

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

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, May 21, 2012
9:40 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN

RESOLUTION 120401 - Resolution authorizing Council's Committee on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs to hold public hearings for applicants seeking nomination to serve on the Commission on Parks and Recreation, and further authorizing the Committee to recommend for Council's consideration nominations to be forwarded to the Mayor.

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COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

3

morning.

4

(Good morning.)

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COUNCILWOMAN BASS: This

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hearing is called to order. This is a

7

public hearing of the City Council

8

Committee on Parks, Recreation and

9

Cultural Affairs. The purpose of this

10

public hearing is to hear testimony on

11

Resolution No. 120401.

12

I want to recognize the

13

presence of a quorum of Committee

14

members. Members of the Committee in

15

attendance are Councilwoman Blondell

16

Reynolds Brown.

17

COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good

18

morning.

19

(Good morning.)

20

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Councilman

21

Bobby Henon.

22

COUNCILMAN HENON: Good

23

morning.

24

(Good morning.)

25

COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And

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2 Councilman Kenyatta Johnson.

3 (Good morning.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And the

5 Clerk will now read the title of the

6 Resolution No. 120401.

7 THE CLERK: Resolution No.

8 120401, resolution authorizing Council's

9 Committee on Parks, Recreation and

10 Cultural Affairs to hold public hearings

11 for applicants seeking nomination to

12 serve on the Commission on Parks and

13 Recreation, and further authorizing the

14 Committee to recommend for Council's

15 consideration nominations to be forwarded

16 to the Mayor.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And

18 I want to thank everybody for being here

19 bright and early this morning and for

20 your interest in parks and recreation

21 here in the City of Philadelphia. It's

22 very important. It's important to our

23 growth and also towards our young people

24 here in Philadelphia. And so I'm just

25 really excited that so many people

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2 applied.

3 Keeping that in mind, we're
4 going to try to keep things moving this
5 morning, because we do have a lot of
6 folks that we'd like to hear from today.
7 So I want to first lay out some ground
8 rules.

9 But let me ask first, does
10 anyone else have any comment, any of my
11 colleagues?

12 I'd like to recognize
13 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
15 morning, everyone. As former Chair of
16 this Committee, it's my pleasure actually
17 to see so many persons who are returning
18 for the next marathon, we'll call it, of
19 still wanting and desiring to be
20 intimately involved with the maintenance,
21 growth and future of our parks. I was
22 struck by the familiar names that went
23 through this arduous experience -- we
24 won't call it exercise; we'll call it
25 experience -- a few years ago. And let

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2 me seize the moment to say thank you to
3 the Commissioners who were successful in
4 that route on the way to being appointed
5 by the Mayor. Thank you for your service
6 more than anything else, because what we
7 can see now with the yield of the green
8 plan and elements of the green plan have
9 become realized, and that really does
10 happen because of leadership and then the
11 membership of the Commissioners who were
12 committed not only to the cause but also
13 to each other and pulling as one to
14 actualize a lot of what the Mayor wanted
15 to see happen.

16 And then for those who are
17 applying for the first time, know that
18 this is far, far, far reduced from the
19 very first time we did this X number of
20 years ago. We actually started at 9
21 o'clock in the morning and we finished at
22 8:00 p.m. that night with the testimony
23 by individuals. But after eight years of
24 former Councilman, now President Clarke
25 and I working on the merger of

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2 Philadelphia Fairmount Park and the Rec
3 Department -- and I would just say as an
4 editorial comment, there were many who
5 thought that would never happen. There
6 were many who thought that would never
7 happen, but Councilman, now President
8 Clarke and I made it clear to each other
9 that we were committed to making sure
10 that strategic plan would indeed become
11 realized.

12 So thank you again for your
13 work, and good luck to all of you as you
14 commence with this journey and the
15 process.

16 Thank you very much.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
18 Councilwoman.

19 Any other comments?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So we're
22 going to lay out the ground rules. What
23 we're going to do is ask that you come up
24 in groups of three. As stated in the
25 e-mail that you have all received,

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2 remarks should be limited to three
3 minutes or less.

4 Council staff will be
5 collecting your written testimony and
6 letters of recommendation. So if you did
7 not submit your letters of recommendation
8 previously, feel free to let us know that
9 you have it with you today, and we'll be
10 happy to send someone around to pick that
11 up and also any other pertinent
12 information that you may have brought
13 with you.

14 We'll have the first three
15 applicants, whose name I'll call,
16 approach the witness table and be seated.
17 Also, we're going to call out the
18 following three folks to testify after
19 the first three, but what we'd like for
20 you to do is have a seat right here in
21 the front behind the speakers' table, and
22 that way, once the original group is
23 completed, we can move a little bit
24 quicker. We can move with expediency.

25 Also, prior to commencing with

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2 your testimony, we ask that you state
3 your name for the record, and also
4 remember that the stenographer needs to
5 both hear and understand your testimony
6 as she's taking it down.

7 And with that, we're going to
8 go ahead and get started. So the first
9 three names we're going to call are
10 Ms. Yahya Abdul-Qaadir --

11 MR. ABDUL-QAADIR: That's
12 mister.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm sorry.
14 Yahya Abdul-Qaadir, Earnest Barile, III,
15 and Hanley P. Bodek.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And also on
19 the second panel we're going to have Mary
20 Brady, Douglas Bryant and Joseph Calhoun.
21 And actually, Ms. Brady, we can include
22 you since we're missing one. We can
23 include you in this first panel. And so
24 that also brings up then Ms. Barbara
25 Capozzi.

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2 Is Douglas Bryant or Joseph
3 Calhoun here? So if we can have you have
4 a seat right here.

5 Okay. You can begin your
6 testimony. Please state your name for
7 the record.

8 MR. ABDUL-QAADIR: My name is
9 Yahya Abdul-Qaadir, and I would like to
10 say good morning to Council and also
11 express my gratitude for allowing me to
12 make this testimony.

13 I would first like to state how
14 important the Parks and Recreation
15 Department is to the residents of
16 Philadelphia by providing a vast array of
17 excellent programs and services.

18 Although recreation may have a
19 different meaning to different people, I
20 think we all can agree that the
21 Department of Recreation's programs and
22 services are essential to the quality of
23 life to the City residents.

24 Equally essential is the
25 Commission on Parks and Recreation in

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2 their duty in assisting and advising the
3 Commissioner on various projects,
4 conducting public meetings, and from time
5 to time, adopting and/or supporting
6 standards and guidelines as they relate
7 to park and recreation issues.

8 As I stated, parks and
9 recreation is an essential part of
10 enhancing the lives of Philadelphia
11 residents, and I see this Commission as a
12 conduit for residents to express their
13 comments, concerns and criticisms and
14 also become aware of how they can gain
15 increased benefit from the Parks and
16 Recreation Department. I would be
17 honored to hold a place on this
18 Commission in assisting and providing the
19 service.

20 Although there may be many
21 qualified and talented individuals to
22 hold the place on this Commission, I
23 would like to present my background and
24 reasons why I should be recommended.

25 I'm a longtime recreation

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2 professional with about 15 years in the
3 industry. I hold a Master's Degree in
4 Parks and Recreation Administration from
5 Aurora University in Illinois. I have a
6 Bachelor's of Science Degree in Sport and
7 Recreation Management, where I also sit
8 on the Alumni Board of the School of
9 Tourism and Hospitality Management.

10 I'm a certified Parks and
11 Recreation Professional, which is an
12 optional industry certification, but it's
13 also a testament to my commitment to the
14 industry and my commitment to serving
15 others in their recreational pursuits.

16 My career has been spent
17 serving a variety of communities, first
18 as a seasonal Park Ranger at Independence
19 National Historical Park and then as a
20 Fairmount Park Ranger.

21 After completing my education,
22 I spent eight years as a civilian in
23 military recreation, serving military
24 personnel and their families in
25 recreation programs; three years at

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2 Willow Grove Naval Air Station; and five
3 years overseas in Japan for the Navy and
4 then the Air Force.

5 After returning home, I worked
6 for the Milwaukee Parks and Recreation
7 Department in their Division of
8 Playgrounds and Community Centers, and
9 currently I'm employed in the Campus
10 Recreation Department at the University
11 of Pennsylvania.

12 Throughout my career, I've
13 always had my finger on the pulse of the
14 community in their parks and recreational
15 needs, wants and challenges, and I
16 believe that this is what this Council is
17 all about. It's about advising a
18 department that implements best
19 practices, a department that remains
20 relevant, a department that understands
21 the community it serves, a department
22 that provides a listening ear and moves
23 forward in the best possible manner in
24 serving the residents and enhancing their
25 lives through recreation.

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2 My experience and expertise in
3 this area would greatly bring added value
4 to this Commission.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

7 MR. ABDUL-QAADIR: And I also
8 have two letters of recommendation and
9 also one was sent in.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very good.
11 Thank you. We would like that.

12 MR. ABDUL-QAADIR: You're
13 welcome.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And next we
15 have Mr. Earnest Barile. Is that you?
16 No. Mr. Hanley Bodek?

17 MR. BODEK: Hanley Bodek.

18 Good morning, Mr. Mayor,
19 members of Council, residents of
20 Philadelphia and users of our magnificent
21 Fairmount Park and the citywide
22 recreation system. My name is Hanley
23 Bodek and I am delighted to be a part of
24 this open and transparent process to
25 select Parks and Recreation

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2 Commissioners.

3 Living in Philadelphia the last
4 39 years has been proof before my eyes of
5 what our city is capable of and how it
6 has been evolving itself in positive ways
7 to the benefits of our residents and
8 visitors.

9 I know firsthand that part of
10 our success and popularity is fueled by
11 the use of Fairmount Park. In addition
12 to that, our recreation system has
13 continued to evolve in a positive manner
14 despite the reality of City budgets and
15 government finances.

16 It is interesting to note that
17 while the Commission is called Parks and
18 Recreation, it could also be called
19 Health and Tourism. I say this because I
20 recognize that the recreation system is
21 in a position to contribute to the
22 physical and mental health of our
23 citizens and that Fairmount Park is a
24 huge tourist magnet and economic
25 generator.

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2 The vibrancy and success of our
3 city and parks and recreation system is
4 manifested by the strong response to your
5 call for Commission service. I've had
6 the pleasure of using and contributing to
7 this vibrant system through my regular
8 use of Fairmount Park on its bikeways and
9 waterways and my experience at the
10 Fairmount Park Historic Preservation
11 Trust.

12 From my experience at the
13 Trust, I am convinced that the park's
14 assets can be leveraged through public
15 and private partnerships without
16 impinging on the natural use and beauty
17 of parkland. I am convinced that the
18 numerous friends groups directly
19 affiliated with the park and even those
20 unaffiliated with the park are a valuable
21 tool that has continued to enhance the
22 park for many years.

23 As a Commission member, I would
24 strive to enhance alliances with friends
25 groups and give them the support to raise

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2 their own funds to benefit the park. I
3 would also support monetizing the park's
4 assets by expanding the Recreation
5 Department's successful history of
6 promoting large, citywide recreational
7 events.

8 I would always want to preserve
9 parkland, but recognize that the High
10 School of the Future was a good idea and
11 in a good location.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

14 Ms. Brady.

15 MS. BRADY: Good morning. It's
16 really an honor and a pleasure to be here
17 as a new immigrant to Philadelphia from
18 Baltimore. I think that I'm going to be
19 your Shirley Chisholm candidate for this
20 highly, highly esteemed position as a
21 Commissioner. I am unbought, unbossed
22 and probably a big unknown to all of you.

23 However, I will say this: In
24 my short tenure as a resident of
25 Philadelphia, I've fallen in love with

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2 your city, which is not to take anything
3 away from Baltimore, a very similar but
4 smaller city, a little bit south of here.
5 You may have heard of it.

6 In my 20 years as a resident of
7 Baltimore, I was active with the Friends
8 of Druid Hill Park, which is a
9 neighborhood association that has a
10 citywide mission. In the last couple of
11 years, I assisted them in planning their
12 150th anniversary celebration. It was a
13 tremendous success, and it's been
14 followed by a number of successes over
15 the last two years, including instituting
16 a farmers' market in Druid Hill Park,
17 working with the Jones Falls Trail to
18 bring bicyclists and families and dog
19 walkers and marathons to the City of
20 Baltimore. And it's been one of the most
21 pleasant experiences I've had in my
22 professional career.

23 Professionally, I am an ADA
24 specialist. I've worked with the
25 Governor's Office for individuals with

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2 disabilities in Maryland for seven years
3 as Executive Director of a federally
4 funded program. During that time, the
5 thing that I'm proudest of is the
6 innovation that we brought to the
7 recreation for citizens of disabilities
8 throughout the State of Maryland. We
9 instituted adaptive sailing, adaptive
10 boating, adaptive dancing, adaptive
11 hockey, basketball, fishing, hunting,
12 biking and a number of other recreational
13 programs.

14 I have been living in Florida
15 recently before moving to Philadelphia,
16 and there I was active with sea turtle
17 watch and also the E.O. Wilson Biophilia
18 Center. So in addition to my interest in
19 disabilities, recreation and conservation
20 of our parkland and urban environments, I
21 also am very interested in the natural
22 world. And it's been such a delight to
23 me to come to Philadelphia and see E.O.
24 Wilson at the Free Library recently.

25 This past weekend I concluded a

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2 volunteer involvement with the community
3 in Northeast bringing a Gershwin festival
4 for young musicians and a competition to
5 Center City. That was also very
6 exciting.

7 Presently, I'm volunteering
8 with Operation Ava, which many of you may
9 know is a rather innovative dog and cat
10 rescue operation in the City. And I'm
11 very much looking forward to learning a
12 great deal more about the City of
13 Philadelphia and becoming an active
14 member of your community.

15 Locally, I live on Palm Street.
16 I'm a member of the Friends of Fitler
17 Park, participated in their festival last
18 weekend, baked a couple dozen brownies
19 and had a great time.

20 So thank you so much for
21 allowing me to be considered for this
22 great position, and I look forward to
23 meeting all of the other applicants this
24 morning.

