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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT

- - -

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, May 2, 2007
1:20 p.m.

- - -

PRESENT:
COUNCILMAN JAMES F. KENNEY, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

RESOLUTION 070206 - Resolution authorizing the
Committee on the Environment to hold public
hearings investigating the long-term benefits
of replacing cement sidewalks with rubber
sidewalks in select areas.

- - -

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COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Good

3

afternoon, ladies and gentleman. I

4

apologize for the delay. I was attending

5

the Police and Fire Memorial Ceremony,

6

which is our annual ceremony in Center

7

City, and it went a little later than I

8

thought.

9

This is the first hearing of

10

the Committee on the Environment, and we

11

intend as a Committee to use this

12

opportunity to be a sounding board for

13

ideas and innovation and issues relative

14

to the environment on how the City of

15

Philadelphia affects the environment,

16

both positively and negatively, and what

17

we can employ in the way of innovation to

18

lessen the detrimental effects of the

19

City's output on the negative part of our

20

environment.

21

So with that, this is a hearing

22

on Resolution No. 070206, which is

23

authorizing the Committee on the

24

Environment to hold public hearings

25

investigating the long-term benefits of

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2 replacing cement sidewalks with rubber
3 sidewalks in select areas.

4 Good afternoon. Thank you all
5 for coming to discuss the benefits of
6 rubber sidewalks compared to traditional
7 cement. After first hearing of this
8 technology from Chicago's Department of
9 the Environment, I've become very
10 impressed with the environmental and
11 practical benefits of this material.
12 While it is not economically feasible or
13 practical to start replacing all cement
14 sidewalks with rubber panels, rubber is a
15 great alternative for walkways that are
16 troubled with tree root problems or need
17 complete replacement.

18 As an environmental benefit and
19 cost saver, rubber sidewalks afford trees
20 the proper air and water necessary for
21 their roots to grow properly, unlike
22 concrete, which often leads to tree roots
23 growing upward in search of water and air
24 that they are denied. In addition to
25 eliminating breaks and rises caused by

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2 tree roots, which are responsible for
3 many pedestrian falls, rubber sidewalks
4 provide a softer surface than concrete,
5 ensuring that in the event of an
6 unexpected fall, the person will sustain
7 minimal injury and, as you will learn
8 today, instead of needing a jackhammer
9 and other devices to break concrete when
10 it needs to be replaced or removed, the
11 rubber panels can be removed with
12 relative ease. Furthermore, the life of
13 each rubber panel can be extended by
14 flipping the panel over after its
15 lifespan of approximately 15 years, which
16 can nearly double its total lifespan.

17 I believe it is important for
18 our city to continue to take steps toward
19 improving our environment. Rubber
20 sidewalks would certainly promote tire
21 recycling and protect our trees that
22 clean our air and beautify our
23 neighborhoods. For these reasons, I
24 decided to hold this hearing to promote
25 this technology and urge the City to

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2 consider using rubber panel alternatives
3 in continual problem areas when replacing
4 cement sidewalks.

5 I want to thank you again for
6 your attendance. And because of
7 scheduling concerns, we're going to ask
8 Brian Goldthorpe, Public Policy Director
9 for the Pennsylvania National Multiple
10 Sclerosis Society, to be the first
11 witness, and then we'll get back on our
12 regular track kind of explaining what
13 this is all about and why we think this
14 is important.

15 So please identify yourself for
16 the record and proceed.

17 MR. GOLDTHORPE: Thank you very
18 much. My name is Brian Goldthorpe and
19 I'm the Public Policy Director for the
20 National Multiple Sclerosis Society in
21 Pennsylvania, and today I'm speaking on
22 behalf of the Greater Delaware Valley
23 Chapter, which currently serves over
24 11,000 people with MS in Southeastern
25 Pennsylvania and Southern New Jersey,

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2 including more than 2,000 in Philadelphia
3 County alone.

4 I'm far from an expert on the
5 signs of rubber sidewalks and I think
6 that you'll get that perspective here in
7 a minute, but even a cursory review of
8 the available research indicates that
9 they're more durable and environmentally
10 friendly than those made of concrete.
11 More broadly, though, the National MS
12 Society offers our support and enthusiasm
13 for an innovative proposal that really
14 has the potential to make Philadelphia's
15 sidewalks safer and more accessible.

16 Multiple sclerosis is a very
17 devastating disease and it is the most
18 prevalent and disabling nervous system
19 disease amongst young adults. The vast
20 majority of people with MS are 20 to 50
21 years old and the average age of
22 diagnosis is 28. Twenty percent of those
23 diagnosed will suffer the most
24 progressive form of MS and become
25 significantly disabled within two to

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2 three years. Fifty percent of those
3 diagnosed will need some form of adaptive
4 equipment within ten years of their
5 diagnosis, and 50 to 60 percent
6 experience cognitive impairment.

