future borrows and future
capital work can be done by those young
people who will then have the ability to
do that work.

COUNCILMAN GREEN: And is that
something that will be tasked to the
program manager or management firm to do
that?

DR. HITE: Yeah. Well, it will
be tasked -- we have to construct what we

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want that to be first. I mean, I do think we would have to -- and our Board President has been talking about opportunities for our young people as we think about the types of things that are going to be happening on these projects.

I think we have to first define what it is we would like to see, and then we'd have to task that in as a part of the RFP for these jobs. I mean, I think it has to be written into the proposals or the request for proposals that we want to see as a part of this work.

COUNCILMAN GREEN: So as part of the RFP and the compensation that will go to the program management firm, will part of the compensation be tied to their ability to develop that pipeline as well as provide opportunities for businesses based in the City of Philadelphia? Would that be part of the compensation as part of their program management?

DR. HITE: Yes. Yes.

COUNCILMAN GREEN: So have you

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2 completed the drafting of the RFP or are
3 you in the process of doing that now?

4 DR. HITE: We're in the
5 process -- we drafted the RFP and it was
6 based on an RFP that the City did some
7 years ago. And we drafted an RFP that I
8 believe is out for the general project
9 management of the whole 500 million, and
10 then we're going to have project managers
11 for multiple things within that.

12 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And you're
13 saying that part of the compensation for
14 that project management firm will be
15 based on their ability to do the goals we
16 just discussed?

17 DR. HITE: Well, we're thinking
18 about that job -- well, I was thinking
19 more about that job by job. And so it's
20 not -- I don't think that's written into
21 the RFP of the project manager for how we
22 would then look for the groups that will
23 do this work for us. I think that
24 becomes a part of how we establish those
25 jobs and then what those individuals

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2 would then use as criteria to vet the
3 companies that we would want to respond
4 to those RFPs.

5 MS. WILKERSON: But I think you
6 raise a valid point, and I think it's
7 probably worthwhile for us to step back
8 and make sure that we've structured the
9 right program. I know my experience is
10 with the NTI program, and it was creating
11 a pool of minority demolition contractors
12 was part of the concept, and it's the
13 kind of thing that has to be integrated
14 early on, and I know my colleague,
15 Mr. Huang, has experience and thoughts
16 about that.

17 MR. HUANG: Yeah. Really
18 appreciate the question, and as Board
19 members, we are sensitized to making sure
20 that the construction projects are done
21 to high quality, on time, and we have to
22 monitor that, and we will receive
23 appropriate information to make sure that
24 we're monitoring that. And we've also
25 requested information on MBE/WBE

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2 participation, so we will be monitoring
3 that. So it's kind of an
4 all-of-the-above approach.

5 DR. HITE: And, Councilman, we
6 have time to do that. It's not out yet.
7 I said I think it was out. It's not out
8 yet, so we can go back and take a look at
9 that.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Because if
11 you don't tie that type of goal to the
12 compensation, it won't get done.

13 I want to continue the
14 conversation regarding this capital
15 initiative and how will you provide
16 information -- well, let me step back.

17 I see that the program
18 management firm will be responsible for,
19 along with the operations team, providing
20 comprehensive project management design
21 and communication support. How will you
22 educate various stakeholders for the
23 School District regarding this new
24 infusion of capital dollars?

25 DR. HITE: I think one of the

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things that is important, we would have
to talk almost project by project, and if
a school is impacted, we're taking now a
whole different tack on the type of
information that we provide to those
communities, to those staffs around the
work that is going to be happening, and
we want to be able to inform individuals
of what they can expect by what time and
what would be the desired completion
date. We would want to give them
constant updates about the projects and
how those projects are moving on a, at
the very least, a monthly basis if they
take a long period of time, but a
biweekly basis, if not. And that is
information that we have to be a lot more
proactive about as opposed to a project
is happening in your school, you might
see activity, but instead defining for
individuals everything that they should
expect to see, everything from how young
people will enter the building, exit the
building, if in fact it changes traffic

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2 patterns in some cases, and all of the
3 environmental testing that will be done
4 if it is in existing spaces.

