

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

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, December 6, 2017
1:15 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILLS 170856, 170904, and 170989

- - -

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
3 afternoon. This hearing is called to
4 order. This is a public hearing of the
5 City Council Committee on Parks,
6 Recreation and Cultural Affairs, and the
7 purpose of this public hearing is to hear
8 testimony on Bills No. 170856, 170904,
9 and 170989.

10 I want to recognize the
11 presence of a quorum of Committee
12 members, and the members in attendance
13 are Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr.,
14 Councilman Kenyatta Johnson, and
15 Councilman Al Taubenberger.

16 And I just wanted to start by
17 asking if they had any opening remarks.

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And if not,
20 we'll have the Clerk read the title of
21 the first bill.

22 THE CLERK: Bill No. 170856, an
23 ordinance authorizing the Commissioner of
24 the Department of Public Property to
25 acquire a trestle over Germantown Avenue

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.
2 just below Cresheim Valley Drive and to
3 enter into an agreement to license from
4 PECO Energy Company a certain strip of
5 land running parallel to a portion of
6 Cresheim Creek, all under certain terms
7 and conditions.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Can
9 we have the Clerk now call the first
10 witness and panel to testify.

11 THE CLERK: Tiffany Thurman.
12 (Witness approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
15 afternoon.

16 MS. THURMAN: Good afternoon.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Please
18 state your name for the record and begin
19 your testimony.

20 MS. THURMAN: Good afternoon,
21 Councilwoman Bass and members of the
22 Committee on Parks, Recreation and
23 Cultural Affairs. My name is Tiffany
24 Thurman and I am here today on behalf of
25 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation in

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.
2 support of Bill No. 170856. This bill
3 authorizes the Commissioner of the
4 Department of Public Property to acquire
5 a trestle over Germantown Avenue just
6 below Cresheim Valley Drive and to enter
7 into an agreement to license from PECO
8 Energy Company a certain strip of land
9 running parallel to a portion of Cresheim
10 Creek, all under certain terms and
11 conditions.

12 This will allow Philadelphia
13 Parks and Recreation to develop the
14 Cresheim Valley Trail, which will connect
15 Stenton Avenue and the neighborhood of
16 Mount Airy to the extensive trail system
17 in the Wissahickon Valley Park. The
18 trail will also allow for recreational
19 use by pedestrians and limited
20 non-motorized traffic, including
21 bicycles, strollers, skateboards, skates,
22 and roller blades. This trail will be
23 designed, constructed, owned, and
24 maintained by the City of Philadelphia by
25 and through Philadelphia Parks and

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 Recreation.

3 Philadelphia Parks and
4 Recreation supports this measure and,
5 accordingly, I respectfully ask that City
6 Council approve Bill No. 170856.

7 Thank you, and I will be happy
8 to answer any questions you may have.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

10 Any questions from the panel?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And we've
13 been joined by Councilwoman Maria
14 Quinones-Sanchez.

15 And I do want to take this
16 moment and opportunity to thank everyone
17 who worked so hard on this particular
18 project, which is in the Eighth District.
19 We're very, very excited about the
20 possibilities and what can come from this
21 transfer and what will happen in the
22 Northwest. So thank you so much for all
23 of your work and for everyone who worked
24 on this particular matter.

25 Councilman Taubenberger.

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Madam
3 Chair, thank you very much.

4 Tiffany, I do have a question.
5 First of all, let me be very clear, I'm
6 very supportive of this. So the question
7 I may ask may seem like I'm debating it
8 in my mind. I am not. I'm very much in
9 favor of this. I think trails are very,
10 very important.

11 But let me ask you this, if you
12 know, and if you don't, maybe you can get
13 me the information. What would be the
14 estimate that you would think of people
15 that would use this trail? Do you have
16 any kind of numbers that you might
17 estimate?

18 MS. THURMAN: So that's a great
19 question, and I have here with me our
20 Planning Manager for Philadelphia Parks
21 and Recreation, Robert Armstrong, and he
22 can answer that question.