7 Due to all of this kind of
8 range of symptoms in the early age of
9 diagnosis, it's really critical for
10 people with MS to have the necessary
11 supports and resources to maintain the
12 highest quality of life possible. This
13 includes not only medical and
14 rehabilitative resources, but also the
15 tools to engage and participate in
16 society. For this reason, the National
17 MS Society has long been an advocate for
18 adequately funded paratransit services,
19 accessible and affordable housing and
20 also safe streets and sidewalks.

21 As an alternative to concrete,
22 rubber sidewalks will help reduce
23 devastating and costly slip-and-fall
24 accidents. Their durability,
25 specifically resistance to cracks and

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2 shifts, create smoother surfaces over
3 longer periods of time. This will ease
4 mobility for people with chronic diseases
5 and disabilities, as well as elderly
6 citizens who use adaptive equipment.
7 Additionally, the depth of rubber
8 sidewalks should make it easier to
9 install curb cuts, which are vital for
10 Philadelphians who require assistive
11 mobility technology.

12 I want to applaud Councilman
13 Kenney and his staff for taking a
14 critical look at the safety and
15 accessibility of Philadelphia's
16 sidewalks, as well as allowing a range of
17 participants to contribute to the
18 dialogue. The National MS Society is
19 encouraged by this conversation and we
20 look forward to other innovations that
21 will help Philadelphians remain active
22 and vibrant participants in their
23 communities.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 very much for your testimony. I just

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2 want to read you a couple numbers. It
3 doesn't necessarily relate directly to
4 your testimony, but it is illustrative of
5 some of the issues that we deal with in
6 the City.

7 In Fiscal Year '04, the City
8 settled 105 cases for \$2.6 million in
9 slip-and-fall cases. In Fiscal Year '05,
10 125 cases settled for 2.8 million. And
11 in FY06, 124 cases settled for 2.9
12 million.

13 We do anticipate that in highly
14 traffic public areas we will experience a
15 decrease in these types of slip-and-fall
16 accidents and, therefore, decrease the
17 amount of money the City pays out in
18 these kinds of cases.

19 So from your client's
20 perspectives and from just the public in
21 general, we do think it's important to
22 pursue the possibility of these sidewalks
23 installed in general common areas that
24 are well traversed. So thank you for
25 your testimony.

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2 Councilwoman?

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Indeed,

4 let us thank you for your testimony.

5 Have you had a chance or can you provide

6 any insight to the cost-benefit analysis

7 of transitioning to this alternative

8 method?

9 MR. GOLDTHORPE: The cost piece

10 of it, I think, is coming up shortly, but

11 from our perspective, anything that

12 improves the quality of life of people

13 who suffer from diseases and disabilities

14 is a good investment to make.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I've been

16 informed by the Chair that all that

17 information is coming.

18 Do you know of any other

19 municipalities that have already started

20 this practice?

21 MR. GOLDTHORPE: I believe

22 there's -- I've heard anywhere 40 to 60

23 different cities, but I think that that

24 will also be part of the testimony.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very well.

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2 Well, thank you for your testimony.

3 MR. GOLDTHORPE: Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
5 very much for coming in.

6 The next witness from
7 Rubbersidewalks is named Vaughn Fisher,
8 and he's going to walk through a
9 PowerPoint on the technology and its use
10 currently and some of the benefits that
11 were alluded to by Councilwoman Brown.

12 So please identify yourself for
13 the record and proceed.

14 MR. VON FISHER: Good
15 afternoon, everyone. Thanks for seeing
16 me. My name is Michael von Fisher of
17 Rubbersidewalks --

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.

19 MR. VON FISHER: -- and I also
20 have a concrete company, Fitzpatrick
21 Concrete.

22 A little bit about me and why
23 I'm involved in this. I saw an article
24 in USA Today, after being an installer in
25 the cities and all over New Jersey for

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2 years, I read about this product, rubber
3 sidewalks. And it was pretty much I
4 field the demand, and it's an outstanding
5 product, because there is a lot of
6 situations where people need sidewalks
7 replaced and what would happen was,
8 traditionally in the old days, you would
9 rip out the tree roots affecting the
10 tree. Now with this product, there's
11 several different methods that can take
12 place. But I'm going to start my
13 presentation and then I'll have questions
14 and go over everything.

15 What you are looking at, it's
16 not what you think. Those pictures are
17 rubber sidewalks. What they are is
18 two-foot-by-two-foot rubber panels. They
19 weigh about 40 pounds a piece, and there
20 are displays around, solid piece of
21 rubber. Also, we manufacture what's
22 called a truncated dome, which is a
23 handicap warning system along metro
24 subways, things like that.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: If I had to

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2 describe it, it would be like a little
3 bit of a softer hockey puck.

4 MR. VON FISHER: Yes.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: That's what
6 the consistency of it would remind you
7 of.