5 And so I think we have to
6 actually do a much better job of being
7 proactive around schedules, timing, and
8 the scope of the work that we expect to
9 be done by what dates.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And that
11 ties into the Environmental Safety
12 Improvement Plan that you laid out and
13 that this program management firm, along
14 with the operations team, will be
15 responsible for following. And so
16 looking at these points, you talked about
17 under Point No. 10, developing and
18 following a discipline process to more
19 proactively communicate with any school
20 where design, construction, and/or
21 environmental initiatives are planned,
22 and there's a goal of December 2019.

23 So give me some perspective on
24 how you're going to communicate that,
25 considering that we're already basically

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2 December.

3 DR. HITE: So we're starting
4 the process for -- what we're trying to
5 do there -- I think you said No. 10?
6 No. 10. So what we're trying to do is
7 come up with a process of how -- it's not
8 for every job, but it's a process that we
9 will follow to ensure that communities
10 are made aware of the work that is going
11 to be happening in those communities.
12 And the best example I have is the lead
13 paint example.

14 When we did lead -- when we did
15 paint stabilization in schools, we had a
16 group of stakeholders from those schools
17 that were going to have that work done.
18 Those individuals knew the time schedule.
19 They gave feedback on the communication
20 to go to other parents to make sure it
21 was in -- that people would understand
22 what was being done, and we want to make
23 sure we have a similar process for every
24 project that we do that's going to
25 involve a school and a school community.

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2 And so that process would then
3 be designed for whoever is doing
4 communications on our part, what do we
5 need to communicate, who needs to receive
6 the communication, what are the
7 timeframes, what are the things that they
8 should expect so that we are very active
9 in that. So we're trying -- we're in the
10 phase of developing that, so we will have
11 that by December 19th, and that is our
12 process that we will use on every project
13 to make sure that communication happens.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That's the
15 communication process for planned
16 projects, but what's the communication
17 process for projects that are not planned
18 when things have been discovered?

19 DR. HITE: Yeah. I mean,
20 that's work that we are -- we're learning
21 a great deal about that dealing with the
22 issues we're dealing with right now, and
23 what we've learned about that is that
24 it's best even in the worst cases to give
25 individuals as much information as we can

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give them, and people don't want to hear it from being asked that question by the press or by the media or seeing something on social media. They want -- if in fact we have information, they said give us that information, let us know what is happening and let us know what you're going to do about it as quickly as possible.

And so those things that are unplanned, if in fact those things become -- it becomes apparent that we need to act on that, we're not waiting until we have a plan ready to go for how we're going to address that issue. We are taking that information to those communities so that they will know that we actually are aware of the situation, and even if we don't have a plan yet, we will be telling them when that plan will be available and what we're going to do until such time that plan is ready for them to see it. We would actually also want to engage them if in fact they are

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2 interested in developing that plan in
3 some cases.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That's
5 interesting to hear, but I guess my
6 concern is how that's going to occur
7 going forward. We met last Tuesday, and
8 in that meeting last Tuesday, I just
9 happened to learn just prior to that
10 meeting regarding asbestos issues at
11 Hill-Freedman. Now, because of the fact
12 that I'm employed by the City of
13 Philadelphia as a member of this body, I
14 was able to get access to that
15 information regarding asbestos at
16 Hill-Freedman, and I would think that
17 based on the conversation we had last
18 Tuesday and the conversation we had prior
19 to last Tuesday, there would be a means
20 of communicating with parents at
21 Hill-Freedman regarding asbestos at that
22 school. Has that communication occurred?

23 DR. HITE: I don't know. I
24 don't know the answer.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So from my

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2 perspective, I'm very engaged --

3 DR. HITE: I know that we
4 solved the problem.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Well, the
6 problem has been resolved, but when you
7 talk about transparency and providing
8 information, trying to stop the
9 whisper-down-the-road scenario, when that
10 information when it's learned that
11 there's asbestos at a school -- and I
12 know you provided some information from
13 Dr. Frank and we talked about that last
14 week as well. That information needs to
15 be provided to the parents and the
16 teachers and others who are stakeholders
17 in that building.