25 Thanks so much.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
3 so much. Thank you.

4 Are there any questions? I
5 recognize Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds
6 Brown.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Forgive
8 me. You said that in your testimony you
9 were a friend of which park?

10 MS. BRADY: Pardon me?

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Friends of
12 Fitler Square, 2nd Councilmanic District.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
14 Councilman.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON:
16 Twenty-third and Pine.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
18 So for each of you briefly
19 state, if you had to look into a crystal
20 ball, what would be the one new reality
21 you would want for our parks. And be
22 as -- summarize as best you can, for each
23 of you.

24 MR. ABDUL-QAADIR: Okay. Look
25 into a crystal ball, I would like to see

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2 a maintenance and some type of
3 maintenance program that would keep our
4 parks clean, an ongoing, consistent
5 maintenance program that will help keep
6 our parks clean. And also I would like
7 to see the continuation of our recreation
8 facilities' after-school programs. Two
9 main issues.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.
11 Mr. Bodek.

12 MR. BODEK: I'd simply say more
13 users.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. And
15 in your testimony you spoke about tourism
16 and you grouped parks with tourism and --

17 MR. BODEK: Well --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Tourism
19 and health.

20 MR. BODEK: Well, I see health
21 coming from not only the parks but from
22 the recreation centers, physical health,
23 mental health, which could have a
24 dramatic effect on our city budget. And
25 the park already attracts a lot of people

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2 and the City attracts people through the
3 marathons, the rowing events, the iron
4 man events, and these are out-of-towners
5 that are coming to our city, presumably
6 spending dollars, and I think the City
7 benefits greatly from them.

8 I'd also add that setting up a
9 mechanism where out-of-City users from
10 the suburbs who are regular users and
11 from other states could become vested
12 members of the park, maybe some sort of
13 informal membership group where they can
14 put some money into the system.
15 Currently, there's no mechanism for them
16 to do that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very
18 helpful.

19 And then please, Ms. Brady.

20 MS. BRADY: Yes. What I would
21 like to see is something similar to what
22 was done in Druid Hill Park in Baltimore,
23 but even better, going a step further.
24 On a trip to France a few years ago, I
25 stopped on the highway and was able to

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2 work out on a para course instead of
3 buying some fast food and routing out
4 along the highway. In Baltimore the para
5 course is terrific, but it doesn't really
6 adapt the exercises for folks in
7 wheelchairs, folks who are elderly or
8 folks who have other sensory or mental
9 issues, and I think that I'd like to see
10 Philadelphia become as innovative in its
11 parks and recreation as it has been in
12 the arts.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
14 so very, very much to all of you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I do want
16 to recognize Councilman Bill Green, who
17 was just here for a moment, who I think
18 is returning, who joined us for just a
19 moment.

20 If we could have our next group
21 come forward. And also behind them,
22 Jeffrey Carroll, Nicole Chandler and
23 Tafia Childs, are next after.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

3 morning.

4 (Good morning.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: You can

6 start your testimony.

7 MS. CAPOZZI: Who is first?

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Next should

9 be Douglas Bryant.

10 MR. BRYANT: Hello. My name is

11 Douglas Bryant. Good morning, Council.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

13 morning.

14 MR. BRYANT: First of all, I'd

15 like to talk about the brief experience I

16 have with Gambrel Rec Center. I'm

17 Treasurer of the Gambrel Rec Advisory

18 Board, and with that office, we plan

19 programming. We also budget for the

20 Gambrel Rec Center.

21 The Gambrel Rec Center is the

22 home of the Frankford Chargers.

23 Frankford Chargers is a very huge

24 athletic association. They've been to

25 Disney World a couple times. We have an

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2 actual turf football field. We have
3 baseball, basketball. We're now in the
4 process of -- we'd like to have the
5 girls -- more programming for the girls
6 in our organization.

7 I'm also a member of the
8 Frankford Parks Association. Frankford
9 Parks, we clean up like the small parks
10 in our area. That's Wilmot Park and
11 Hedge Street Park. Love Your Park Week
12 we cleaned up Wilmot Park and we also
13 cleaned up a small park there at
14 Tackawanna, which has a little fruit
15 garden and vegetable garden there. Our
16 next plan is to renovate Hedge Street
17 Park.

18 I'm also a member of the EPIC
19 Stakeholders Board, and we try and
20 improve the -- we try and improve the
21 quality of life for citizens there in
22 Frankford. I'm also a member of the
23 Philadelphia Alliance for Parks.

24 I'm retired. I work for
25 Lockheed Martin, the largest defense

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2 contractor in the world, and in that
3 position, I was an analyst, systems
4 analyst.

5 The reason I'd like to be a
6 part of this Board is, I'm concerned.
7 I'm also -- I've always had -- I've
8 always been concerned with like the
9 safety in like our unsupervised parks,
10 not so much our rec centers, because they
11 are supervised. I know our rec center is
12 supervised. Our problem there is with
13 maintenance. Mr. Gambrel, who our park
14 is named after, he's been affiliated with
15 the Chargers for like 40 years. He's
16 been with the Gambrel Rec Center for that
17 same amount of time. He is basically our
18 maintenance man there. When things have
19 to be done, he does that. He cuts the
20 grass. So I'm concerned about the
21 maintenance of our park, and I look at
22 the Commission here as an avenue to help
23 improve the -- to help -- I'm sorry.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's
25 okay.

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2 MR. BRYANT: I'm retired. I
3 haven't interviewed for like 30 years.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's
5 okay. Your time is up, so nice segue.
6 Very good. But thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Is there anything else that
9 you'd like to add?

10 MR. BRYANT: No. I think
11 that's it.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
13 Thank you very much. That was
14 Mr. Douglas Bryant.

15 And next we have Mr. Joseph
16 Calhoun.

17 MR. CALHOUN: Good morning.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
19 morning. How are you? You can begin.

20 MR. CALHOUN: I'm doing well.
21 Thank you.

22 Good morning, Councilmembers.
23 My name is Joseph Calhoun. I am a
24 lifelong resident of Philadelphia and I
25 am honored to be here this morning to

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2 seek nomination to the Commission on
3 Parks and Recreation. I've recently
4 returned from two years of service with
5 the Peace Corps as a Municipal
6 Development Advisor in Guatemala, and I
7 am now hoping to reestablish my long
8 roots of involvement with the City of
9 Philadelphia and our park system.

10 Born and raised in
11 Philadelphia, I have always held the
12 Philadelphia parks and recreation system
13 in great pride and consider it to be one
14 of our city's treasures. I hope to be
15 able to serve my fellow citizens as a
16 steward of not only our famous signature
17 parks, like Fairmount, Wissahickon and
18 FDR Park, but also lesser known parks but
19 equally important parks, like Harrogate
20 Park in Kensington and Gorgas Park in
21 Roxborough.

22 It would be an honor to devote
23 my time and energy over the next four
24 years to working to preserve and protect
25 and hopefully grow the Philadelphia parks

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2 and recreation system.

3 I understand the position
4 requires specific skills and a strong
5 dedication to service, and I believe I
6 possess the qualifications that this
7 position requires. As a child, I spent
8 countless hours at our local recreation
9 center, like many other children, playing
10 at the playground, competing with the
11 local sports teams and participating in
12 summer camp programs. It was at the
13 local public pool where I first learned
14 how to swim and in Pennypack Park where I
15 learned how to ride a bike. Through
16 these activities, I developed a deep
17 appreciation of the benefits of our
18 public facilities for youth development.

19 The value of community parks,
20 playgrounds and athletic facilities
21 became even more apparent when I would
22 spend my summers playing on the streets
23 of Kensington while staying with my
24 grandmother on East Russell Street.

25 I think for many people in our

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2 state and even some people in our city,
3 the value of parks and athletic
4 facilities is often overlooked. It's
5 easy to overlook parks when you might
6 have a front lawn or a swing set in your
7 backyard or, if you're fortunate, maybe a
8 pool, but for many of Philadelphia
9 residents, these are not assets that they
10 have themselves nor could they afford to
11 have them, and we rely upon the public
12 facilities to enrich our lives.

13 Throughout my youth, I was
14 highly active in community service
15 through the Boy Scouts of America.
16 Ultimately I attained the rank of Eagle
17 Scout and I was awarded the Good
18 Citizenship Award from the Philadelphia
19 Union League. Our troop would routinely
20 hold events to maintain Pennypack and
21 Holme Crispin Parks and Thomas Holme
22 Recreation Center. In college, I became
23 involved with our campus environmental
24 group participating in cleanups at Cobbs
25 Creek Park, pulling tires out of the

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2 Perkiomen Creek and volunteering at
3 recycling centers. My coursework in
4 environmental studies, especially classes
5 in ecosystem management and environmental
6 psychology, reinforced my commitment to
7 citizen access to green and open space
8 and encouraged me to coordinate with
9 professors and students through my
10 capacity as President of the College
11 Democrats, working tirelessly to
12 galvanize public support for the
13 Montgomery County Open Space Initiative,
14 which passed with 80 percent of public
15 vote in 2003.

16 Ultimately I concluded that a
17 career in environmental law and planning
18 would be the route for me that would
19 allow me to effectuate the implementation
20 of the ideals that I hold so dearly.
21 However, I also knew that I wanted to be
22 of service to society, and thus I
23 committed myself to serving as a Peace
24 Corps volunteer upon completing law
25 school, but before entering private

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2 career.

3 In law school, I completed an
4 environmental and natural resource law
5 concentration while serving on the
6 executive boards of numerous student
7 organizations, including the Public
8 Interest Law Society, the Triangle Bar
9 Association and as Student Bar
10 Association President.

11 My whole life I have believed
12 that public parks and facilities are
13 important and that they need to be safe,
14 clean and attractive and accessible.
15 However, my education and life
16 experiences have convinced me of this
17 truth and have trained me to be able to
18 plan and manage our assets and facilities
19 to achieve this goal.

20 Am I out of time?

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes. Are
22 you done? Okay. Well, thank you so
23 much.

24 All right. And any questions
25 so far?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

4 Ms. Capozzi.

5 I'm sorry. Councilman Johnson.

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You served
7 in the Peace Corps; is that right?

8 MR. CALHOUN: In Guatemala.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: What was
10 your service in Guatemala?

11 MR. CALHOUN: I was a Municipal
12 Development Advisor. It's a separate
13 track within Peace Corps. It's
14 considered a professional volunteer, thus
15 I already had Master's level experience
16 with urban and regional planning and I
17 had my law degree when I entered Peace
18 Corps.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Law degree
20 from where?

21 MR. CALHOUN: Michigan State
22 University.

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: In what?

24 MR. CALHOUN: My law degree is
25 environmental and natural resource law.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: That's
3 your specialty?

4 MR. CALHOUN: That's my
5 specialty.

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

7 MR. CALHOUN: Thank you.

8 MS. CAPOZZI: Thank you for the
9 opportunity to present today. My name is
10 Barbara Capozzi and I seek reappointment
11 to the Commission, having served as
12 Mrs. Verna's designee since the new
13 Commission formed in July 2009. I have
14 letters of recommendation from three
15 strong park advocates, Kathryn
16 Ott-Lovell, the dynamic Executive
17 Director of the Fairmount Park
18 Conservancy; Councilman Mark Squilla, the
19 1st Council District; and Councilman
20 Kenyatta Johnson from the 2nd District.
21 The 1st and 2nd District comprise the
22 southernmost portion of the City and
23 we're blessed to have several strong
24 parks and rec centers that are the hearts
25 of our communities.

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2 I'm honored that these
3 advocates feel that I can represent our
4 mutual interest and concerns, and I
5 appreciate their confidence.

6 A brief pitch for the largest
7 asset in South Philadelphia, which is the
8 oasis of South Philadelphia, FDR Park,
9 where we have just most recently last
10 week gotten rid of pond scum that has
11 been our enemy for 40 years there, and
12 just last week we've invented ways to get
13 rid of it, and it's really amazing and
14 beautiful, and I encourage everybody to
15 come down.

16 I lobby not only for myself
17 but, more importantly, for the rest of
18 the current Commissioners who wish to
19 reapply, because they've all worked hard,
20 dedicated long hours to the delicate
21 transition period while the two large,
22 very large, City departments merged their
23 staffs, their budgets and their
24 territories. And it was a delicate
25 transition, and it's been a very, very

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2 amazing progress.

3 I believe the Commission
4 collectively and personally helped in
5 many ways during this difficult period to
6 make it as smooth a transition as has
7 occurred.

8 We've all played a role
9 somewhat in calming nerves, bridging
10 fences and making the transition for
11 these two vital departments a success and
12 productive as it's been. We listen well,
13 we observe and we do counsel behind the
14 scenes.

15 Respectively, I believe that
16 each Commissioner should be retained, if
17 they would like to submit their
18 application, because collectively, now
19 that the merger has been completed, we
20 can exponentially improve the department.

21 Especially worthy of special
22 mention -- and I don't mean to embarrass
23 her, but I know she'll never say anything
24 about herself as I would anyway.

25 Especially worthy of special

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2 mention is Nancy Goldenberg, our
3 Commission Chair. Her dedication is
4 unending. Her performance has been
5 flawless and outstanding, and her
6 capacity for extra work is amazing. In
7 her role as Chair, she frequently has to
8 write memos about complex and important
9 issues that she needs to brief the
10 Commissioners on, and at the end of
11 Nancy's memos, there are never any
12 unanswered questions. There's never any
13 loose ends. And I can see behind each
14 memo the time and energy that she's put
15 into it.

16 She conducts her meetings in
17 the same effective, efficient and
18 transparent manner, and she's very
19 dedicated to this task. So I'm using my
20 time -- and I don't think anybody needs
21 to pitch for Nancy, but I wanted to do
22 that. This is all in addition to her day
23 job as Vice President of Planning for the
24 Center City District.