23 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Maybe
24 timing is everything.

25 MR. ARMSTRONG: Thank you,

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 Councilman. My name is Robert Armstrong,
3 as Tiffany said. I'm from Philadelphia
4 Parks and Recreation.

5 We estimate that this will
6 receive thousands of people using it per
7 year. We have upwards numbers on the
8 Schuylkill River Trail of over a million,
9 and with our ancillary trails in the
10 Wissahickon Valley Park and in Cresheim
11 Valley, we really think this is going to
12 be a wonderful connection and it will be
13 a way for residents of Stenton Avenue on
14 down in this area to Germantown Avenue to
15 access the Wissahickon Valley Park. So
16 not only will people be able to use the
17 trail just for walking, walking the dog,
18 things like that, riding their bike on
19 the trail itself, but also to connect to
20 other trails that are heavily, heavily
21 used, and vice versa. If you're in the
22 Wissahickon, you come up to this and you
23 can get up to Stenton Avenue, because
24 we're going to build a way to get up to
25 Stenton Avenue.

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: So
3 this will be open to pedestrians and to
4 bicyclists at the very same time?

5 MR. ARMSTRONG: Correct. It's
6 our standard trail width.

7 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
8 think it's a great thing. I think people
9 should walk and bicycle much more.

10 And the last question I have,
11 the approximate length of this trail?

12 MR. ARMSTRONG: It's a little
13 over a mile.

14 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Okay.
15 That's fine. Thank you very much.

16 Madam Chair, thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You're very
18 welcome. Thank you.

19 Any other questions?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
22 you very much.

23 And can we have the Clerk now
24 read the title -- or actually is there
25 anyone else here to testify on this bill?

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 Yes. Please come forward.

3 Please come forward if you're here to
4 testify on Bill No. 170856.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And if we
8 could have you state your name for the
9 record and begin your testimony.

10 MS. DANNENBERG: Yes. My name
11 is Susan Dannenberg and I'm the Chair of
12 the Board of the Friends of the Cresheim
13 Trail. I want to thank this Committee
14 and Councilwoman Bass for the opportunity
15 to speak here today and also for the
16 consideration of the ordinance.

17 The Friends of the Cresheim
18 Trail was an informal group until six
19 years ago when we decided to incorporate
20 and applied for non-profit status in
21 order to better advocate for the building
22 of the trail. In the intervening time,
23 we have advocated for the right-of-way,
24 and our volunteers have built two miles
25 of natural surface trail within the

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 Fairmount Park section of this trail.

3 It's part of a larger context.

4 The Circuit Trails covers the nine-county
5 area, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and this
6 is a key link. It's one of the few
7 trails that crosses from Philadelphia
8 into Montgomery County, and Montgomery
9 County is also eager to add their
10 portion, and that really allows us to
11 leverage this investment. We're not just
12 building a one-mile trail. We're
13 actually building a length between
14 Philadelphia and Montgomery. Montgomery
15 will then go on to build another six
16 miles of trail that will hook back into
17 the network.

18 So we appreciate you
19 considering this, and I want to
20 personally thank the Parks, Recreation
21 and Cultural Affairs Committee for
22 considering the ordinance and urge you to
23 pass the ordinance with all due haste.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
25 very much. Thank you for your testimony.

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2 Sir, if you could state your
3 name for the record and begin your
4 testimony.

5 MR. KERRY: My name is Timothy
6 Kerry and I'm a member of the Bicycle
7 Club of Philadelphia. I reside in Center
8 City.

9 Even to go up to Cresheim
10 Valley would be wonderful to go over this
11 bridge and, as you know, how much
12 beautiful the City is having the
13 boardwalk, having the Manayunk Trail
14 bridge, and now you just got the swing
15 bridge. The Cresheim Valley, it's a
16 trestle, huge, overlooked, spectacular.
17 It will be on the front page of the New
18 York Times when you open that. And what
19 better?