8 MR. VON FISHER: Exactly. And
9 I'll go over everything.

10 Rubber sidewalks, it's the
11 alternative to concrete. It's an
12 interlocking modular recycled rubber
13 sidewalk paving system. In Washington,
14 DC, there have been several installs
15 where old concrete was taken out and
16 rubber sidewalks were put in.

17 They're a solution-based
18 company. They're dedicated to the
19 environment, an industry leader in green
20 technology, national and globally. It's
21 a woman-owned company.

22 Lindsay Smith, who you see
23 pictured to the left, she owned a house
24 in California. The township was
25 replacing her sidewalks. She had

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2 beautiful trees out front where the
3 roots, unfortunately, lifted up the
4 sidewalk. So she actually pleaded with
5 them to give her more time to come up
6 with an alternate solution. Her and
7 another gentleman have developed rubber
8 sidewalks. So she ended up saving her
9 trees, is the good news, and came across
10 a fantastic product.

11 Tree roots break concrete.
12 Trees were once planted too close to
13 sidewalks. Now it is an urban epidemic.
14 Year after year every year concrete
15 expands and contracts and breaks due to
16 freeze-thaw conditions.

17 In cold climates near trees
18 concrete looks like that in three to
19 seven years. In my own personal
20 experience, I've seen it as soon as a
21 year.

22 Cities are unable to keep up.
23 Of 74 miles of sidewalks in the city, 29
24 percent or 21 miles are in dangerous
25 condition. The sidewalks are unusable,

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2 growing tree roots to blame. This
3 gentleman of Portland's Public Works
4 Department is showing an example.

5 There's been several articles
6 in newspapers pretty much nationwide.
7 Settlements, as you heard Councilman
8 Kenney mention, the number in the City of
9 Philadelphia is pretty astronomical. San
10 Francisco, Washington, DC, all over the
11 place, have paid out very big numbers in
12 slip and falls due to concrete.

13 Also, one thing I would like to
14 point out, in several states, including
15 Pennsylvania, homeowners insurance
16 companies will also come out to
17 residential homes and failed sidewalks
18 where they need to be replaced.

19 Twice the cost of maintenance.
20 Dollar for maintenance versus \$2.26
21 legal.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Those are
23 settlements?

24 MR. VON FISHER: Yes.

25 Rubber sidewalks is a solution.

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2 They're unbreakable. They're
3 maintainable, eliminates trip and fall
4 and ends chronic breakout. Rubber
5 sidewalks, you can drop a bottle -- it's
6 been tested -- at ten feet and it will
7 not break. Bones do not break on it.

8 It's a maintainable system.
9 What they are is two-by-two-and-a-half
10 pavers interlocked with recycled
11 fiberglass dowels enclosed in a landscape
12 railing chassis.

13 With concrete it's guaranteed
14 to break. It's a chronic problem. It's
15 costly, creates waste. It's loud and
16 it's polluting.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: What do you
18 mean by "loud"?

19 MR. VON FISHER: Just
20 vibration, people walking on concrete.
21 When you have to repair concrete,
22 demolition of the jackhammer, the backhoe
23 and construction crews.

24 Studies show that tree roots
25 grow less aggressively under rubber

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2 sidewalks, and I will get into more about
3 that in a moment. On the left side, you
4 see rubber sidewalks versus the right
5 side, concrete.

6 It allows access to utility
7 lines and tree roots. In a lot of city
8 buildings, what you would see happen,
9 they would have new concrete put in and
10 then your local utility company would
11 need to break up that concrete to service
12 fiberoptic lines, electrical lines, et
13 cetera. These provide access all the
14 time.

15 It also provides temporary
16 pathways. If there's any construction
17 going on in any location, rubber
18 sidewalks can be put down as a temporary
19 walkway, and it's reusable. You can pick
20 it up and move it to your next location.
21 It also prevents storm water runoff. It
22 accommodates freeze-thaw conditions. It
23 does expand and contract with the
24 environment and does not break.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Could you

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2 go back a slide?

3 MR. VON FISHER: Absolutely.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Explain the
5 storm water runoff.

6 MR. VON FISHER: On the edge of
7 a full-size paver, which is two by two,
8 it has a five percent void on the end of
9 it around it and it allows water runoff
10 to run in between the slight gaps in
11 between the modular paving system. Tree
12 roots do not starve for water because
13 there is some water fed. It reduces
14 water runoff going into your storm sewers
15 because it does have that five percent
16 void on the edges.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

18 MR. VON FISHER: There's the
19 five percent void, as you see, where the
20 joints connect.

21 Healthy tree roots are saved
22 instead of being cut down. No damaging
23 tree root trimming.

24 One thing I want to say is that
25 my company also is a certified installer

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2 of putting this down. In no way, shape
3 or form do we trim or touch tree roots.
4 What the cities are currently doing, most
5 of them have a certified arborist that
6 they use and consult with. Usually the
7 steps are, the arborist will evaluate the
8 tree roots and the site and see what
9 needs to be done. The arborist can do
10 what he feels necessary, if anything.
11 And when the installation takes place,
12 what we will do is grade up to the level
13 of what the arborist wants us to do.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Will
15 ultimately, though, the tree roots
16 settle? If they're exposed and there's a
17 lump of tree root, you will go up to that
18 root?