25 Also, a special mention needs

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2 to go to Carol Rice, Pete Hoskins and
3 Debra Wolf Goldstein, who stepped up to
4 chair the three committees that were
5 newly formed because of the Charter
6 change and the three roles that the
7 Charter asked us to take, and all of
8 those three were very productive,
9 motivated and deserve to be retained.

10 Of course, every Commission
11 needs new blood and new energy, and what
12 we did last time, although we were new
13 ourselves, was to try to get all the
14 great applicants that were last time and
15 put them on our committees and ask them
16 to serve that way, and I'm sure that that
17 wise practice will continue.

18 Our current Commissioners
19 worked very hard to be inclusive, to
20 listen very hard and to communicate, not
21 only to the two departments that merged
22 but also to the public. One of our roles
23 was to communicate to the public about
24 the many assets of the park and rec
25 system. So I feel that we did that well,

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2 but we can do it even better now that the
3 merger is completed.

4 There's no department of the
5 City that has been blessed with more
6 dedicated volunteers. You've already
7 seen today people step up, I mean, with
8 incredible credentials.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Barbara,
10 I'm going to ask you to summarize,
11 because we're out of time.

12 MS. CAPOZZI: Okay.

13 It would just be my honor to be
14 reappointed. And I have been in the
15 company of many great Philadelphians and
16 I would like to continue my service, if
17 possible.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. The
19 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blondell
20 Reynolds Brown.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Briefly,
22 would each one of you state in one or two
23 sentences only what would you bring to
24 the Commission for the next four years.
25 What would you bring to the table?

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2 We'll start with you, sir.

3 MR. CALHOUN: Thank you,

4 Councilwoman. I believe that I would
5 bring a variety of perspectives, having
6 lived in different parts of the City and
7 also having lived in different parts of
8 the world. I've participated in planning
9 and design consortiums in Germany, where
10 I won an award for -- special recognition
11 for my design, my team. And I've also
12 lived in Central America, where they
13 don't have the type of access that we
14 have. I spent four years at Michigan
15 State University studying urban planning
16 and redevelopment. I believe that I can
17 use what I've learned there to help
18 achieve what I believe is the most
19 important goal, is to ensure more
20 walkable access to parks for our
21 citizens, because many of Philadelphia
22 residents who live in the most populated
23 and urban parts of the City have the
24 least access to green space and
25 recreation facilities.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

3 MR. BRYANT: As a member of the
4 Gambrel Advisory Board, I also had the
5 pleasure of going to citywide advisory
6 meetings, and going to those meetings, I
7 have a feel for what the recreation
8 centers throughout our city mostly need,
9 and it's mostly maintenance and safety.
10 And I have a passion, I have a strong
11 passion for the safety of our children,
12 not only in Frankford where I live but
13 for the City of Philadelphia. And as
14 part of that Commission, I'm dependable,
15 reliable and a very hard worker, and I'd
16 like to be a part of that.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

18 MS. CAPOZZI: Enthusiasm and
19 energy.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
21 then. Thank you very much.

22 Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The Chair
24 recognizes Councilman Johnson.

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes. I

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2 have just one quick question. In terms
3 of Parks and Recreation, as a city what
4 aren't we doing to take parks and
5 recreation to the next level, and what
6 would be your recommendations that we
7 need to look at as a city in terms of
8 making our parks and recreations the best
9 of the best in the country? Like
10 yesterday I was in Silver Springs,
11 Maryland. Some park I was in, great,
12 people riding bicycles, enjoying
13 themselves. I go to Central Park every
14 now and then. So I know we have some
15 great parks in Philly. I'm always going
16 to acknowledge FDR Park, because that's
17 one of the key -- probably largest parks
18 in South Philly where I grew up at as a
19 kid when I think about the City as a
20 whole.

21 How do we go to that next
22 level? What aren't we doing? What are
23 your recommendations in terms of what we
24 need to look at moving forward as a city
25 for all our parks and recs?

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2 MR. CALHOUN: As a Philadelphia
3 resident, I hold our park system in the
4 highest esteem, and I think many citizens
5 do. We often say that we have the
6 largest landscaped park system in the
7 country.

8 However, I feel that sometimes
9 we fail to work with a lot of the
10 resources that we have available to us.
11 Here in the City of Philadelphia, there
12 are over 4,000 acres of vacant land, many
13 of which is public land, and there's
14 nearly 200 acres of School District land
15 that is impervious that we could improve
16 by greening this land, and there's more
17 than a thousand acres of other schoolyard
18 and paved lots that are within the City's
19 assets that we could work with. And
20 these are resources that are here that
21 would eliminate the cost of acquisition.

22 People often want new parks,
23 but we can't sometimes afford in this
24 budget climate to buy parks, but we have
25 land available to us. We also have

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2 wonderful community partners in the
3 Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and
4 different park groups that would help
5 beautify these parks and lots.

6 And, finally, we are one of the
7 greatest educational cities in the
8 country. We have a host of wonderful
9 universities here, and I think we could
10 offer practicum opportunities to some of
11 these universities for the engineering,
12 design and planning students. They could
13 provide us some of the designs and plans
14 for free, and they'd be happy to do it.
15 The university would be thrilled to have
16 the internship and credit opportunity.

17 So I think we have a lot of
18 resources available to us to achieve
19 Mayor Nutter's bold and brilliant goal of
20 adding more acres to our park system and
21 adding 300,000 trees, but I think we need
22 to work with the resources we have
23 available to us, because, as we all know,
24 the budget is a delicate situation.

25 MR. BRYANT: I had an

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2 opportunity to work with our Frankford
3 group, parks group, advisory board, and
4 the EPIC Stakeholders Council. I
5 think -- and I was -- with Philadelphia
6 Alliance, I was at the press conference
7 we had. You, Councilman, and
8 Councilwoman Cindy Bass was there also.
9 There was a chart there and it showed the
10 funding, Philadelphia's funding, as it
11 stands with the rest of the country, and
12 Philadelphia is at the bottom of the
13 realm.

14 We have beautiful parks,
15 Fairmount Park. Mostly I'm concerned
16 about the local parks in the
17 neighborhood. Parks are meant to be an
18 enhancement to our neighborhoods and not
19 a detriment to our neighborhoods. We
20 have to find more ways to increase the
21 funding for parks and recreation. A
22 promise is a promise, as you said,
23 Councilman. We have to restore that 8,
24 find a way to restore that \$8 million.

25 Thank you.

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2 MS. CAPOZZI: Just quickly, I
3 think the thing that we need the most is
4 more users. Clearly, more users. And
5 the two things that most people suffer
6 from are extra pounds and extra stress,
7 and the park system and the rec system
8 answer both of those questions free. And
9 why we can't get more people away from
10 televisions to take a book and go sit in
11 the park or play ball or -- it starts
12 with parents too, come play with your
13 kids.

14 I mean, when I go down to FDR,
15 I see a father playing catch with his son
16 or fishing with his kids. I mean, that's
17 just so important. And what we need is
18 more users, and how we encourage that,
19 we're struggling with that, communicating
20 at every medium possible, ads in the
21 paper, Facebook, Twitter, all these
22 things, but we need to maybe on a more
23 personal level go out and just keep
24 saying come down to the parks.

25 People are afraid. They feel

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2 they're not safe, but the more people
3 that come down, the safer they are, and
4 that's just a paradox that we just have
5 to get over.

6 I see more usage in FDR Park.
7 We have stood on our head in the middle
8 of Broad Street to get people to come
9 down there. Once they're there, Oh, my
10 God, it's so beautiful here. It's an
11 eye-opening experience. So we just
12 little by little have to keep getting
13 more users into the park, which will
14 automatically bring more money, because
15 more people will be lobbying their
16 Councilpeople for more money, more people
17 will be donating to the parks when they
18 see the value of it.

19 I think that's our key role.
20 Just like we need more active voters in
21 the City, we need more users in our
22 parks. We need more people to care. And
23 how we communicate that is a problem that
24 we work with every day.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any other

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2 additional questions?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
5 you very much.

6 (Thank you.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Our next
8 panel is Jeffrey Carroll, Nicole
9 Chandler, Tafia Childs. And behind them,
10 if we could have next on deck, Kate
11 Clark, Thomas F. Crawford and Alfred S.
12 DeLucia.

13 (Witnesses approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
16 morning. Why don't we get started with
17 Mr. Carroll.

18 MR. CARROLL: Good morning.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
20 morning.

21 MR. CARROLL: Good morning,
22 Council and the Committee on Parks
23 Recreation and Cultural Affairs,
24 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, Councilwoman
25 Bass, Councilman Henon, Councilman

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2 Johnson. I am Jeffrey Carroll,
3 instructor and doctoral candidate in
4 political science at Temple University.
5 I live in the Bella Vista neighborhood
6 near 7th and Carpenter, 2nd Ward, 12th
7 Division.

8 For the last 11 years since
9 moving to Philadelphia, I have spent an
10 average of 15 to 20 hours each week in a
11 City park or within a recreation center.
12 I am a member of Friends of FDR Park in
13 South Philadelphia, where I've served as
14 the Captain of the United States Tennis
15 Association tennis team for seven years,
16 and credit to Barbara Capozzi, who is
17 here today, and thank you for the pond
18 scum removal and our new tennis greens.

19 I have also served as the
20 Captain of an adult recreational kickball
21 league at Stark Garden at 7th and Lombard
22 for over four years. Yes, kickball.

23 I'm a member of a basketball
24 league and frequently scour the City's
25 basketball courts for a good game, most

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2 of which I play twice a week at Palumbo
3 Recreational Center on 10th and
4 Fitzwater.

5 Professionally, I have been
6 heavily involved in youth educational
7 programming surrounding parks and
8 recreation facilities as part of my work
9 for two research groups at Temple
10 University. In the BITS program, I led
11 groups of youth for five years in the
12 creation of a community geography
13 information system, which is drawn on the
14 prospectus and experiences of the program
15 participants, all high school students.

16 For two years, I was the
17 collegiate advisor to a group of youth
18 who focus on environment and
19 sustainability issues and represented
20 Dwight Evans' Youth Leadership Summit,
21 and I have also served as the project
22 coordinator to conduct a film project in
23 collaboration with national public TV and
24 radio station WHYI regarding youth access
25 to recreational activities in the City of

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2 Philadelphia and the perception of those
3 high school youth in maintaining those
4 facilities.

5 I'm applying to serve on the
6 Commission on Parks and Recreation for
7 one primary reason: To assist the City
8 of Philadelphia in the creation of
9 innovative means to proactively maintain
10 and promote the 75 parks and 200
11 recreational facilities that are the
12 backbones of our neighborhoods. The
13 implementation of proactive measures, of
14 course, is increasingly arduous in the
15 midst of the City's difficult economic
16 situation. Thus, my focus as
17 Commissioner would be to find thoughtful
18 strategies that will not cost one dime
19 over the City's \$46 million operating
20 budget for the Parks and Recreation.

21 If appointed to the Commission,
22 I will produce a detailed programmatic
23 strategy that would support, promote and
24 invest in the City's park and recreation
25 system based on three primary elements.

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2 Number one, volunteerism. I'll seek to
3 collaborate with area businesses, local
4 non-profits and institutions of higher
5 education to engage in new initiatives,
6 with the primary emphasis on engaging
7 youth ages 10 to 17. Philadelphia is
8 home to nearly 100 friends of parks.
9 Perhaps we can consider a central
10 organization that allows each friends
11 group to interact with one another.

12 According to a report by the
13 Trust for Public Land, volunteer hours
14 equates to approximately \$8.77 per hour,
15 which totals \$4 million for the roughly
16 230,000 volunteer hours that citizens
17 provide each year.

18 Second, fundraising. I will
19 seek to engage both traditional and
20 modern fundraising techniques that
21 include, but not limited to, a social
22 networking campaign, community-based
23 events and grant-writing.

24 The park system generates over
25 \$4 million from financial contributions

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2 with supplements as allocation from the
3 City's General Fund. So a large
4 systematic effort to mirror or exceed the
5 park's contribution is needed for our 200
6 recreational facilities for improvement
7 to infrastructure and staff support.

8 Last, advocacy at the state
9 level. Officials in Harrisburg are
10 essential in establishing the
11 environmental standards of government in
12 the Commonwealth in addition to
13 sponsoring programs for children and
14 families that are housed in
15 Philadelphia's parks and recreation
16 facilities. Consider the substantial
17 value of recreation in Pennsylvania. The
18 Commonwealth spends nearly \$4 billion for
19 recreation, generating nearly 85,000 jobs
20 and nearly three-quarters of a billion
21 dollars in taxes. I will ensure that the
22 City of Philadelphia has an active voice
23 in Harrisburg who will protect the
24 standards that are applicable to our
25 parks and recreational facilities.

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2 So in closing, I seek to be a
3 member of the Commission because I view
4 the parks and recreation facilities
5 playing a fundamental role in the City's
6 vitality. Through my experiences, I've
7 observed how an investment in parks and
8 recreation is a direct investment in
9 community development, public safety,
10 public health, environmental
11 sustainability and the nurturing of
12 Philadelphia's children and families.
13 There are few activities that produce so
14 many tangible returns as an outcome of
15 its investment. As Commissioner, I will
16 find ways for the City of Philadelphia to
17 produce numerous positive results without
18 exacting another burden on the City's
19 tight budget.

20 I thank the Committee for
21 allowing me to testify. I cannot wait
22 for my opportunity to serve the City on
23 the Commission on Parks and Recreation.

24 Thank you. I'm submitting two
25 letters of recommendation. Thank you

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2 very much.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you

4 very much.

5 And next, Ms. Chandler.

6 MS. CHANDLER: Good morning,

7 Council.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

9 morning.

10 MS. CHANDLER: My name is
11 Nicole Chandler. I'm the Founder of
12 Royal Gardens Association, the local
13 affiliate to Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful
14 and the sisterly organization of Keep
15 Philadelphia Beautiful.

16 My letters of recommendation
17 are from Phoebe Coles of Keep
18 Philadelphia Beautiful, Todd Crouch of
19 Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, Kid Long of
20 Pennsylvania Environmental Council and
21 the Neighbors of Overbrook Association,
22 Pauline Rosenberg.