18 Now, it does not make sense to
19 me -- and I'm glad that things have been
20 addressed, but from the perspective that
21 I don't know if parents even know that
22 there was asbestos in that school.

23 DR. HITE: Yeah. The principal
24 used robo calls.

25 COUNCILMAN GREEN: He did do

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2 robo calls?

3 DR. HITE: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Just making
5 sure.

6 DR. HITE: I just found out.

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Because I
8 know I listen to Principal Majewski's
9 robo calls when I'm at home at times.
10 They come to my home. I had not heard
11 that. Often when there's other issues,
12 there's multiple robo calls. There's
13 robo calls at different times during the
14 day. There is information provided in
15 note-bags and others.

16 And so my concern is that
17 making sure that that information is
18 available and provided in a timely way so
19 we don't have these situations where
20 people don't know and they hear about
21 issues after the fact or they hear from
22 others, and that's part of the
23 transparency and communication issues and
24 concerns, that there's going to be a lot
25 of concerns.

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Even with the ability to borrow the dollars, and the District has done a good job over the past number of years of improving finances to be able to borrow at this amount of money, because that's something they've not done in a significant period of time because of financial issues, but people are not going to trust your ability to get this work done. As I said in our meeting just last week, when Hill-Freedman was used as the opening of the school year for the bell ringing, there was investment of dollars made at the school at that time. That was only a few years ago. And to learn in a short period of time later there are issues of asbestos in the school is disheartening, and I think the concerns I have -- and I've said this before -- is the methodology of communicating on a timely basis of information to parents and stakeholders and others who are in our school buildings.

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And also I think there's a big perspective that people are not going to believe we're going to be able to get this work done on a timely and efficient way just based on what they've seen in their own experiences from their school where their child goes to, from the issues at SLA and Ben Franklin, the issues at T.M. Peirce, and we can go down the line. I mean, I think the District -- and I've tried to be an advocate for the School District in a lot of ways. There's good things that have been occurring in the District, but when you have this type of situation and even when you come out with a major initiative like this, people have a lack of faith in your ability to get things done. And I raise this issue because I know in years to come, there's going to be a financial challenge for the District, and that's going to be something coming to members of this body to address that, because we're not going to get the level of

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2 dollars that we need in Harrisburg, and
3 it's going to be a real -- I can see some
4 real pushback from people in reference to
5 why we should do that when you have not
6 proved your ability to get things done in
7 the past.

8 DR. HITE: I will just add
9 that, so on the Hill-Freedman issue,
10 you're right, we did a major renovation
11 at Hill-Freedman when we moved
12 Hill-Freedman into the Leeds building,
13 and I know the issue at Hill-Freedman was
14 some broken floor tiles, and those have
15 now been repaired. We got to go in and
16 repair the floor, but we've removed the
17 floor tiles that were broken, which could
18 have happened -- because if they weren't
19 disturbed when we were doing the
20 construction, they would not have been a
21 part of the construction.

22 On the latter point, though, I
23 do think -- and I appreciate the point.
24 I appreciate when you get a lot of
25 attention to projects like Ben

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Franklin/SLA, those things impact
credibility and impact individuals' trust
in our ability to do work, but I'll also
add, Councilman, that we have just as
many projects that we've completed and
we've made some investments and we've
done hundreds of classroom
modernizations. We've done some pretty
significant school renovations. So there
are individuals who are also experiencing
something different because we've made
some improvements at their schools as
well. And when you have things that
receive all of the attention like Peirce
and SLA/Ben Franklin, it does shake
credibility, but I also want to also
remind a lot of individuals that we've
also had a lot of projects that we've
been able to accomplish that have
actually improved conditions in schools
as well.

COUNCILMAN GREEN: But how have
you messaged that information to
stakeholders like City Council and others

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2 regarding those improvements?

3 DR. HITE: I do it every budget
4 season. I mean, I do it as a part of the
5 things that we've accomplished. I think
6 I did it at the beginning of this
7 meeting, not the specific projects, and
8 then we try to do it project by project
9 in terms of the work.