19 MR. VON FISHER: Yes. What we
20 do is, we grade with the material going
21 kind of over the roots. The roots have
22 been known to subside.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: That's the
24 question.

25 MR. VON FISHER: Because when

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2 concrete is there, roots travel up for
3 water access. This allows the roots to
4 be more settled in and it's healthier for
5 the tree.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So the
7 roots will grow down?

8 MR. VON FISHER: Yes. They
9 can, yes, depending on the tree, of
10 course.

11 Freezing ground expands and
12 contracts, causing concrete breakage.
13 Rubber sidewalks expands and contracts as
14 the ground changes. That's after two
15 winters in New Rochelle, New York, an
16 install that we did.

17 Firm, yet shock absorbing.
18 Safe transition on and off of adjacent
19 concrete. Nothing breaks on rubber
20 sidewalks, not bottles, not bones.

21 It's a non-skid surface and
22 it's ADA compliant. Low vibration, safe
23 transition and it's a four-foot width
24 minimum.

25 Temporary sidewalk needs: As I

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2 mentioned earlier, construction sites,
3 temporary developments and utilities
4 maintenance, which would be a key for
5 PECO or any other company.

6 Diverts waste tires from
7 landfills. These panels are 100 percent
8 recycled tire rubber fabricated into
9 dense, durable modules. One tire equals
10 one square foot of recycled rubber
11 sidewalk. So as you see, the tire is
12 being in. They're stripped of the steel
13 threads, heated up, get rid of a lot of
14 the impurities, put into molds and then
15 you have the end result.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is the
17 other material that's removed from the
18 tires that's not usable for the sidewalk,
19 is that also recycled?

20 MR. VON FISHER: Yes, sir.
21 Everything is 100 percent recycled.

22 LEED credits. If I had
23 Internet access, I could click on here
24 and go into further detail. If you look
25 on the handouts that I have provided,

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2 they're up at the table that everybody
3 can certainly grab. LEED is the
4 Leadership in Energy and Environmental
5 Design green building rating system,
6 which was developed by the U.S. Green
7 Building Council providing standards for
8 environmentally sustainable construction.

9 What happens now, we're doing a
10 lot of business in Washington, DC,
11 because all new buildings in construction
12 sites need to have so many LEED credits
13 per job. This is a LEED credit four.
14 Also, in a lot of state applications, you
15 can get grant money which can be
16 subsidized by the federal government.
17 There's a lot of good things there also.

18 It fulfills the EPA's five
19 guiding principles. Environment: price
20 plus perform, pollution preventative,
21 life cycle perspective, comparison of
22 environmental impacts, and environmental
23 performance information. It meets all of
24 those requirements if you go on the EPA's
25 website.

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2 Installation: It's modular and
3 interlocking. If you look to the
4 right-hand side, you can see the
5 fiberglass recycled dowels that hold the
6 panels together.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Let me ask
8 you a question. You may laugh when I ask
9 this question, but I'm going to ask it
10 anyway because it always occurs to me.
11 Are these easily stolen?

12 MR. VON FISHER: Easily stolen?
13 We have never had a case of any of them
14 being stolen, not even off the job sites.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We've had a
16 situation where a guy actually stole a
17 street, Belgian-block street, in South
18 Philly.

19 MR. VON FISHER: Really?

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: He stole a
21 whole street. Over a period of time, he
22 carted off all the Belgian blocks. And
23 they caught him and, of course, got them
24 all back, but I was wondering whether or
25 not that's in the dead of night easy to

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2 remove.

3 MR. VON FISHER: Well, it's not
4 that easy to remove because it's all
5 interlocked and locked in at the sides,
6 but, I mean, somebody could steal a block
7 of concrete if they really wanted to.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But you
9 haven't had experience with them being
10 stolen?

11 MR. VON FISHER: None at all.

12 Step one, we break out the
13 existing surface. Step two is, we
14 prepare the bed. Step three, we set the
15 modules and lock them into place. Step
16 four, it is ready to walk on. No curing
17 time. Immediately ready.

18 It can be snowplowed over,
19 shoveled. You pretty much name it and
20 it's durable. Driven on. There has been
21 no problems.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: How about
23 chemical de-icing stuff, salt?

24 MR. VON FISHER: That is not a
25 problem. The only thing that is known to

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2 hurt this is sulfuric acid, which will
3 pretty much hurt anything in its path.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are those
5 block sizes standard or can they be done
6 in different sizes?