23 Out of the seven years and
24 experience as a steward in the
25 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation

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2 Stewardship Program, I found at the
3 neighborhood level a need to have
4 improved representation and expansion for
5 best management practices for the
6 Fairmount Park system in its entirety.
7 Streamlined coordination is where I excel
8 at best to serve on the Philadelphia
9 Commission on Parks and Recreation. My
10 focus would be to improve policies, to
11 make partnerships such as with the
12 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation,
13 Philadelphia Water Department, stewards
14 and volunteers in the private sector that
15 will work effectively together; policies
16 as the timeline that volunteer projects
17 are completed with operation support from
18 the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation,
19 for this is never ever easy to
20 coordinate; establish guidelines to build
21 a training program to improve
22 stewardships from volunteers.

23 When stewardship groups have
24 reached a certain level of expertise and
25 experience in their capacity, a policy

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2 should be established for the opportunity
3 to make business partnerships available
4 in maintenance operation, landscaping and
5 programming. A business opportunity,
6 which will include the scheduling with
7 operations and the friends and
8 stewardship groups, is what I will work
9 on policy for, best management practices
10 in securing an alignment with stewardship
11 groups and operation.

12 Through my stewardship efforts
13 and under the strict supervision of the
14 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation new
15 retiree Harry Clement, major
16 transformation has taken place in the
17 areas of Morris Park, Rose Recreation
18 Center, the gateway entrance and
19 parameter of the Cobbs Creek Golf Course,
20 and in Upper Darby, the Glencoe Road
21 section of Cobbs Creek and the gate and
22 burial of the Mt. Moriah Cemetery.

23 I have been able to aid as a
24 community organizer to expand
25 beautification along the Cobbs Creek

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2 Parkway and its neighborhood. I am the
3 first non-profit organization to receive
4 funding from Pennvest to set up a green
5 infrastructure on municipality land. The
6 grant was awarded \$174,000, and as you
7 know, at Pennvest, municipalities only
8 get loans. This was actually a grant,
9 not had to be paid back.

10 Since 2008, I have supported
11 Mayor Michael Nutter in his efforts to
12 plant a million trees by securing an
13 ongoing annual donation of 21 native
14 Berling Burlett trees from a committed
15 partnership with Feeney's Wholesale
16 Nursery and the Pennsylvania Landscape
17 and Nursery Association. Our current
18 total tree planting is 86 from this
19 partnership.

20 Under the supervision of Pat
21 Ford of the Philadelphia Water
22 Department, its Waterway Restoration
23 Department, and as the Keep Pennsylvania
24 Beautiful local affiliate, I have been
25 able to coordinate mass cleanups in that

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2 restoration projects on landscaping
3 interests in the Cobbs Creek Darby
4 Watershed areas. Annually I coordinate
5 events to support 2,000 volunteers, which
6 includes many corporations, schools,
7 universities, at-risk and faith-based
8 groups. To name a few, Comcast, who has
9 awarded me \$20,000, Harrington High
10 School, Villanova University,
11 Philadelphia Youth Advocate Program and
12 the Jewish Federation of Philadelphia.

13 My focus is to assist with
14 providing policies which will allow the
15 opportunity for the thoroughbred, which
16 is your stewardship groups, so it's not
17 worked like a mule. Sustainability is my
18 goal.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

21 And Ms. Childs.

22 MS. CHILDS: Yes. Good
23 morning, City Councilmembers and Parks
24 and Recreation Commissioners. My name is
25 Tafia Childs. I was born and raised in

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2 North Philadelphia on 12th and Girard
3 Avenue. I had the opportunity to attend
4 some of the greatest schools in the City
5 of Philadelphia and graduated from
6 Slippery Rock University with my
7 Bachelor's Degree in Communication,
8 Multi-Media and Emerging Technology. I
9 consider myself a forward-thinker, who
10 loves the present but also embraces the
11 future and all it has to offer us.

12 Although I grew up in the North
13 Philadelphia area, today I sit before you
14 as a member of the West Philadelphia
15 community, where we are surrounded by
16 Cobbs Creek Park, Malcolm X Park, Sayre
17 Recreation Center, Laura Sims Skate House
18 and many others. Being a part of this
19 amazing community has shown me that the
20 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation system
21 serves not only a purpose, but is an
22 essential component to the vitality of
23 our citizens.

24 I want you to imagine with me
25 for a minute a relay race with several

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2 racers running, and I'm one of the
3 runners. Before the run, we huddle up to
4 have our last-minute strategy discussion.
5 Then each of us proceeds to our proper
6 place in the lineup. I have the second
7 leg of the race, and I'm looking back to
8 the person coming towards me and looking
9 forward to make sure there are no
10 obstructions in my way.

11 The gun to start the race is
12 fired. All the runners start out with
13 force, speed and determination. The
14 crowds surrounding us are shouting,
15 screaming, clapping and some are even
16 booing as the race continues.

17 My partner rounds the corner as
18 I brace myself for the pending pass.
19 While I wait, there are many thoughts
20 going through my mind, especially the
21 repeated, Don't drop the baton. Whatever
22 you do, don't drop it.

23 I get into position to accept
24 the baton, and with poise and
25 concentration, the pass is made and I

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2 continue on.

3 I, like my predecessor, take
4 off with force, speed and focus, looking
5 forward to ensure that I have my fellow
6 teammate in my view. The race is run and
7 the best team wins.

8 Now, I'm sure you're trying to
9 figure out why I gave such an
10 illustration about running in a relay
11 race. Let me explain.

12 The parks and recreation system
13 has had 15 outstanding Commissioners who
14 have, for the past four years, taken what
15 they have been given - budget shortfalls,
16 deteriorating buildings, renovation
17 projects, pool openings, City revenues,
18 increases and decreases, and regardless
19 of all their challenges, continue to run
20 their race. They have taken a park
21 system that offers so much to many and
22 continue to keep its heartbeat strong and
23 vibrant. Yet, their time to pass the
24 baton has come.

25 As they near the turn in their

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2 tenure, consider passing the baton to me
3 as one of your next Parks and Recreation
4 Commissioners. Allow my hands to
5 continue forging the mission of
6 excellence that was established. Allow
7 me to utilize my care, concern and
8 genuine love and appreciation for our
9 communities and cities to help take this
10 system to the next level of excellence.

11 Thank you for your time and
12 consideration.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
14 very much.

15 Do we have any questions from
16 the members of Council?

17 Councilwoman Brown.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
19 morning to all of you. Thank you for
20 your testimony. I'm inspired by the rich
21 texture and diversity of testimony.

22 I am curious to learn -- to
23 note briefly, because the clock is not on
24 our side -- more about Pennvest. So the
25 grant that you received was specifically

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2 for what?

3 MS. CHANDLER: The grant that I
4 received was specifically for green
5 infrastructure along the parameter of the
6 Cobbs Creek Golf Course and the Rose
7 Recreation Center.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And you've
9 worked closely with the Administration to
10 implement or execute the provisions of
11 that grant?

12 MS. CHANDLER: Yes. And I
13 worked with Mark -- I mean, excuse me,
14 Mike DiBerardinis as well and Joan
15 Blaustein and Chris Palmer of
16 Fairmount -- well, at that time they were
17 Fairmount Park Commission, yes.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
19 Well, it's clear with all of you that
20 your level of commitment and eagerness to
21 want to contribute.

22 Please -- and yours comes
23 through as well. So if there is one
24 improvement, I'll say, that you would
25 like to make going forward based on your

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2 testimony, what would that be?

3 MS. CHANDLER: The improvement
4 I would like to see is, as I stated, best
5 management practices between the
6 stewardships like myself with operations
7 of the Fairmount Park system. Since the
8 merger, we have not received any support
9 from the Philadelphia Parks and
10 Recreation.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Stop right
12 there. Define "support." Support in
13 what way?

14 MS. CHANDLER: I have volunteer
15 events and my groups range between 100
16 and 300 volunteers at a time. I need
17 heavy equipment personnel on staff to
18 assist me when we have to remove invasive
19 trees. I don't get that support.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. All
21 right, then. That gives me a sense or a
22 peek into what your concerns are. So I
23 would suggest that for that specifically,
24 I may want to -- I'll talk with you
25 offline to hear from you how you've

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2 interfaced with Philadelphia Parks and
3 Recreation in an attempt to provide you
4 some guidance for that specific area
5 alone. I don't want to use this hearing
6 for the specifics of that because we're
7 here for another purpose, but when I hear
8 lack of support, that needs to be
9 articulated, because that guides the City
10 agency on how you need their help.

11 MS. CHANDLER: Thank you for
12 your consideration.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sure.
14 Thank you very much.

15 Thank you all.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
17 additional questions by the panel?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, thank
20 you very much for your testimony.

21 Next we have Kate Clark, Thomas
22 F. Crawford and Mr. DeLucia.

23 (Witnesses approached table.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And also if
25 we could have come forward after them

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2 will be speaking Andrew Denison, Eric
3 Doloway and Thomas Donerson El.

4 Good morning.

5 (Good morning.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And you can
7 begin your testimony.

8 MS. CLARK: Good morning. I'm
9 really excited about the prospect of
10 serving on the Commission, both for
11 personal and professional reasons.

12 Personally, I grew up in New
13 York City and my local park --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm sorry.
15 Can you state your name for the record,
16 please.

17 MS. CLARK: Oh, I'm sorry.
18 Kate Clark.

19 Personally, I grew up in New
20 York City and my local park, Inwood Hill
21 Park, was my backyard. And now I'm a
22 mother to an 11-month-old son and I live
23 in South Philadelphia, and I would like
24 him to share my love of urban parks and
25 be able to grow up using them frequently.

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2 Professionally, my career has
3 been dedicated to improving public space
4 in New York City; Syracuse, New York;
5 Buenos Aires, Argentina; and
6 Philadelphia. I have a Master's in
7 Public Administration and have also
8 published a paper, entitled
9 "Public-Private Partnerships in Parkland
10 Management," from research that I
11 conducted as a Fulbright scholar.

12 Currently, I'm a planner at
13 Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, where
14 I manage an agenda called Age-Friendly
15 Philadelphia that focuses on convening
16 organizations from a variety of
17 disciplines to help our neighborhoods,
18 including our parks, become more senior
19 friendly.

20 For the past two years, I've
21 been collaborating with the Fairmount
22 Park Conservancy and Philadelphia Parks
23 and Recreation to encourage seniors to
24 use parks more and educate park leaders
25 about how our parks can be more

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2 accessible and inviting to older adults.
3 This effort began due to an alarming
4 statistic on senior park usage from PHMC
5 that in 2010, 72 percent of seniors
6 reported not having used a public
7 recreation facility, including a park,
8 within the past year, while just 1
9 percent said they did not live near one.

10 Additionally, 78 percent of
11 seniors reported being physically active
12 on a regular basis. So this seemed like
13 a great opportunity that was being
14 missed.

15 I've also worked with a variety
16 of organizations to increase community
17 gardens at senior centers and housing
18 complexes, and I'm currently working with
19 two civic associations and Play in
20 Between, which is an organization that
21 creates temporary innovative play spaces
22 in urban areas to create an
23 intergenerational pop-up playground in
24 South Philadelphia.

25 In order to best leverage

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2 resources and help promote, sustain our
3 park system, I think Philadelphia must
4 think about fostering innovative and
5 unconventional collaborations like with
6 hospitals or senior centers or small
7 businesses and more; researching,
8 adapting and planning best practices from
9 cities worldwide; conducting research on
10 impact of park use on health, as many
11 funders are interested in how environment
12 may provide health benefits; and
13 promoting more innovative and
14 economically sound destination
15 concessions at parks.

16 I have letters of
17 recommendation from Rose Gray at APM,
18 Kathryn Ott-Lovell from the Fairmount
19 Park Conservancy and Christine Piven from
20 Play in Between. And I would welcome the
21 opportunity to be a part of the
22 Commission and contribute in any way that
23 I can.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

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2 And next, Mr. Crawford.

3 MR. CRAWFORD: Good morning,
4 Council. My name is Thomas Crawford.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
6 morning.

7 MR. CRAWFORD: I restore
8 historical buildings. I have a passion
9 for doing so. I'll give you a few
10 examples. One is the Perkiomen Bridge
11 Hotel in Collegeville. It's reported to
12 be the oldest standing hotel in the
13 United States. We are currently
14 redeveloping the site for a combination
15 hotel/restaurant usage. I'm also an
16 owner of the Central Trust Building in
17 Camden, New Jersey. Originally the
18 County of Camden had desired to make that
19 building into the main branch for the
20 Camden Public Library. It appeared that
21 we were going to build it to suit and
22 then they were going to lease it over the
23 long term. They're having funding
24 issues. That project is on hold at this
25 time.

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2 I recently have started a new
3 project to the renovation and reuse and
4 adaptation of the Fort Washington
5 Schoolhouse in Fort Washington.

6 I could give you a list of
7 examples. It's not necessary. My main
8 point is that I have private business
9 experience. When I'm doing these
10 projects, I have responsibilities for the
11 vision for the project, the design, the
12 financing, the construction management,
13 everything from beginning to end. In my
14 case, it's really not a matter of
15 academics. I mean, I'm doing hands-on
16 historical projects each and every day
17 with my own skin in the game. So I'm
18 bringing practical business experience to
19 the table.

20 Just by way of background, I'm
21 a former Chief Assistant City Solicitor.
22 I have over 30 years legal experience. I
23 understand municipal law extremely well.
24 I understand real estate law extremely
25 well. I understand a lot of areas of law

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2 after 30 years of legal experience.

3 I also have a history of
4 volunteer services. I have designed the
5 entranceway to the Churchville Nature
6 Center in Churchville, PA up in Lower
7 Bucks County. I have served on the
8 Sycamore Street Committee regarding the
9 revitalization for Newtown, Pennsylvania.
10 I've served as Santa for the Wood School
11 in Langhorne and St. Mary's Hospital in
12 Bensalem for many, many, many years.