10 Now, I will add that too often
11 it is with the Councilperson who is in
12 that district, so then the other
13 Councilmembers may not be aware of that.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: So when you
15 say projects -- I mean, for example, when
16 you say project by project, I mean, to me
17 even doing something as basic as a
18 branding of another school building -- I
19 mean, I know you've done a lot of work on
20 lead issues, but, I mean, there needs to
21 be communication about the stuff you're
22 doing, even if it's just a simple press
23 release, an e-mail, something to let
24 people know what's happening, because for
25 the most part, people just have lost

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2 faith in the District in a lot of ways.
3 I think that's unfortunate, because I
4 know there's good things happening in the
5 School District.

6 I get out of City Hall a lot,
7 just about every day, and I try to see
8 what's happening in our city and
9 especially in our schools, and without
10 that comfort and that belief in the
11 District, we're going to have some major
12 problems going forward. And I was
13 someone that was very, I'll just say -- I
14 won't use the word "agitated," but I'll
15 use the word "concerned" last week when
16 the perspective I was getting in our
17 meeting was we're going to present
18 someone to -- let's educate the people of
19 the City of Philadelphia, parents,
20 stakeholders, and others, about what
21 asbestos really is. And I understand the
22 need to do that, but as I'm a parent with
23 a child in the District, my concern is
24 what's going on with asbestos right now.
25 Having someone tell me that, well,

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asbestos you're thinking about is not quite as bad as you think it is, we have all these other issues in the air and the world that is problematic, I don't want to hear that when I just learned about a teacher who got diagnosed with mesothelioma. And I think those are some of the concerns and perspectives that we need to have to make sure we don't have these issues going forward.

And I'm going to say this now. I'm going to say it again in the future. I'm really concerned on where we are in the future when resources are going to be needed and people have a perspective the District does not have the ability to do the projects they need to do as well as educate children in the City of Philadelphia.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

Councilman Taubenberger.

COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Madam

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2 Chair, thank you very much.

3 And, Ms. Wilkerson, thank you
4 for being here with virtually your entire
5 Board. I think that's very, very good.

6 Dr. Hite, I have one question
7 and that's a follow-up to something you
8 had said, and I just want to make sure I
9 got it right, but the idea intrigues me.
10 You had said there is a plan in place
11 that if one school were to shut down for
12 an emergency, another school could be
13 used or another building could be used to
14 house that school. Is that plan
15 complete?

16 DR. HITE: It's not complete.
17 We're in the process of reviewing all of
18 our facilities and assets. With some
19 work, they could be made available, but
20 all of them require work and all of
21 them -- some more significant work than
22 others, but all of them require work, and
23 a lot of that work is environmental work
24 that also has to happen.

25 But we are developing a list of

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2 those facilities and then what will need
3 to happen in those facilities so that we
4 are resolving those environmental issues
5 so that they could become a space in the
6 event we need space to move a school.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And
8 that would be all in School
9 District-owned spaces?

10 DR. HITE: Yes.

11 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Very
12 good. Is it possible you could give me
13 one example?

14 DR. HITE: South Philadelphia,
15 Pratt, L.P. Hill.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.

17 DR. HITE: Strawberry Mansion
18 is another. And so those are all --
19 Peirce School. Those are -- I'm sorry.
20 Is it the other Peirce?

21 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: If
22 you misspeak on this, I'm not going to
23 hold your feet to the fire.

24 DR. HITE: I think we have two
25 Peirces and I think it's the other

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2 Peirce, not the one --

3 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I

4 think the idea is intriguing that you've
5 thought this out. The fact that the plan
6 exists, even though it may not be
7 complete, I think in my eyes is very,
8 very important, because you just don't
9 know what the future has for anything. I
10 mean, something could go terribly wrong,
11 and being able to educate, continuing to
12 educate children is so very much vital to
13 our mission as a school, as a government,
14 and of course obviously as the School
15 District of Philadelphia. I commend you
16 for that, and I thank you very much. If
17 I can be of any assistance during that
18 process, please let my office know, let
19 me know. And I thank you for everything
20 you're doing.