7 MR. VON FISHER: They're
8 standard sizes.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: On the
10 upper right, what size is that?

11 MR. VON FISHER: What that is,
12 they're two-by-two blocks with three of
13 them. It's a total of a six-foot-wide
14 walkway.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Because a
16 lot of the sidewalks in Philadelphia are,
17 I think -- are they four by four?

18 MR. VON FISHER: Yeah, usually
19 four by four, but walking up to here,
20 it's probably -- could be as wide as ten
21 feet. That doesn't pose a problem for
22 anything.

23 It's a little hard to see, but
24 here is the competitive points. Benefits
25 versus rubber sidewalks, concrete and

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2 asphalt. Life cycle near tree roots:
3 Rubber sidewalks is 20 years, concrete is
4 five years, asphalt is two. Installed
5 material costs under a thousand square
6 feet: \$15 a square foot is rubber
7 sidewalks, concrete is \$8 a square foot
8 basically in a residential type of
9 application, asphalt is \$6 to \$8 a square
10 foot.

11 Labor involved --

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But it's
13 actually, I guess -- not to interrupt
14 you, but it's actually, on concrete, if
15 you do an actual comparison, it's \$40 a
16 square foot.

17 MR. VON FISHER: Well, that
18 will be my next couple slides.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

20 MR. VON FISHER: Labor,
21 three-man crew versus four-man crews:
22 Recycled materials, 100 percent in rubber
23 sidewalks. Some may be present in
24 concrete, as well as asphalt.

25 ADA compliance: Rubber

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2 sidewalks, low vibration; concrete, high;
3 asphalt, high.

4 Porosity, which is the water
5 seepage through the joints on it, rubber
6 sidewalks is the best; concrete has
7 nothing; asphalt is a little better.
8 Rubber sidewalks is 0.54 inches per hour.
9 Co-efficient of friction and mass
10 changes: Concrete lifts and breaks.
11 Rubber sidewalks, there's possible
12 settling where you just kind of have the
13 certified installer lift it, regrade it,
14 put it down, it is usable again. There's
15 nothing breaking out and repouring.
16 Also, what is nice, it's maintainable.
17 The life expectancy on it, they say 15
18 years, but that's soon to go to 20 years,
19 because we have further testing done on
20 it. And as Councilman Kenney said, it
21 can be reversed.

22 Savings over 20 years, this is
23 the key element: Rubber sidewalks stays
24 at \$15 per square foot. As you see, the
25 comparison against concrete, after five

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2 years, goes up. Ten years goes up to
3 \$24, goes up to \$32. That is pretty much
4 with maintenance, rebreaking out the same
5 spots, not even counting the amount of
6 lawsuits that cities are faced with.
7 That's a whole different separate issue.

8 Current installations:

9 Washington state, Texas. We're doing all
10 the Wal-Marts in the southern states, the
11 entrance to Wal-Marts, to eliminate their
12 slip-and-fall issues. Chicago; Vermont;
13 New York; Baltimore, Maryland;
14 Washington, DC. Baltimore, if anyone
15 happens to go down there to visit, you
16 will see right across from the Aquarium
17 we installed -- I forget how many square
18 feet, but it looks good till this day. I
19 was there last weekend.

20 Over 140,000 square feet in 60
21 cities, 13 states, 135 installations
22 spec'ed by city engineers, public works
23 and green architects.

24 Currently, we are going to have
25 an install in Bucks County at Pennswood

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2 Retirement Community, which is going to
3 be 27,000 feet, and a few of the
4 hospitals in the City, roof-top decks,
5 entranceways and things of that nature.

6 This photo was taken on March
7 15, 2006. It was a project completed in
8 New Rochelle, New York in September 15th,
9 '04. The sidewalks have stood up to the
10 second winter with no discoloration from
11 de-icers or gouging from shovels or
12 equipment.

13 I noted some minor movement in
14 a few individual pieces, which may be due
15 to frost still being in the ground. All
16 in all, the project looks good. That was
17 from Jim Maxwell, the Commissioner of the
18 City of New Rochelle.

19 This is in Idaho after three
20 winter cycles. Holds up, no issues.

21 This is Hoboken, New Jersey in
22 '04.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Now, is
24 that slide both a rubber and cement mix?

25 MR. VON FISHER: Yes.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Around the
3 tree is rubber and the concrete is --

4 MR. VON FISHER: Yes, sir.

5 This is Washington, DC in
6 August of 2006. This is Aurora, Colorado
7 used as an entranceway to the Public
8 Works building. This is the Los Angeles
9 School District, which has implemented
10 the policy to put rubber sidewalks in all
11 school locations.

12 Also, we have a future meeting
13 set with the School District of
14 Philadelphia.

15 This is San Fernando,
16 California; Long Beach, California in
17 '04; Santa Monica, California. As I
18 said, the sidewalks originated in
19 California.