13 The main thing that I
14 believe -- just to bring you up to date,
15 I restore historical buildings. I've
16 given them some examples of historical
17 buildings which I have restored.

18 The main thing I think that I
19 can bring to the Commission is really a
20 vision. That's my entire purpose when
21 I'm doing historical projects. I have to
22 find these projects -- I have to come up
23 with a vision for how we can adapt and
24 reuse them, sustain them, and I have a
25 passion for doing so. When you're taking

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2 those types of properties, they're really
3 the gems and the key to community
4 revitalization.

5 I'm here to volunteer to help,
6 if selected to do so.

7 A couple questions have been
8 asked about some focal points and about
9 needing increased users. I'll just very
10 briefly touch the issues.

11 I'm coming at it from a private
12 business model. I look to create
13 basically business models. You can think
14 of almost examples as to like LA Fitness.
15 LA Fitness has a business model for
16 locations, demographics, what their cost
17 structure is, and I kind of try to
18 systematize a business or the projects
19 into business models. And really the key
20 to increase users is really by
21 systematizing your programs coupled with
22 special events. And I really think that
23 the key for Philadelphia Parks and
24 Recreation is, the Fairmount Park is a
25 gem. I think it's an underutilized gem.

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2 I think through the proper vision, I
3 think it could move more towards what has
4 happened in New York City and Central
5 Park, which has evolved over the years
6 and I think is a good model for the
7 Fairmount Park system.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

10 Okay. Next we have
11 Mr. DeLucia.

12 MR. DeLUCIA: My name is Al
13 DeLucia. I have a Master's in
14 Environmental Engineering. I've been a
15 40-year Philadelphia resident. I
16 recently retired after 38 years of public
17 service at the state, federal levels,
18 spent watershed management, flood routing
19 and controls, construction, contract and
20 project management, portfolio planning
21 and management. I'm a registered expert
22 in project management.

23 My home is within a block of
24 the park. I have hiked, biked and
25 cross-country skied there for many years.

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2 That, together with my recent experience
3 as project manager for the 30th Street
4 Post Office renovation, \$350 million
5 project we worked with Brandywine
6 Development Corp on, led me to believe
7 that the potential of the park in
8 relation to the river is not fully
9 exploited.

10 What really bothers me is how
11 Kelly Drive cuts off pedestrian and bike
12 traffic from the park. I think that we
13 could capitalize on that traffic, bring
14 more pedestrian use into the park. Right
15 now most of the park access is by
16 automobile, and I think that's the
17 biggest issue with the park.

18 I can bring in years of
19 experience in master planning and
20 development. I hope there is a master
21 plan for the City's park system. I've
22 seen no evidence of it.

23 I've managed capital budgets of
24 over \$100 million -- excuse me;
25 operational budgets over \$100 million,

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2 capital budgets over a billion dollars.
3 I've been very involved in the strategic
4 planning and development of strategic
5 plans for federal complexes. I'm very
6 familiar with public-sector funding,
7 public-sector contract administration,
8 project management and sources of
9 funding.

10 I have some letters of
11 recommendation. The one I'd like to
12 point out is from Gerry Sweeney, Chairman
13 of Brandywine Development Corporation.
14 Another one is from Cecil Baker of Cecil
15 Baker and Associates, a noted
16 architectural firm that we've worked with
17 in the City for many years.

18 Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
20 very much.

21 Councilwoman Brown.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I do.

23 I'm struck by your observation,
24 Mr. DeLucia, regarding -- you said that
25 you don't believe that we don't take

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2 advantage enough of pedestrian walkways.

3 Did I hear you correctly?

4 MR. DeLUCIA: You go out on the
5 river, the Schuylkill Banks bike path I
6 think is a success, and that kind of
7 funnels out into what goes on along the
8 bike path behind the Art Museum and up
9 along the river to Fairmount Park. Every
10 day, every weekend, there's hundreds and
11 hundreds of people on bikes and skaters
12 out there. They're all on the river side
13 of Kelly Drive. None of that is captured
14 into the park. The only real connection
15 between the river side and the park is at
16 the Lincoln statue, and that's not a very
17 effective one.

18 I think that we could better
19 capitalize on that. And the example I've
20 seen, if you've ever been to Chicago, the
21 Golden Coast, they've got a similar
22 problem with Michigan Avenue causeway
23 cutting off access to the lake. What
24 they've done is inserted a couple of
25 tunnels underneath with ramps, and every

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2 day there's bikes, there's skaters going
3 through there. So there's an integration
4 pedestrian-wise, foot-wise between what's
5 going on inside and what's going on
6 outside, and I don't think we have that
7 here.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

9 MR. DeLUCIA: And I think we
10 could easily get that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I thank
12 you very, very much for that. I'm an
13 active or avid user of that area there --
14 not as a runner; I don't want to mislead
15 anybody -- out walking, and I hear
16 exactly what you're saying. The
17 confluence of all of those park users
18 huddled, if you will, for X period of
19 time and then it sort of thins out. So
20 your recommendation is very well taken.

21 Thank you very much.

22 Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

24 Councilman Henon.

25 COUNCILMAN HENON: Good

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2 morning, and thank you for testifying
3 today and your enthusiasm for trying to
4 make our City parks and recreations a
5 better place and a more usable place for
6 citizens and visitors in the City of
7 Philadelphia.

8 More on the lines of thinking
9 outside the box and creativity, I've been
10 hearing a few folks talking about
11 fundraising and more public-private
12 partnerships and creativity. Could you
13 expand or give a little brief statement
14 on -- statement or an idea of thinking
15 outside the box. Because I think
16 sometimes using best practices, the
17 department and the board will always look
18 around for -- I would hope they would
19 look for best practices in our country
20 with similar urban areas and
21 redevelopment of our parks and recs, but
22 I'm interested in creativity, something
23 outside the box that otherwise we may
24 miss from our traditional attraction and
25 uses.

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2 MS. CLARK: I don't have any
3 specific examples, and I do think it's
4 extremely important to research best
5 practices in other cities. I think a lot
6 of cities have done things like adopt a
7 park type programming, but it's really
8 extremely important not to privatize
9 public space.

10 I don't know. I think -- I
11 don't have any great solutions, but I
12 think that it would be really important
13 to do lots of research.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: And I don't
15 mean examples for best practices. I mean
16 outside the box, just something crazy,
17 something that you would like to -- or
18 you've thought about, something in your
19 experience, something that you come
20 across or you thought would be a great
21 idea while using our parks and our
22 walkways and our facilities.

23 MS. CLARK: I was going to say
24 one of the things is to try to get
25 more -- we've been hearing so much about

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2 getting more park users and getting
3 people of all ages involved in their
4 parks, and I've heard some cities are
5 doing things like getting more hospitals
6 involved and getting doctors to come out
7 and walk around with older adults, with
8 kids, whatever, but try to educate them
9 about best -- well, like health and
10 eating healthy and why is it important to
11 exercise. So it's like a combo. You can
12 get some free health advice while walking
13 around and also utilizing the park more.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: Make it a
15 part of their wellness.

16 MS. CLARK: Yeah, wellness.
17 Exactly.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: A little
19 more collaboration with some of the other
20 departments with the City and things like
21 that.

22 MS. CLARK: Yeah, definitely.

23 COUNCILMAN HENON: Absolutely.

24 MR. CRAWFORD: I mention that I
25 restore historical properties. For each

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2 project, most of them have been
3 abandoned. I have to come and I have to
4 find a vision, how I can take this
5 project and reconnect it to the
6 community, and that takes a little bit of
7 creativity to do that. But you're always
8 looking to be able to reuse it,
9 revitalize it, how to reconnect it to the
10 community.

11 One of my biggest comments
12 about Philadelphia -- and I've traveled
13 extensively and I love to visit different
14 cities and explore different cities.
15 Most of the other cities, comparatively
16 speaking, have a greater continuity when
17 you're walking. If you go to Boston, you
18 can walk and walk and walk and there's
19 always something new. The biggest
20 element which is lacked by Philadelphia
21 is the lack of connections. You have
22 isolated spots which are of interest, but
23 you don't have the connections between
24 them to create the degree of continuity.
25 So you have to take your gems and you

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2 have to kind of fill in the spaces in
3 between, and that might take a little bit
4 of creativity, it might take
5 privatization, but you have to create
6 points of interest, activities, events so
7 that you are connecting to kind of create
8 the continuity among Philadelphia. I
9 think that that's how you get a dynamic
10 environment.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. DeLUCIA: Another thing
13 I've thought about, I've cross-country
14 skied an awful lot in the park. I know
15 we don't get much snow anymore, but I'm
16 not sure people realize what a wonderful
17 place that is with the rolling hills, not
18 too steep for cross-country skiing. And
19 I've often thought of an idea of
20 integrating a set of trails for hiking,
21 biking and cross-country skiing. And,
22 again, if we could connect that with
23 what's happening on the river, it would
24 be even better. But if you could tie
25 that together with some strategically

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2 placed cafes or restaurants that draw in
3 that foot traffic and tie that into a
4 master plan of some kind -- is there a
5 master plan? I've seen no evidence of
6 it. If not, there needs to be one.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'll be
8 happy to give you the backstory on that,
9 and let me just be brief.

10 Yes, there is a strategic plan
11 wherein the William Penn Foundation --
12 thank you to the William Penn -- gave
13 \$300,000 and matched that with the City's
14 contribution of \$300,000 and conducted a
15 strategic plan -- and Debra Goldstein may
16 remember these exact dates -- somewhere
17 between 2003, 2004. Out of that came a
18 number of recommendations. One of them
19 was to merge and one of the best practice
20 was to merge Philadelphia Fairmount Park
21 with the Rec Department. That took eight
22 years. It was Councilman Clarke, now
23 President Clarke and I who coached that
24 along, if you will.

25 And so I do know that the

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2 Commission is still in the process of
3 executing and implementing
4 recommendations from that strategic plan,
5 and that's public information. So we'd
6 be delighted to --

7 MR. DeLUCIA: I looked on the
8 website. I couldn't find it.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
10 then. We'll speak with any one of the
11 existing Commissioners and ask that you
12 get a copy of that.

13 MS. CLARK: Can I just add
14 something innovative that's happening in
15 our city that I think is real exciting?
16 There's an organization called Play in
17 Between, and they crated a pop-up
18 temporary play space on the Parkway this
19 past summer. Christine Piven runs it.
20 And she would like to expand this and use
21 vacant lots to create these play spaces
22 that you can then partner with a
23 community member and sort of like put it
24 away at night, and it can come out and
25 you get neighbors to be volunteers to

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2 watch the space. But it was really
3 successful and she's going to be doing
4 one in South Philly, and I think it's
5 something that we can do in our schools.
6 A lot of our schools are just like
7 cement. Well, what if we had these
8 pop-up play spaces?

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I'm sorry.
10 What did you say the name of that was
11 again?

12 MS. CLARK: It's called Play in
13 Between, and she has a website, and she's
14 amazing.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
18 so much for your testimony.

19 And our next group -- I'm
20 sorry. Did you have a question,
21 Councilman?

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just more
23 of a comment. Not so much for the
24 individuals doing testimony, but more of
25 a public statement. Just to encourage

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2 individuals who, I guess, have an
3 interest in the Parks and Recs
4 Commission, at least from my perspective,
5 and just in general, we often talk about
6 the actual parks, but there's another
7 part of this conversation at least that I
8 have a special interest in, and that's
9 the emphasis on our recreation facilities
10 and programming in our recreation
11 facilities. And thus far, which is okay,
12 I've only really heard ideas and concerns
13 about parks, connecting trails, which is
14 all nice and I'm very supportive of, but
15 I think when they did the merger -- and
16 that's one thing I did pay attention to.
17 When you merge two different agencies,
18 you want to make sure that we have a
19 cohesive vision of the existing agencies
20 that were actually merged, and a lot of
21 times, at least from what I've been
22 hearing thus far, I don't hear about
23 what's actually taking place in our
24 playgrounds, our rec centers. Somebody
25 touched on maintenance, but what about

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2 the programming, the soccer, the
3 basketball, the baseball, the swimming,
4 the activities that keep young people off
5 the street during the summertime?

6 Because I know myself as a young man
7 growing up, we always went to Chew
8 Playground for the free public summer
9 camp program. We would get our free
10 lunches. We would get our free snacks in
11 the afternoon, and that was the way that
12 we enjoyed ourself every single summer.

13 So just for the record, when I
14 advocate as a Councilman for additional
15 funding or the rededication of revenue
16 from the parking tax to the Department of
17 Parks and Recreation, I have an interest
18 not only in just making sure we maintain
19 the vitality of our open space and parks,
20 but more specifically looking at also how
21 do we maintain and provide aggressive
22 programming for our young people and our
23 children and families through our actual
24 recreation centers, specifically
25 playgrounds.

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2 And so I just want to put that
3 out there. Obviously your testimony is
4 probably already set in stone, but
5 there's two parts to this conversation.
6 It's just not let's just make sure we
7 have a nice park and green space, but we
8 also have a recreation component that
9 really services our young people. And so
10 I just want to put that out there for the
11 record in terms of this dialogue as we
12 move forward.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
14 Councilman. I want to echo your
15 comments, as someone who grew up in
16 public recreational facilities and went
17 to the free summer camp and the free
18 lunch and the free snack and the whole
19 thing.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: You
21 remember the peanut butter and jelly?
22 That was like my favorite, like the
23 little hard thing. Some of y'all might
24 know what I'm talking about.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: But thank

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2 you so much for those comments. It's
3 very, very important.

4 Next, we're going to move to
5 our next panel. Mr. Andrew Denison, Eric
6 Doloway and Thomas Donerson El. Thank
7 you.

8 MR. DENISON: Thank you very
9 much. First I want to thank Councilman
10 Johnson for the setup line to help
11 promote my testimony which I'm about to
12 give. I think I'll be preaching to the
13 choir that you're in right now.

14 But seriously, I do want to
15 also thank the Committee.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: State your
17 name.