21 DR. HITE: Thanks.

22 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Madam
23 Chair, thank you so much.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
25 you very much, Councilman.

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2 Would any Councilmembers like
3 to make a comment or statement?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Seeing
6 none, this will conclude the public
7 meeting. Do we have members of the
8 public who would like to testify, any
9 witnesses here?

10 Please approach the witness
11 table. Thank you very much. When you
12 come forward, give us your name and feel
13 free to begin your testimony.

14 (Witness approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is
17 there anyone else who would like to
18 testify?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you very much. Good afternoon.

22 MS. WALLER: Good afternoon.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Feel
24 free to identify yourself and begin your
25 testimony.

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2 MS. WALLER: Yes. I'm looking
3 for my glasses.

4 My name is Doreen Waller.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you.

7 MS. WALLER: I guess I have to
8 do the best I can without them.

9 As I stated, my name is Doreen
10 Waller. I worked for the School District
11 from 1999 to 2012 as a secretary. When
12 you work in the office, you know
13 everything that's going on, in the school
14 office. I'd like to mention some things
15 that happened while I was employed and is
16 still happening today. I'd also like to
17 make suggestions on how some things can
18 be improved.

19 Here again, asbestos. In my
20 second year with the District, I was
21 transferred to another school. As soon
22 as I walked in and got settled, I began
23 coughing constantly. A few years later,
24 this school was renovated. The
25 contractors were working in their white

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2 suits while employees and students were
3 still in the building.

4 One morning I came into the
5 office and there was white powder
6 everywhere, on the desks, chairs,
7 equipment, and floors. I complained to
8 the principal and was told that I knew
9 that downtown wasn't going to do anything
10 and I could go home.

11 This is unacceptable, Dr. Hite.
12 These contractors should not be allowed
13 to start any work while students and
14 employees are in the building. I think
15 employees, present and former, as well as
16 students who think that they have been
17 affected by asbestos should be tested for
18 free.

19 I know of teachers that have
20 taken early retirement because of their
21 coughing. I believe I heard President
22 Clarke say on Cody Anderson's show that
23 there was 400 million for health issues
24 in the City. The District could contract
25 with some of these law firms we hear

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2 about actually people to come who think
3 they have asbestos and maybe the
4 employees, present and former, who think
5 they've had this can go and get tested.

6 Now I'd like to talk about
7 contractors. I've seen contractors sit
8 in the break room all day waiting for
9 their supplies to come in. Dr. Hite, can
10 you imagine the amount of overtime they
11 are getting? There is no accountability
12 for them.

13 Payroll: You can never get
14 through when you call Payroll. They are
15 constantly making mistakes on employees'
16 pay. There are some new employees who
17 started in August who have three entries
18 on their pay stub. Each entry was for
19 retirement. Each entry was for
20 retirement where they were taking out for
21 retirement.

22 Some new employees' names are
23 incorrect on their checks and pay stubs,
24 and Payroll still hasn't corrected them.

25 I am sure checks are still

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being sent to dead people. When I was working, there was a woman who had resigned and was still receiving a check. No accountability, Dr. Hite.

Administrative absences: One day I was told by my principal to mark the assistant principal present, although she was absent. I wasn't told to give her a personal or a sick day, but to mark her present. Years later I found out why this occurred. If there are too many absences by administrators and I guess students, that school and maybe the District will not get funding from Harrisburg. And I know this was a directive from the District.

Dual roles: I worked at a school where the assistant principal was also the special ed liaison. This is unheard of, isn't it, as much work as the vice principals and the special liaison has to do. This is why so many special ed cases are out of compliance.

Now, speaking of special ed, it

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can take months and months for a child to
get compensatory ed services. Some years
ago there was only one person doing comp
ed in the District. I don't think it's
much better today.

To my knowledge, special ed
students are to go on a trip, I believe,
once a week and go out to recess with
regular classes on a daily basis. This
is not happening in some schools, and in
some instances, the higher-ups knows this
is happening and still nothing is being
done about it.