20 This is the pilot program. It
21 was a partial order of 2,000 square feet.
22 It can do up to 20 tree well sites, would
23 be -- there's the cost and what the
24 breakdown of materials is per square
25 foot.

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2 Provides modular, maintainable
3 sidewalk paving that preserves the urban
4 forest, reduces costs of sidewalk
5 maintenance, eliminates trip-and-fall
6 hazards, keeps waste tires out of
7 landfills and achieves LEED rating
8 points.

9 And that's a picture of a beach
10 access.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is there a
12 facility which manufactures them in the
13 East Coast?

14 MR. VON FISHER: Yes.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Where?

16 MR. VON FISHER: In New York.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: New York
18 state?

19 MR. VON FISHER: Yes, which New
20 York state is one of the -- I think it's
21 still the number one recycling state in
22 the country.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: How large
24 is that factory and how much do they
25 produce in a year?

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2 MR. VON FISHER: They can
3 produce up to 30,000 square feet of
4 material per day. They have four
5 humongous presses that keep pressing it
6 out.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Excellent
8 testimony.

9 MR. VON FISHER: Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
11 very much. You don't mind hanging around
12 so we can --

13 MR. VON FISHER: Not at all.
14 Any questions, hopefully I'll have the
15 answers to.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We now ask
17 Sarah Corlett from New Kensington CDC.

18 Actually, is Christine here?
19 Why don't you both come up together.

20 Please identify yourself for
21 the record.

22 MS. CORLETT: Good afternoon.
23 I'm Sarah Corlett and I am the Economic
24 Development Director at New Kensington
25 Community Development Corporation.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
3 proceed.

4 MS. CORLETT: New Kensington
5 CDC services the Fishtown, Kensington and
6 Port Richmond neighborhoods through
7 housing counseling, real estate projects,
8 land use management and economic
9 development. New Kensington CDC is
10 present today to demonstrate support for
11 a resolution authorizing the Committee on
12 the Environment to hold public hearings
13 investigating the long-term benefits of
14 replacing cement sidewalks with rubber
15 sidewalks in select areas of the City.

16 NKCDC would support the use of
17 rubber sidewalks in parts of the City for
18 several reasons. This organization has a
19 history of sustainable practices and
20 environmental preservation efforts, and
21 several years ago, a land use management
22 department was formed to clear, stabilize
23 and maintain abandoned vacant land that
24 was an eyesore for the residents. And
25 since the program has started, NKCDC has

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2 kept over 1,100 lots green and lush. And
3 this open and cared for space is highly
4 valued in the community and has been
5 responsible for revitalizing the
6 Frankford Avenue commercial corridor.

7 Particularly relevant to the
8 usage of rubber sidewalks are the regular
9 tree plantings New Kensington CDC
10 conducts throughout the neighborhood. In
11 partnership with the Department of
12 Conservation and Natural Resource's
13 TreeVitalize program, NKCDC is able to
14 plant trees for residents and business
15 owners at no cost. Two neighborhood tree
16 plantings are held during the year, and
17 most recently this past April, over 90
18 neighborhood volunteers turned out to
19 support the cause. And during the fiscal
20 year of 2006 and 2007, nearly 150 trees
21 will have been planted throughout the
22 neighborhood.

23 It is clear that trees are a
24 valuable resource in our neighborhood,
25 because not only do they provide shade

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2 and a sense of intimacy, they also
3 represent a community renaissance to
4 individuals who have witnessed
5 neighborhood economic decline for
6 decades.

7 NKCDC has also been able to
8 leverage nearly \$2 million of federal
9 highway funding to implement capital
10 improvements along Frankford Avenue
11 commercial corridor, and as we plan for
12 concrete pavement and new trees, the
13 project team considers sustainability.
14 Streetscape improvements are intended to
15 encourage development, in hopes of
16 revitalizing the neighborhood economy and
17 ensuring that these developments are
18 sustainable. And even when trees are
19 planted properly in appropriate-sized
20 tree pits, invasive roots over the years
21 can damage the pavement as trees seek the
22 water and nutrients they need to survive.
23 This can ruin the pedestrian-friendly
24 walkways that make commercial corridors
25 throughout the City attractive and

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2 viable.

3 Recycled tire rubber sidewalks
4 pose benefits to the City and its
5 neighborhoods for a number of reasons.
6 First, this mechanism reuses materials
7 that exist in surplus rather than
8 employing valuable energy and materials
9 to create concrete. And, secondly,
10 research has demonstrated that tree roots
11 develop differently under the rubber
12 sidewalks and they are less invasive,
13 smaller and develop at a slower rate,
14 while also receiving sufficient water and
15 oxygen due to the porous surface. Should
16 tree roots need special attention or
17 trimming, rubber sidewalks can easily be
18 lifted and trees can be replaced without
19 damaging.