18 MR. DENISON: Andy Denison.

19 Thank the Committee first for
20 your accomplishment in supporting the
21 notion of merging Parks with Recreation.
22 I think it was a good idea, and I think
23 it turned out to become a great idea and
24 seems to be getting better every day. So
25 I think there's a great positive future

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2 forward with the Parks and Rec Commission
3 and also the Parks and Rec Department
4 being merged.

5 So since the establishment of
6 the Parks and Rec Commission only a few
7 years ago, I was fortunate enough to have
8 the opportunity to be asked to serve on
9 the Commission's Branding and
10 Communications Committee, under the
11 direction of current Commission member
12 Carol Rice. And she has been a great
13 asset to the Commission, and I really
14 enjoyed working with her and getting to
15 know her as well.

16 So since the start of the
17 Commission's existence, I've worked
18 directly with Carol and Commission
19 Chairperson Nancy Goldenberg and others
20 on many of the initiatives and
21 accomplishments designed to promote the
22 mission and objectives of the newly
23 formed Commission. It's been rewarding
24 work for me, and I think my capabilities
25 have contributed to the impressive

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2 success of the Commission so far.

3 So here's a few examples.

4 Seeking an outlet to communicate via the
5 Internet and with literally no funds
6 available, I created and maintained the
7 Commission's first unofficial web
8 presence, a Facebook page with
9 information and timely updates. When a
10 generous grant was allocated to the
11 Commission to develop an official web
12 presence with a local web development
13 company, it was decided to simply build
14 on what I had started, and now I continue
15 to maintain the official Facebook page,
16 with regular updates on the Commission's
17 activities and initiatives.

18 When the Commission wanted to
19 create an award for recognizing
20 outstanding volunteers not only from the
21 park side but also many from the rec side
22 who formed the real backbone of this
23 Parks and Rec Department, I worked with
24 Commissioner Rice to create the PaRC Star
25 Award developing the nomination process

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2 and the award itself. To date, the
3 Commission has recognized several
4 wonderful volunteers, both who work in
5 the park and many of them work in the rec
6 centers from around the City who have
7 contributed mightily to the success of
8 the park and rec system.

9 Now, where did I get my
10 experience to help the Commission?
11 Working here in Philadelphia as a
12 marketing and communications leader for
13 local and national accounts has given me
14 the set of unique capabilities to develop
15 communication strategy and marketing
16 plans, and these skills have served the
17 Commission well in collaborating with
18 others to continue to promote the
19 evolving role of the Commission on Parks
20 and Recreation. And in addition, in my
21 experience as a member of the news media
22 in leadership positions, I have an
23 excellent understanding of the role and
24 responsibilities of government and the
25 dynamics of the public arena.

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2 Now, on a personal side,
3 Councilman Johnson and others, I am a
4 longtime Board member of the Fairmount
5 Sports Association, and for nearly 50
6 years, this organization has sponsored
7 athletic leagues on the grounds of
8 Fairmount Park for thousands of children
9 that have come from all corners of the
10 City. As a Commissioner, a Board member,
11 a coach and parent, I've traveled to
12 recreation centers across the City and
13 have seen how important a well-run rec
14 center to be to maintaining community
15 cohesion.

16 I've served as a Commissioner
17 on the FSA Youth Basketball League at
18 Lloyd Hall since 1998, where hundreds of
19 children have been fortunate enough to
20 get their first positive experience
21 playing basketball in an entirely
22 volunteer organization, but also
23 coordinating with Lloyd Hall's Joel Fagan
24 and Joe Cooke before him and his staff on
25 logistics, and I even ref the games.

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2 So I think there's a lot of
3 experience that I have not only on the
4 park side as a park lover and user, but
5 also as a person who is involved in youth
6 recreation, getting the parents,
7 children, coaches, everybody, volunteer
8 activities, involved in not only
9 utilizing the park but also utilizing it
10 for a way to get children and others
11 involved in the activities of the park.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

13 MR. DENISON: Thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Next, we
15 have Mr. Doloway.

16 MR. DOLOWAY: Good morning.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
18 morning.

19 MR. DOLOWAY: My name is Eric
20 Doloway. I'm a resident of the
21 Brewerytown section of Philadelphia. I
22 am honored to have the opportunity to be
23 here today.

24 I am seeking your nomination as
25 a member of the Philadelphia Commission

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2 on Parks and Recreation because I believe
3 that Philadelphia's parks and recreation
4 centers are our city's most valuable and
5 most underutilized resources.

6 Our parks and recreation
7 centers have tremendous potential to
8 reinvigorate neighborhoods and become
9 centers for youth and community
10 development. I believe that I have the
11 skills, the creativity and the experience
12 to help our parks and recreation centers
13 reach their full potential.

14 In order for our parks and
15 recreation centers to reach their
16 potential, we must do at all recreation
17 centers what is already working in a
18 handful of recreation centers. Our parks
19 and recreation centers must develop
20 strong and sustainable partnerships with
21 their communities, businesses,
22 universities and other non-profit
23 organizations. When I walk into a
24 vibrant recreation center, I have come to
25 expect that I will find a committed

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2 partner organization. In the very best
3 rec centers, I will find several.

4 If we are to see Philadelphia's
5 parks and recreation centers meet their
6 potential, we must create an environment
7 conducive to these partnerships.

8 In 2006, I led a program at
9 Arthur Ashe Youth Tennis and Education
10 where my staff and I assisted Penrose
11 Playground at 12th and Susquehanna in the
12 development of partnerships with outside
13 organizations to create a more vibrant
14 and community-friendly space. Through my
15 work with Penrose Playground, we were
16 able to assist recreation staff and
17 advisory council in developing
18 partnerships, which resulted in
19 significant increases in after-school
20 program attendance and diversified
21 program offerings, transforming a
22 previously fledgling and underutilized
23 space into a true youth development
24 program. I worked with the Director of
25 Penrose and community members to create

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2 an environment that was friendly to
3 partnership and found many interesting
4 and willing partners who did not require
5 any City funding.

6 I am currently the Executive
7 Director of the Urban Blazers Foundation.
8 Through partnership with schools and
9 recreation centers, I have grown Urban
10 Blazers to reach more than 900 young
11 people each year with weekly programs
12 that provide regular interactions with
13 Fairmount Park. I never cease to be
14 amazed by children's reactions to the
15 park and the limitless potential to
16 play -- for play, learning and exercise.

17 Unfortunately, I am no longer
18 surprised by the fact that so few have
19 been introduced to Fairmount Park prior
20 to their time with Urban Blazers, despite
21 the fact that every child we work with
22 lives no more than a short SEPTA bus ride
23 from Fairmount Park.

24 This is unacceptable in a city
25 that boasts our nation's largest urban

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2 park system.

3 As a member of the Commission
4 on Parks and Recreation, I will work
5 tirelessly to ensure that more children
6 have access to Fairmount Park. This
7 resource should not be reserved for a
8 select few residents.

9 As a member of the Commission
10 on Parks and Recreation, I will also work
11 to ensure that all of our city's
12 recreation centers are able to develop an
13 environment conducive to beneficial
14 partnerships and not just the select few
15 that currently have them.

16 Thank you for the opportunity
17 to speak today.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

19 Next, we have Mr. Thomas
20 Donerson El.

21 MR. EL: Yes. You can call me
22 Brother El.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Brother El,
24 okay.

25 MR. EL: Good morning to

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2 everyone and thank you to the Committee
3 for its consideration of my application.

4 Just a little bit about myself.

5 Again, my name is Thomas Donerson El. I
6 am a 50-plus year resident of Brewerytown
7 Philadelphia and also currently have a
8 home in Strawberry Mansion where I'm
9 currently very, very active. I sit on
10 the Board of the Greater Brewerytown
11 Development Corporation. I'm also the
12 3-1-1 liaison for my neighborhood,
13 Strawberry Mansion, area. I'm pretty
14 much known as a go-to guy. My ability to
15 crack open doors and get information and
16 find out things that may be of use to my
17 fellow residents is what I'm known for.

18 Again, thank you for
19 considering my application. I just have
20 a little story, because as Councilman
21 Johnson mentioned, the recreation
22 centers, of which I am a regular user, on
23 a monthly basis my wife and I, we feed
24 the homeless at the Cecil B. Moore
25 Recreation Center at 22nd and Cecil B.

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2 Moore Avenue. We've been doing that
3 since November of last year, and we do it
4 monthly. I also have been a registered
5 tutor with the Mayor's Commission on
6 Literacy since 1992, and I utilize Hank
7 Gathers Recreation Center as well as the
8 recreation center at 27th and Master to
9 educate my students. I moved into adult
10 literacy recently, which, Councilwoman
11 Brown, one of your workers is one of my
12 students.

13 But anyway, I just have a
14 little story I'd like to share with you
15 about why I wish to be nominated and
16 selected for the Fairmount Commission on
17 Parks and Recreation.

18 I wish to have an opportunity
19 to serve on the Philadelphia Commission
20 on Parks and Recreation for the simple
21 reason that I have enjoyed over a period
22 of 50 years an attachment, intimacy and
23 love for Fairmount Park, the recreation
24 center at 27th and Master, going to the
25 old concession stands at Belmont Plateau

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2 and I have also enjoyed for years going
3 to concerts at Robin Hood Dell and the
4 old Playhouse in the Park. I learned to
5 swim at the swimming pool at what we call
6 The Rec, and I played basketball,
7 football, baseball and softball there. I
8 played soccer at the fields near Sedgley
9 Drive and remember being able to buy
10 hotdogs, ice cream and soft drinks at the
11 concession stand that used to be there.
12 I really miss that concession stand.

13 I would personally like to see
14 Philadelphia's Fairmount Park maintain
15 that world-class, premier status that it
16 has always enjoyed as being the very best
17 inner city park in the country. Although
18 maybe not as famous as Central Park, I
19 still think it's the best park in the
20 world.

21 I would do my -- for whatever
22 length of time I would be permitted to
23 serve as a Commissioner, I would, of
24 course, do my utmost in helping to
25 maintain those standards already in place

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2 that have made our system of parks and
3 recreation what it is today and to
4 contribute my ideas and experiences in
5 helping to continue that same tradition
6 and practice and perhaps improve upon the
7 same.

8 I have a natural affinity for
9 being in the park and have considered
10 being able to take more of an active part
11 in helping to preserve and keep it
12 beautiful, and on my daily -- I visit the
13 park almost daily to go and meditate and
14 read, and you might find me picking up
15 trash, because I just want to keep the
16 park looking good. So I might take it
17 upon myself to get a bag and bag up trash
18 and put it in the trash can.

19 Because I don't have any true
20 idea of what the responsibilities of a
21 Parks and Recreation Commissioner are, I
22 am confident nevertheless that because of
23 my connection to the community in which I
24 live, my professional and business
25 connections and my educational work and

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2 professional experiences of over 30 years
3 will qualify me to be able to serve and
4 serve well. Being a member of the
5 Philadelphia Commission on Parks and
6 Recreation would enable me to do so and
7 help to make me a better human being,
8 because I want to learn and grow through
9 experience.

10 So I thank you again for your
11 consideration.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
13 Any questions from the panel?
14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No? Okay.
16 Oh, wait.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just a
18 quick comment.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Councilman
20 Johnson.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Maybe I
22 spoke too fast, but I am happy that we
23 are along the same thought process when
24 we talk about the other side of parks and
25 recreation, which is the recreation

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2 component. And just listening to your
3 testimony and reading your various
4 testimonies, there's some acknowledgment
5 that there is a recreation component that
6 plays a very pivotal role in how we
7 improve the quality of life in the City.
8 And so I just want to acknowledge that.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

11 And I just wanted to -- I had a
12 question for you, Mr. Doloway, in terms
13 of you mentioned how you were no longer
14 surprised in terms of young people who
15 live near the park who don't have any
16 access that haven't been introduced to
17 the park. And can you talk about what
18 your ideas would be to change that?

19 I'm originally from North
20 Philadelphia and grew up probably less
21 than two miles from Fairmount Park and
22 had very little interaction with it,
23 except for when our mother had the time
24 to take us over to Smith Playground or
25 something of that sort. So how do you

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2 change, in your mind, how do you
3 change --

4 MR. DOLOWAY: So I think one of
5 the most important pieces to changing
6 this is just working to get the kids into
7 the parks. When I first started working
8 with Urban Blazers three years ago, I was
9 struggling to like convince the adults in
10 the community who ran the recreation
11 centers and ran the after-school programs
12 to allow us to bring the kids into East
13 Park, to bring the kids to the
14 Wissahickon. And once they have that
15 access and they learn that it's a safe,
16 fun place to play and that it's something
17 that when we teach the kids like it's fun
18 and we teach them all of the things there
19 are to do in the park, you don't need
20 video games, you don't need a swing set
21 in order for the park to be fun, like a
22 fallen tree can be the greatest asset.
23 So once the kids -- you get the kids out
24 there, they learn that pretty quickly and
25 they want to come back. And when we're

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2 talking about East Park, which is
3 literally like across the street from
4 where so many young people live in our
5 city, yet none of them knew that the
6 Boxer Trail existed back there.

7 So we just need to create more
8 opportunities to engage people with our
9 park and not just Kelly Drive, but
10 showing kids that we can get to the
11 Wissahickon by taking a SEPTA bus, like
12 we don't have to -- you don't have to
13 have a car to get there. And right now,
14 a few years ago the Friends of the
15 Wissahickon did a study that showed that
16 the people who utilize the Wissahickon
17 are mostly from Chestnut Hill. And like
18 that doesn't make sense, because
19 Germantown and Mount Airy and so many
20 other neighborhoods, and West Allegheny
21 and Strawberry Mansion and Brewerytown
22 are so close, like you don't even have to
23 transfer a bus line to get there. They
24 just need to know that it's there.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Would

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2 either of you like to also comment on
3 ways to get young people, particularly in
4 underserved communities, into the parks.

5 MR. EL: Well, basically
6 information, access to information, I
7 think is one of the things that would
8 help involve the people of the community
9 more. Like a lot of times people just
10 don't know. They just don't know certain
11 things.