Dr. Hite, you need to visit
schools unannounced, without even the
principal knowing that you're coming, and
just walk around.

Misconduct investigations:
Sometimes it takes a couple of years
before the outcome of teacher abuse cases
are resolved. I believe Ms. Blackwell
sent a letter to Harrisburg a couple of
years ago complaining about the length of
time it took to resolve cases. As it

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currently stands, the outcome of teacher abuse cases are withheld from parents. This should not be so. They are not told what penalties, terminations, et cetera, were given to the teacher. This rule should be changed. Parents have a right to know just as if it were a civil or criminal case in court. The plaintiff has the right to know the outcome of a case.

Food: Some cafeteria managers do not give students seconds as they ask for it. Many of these students do not get enough to eat at home. Some students don't get beverages with their breakfast or lunch. And at the end of the week, I've seen cafeteria staff giving out boxes of frozen food left over from the week to school employees. No accountability.

Durham bus service: This is a joke. We've heard about them several times on the news. Why is the District still contracting with them? We know

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most of the students that this bus company transports are special ed. Most of the time they are late picking up the students. I believe all school buses should be checked to have working cameras on them.

Resources: I thought the TV show Parking Wars whenever they filmed in Philly, that that money was to come to the District. Does it?

Teacher selection: Back when I was working, there was a policy -- I don't believe it was ever put in place -- where the community would be included in selecting the teacher for a school. Is that still going on?

Bullying: A plan has to be put in place regarding bullying. Within the last two years, two ten-year-olds have committed suicide. Teachers, parents, and the community have to be more attentive to our children who complain of being bullied. Something has to be done.

Mass shootings: Is there a

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plan in place for a mass shooter? There should be. We are laughing at what other cities and school districts are doing, strapping the teachers, putting rocks in buckets, but what are we doing? Nothing. Are we going to wait until something happens before we begin to do something?

I really believe schools should have mass shooting drills. Some schools have bomb shelters long ago, you know, the bomb shelters. Maybe they could be resurrected. Maybe it would be a good idea to have school police -- I don't know if they still have school police anymore -- be trained for what to do in mass shooting cases.

440 North Broad: In the summertime, the District office may as well be closed. It's like a ghost town when you walk in there, and, again, no one answers their phones. Everything goes to voicemail. Unacceptable, Dr. Hite.

In closing, Dr. Hite, City

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2 Councilmembers, and officials, my report
3 card rating for this School District, if
4 I had to report, would be an F.

5 Something has got to be done to make it
6 better and, that is, to have more
7 accountability and responsibility.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you very much. If you could give us a
10 list, we could make it part of the
11 record. And we're very impressed with
12 your testimony and all the issues that
13 you mentioned. We thank you very much.

14 Dr. Hite or any members of the
15 Board, would you like to comment?

16 MS. WILKERSON: I just want to
17 recognize Dr. Maria McColgan who has come
18 to the meeting. We appreciate your
19 attendance.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
21 we certainly again appreciate all that
22 you said. We're very happy to look into
23 some of these issues and provide a
24 response to you. If you give your
25 information to where we can get you to

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2 John Christmas, he'll make sure that we
3 have it, and we'll submit it to the
4 Superintendent, President of the Board,
5 and all members. And we thank you for
6 being retired and being still concerned
7 enough to try to do something about the
8 issues and the problems that you have
9 found. Thank you.

10 Are there any comments from
11 members of Council or members of this
12 Committee, School District or the
13 Superintendent?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Is
16 there anyone else who would like to
17 testify?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
20 right. So we thank you very much. We
21 want to thank City Council and we want to
22 thank the School District for being here.

23 We leave the public hearing and
24 enter into the Committee meeting.

25 Are there any comments at all?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Seeing
4 none, since this is our resolution, this
5 public meeting and public hearing are
6 being recessed subject to the call of the
7 Chair.

8 Thank you all very much.

9 (Committee of the Whole
10 concluded at 4:29 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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Committee of the whole
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