20 Once concrete begins to crack
21 and deteriorate, the surface cannot be
22 mended, but must be completely replaced.
23 Rubber sidewalks can be repaired and also
24 have a longer lifespan due to the
25 durability of the material. And while

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2 the initial cost of installing the rubber
3 sidewalks exceed concrete paving, the
4 longevity of this product proves to be
5 more cost effective. The cost of
6 concrete is continuously on the rise, and
7 it makes financial and environmental
8 sense to invest in a product that poses
9 greater sustainability and produces less
10 waste.

11 As of December in 2006, nearly
12 60 cities throughout the U.S. are taking
13 advantage of this new technology.
14 Philadelphia has the opportunity to
15 strengthen its presence as an
16 economically and environmentally
17 competitive city, and such practice would
18 immediately impact our neighborhood as
19 one that is increasing efforts to become
20 sustainable and as a neighborhood that
21 values its trees.

22 NKCDC services a community
23 that's rebuilding, and this is a chance
24 to invest in practices that will ensure
25 neighbors have safe and viable places to

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2 live and work.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
5 very much for your testimony.

6 Could you please identify
7 yourself for the record and proceed.

8 MS. KNAPP: My name is
9 Christine Knapp. I'm the Eastern
10 Pennsylvania Outreach Coordinator for
11 Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, also
12 known as Penn Future. I want to thank
13 you for giving me the opportunity to
14 speak today in support of rubber
15 sidewalks.

16 Penn Future is a statewide
17 environmental advocacy organization
18 working to create a more just future
19 where the environment, the economy and
20 communities thrive. I'm also the local
21 coordinator for the Next Great City
22 Initiative, which is backed by a
23 coalition of 85 organizations working to
24 create a greener, healthier and safer
25 city in Philadelphia.

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2 The Next Great City Coalition
3 released a report in January outlining
4 ten commonsense and cost-effective
5 strategies to enhance environmental
6 quality and strengthen our neighborhoods.
7 While installing rubber sidewalks was not
8 one of the recommendations, it does tie
9 into two of the recommendations that were
10 put forward.

11 First, the Coalition
12 recommended that the City replace the
13 23,000 trees that have been cut down in
14 the last few years. Trees are vital for
15 our neighborhoods, as they reduce air
16 pollution, absorb storm water and reduce
17 energy costs for neighboring homes. They
18 also add much-needed greenery to urban
19 settings. While most residents enjoy
20 having trees in their neighborhood, many
21 complain that trees often break their
22 sidewalks, creating an unsafe and
23 unsightly problem. In fact, in talking
24 to hundreds of residents around the City
25 this year about the need for additional

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2 trees, the number one concern I heard
3 from residents was overbroken sidewalks.
4 However, rubber sidewalks are more
5 elastic, so instead of cracking, they
6 stretch, alleviating the problem for
7 residents. In addition, rubber sidewalks
8 greatly reduce or even eliminate the need
9 to reprove trees due to root growth.
10 Because rubber sidewalks are flexible,
11 they allow tree roots to grow and be
12 trimmed in a way that doesn't harm the
13 health of the tree. And putting forth
14 the effort to plant much trees, the City
15 would be protecting its own investment by
16 installing rubber sidewalks near trees.

17 Another Next Great City
18 recommendation is to increase the City's
19 poor recycling rate. Installing rubber
20 sidewalks helps close that recycling loop
21 by providing a reuse for rubber tires.
22 Tires can be found short-dumped all over
23 Philadelphia in our vacant lots, on the
24 sides of our roads, in our parks and our
25 playgrounds, and those that aren't

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2 short-dumped end up in our landfills.

3 Rubber sidewalks create a new
4 life for trees. In fact, every square
5 foot of rubber sidewalks saves one tire
6 from being in a landfill.

7 Lastly, rubber sidewalks also
8 help save the City money. Their ability
9 to stretch also means they have to be
10 replaced less often, and they're cheaper
11 to fix. At \$8.70 a square foot, which I
12 think we've heard this earlier, the
13 rubber plates cost about \$2 more a square
14 foot to install than regular concrete,
15 but labor costs of replacing them runs
16 about a \$1.50 square foot instead of the
17 \$8 to \$12 it costs to break up and
18 replace concrete.

19 Rubber sidewalks, therefore,
20 represent a win-win for both the
21 environment and the economy. Therefore,
22 I urge this body to support the placing
23 of rubber sidewalks in select areas
24 around the City.

25 Thank you.

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2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
3 very much for your testimony.

4 Councilwoman Brown.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.
6 Thank you for your testimony, ladies.

7 Regarding the Philadelphia
8 Public School District, what is the
9 status of those discussions or
10 negotiations?

11 MR. VON FISHER: Right now
12 there's still a meeting date to be set.
13 The gentleman that we were going to meet
14 with had something he had to take care of
15 with his health, but I was going to try
16 to coordinate that today, but hopefully
17 within the next two weeks.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And,
19 ladies, what was the trigger for you to
20 consider this environmental opportunity?

