

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING, NEIGHBORHOOD
DEVELOPMENT AND THE HOMELESS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, April 6, 2015
1:15 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE

RESOLUTION 140577 - Resolution authorizing
City Council's Committee on Housing,
Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to
hold hearings concerning increasing resources
to expand the production and preservation of
affordable housing in the City of Philadelphia

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COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good afternoon. Let me thank all of you for coming. This is a hearing before the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless with regard to Resolution No. 140577.

We will ask the Clerk to read the title of the resolution.

THE CLERK: Resolution authorizing City Council's Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development and the Homeless to hold hearings concerning increasing resources to expand the production and preservation of affordable housing in the City of Philadelphia.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you very much.

We note the presence of Councilman Bill Greenlee. Others will be here shortly, and those who are in their offices, we invite you to be here.

Obviously it's legal for us to do this with regard to a resolution, and, again, we thank all of you for being

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2 here. I want to especially thank Herb
3 Wetzel, who read the resolution to us,
4 for all of his work. I'd like to take
5 credit for everyone else's work, but then
6 that wouldn't be very honest, would it?
7 But I want to thank him and a member of
8 my staff, Anjali Chainani, who is not in
9 today.

10 My opening remarks will be made
11 as follows. Again, we want to welcome
12 you to our Committee hearing.

13 An uneven economic recovery
14 following the Great Recession has brought
15 income inequality into sharp relief
16 across the country, including
17 Philadelphia. Coupled with the housing
18 crash which spurred the recession, many
19 regions of the country are grappling with
20 the shortage of affordable housing. This
21 crisis can be seen in the City, suburbs,
22 and rural areas and is found not just in
23 large municipalities like New York City
24 and San Francisco but in smaller cities
25 such as Carlsbad, New Mexico and Fort

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2 Collins, Colorado. If you don't believe
3 me, just Google "affordable housing
4 crisis in America" and your screen will
5 light up with hundreds of articles and
6 studies.

7 I want to share with you some
8 Philadelphia facts on affordable rental
9 housing. In February of 2015, the
10 Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia
11 issued a report, entitled "Affordability
12 and Availability of Rental Housing in the
13 Third Federal Reserve District." This
14 report states that, one, in Philadelphia
15 there are only 38 affordable rental units
16 for every 100 households. Again, in
17 Philadelphia there are only 38 affordable
18 rental units for every 100 households
19 whose income is 30 percent or less of
20 family median income, leaving a shortage
21 of 69,600 units. Of these renter
22 households, 72 percent spend 50 percent
23 or more of their family income on rent.

24 Two, in Philadelphia there are
25 only 74 affordable rental units for every

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2 100 households whose income is between 30
3 percent and 50 percent of median family
4 income, leaving a shortage of 41,523
5 units. Of these renter households, 65
6 percent spend more than 50 percent of
7 their household income on rent.

8 The national low housing --
9 (Some audience members banging
10 and shouting.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We
12 tried.

13 We don't have an interpreter.
14 Apparently the City applied for one and
15 we don't have an interpreter. So he's
16 letting that be known, that we do not
17 have an interpreter. We did apply, and I
18 understand they've had issues. There
19 have been issues lately with getting
20 interpreters, but the City did try.

21 We are happy to face you and if
22 someone else can sign, we welcome you.
23 We could not get someone.

24 They sent a note saying that
25 they asked for an interpreter last week.

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2 The City tried to get one and
3 none was available, obviously, because
4 they're not here.

5 I can face you. I can turn
6 that way, if that's helpful.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who are
8 you talking to?

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I'm
10 talking to those who can't --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How
12 would they know?

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
14 many lip read.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You
16 think so? You should ask them directly
17 if they're able, one at a time.

18 (Audience members banging and
19 shouting.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: They
21 are asking -- the question is, they're
22 asking us to reschedule this hearing. I
23 know some of you have taken trains here
24 and come other ways. So I will let it be
25 the decision of the majority as to what

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2 we do. If those who have gotten trains
3 to come here are willing to reschedule,
4 then we will try to reschedule to be
5 fair.

6 (Pause.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

8 We will --

9 (Audience members banging and
10 shouting.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: We are
12 waiting to confirm a new date. I want to
13 do it so you know now. So we're trying
14 to honor your request.

15 We want to thank Mr. Kelvin
16 Jeremiah, head of PHA, for trying to see
17 if PHA could lend us someone today.
18 Having said that, they do not yet know.
19 Therefore, we're happy to continue this
20 hearing until the same time on April
21 27th.

22 Thank you all, and I'm very
23 sorry for the inconvenience. Thank you.

24 (Committee on Housing,
25 Neighborhood Development and the Homeless

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2 adjourned at 1:30 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

(The foregoing certification of this
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