12 So from a communications
13 standpoint, regular communications to the
14 recreation centers. Again, I remember
15 that I could go to The Rec at 27th and
16 Master and look on the bulletin board. I
17 mean, we're talking years and years ago,
18 of course, but I could go there and find
19 out about things that were taking place
20 in the community. And that has since --
21 I won't say completely gone away, but
22 it's fallen off. And once the people
23 know what they can do and have access.
24 Like, for example, I used to be able to
25 walk from my house straight to Rock

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2 Garden, which is my all-time favorite
3 place in the park, and I'm so glad that
4 they refurbished that area of Rock Garden
5 where you can cross the street and sit on
6 the riverbanks. But since they've built
7 some houses down there, they've kind of
8 like eliminated access to walk directly
9 into the park, because you have to cross
10 the railroad bed. And now with the
11 Bottom Dollar food market that's being
12 built there, I would like to see them
13 perhaps build a safe walkway so that
14 people can go directly into Rock Garden
15 like we used to, because we used to get
16 spring water there.

17 Another thing is, I would like
18 to see again the concession stands for --
19 those places were, especially at Belmont
20 Plateau, going to the concession stands,
21 people use that as a gathering place,
22 which will be another way of making the
23 people aware of what's going on and how
24 they can access the park more.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Just to

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2 make a note on one of the things you just
3 said in terms of they are building
4 housing and a Dollar --

5 MR. EL: Westrum built a
6 development at 31st and Thompson, which
7 is the most direct egress into Rock
8 Garden.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: One of the
10 things we're doing -- because we want to
11 promote development, but at the same
12 time, if it's prohibiting or somehow
13 blocking people from having access to
14 parkland, that's something that we want
15 to examine and look further into.

16 MR. EL: Absolutely.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So we
18 certainly want to get that information.

19 MR. EL: And one last thing.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sure.

21 MR. EL: As far as the Robin
22 Hood Dell East, which I would like to see
23 maintain its standard of giving people a
24 way to come and hear some entertainment,
25 I'd like to see maybe a community night

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2 implemented maybe once a month for Robin
3 Hood Dell East that the people could
4 come. Maybe you could sponsor a youth
5 talent night or something like that, kind
6 of off the beaten path to help the people
7 get more involved as well.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

10 Yes, sir.

11 MR. DENISON: I think that not
12 only do children and parents need to know
13 about what's going on in the park, but I
14 think it can be incumbent on us to show
15 them actually what they can do in the
16 park. I think you can engage the
17 advertising and media communities here in
18 Philadelphia that are already here and
19 ask them to help participate in this
20 process, where we are not only informing
21 people about what is available to them at
22 the park but actually showing them how to
23 enjoy it, because I think some children
24 here -- and I know they're focusing on
25 children, but grownups too -- don't even

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2 know how to enjoy the park or what's --
3 they may not even know what's there, but
4 they may not even know what to do once
5 they got there. So there's a little bit
6 of education and promotion, to be honest,
7 on ways to actually enjoy the park. Open
8 people's minds to those other ways to
9 enjoy the park.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

11 Thank you.

12 Councilwoman Brown.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I too am
14 very, very, very encouraged by the
15 feedback and reaction of Councilman
16 Kenyatta's observation, and my sadness is
17 that when I look at the number of
18 interested parties and the very short,
19 short list of ultimate appointees by the
20 Mayor, my sadness is that we can't
21 capture the eagerness of all who are
22 here. And I will be asking the former
23 Commissioners who are going to testify
24 about this. My hope is that you will
25 seize the moment and be assertive and

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2 aggressive in your own way about
3 registering these brilliant ideas that
4 you have. Because I operate from the
5 philosophy don't hold me responsible for
6 anything you haven't brought to my
7 attention. You have some brilliant,
8 brilliant, brilliant ideas that should be
9 considered by the Park Commissioners.

10 And so my hope is that you will
11 do that irrespective of outcome, that
12 there's still the opportunity to register
13 your voice and make it loud and clear
14 that this is a way we can improve our
15 park system.

16 So let me close with this
17 question. If you had to grade, give a
18 grade to that part of the report card
19 that talks about parks' engagement with
20 neighborhood communities, what would that
21 be? Because that gets exactly to what
22 Councilman Kenyatta observed.

23 MR. DOLOWAY: Since no one else
24 wants to go first, I will.

25 So, I mean, grade, I think that

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2 it depends on where we are.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: By that
4 you mean what section of the City?

5 MR. DOLOWAY: What section of
6 the City we're in.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I agree
8 with you.

9 MR. DOLOWAY: And I think that
10 during the merger of Fairmount Parks and
11 Department of Recreation I was engaged,
12 my organization, Urban Blazers, was
13 engaged to work very specifically with
14 Mander Playground and Hank Gathers
15 Recreation Center to engage those
16 children with the park, and it was a
17 wonderful opportunity and it goes to what
18 others have said, that we need to show
19 the kids how to have fun there and
20 then -- now we see kids doing many of the
21 things that we've taught them and going
22 off on their own and they know how to
23 utilize the park safely because of that.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

25 MR. DOLOWAY: So in that, I'd

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2 say I'm a harsh grader on myself, so I
3 think I can do a lot better, so I'd say a
4 B.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That's
6 encouraging.

7 MR. DOLOWAY: I think there's
8 others that are really failing to engage
9 their parks that are so close.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That's
11 very instructive.

12 MR. DOLOWAY: And as a
13 Commissioner, I would work to ensure that
14 those who are working at our recreation
15 centers better understand the benefits to
16 their children of the parks.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well
18 taken.

19 MR. EL: Well, with respect
20 to -- I don't want to beat the recreation
21 center issue up, but I think that the
22 recreation centers need to have a special
23 focus at this time. I mean, where I come
24 from in Strawberry Mansion and
25 Brewerytown, I notice there are a lot of

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2 children that do use the recreation
3 center. However, a lot of them have
4 closed and locked rooms that they hardly
5 ever use, especially at the one at 22nd
6 and Cecil B. Moore, things in disrepair,
7 things like water fountains. They have a
8 stage there that's never used.

9 So the recreation centers I
10 would give a grade of a D plus at this
11 particular time, because, again, it needs
12 to be more focused on -- because a lot of
13 times people that might not -- like on
14 rainy days, you don't go to the park, so
15 you go to the recreation center. And so
16 you would want to have everything there
17 that you could utilize, you know, I mean,
18 other than just basketball. Just have
19 rooms available for a tutoring program, a
20 literacy program, which is what I have,
21 and just things of that nature.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Again,
23 very instructive and very informative.

24 It would have been great to
25 have had this hearing before budget

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2 hearings, because we would have had this
3 kind of information to share with the
4 heads of those departments, and so we'll
5 have to do that in some other type of
6 way.

7 But, again -- we can revisit.
8 We can absolutely revisit, so it's very,
9 very helpful.

10 MR. DENISON: I think Deputy
11 Mayor DiBerardinis has done a really
12 wonderful job and I would say an A -- if
13 it gets any higher than that, I would go
14 there too -- in terms of setting the
15 standards and setting a foundation for
16 merging these two organizations together.
17 I think you're probably going to find, as
18 everybody knows, that there are places
19 where there are A programs and there are
20 places where there are C programs, and I
21 think the goal should be can we get the
22 C's to be a B, and usually that's by
23 sharing practices with the A's and
24 getting people to understand why this
25 program works here and why that program

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2 works there.

3 I know that I did that when I
4 was involved in -- being involved in
5 Fairmount Sports. We would go to rec
6 centers and see what worked and didn't
7 work, and we would emulate the things
8 that worked and didn't try to reinvent
9 the wheel. So with a little bit of
10 effort, you can raise your grade as long
11 as you're following somebody who has done
12 the hard work for you.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Great
14 testimony. Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Councilman
16 Johnson.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I'm going
18 to be real brief. On the recreation
19 component -- and I'm going to follow up
20 with my Majority Whip, Councilwoman
21 Blondell Reynolds Brown, and I'll follow
22 up with Madam Chair regarding looking
23 at -- there should be a standard for
24 programming across the board in every rec
25 center.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That was
3 the note I made.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: It
5 shouldn't be some rec centers have great
6 rec leaders and they're required to do
7 programming in A, B, C and D, and then
8 some rec centers just have some rec
9 leaders that just come and show up and
10 relax, to be quite frank with you. And
11 that's something from a public safety
12 standpoint and improvement of quality of
13 life standpoint we have to take a look at
14 so it can be across the board. And I
15 think when you talk about making parks
16 and recreation a priority, there should
17 be a standard for who gets accepted to be
18 a rec leader, and you should have the
19 skills and be qualified or there need to
20 be some type of best practice manual that
21 at a barebones minimum, we know that the
22 job is being done on all different areas.

23 So that's just something to
24 think about, you know. But the other
25 question was, Mr. Denison, what is

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2 interesting to know about your testimony
3 is, you serve on the committee,
4 subcommittee from the Parks and
5 Recreation Commission?

6 MR. DENISON: Right. I
7 actually applied to become a Commissioner
8 here and was nominated but not chosen
9 back in 2009.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: But you
11 got involved.

12 MR. DENISON: So I was asked to
13 be a member of the Branding and
14 Communications Committee under the
15 direction of Carol Rice, who is the
16 Commissioner.

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So you've
18 already been volunteering your time for
19 Parks and Rec, although you didn't get
20 picked.

21 MR. DENISON: Correct.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I commend
23 your efforts.

24 MR. DENISON: Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

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2 Thank you so much for your testimony.

3 We're going to move a little
4 bit quicker. We have Mr. John Farabella,
5 Derrick Ford and Helene Furjan. After
6 them, on deck we'll have Gail B. Gale,
7 Jeffrey George and Nancy Goldenberg.

8 (Witnesses approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is
11 Mr. Farabella here? No? So why don't we
12 also have Derrick Ford and Helene and
13 Gail. So if you want to come forward.
14 And also if we could ask Noah Goldman to
15 come forward and be in the next panel.
16 Is Noah here?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Debra Wolf
19 Goldstein, do you want to come forward.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And
23 why don't we start with you, Mr. Ford.

24 MR. FORD: Good morning.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

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2 morning.

3 MR. FORD: Good morning to
4 members of the Council. I'm glad to be
5 here, and I thank God for the opportunity
6 to sit before you. My name is Derrick
7 Ford and I'm a lifetime resident of
8 Strawberry Mansion, who stands before you
9 with a 40-year history of being involved
10 with parks and recreation here in the
11 City of Philadelphia.

12 Growing up on the 3200 block of
13 Arlington Street, which sits 30 feet
14 across from Fairmount Park, is where I
15 spent most of my life, working, playing
16 and enjoying parks and recreation.
17 During my early years working as a
18 lifeguard and as a tennis instructor, I
19 found refuge at our local recreation
20 center, which is located at 33rd and
21 Diamond, Mander Recreation Center.

22 For many years being employed
23 by the Department of Recreation working
24 as a certified lifeguard and also a
25 tennis instructor, I played an intricate

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2 part in who you see standing before you
3 today.

4 I'd like for you to journey
5 with me and travel with me throughout my
6 years of development and implementation
7 of various recreation opportunities for
8 many youth and adults of the Philadelphia
9 communities. Over the last five years, I
10 have organized and developed the
11 Strawberry Mansion Athletic Association,
12 which is housed at 33rd and Diamond at
13 Mander Recreation Center, which consists
14 of boys and girls between the ages of 5
15 and 16 playing the wonderful game of
16 baseball and football. Since the
17 inception of the Strawberry Mansion
18 All-Star Baseball League, baseball has
19 been revitalized in a host of communities
20 within North Philadelphia, expanding to
21 nine different locations with over 1,100
22 kids playing the wonderful game of
23 baseball. I'm honored for that
24 development.

25 Also I'd like to also include

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2 that I am the Vice President of Friends
3 of Strawberry Mansion or Mander
4 Playground, where we strive to improve
5 the quality of life for the youth and
6 adults through sports, education and
7 family values.

8 For many, many years -- and I
9 wanted to kind of echo the words of
10 Councilman Kenyatta -- that when we talk
11 about parks and recreations, I live parks
12 and recreations, and I'll say
13 wholeheartedly because living on the 3200
14 block of Arlington Street, which almost
15 is close proximity to where I'm sitting
16 to you, it gave me an opportunity to go
17 over there and be alone, opposed to
18 living in the upper streets where there
19 was no outlet for privacy and med -- I
20 was getting ready to say medication. I
21 meant meditation. So the parks has
22 really been a savior for me.

23 Recreation, I'm over there all
24 the time at 33rd and Diamond. I think I
25 spent the majority of my time there

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2 because I understand the significance.

3 Just as we sit here at this very moment,
4 kids are out there using drugs for the
5 first time, someone is dying right now,
6 some phone is ringing somewhere with bad
7 information on the other end.

8 So I understand based on what's
9 happening in our streets today, and I
10 kind of wanted to tie parks and recs
11 together. I spent a considerable amount
12 of time trying to implement and improve
13 the quality of life for the kids up in
14 Strawberry Mansion and surrounding
15 neighborhoods in North Philadelphia.

16 I'm truly a living testimony of
17 what it is to give back to the streets
18 and to the communities.

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
21 so much for your testimony.

22 And next, we have Helene.

23 MS. FURJAN: Good morning. I'm
24 probably a very different category of
25 person from everyone else you've met.

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2 First of all, I'm from New Zealand. I'm
3 not North American. And, secondly, I
4 teach at Penn in the School of Design,
5 and I was actually trained as an
6 architect.

7 I have been living in Center
8 City in the Logan Square neighborhood for
9 nearly eight years and have a
10 four-year-old, which is probably largely
11 the reason that I'm here before you
12 today. As a result of having a young
13 child, I have, of course, visited most of
14 the parks within the Center City District
15 and have become very closely networked
16 with a lot of the other parents in my
17 neighborhood.