20 And I as a cyclist will make
21 the effort to go all of the way up there.
22 And our club has many members in
23 Philadelphia and vicinity, and we'll use
24 it for recreation and probably also some
25 people will use it for commuting, for

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 transportation.

3 So I'm in favor. I would
4 encourage the Committee to vote positive
5 on this issue.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
8 very much. Thank you for your testimony.

9 Councilman.

10 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I
11 just want to make sure my ears heard that
12 correctly, Mr. Kerry. You said that
13 would make the front page of the New York
14 Times?

15 MR. KERRY: Yes.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Not
17 the Northeast Times or any other. New
18 York Times?

19 MR. KERRY: Yes. Did you see
20 the New York Times when the Manayunk
21 Trail bridge opened? Did you see the New
22 York Times when they took the picture of
23 the boardwalk? Do you remember -- just a
24 little history --

25 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: And

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 all these things made the New York Times?

3 MR. KERRY: Yes, they did.

4 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: All

5 right. Now, I want to ask you this, and

6 it has nothing to do, but really quick,

7 did you see the New York Times when they

8 called us, Philadelphia, the sixth

9 borough of New York? It's true, they

10 did.

11 MR. KERRY: Sir, I have my

12 little condo in Philadelphia. I think

13 I'm a little happy about that. But I am

14 very active, and to make it a vibrant

15 city in our -- for everybody.

16 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: I

17 share your passion and I appreciate your

18 passion as well. Thank you.

19 Madam Chair, thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

21 Thank you very much for all of

22 your testimony.

23 Is there anyone else here to

24 testify on Bill No. 170856?

25 (No response.)

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
3 you very much for being here today.

4 If we could have the Clerk now
5 read the title of the next bill.

6 THE CLERK: Bill No. 170904, an
7 ordinance authorizing the Commissioner of
8 Parks & Recreation, on behalf of the City
9 of Philadelphia, to enter into an
10 agreement with the Commonwealth of
11 Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
12 for maintenance of a shared use trail
13 located at the Girard Avenue Interchange
14 and Interstate Route 95, under certain
15 terms and conditions.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
17 And if we could have you call the first
18 witness or panel to testify.

19 THE CLERK: Tiffany Thurman.

20 MS. THURMAN: Good afternoon,
21 Councilwoman Bass and members of the
22 Committee on Parks, Recreation and
23 Cultural Affairs. My name is Tiffany
24 Thurman and I am here on behalf of the
25 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation. I am

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 here today to testify in support of Bill
3 No. 170904, an ordinance authorizing the
4 Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, on
5 behalf of the City of Philadelphia, to
6 enter into an agreement with the
7 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department
8 of Transportation for maintenance of a
9 shared use trail located at the Girard
10 Avenue Interchange and Interstate Route
11 95, under certain terms and conditions.

12 The trail would link the East
13 Coast Greenway and the Port Richmond
14 Trail, connect the local community from
15 Richmond Street and Allegheny Avenue to
16 the Delaware River, and allow for
17 recreational use by pedestrians and
18 limited non-motorized traffic, including
19 bicycle, strollers, skateboards, roller
20 blades. The trail will be constructed by
21 PennDOT and owned by the Commonwealth of
22 Pennsylvania. The City, by and through
23 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, will
24 provide maintenance for the trail for at
25 least four years.

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 Philadelphia Parks and
3 Recreation supports this measure and,
4 accordingly, I respectfully ask that City
5 Council approve Bill No. 170904.

6 Thank you, and I will be happy
7 to answer any questions.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

9 Any questions from the panel?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is there
12 anyone else here to testify on Bill No.
13 170904?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
16 none, if we could have the Clerk read the
17 title of the next bill.

18 THE CLERK: Bill No. 170989, an
19 ordinance authorizing the Commissioner of
20 the Department of Parks and Recreation,
21 on behalf of the City, to enter into one
22 of more agreements with the Philadelphia
23 Authority for Industrial Development to
24 amend, restate, or otherwise replace the
25 lease and sublease authorized by Bill No.