21 MS. CORLETT: Well, in our
22 neighborhood we have -- I mentioned we
23 have a streetscape improvements plan --

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You have
25 what?

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2 MS. CORLETT: We have a
3 streetscape improvements plan.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Pull that a
5 little closer to you.

6 MS. CORLETT: And we have \$2
7 million in federal highway money to redo
8 our sidewalks, and we also plant a number
9 of trees in our neighborhood twice a
10 year. And so to me, this product
11 prevents future repair on all of this
12 concrete. And if we're going to invest
13 all of this money in these improvements,
14 wouldn't it be great if it was
15 sustainable.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

17 MS. CORLETT: So that was what
18 kind of drew me to this product.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
20 Thank you very much.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You have
22 more testimony?

23 MS. KNAPP: Sure.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.
25 Go ahead.

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2 MS. KNAPP: No. I was done.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

4 Question relative to the relationship
5 between a particular municipality, the
6 disposal of used tires and the company
7 that does the manufacturing. I mean, is
8 there any way that you're aware of where
9 the tires from the actual community were
10 the tires that were used in the
11 manufacture?

12 MR. VON FISHER: How they rate
13 it now is, they go by the state. They
14 keep track of all the tires that are
15 recycled from Pennsylvania. So the
16 recycler and Rubbersidewalks does have
17 that information exactly.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We're
19 probably not doing it at all. I would
20 suspect that whatever short-dump we're
21 picking up is taken to a normal sanitary
22 facility and then taken to a landfill as
23 opposed to -- what I'm trying to figure
24 out is the method or the possibility of
25 actually creating a stream of raw

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2 material; i.e., tires, to the company
3 itself.

4 MR. VON FISHER: That would not
5 be a problem, because what will happen
6 is, the manufacturing plant in New York,
7 once Philadelphia does sign on board,
8 they need to document the amount of tires
9 coming from Philadelphia and Pennsylvania
10 in order to report it to the government
11 for LEED credits and future dollars.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Now, the
13 other cities that have this relationship
14 either in California or in New York, how
15 do they transport the tires there?

16 MR. VON FISHER: Usually what
17 they do is, there's several people that
18 pick up the tires and the end user, a
19 garage or a tire store, pays to dispose
20 of them. So usually they get free
21 transportation to a recycling facility.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But there's
23 no requirement to recycle the tires,
24 right?

25 MR. VON FISHER: In New York

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2 state and with --

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Not in
4 Pennsylvania?

5 MR. VON FISHER: Not in
6 Pennsylvania as of yet.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So a
9 municipality has to sign on in order to
10 take advantage of this technology? Can
11 the School District operate independent
12 of the City?

13 MR. VON FISHER: Yes,
14 absolutely. Absolutely.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. All
16 right, then.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We'll have
18 to get some additional -- come on up.

19 This is Ed McBride, who is a
20 representative of PECO. I'm glad he's
21 here and listened to some of the utility
22 possibilities, and a Montgomery County
23 Commissioner, I believe.

24 MR. McBRIDE: Yes. Thank you.
25 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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2 I had a question about --

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Ed, just
4 identify yourself for the record.

5 MR. McBRIDE: I'm sorry. Ed
6 McBride, PECO Energy.

7 I had a question about
8 compacting the earth underneath. Because
9 it's porous and we have sometimes a lot
10 of junk under the sidewalks, would it
11 wash away more the dirt and then cause an
12 uneven situation?

13 MR. VON FISHER: No. That
14 hasn't happened in any install that we
15 have done. What it is, it's pretty much
16 like a crushed concrete just as you would
17 do normal concrete, and it's tamped. And
18 then what we do is, we put the micro-fi
19 fabric over top of it, which prevents
20 anything from being washed away.

21 MR. McBRIDE: Oh, okay. All
22 right. Thank you.

23 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 very much.

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2 Any other questions or anything
3 anyone wants to add?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Let me tell
6 you, we like to have these as quick and
7 not drawn-out hearings. They provide a
8 lot of information and get our business
9 done.

10 We're going to continue to
11 pursue this, along with some other
12 environmental issues that we're kicking
13 around, but I think this is something
14 that's relatively doable, at least
15 requiring it on all City projects or at
16 least requiring the examination of the
17 possibility of it on all City projects,
18 whether that's playground renovations,
19 whether it's firehouse, police station,
20 concrete replacement in those locations.
21 I think maybe potentially requiring the
22 City to examine this potential first, it
23 can become sort of a showcase for other
24 private commercial ventures that this
25 stuff works and that it does all the

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2 environmental things that we've heard
3 about in the presentation.

4 So if no one has anything else
5 to offer, we will conclude the hearing
6 and we'll continue pursuing these goals
7 and this one in particular.

8 Thank you very much for your
9 attendance.

10 (Committee on the Environment
11 adjourned at 2:05 p.m.)

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