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.
2 090330 to permit the Philadelphia
3 Holocaust Remembrance Foundation, Inc.,
4 to construct, operate, maintain, and
5 repair a Holocaust Memorial Plaza on the
6 "Premises" identified under the
7 previously authorized lease and sublease,
8 all under certain terms and conditions.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
10 And if we could have the Clerk now call
11 any witnesses to testify.

12 THE CLERK: Tiffany Thurman,
13 Chief of Staff, Philadelphia Department
14 of Parks and Recreation.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
16 Please state your name for the
17 record just one more time.

18 MS. THURMAN: Good afternoon,
19 Chairwoman Bass and members of the
20 Committee on Parks, Recreation and
21 Cultural Affairs. My name is Tiffany
22 Thurman and I am here on behalf of the
23 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation. I am
24 here today to testify in support of Bill
25 No. 170989. This bill authorizes the

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.
2 Commissioner of Philadelphia Parks and
3 Recreation to enter into one or more
4 agreements with the Philadelphia
5 Authority for Industrial Development to
6 amend, restate, or otherwise replace the
7 lease and sublease authorized by Bill No.
8 090330 to permit the Philadelphia
9 Holocaust Remembrance Foundation,
10 Incorporation, to construct, operate,
11 maintain, and repair a Holocaust Memorial
12 Plaza on the "Premises" identified under
13 the previously authorized lease and
14 sublease.

15 The Philadelphia Holocaust
16 Remembrance Foundation is a non-profit
17 organization that will construct a
18 Holocaust Remembrance Plaza on the west
19 of the west intersection of Benjamin
20 Franklin Parkway located at 16th and Arch
21 Street. In Bill No. 090330, City Council
22 previously authorized the Commissioner of
23 Parks and Recreation to an agreement with
24 the Philadelphia Authority for Industrial
25 Development under which they entered into

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.
2 a sublease with the Foundation. The
3 Foundation now wishes instead to
4 construct an open public plaza, which is
5 a substantial change from what City
6 Council previously authorized. The plaza
7 will contain six panels with text that
8 summarize the Holocaust and construct
9 basic elements of the Holocaust with
10 democracy in the United States. The
11 plaza will also have a "Remembrance Wall"
12 to promote contemplation and reflection.

13 Philadelphia Parks and
14 Recreation supports this measure and,
15 accordingly, I respectfully ask that City
16 Council approve Bill No. 170989.

17 Thank you, and I will be happy
18 to answer any questions you may have.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

20 I see no questions from the
21 panel.

22 Is there anyone else here to
23 testify on Bill No. 170989?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.
2 none, that concludes our public hearing
3 and we'll now go into a public meeting on
4 Bill Nos. 170856, 170904, and 170989.

5 And the Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Jones for a motion on Bill
7 Nos. 170856, 170904, and 170989.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
9 Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
10 170856, Bill 170904, and Bill No. 170989
11 be moved out of this Committee with a
12 favorable recommendation and further move
13 that the rules of Council be suspended to
14 allow first reading of these bills at our
15 next session of Council.

16 (Duly seconded.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
18 moved and properly seconded that Bill No.
19 170989, 170904, and 170856 will be
20 reported from this Committee with a
21 favorable recommendation with a request
22 that the rules of Council be suspended to
23 permit first reading at the next session
24 of Council.

25 All in favor say aye.

1 12/6/17 - PARKS - BILL 170856, ETC.

2 (Aye.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Anyone

4 opposed?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The ayes

7 have it and the following bills, 170856,

8 170904, and 170989, will be reported from

9 this Committee with a favorable

10 recommendation and a request for a

11 suspension of the rules to permit reading

12 at the next session of Council.

13 This concludes the public

14 meeting on these bills, and there being

15 no further business before the Committee

16 on Parks, Recreation and Cultural

17 Affairs, thank you all very much for your

18 attendance.

19 (Committee on Parks, Recreation

20 and Cultural Affairs concluded at 1:30

21 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 on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
December 6, 2017

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