18 I'm a member of the Friends of
19 Clark Park, which is a park most people
20 don't know exists. In fact, a tiny
21 little pocket park in Logan Square. And
22 I'm on the Board of the Logan Square --
23 I'm sorry; I'm not on the Board. I'm a
24 member of the Logan Square Neighborhood
25 Association. I have a letter from the

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2 current President. And I also have just
3 joined the Evolve Foundation and started
4 a pro bono initiative which we're calling
5 Urban Space at the moment.

6 One of my big interests is
7 trying to bridge the gap between design
8 and policy and politics, and my
9 experience is that -- I teach in School
10 of Design and, therefore, am closely
11 connected to landscape design as urban
12 planners and urban designers. And what I
13 find is architects in particular tend to
14 lack the connections to have their voices
15 heard at the level of decision-making.

16 But what I also see is at
17 Philadelphia, particularly in recent
18 years, has become a place where that's
19 enormously possible, Alan Greenberger
20 being a good example of the crossover
21 from the disciplines.

22 I think that the work you've
23 done in bringing the two entities
24 together -- and it is to me phenomenal
25 that it took eight years, but it's a

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2 hugely important step. I would also
3 commend a lot of the recent initiatives
4 that have been done, including the work
5 that people like the PHS partnering with
6 Parks and Rec have done in greening
7 vacant lots in different parts of the
8 City, which we know from the study that
9 Penn just recently did has actually
10 decreased crime rates quite dramatically,
11 which was an unexpected bonus. And also
12 Sister Cities Park, which of course
13 opened in my neighborhood less than a
14 week ago and is already hugely
15 successful.

16 What I would sort of say was
17 that the comment about programming was
18 exactly what I've been thinking sitting
19 here and listening to the testimony, and
20 I want to say actually just getting to
21 spend the morning listening to all these
22 ideas has been for me a really fantastic
23 opportunity.

24 In the part of the City that I
25 frequent, which in fact of course my

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2 neighborhood has one of the largest areas
3 of green space I would say of almost any,
4 but I would also describe that green
5 space as predominantly, with the
6 exception of Schuylkill Banks and places
7 like Sister Cities and the playing area,
8 predominantly monumental civic green
9 space, which is -- if you ever hear of a
10 new program, the Parkway is very heavily
11 programmed -- for that scale of event,
12 but in terms of connecting community and
13 providing community resources, it's very
14 poor.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

16 Thank you very much.

17 And Ms. Gale.

18 MS. GALE: Good morning,
19 Council.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
21 morning.

22 MS. GALE: I'm honored to be
23 here.

24 Let me catch my breath for a
25 minute.

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2 My name is Gail Gale. I was
3 born in the United States, but I became a
4 landing immigrant at the age of three,
5 meaning my father took a job in Montreal,
6 Canada, so it gave me the opportunity to
7 be able to live both places, in the
8 United States and in Canada. From that,
9 I learned so much about the parks and
10 recreational and food and everything by
11 the different environments of healthy
12 activity life-style that I have.

13 In 2005, I started working for
14 East Park Revitalization Alliance, which
15 is a non-profit organization that now has
16 a summer camp, after-school program, and
17 we planted over 800 trees in the
18 Strawberry Mansion and Fairmount Park in
19 the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood,
20 along with my fruit tree orchard at
21 Woodford Mansion in East Strawberry
22 Mansion Park.

23 From then, the other side is
24 that I have gardens that I grow fresh
25 fruits and vegetables, and I serve over

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2 100 seniors, along with the community, at
3 two different sites in the Strawberry
4 Mansion neighborhood.

5 Activities is a great part of
6 our going to the park, me getting the
7 residents familiar with Fairmount Park to
8 link, make gateways, draw guidelines,
9 along with the children in our park and
10 in our community.

11 I had also instrumented a role
12 in developing the discovery of Fairmount
13 Park program for East Park area. This
14 monthly program was a partnership between
15 Fairmount Park, Mander Recreational
16 Center and Epper, which is the goal to
17 bring Strawberry Mansion residents into
18 the park. I also helped coordinate the
19 information workshop series for
20 neighborhood residents around the
21 proposed plans to build an environmental
22 educational center at the East Park
23 Reservoir by Audubon Society. I also
24 play important roles in organizing the
25 senior community events held by

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2 Children's Choice after-school program.

3 I was Volunteer of the Year in
4 2008 at the Horticultural Society. I'm
5 also the committee person at the 32nd
6 Ward, the 10th Division. I coordinated
7 all kinds of neighborhood activities and
8 goals to come into the Fairmount Park.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
10 so much for your testimony.

11 Any questions?

12 (No response.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No? Okay.
14 Councilman? No.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I'm okay.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
17 so much.

18 And next, we'll have Jeffrey
19 George, Nancy Goldenberg and Debra Wolf
20 Goldstein.

21 Why don't we start with
22 Mr. George.

23 MR. GEORGE: Good afternoon,
24 City Councilmembers. I want to thank you
25 for giving me the opportunity to speak.

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2 My name is Jeff George and I am a
3 lifelong City of Philadelphia resident,
4 and my wife and I are expecting our first
5 child in August. So I'm very excited
6 about that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

8 Congratulations.

9 MR. GEORGE: Thank you.

10 Today I plan to highlight some
11 life and career experiences that would
12 qualify me to serve on the Board of the
13 Parks and Recreation Committee.

14 I grew up in the City. I
15 attended public and parochial schools.
16 So I am aware of how both function. Upon
17 graduating from high school, I chose to
18 attend Temple University, and I received
19 my Bachelor in Business Administration
20 and Master's of Education in 2007.

21 While in college, I decided to
22 give a career with the Recreation
23 Department a shot. A man named John
24 McBride, who supervised the rec center in
25 my neighborhood at Russo Park, the things

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2 he did for us, it was unbelievable. I
3 mean, I know firsthand he kept that rec
4 center open while he was off the clock.
5 He was there on Sundays just because he
6 wanted to be there. So when he offered
7 me a position to work under him, I took
8 advantage of that.

9 That's when I decided that I
10 wanted to get into a career of public
11 service. So ever since that summer in
12 1999, I've been a recreation center
13 employee up until 2011. I've been a golf
14 camp instructor. We showed children in
15 inner city youth how to golf throughout
16 our city's golf centers. We had Walnut
17 Lane, Juniata, Cobbs Creek. People don't
18 even know that they're public golf
19 courses. So taking the kids from the
20 cities to the golf courses was great. I
21 was an Assistant Recreation Leader and
22 most recently a Facility Supervisor with
23 the rec centers.

24 I was also an educator. For
25 the past ten years, I've been a high

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2 school mathematics teacher in addition to
3 a business teacher at Franklin Towne
4 Charter High School and Bok Technical
5 High School in South Philadelphia.

6 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: My alma
7 mater.

8 MR. GEORGE: There you go.

9 For a short period of time, I
10 also taught in Kensington at a local
11 catholic elementary school called Holy
12 Innocence.

13 So what I want to sum up is, my
14 entire career has been working with the
15 youth of this city, whether it be an
16 educator or whether it be in the rec
17 center showing them how to golf, taking
18 them into the state parks, everything.
19 My entire career has been with the City's
20 youth.

21 As a volunteer in addition to
22 career examples, every neighborhood I've
23 lived in I've been a member of the civic
24 association. I lived in the Tacony
25 section of Philadelphia. I worked in

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2 Tacony, in Somerton. I was always at
3 their civic meetings, and I now live in
4 Parkwood and I'm member of their civic
5 association, a volunteer for Habitat for
6 Humanity. I'm a member of their Young
7 Professionals Steering Committee, Temple
8 University's Loyalty Society, and I have
9 participated in every Mayor's cleanup
10 event citywide over the past five years.

11 What I want to say that sets me
12 apart from a lot of people that have
13 spoken today, I know, Councilman Johnson,
14 you said, I want to hear what we can do
15 with these rec centers, how do we get
16 these kids in the parks. A lot of people
17 said let's get the kids in the park. We
18 could do this, we could do this, we could
19 do that. I've done it. I've taken the
20 kids through a partnership with the
21 Department of Conservation and Natural
22 Resources, the state DCNR, we've taken
23 kids to Ridley Creek State Park, Ralph
24 Stover State Park, Fairmount Park. We've
25 taken them fishing, frisbee golfing,

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2 hiking, geocaching, rock climbing,
3 everything. So I've done that. It's
4 worked. I chose the kids that I want to
5 say maybe not gave me the most -- gave me
6 a hard time, but I picked those kids.

7 I'm sorry I'm kind of rambling
8 here.

9 I submitted some recommendation
10 letters and an article about that program
11 that I just discussed.

12 I want to thank you for your
13 time, and if you have any questions, I'll
14 be here to answer them. Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
16 very much.

17 We'll save questions until the
18 end.

19 Nancy, how are you?

20 MS. GOLDENBERG: I am well.

21 Thank you. Good morning and thank you
22 for this privilege to testify on behalf
23 of my candidacy and continued service on
24 the City's Commission on Parks and
25 Recreation. My name is Nancy Goldenberg,

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2 and for 30 years I've clearly
3 demonstrated my commitment, both
4 personally and professionally, to park
5 and recreation issues in Philadelphia.
6 Allow me to highlight a few.

7 Twice in my professional
8 career, I worked for Fairmount Park,
9 first producing a master plan for the
10 River Drives in 1990, and more recently
11 serving as the Director of its Natural
12 Lands Restoration and Environmental
13 Education Program, a \$26 million
14 initiative supported by the William Penn
15 Foundation to preserve and protect the
16 natural areas of Fairmount Park. In my
17 current position as Vice President of
18 Planning at the Center City District, I
19 frequently work with many City officials
20 and, in particular, the Park and
21 Recreation Department on projects that
22 range from renovating highly visible
23 parks like Aviator Park, Three Parkway
24 Plaza and the newly opened and highly
25 successful Sister Cities Park on the

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2 Benjamin Franklin Parkway to annually
3 inventory and planting trees in Center
4 City. I've raised millions of dollars
5 for these projects and have managed their
6 successful implementation. For the past
7 four years, I've devoted much of my
8 professional time to developing the
9 design and raising funds to renovate
10 Dilworth Plaza, now under construction
11 and poised to transform the heart of
12 Center City into an active hub of civic
13 life. I've been an early proponent of
14 measuring the economic value and social
15 benefits of our city's open space and, to
16 that end, have served on several
17 professional panels with national
18 experts.

19 As a volunteer, I've had the
20 honor of serving the City and its
21 citizens as Chair of the Commission on
22 Parks and Recreation for the past two
23 years. We have built a strong, committed
24 team of Commissioners and committees
25 populated by other volunteers, as you

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2 have heard earlier today. During this
3 time, the Commission has made several
4 successful achievements, including the
5 passage of the Open Space Land Protection
6 Ordinance, completion of a revenue
7 enhancement study that focused on growing
8 the entrepreneurial base of
9 concessionaires, creating a Facebook
10 page, as you heard earlier, and
11 establishing the PaRC Star program,
12 honoring citizens who exceed expectations
13 and service to our parks and recreational
14 facilities and programs. For the past
15 year, we have held our meetings in
16 various recreation centers around the
17 City, learning and listening to citizens
18 tell us their concerns, particularly
19 about safety, maintenance and programs.
20 I'm a past member of the Fairmount Park
21 Advisory Council, a past Board member of
22 the Philadelphia Parks Alliance and past
23 President of Friends of Carpenter's
24 Woods. I'm the founder of Philadelphia
25 Outward Bound, which is headquartered in

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2 Fairmount Park and has for the past 20
3 years actively and successfully used our
4 park, recreational and cultural resources
5 as fundamental tools for teaching
6 leadership skills to Philadelphia's
7 youth.

8 Personally, as an athlete I
9 regularly use Fairmount Park as a runner
10 and hiker. I've had the good fortune to
11 travel to many of the world's
12 extraordinary parks and recreation
13 facilities and I have yet to come across
14 a city whose park and recreation system
15 comes close to being as pervasive and
16 compelling as ours. It is with good
17 reason that Fairmount Park has been
18 ranked one of the ten best parks in the
19 world and our recreational programs
20 continue to win accolades from press.

21 What I hope is readily apparent
22 from my testimony is that I have the
23 professional expertise and personal
24 passion and proven capacity to continue
25 serving on the Commission on Parks and

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2 Recreation, and for that, I seek your
3 favorable recommendation.

4 I'm pleased to leave you with a
5 few letters of recommendation, and I'd be
6 happy to entertain any questions you may
7 have.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
9 Debra.

10 MS. GOLDSTEIN: Madam
11 Chairwoman, former Madam Chairwoman and
12 Councilman Johnson, it is an honor to be
13 before you today -- and Councilman
14 Johnson, I'm sorry, if I didn't say that.
15 My name is Debra Wolf Goldstein. For the
16 last 20 years, I have dedicated both my
17 professional life and countless hours of
18 volunteer time to help improve our city's
19 and region's parks and recreation
20 facilities. I truly believe that our
21 park and recreation system can be
22 polished to be one of the best systems in
23 the country, enhancing the quality of
24 life for residents and visitors alike.

25 I currently am a member of the

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2 Commission on Parks and Recreation and
3 serve as Chair of its Land Use Committee.
4 In that capacity, I spearheaded and
5 helped to draft the new Open Lands
6 Protection Ordinance that you in Council
7 signed into law this past spring. I also
8 led the Land Use Committee in providing
9 feedback on park-related issues during
10 the Zoning Code reform efforts.

11 I also want to add that as
12 Chair of that Land Use Committee, I
13 reached out to and included members who
14 were not Commissioners but who I had
15 heard testify and who are applicants for
16 the Commission who had very impressive
17 ideas and who had specific skills that I
18 thought would be important to include on
19 that Committee. And I'm actually keeping
20 a notebook today and capturing some of
21 those names, should I be fortunate enough
22 to serve again on the Commission. We'd
23 like to continue to reach out and involve
24 the people who have shown up today and
25 tomorrow and capture the ideas and their

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2 energy as part of creating a network of
3 advisory boards to the Commission.

4 Previously, I had the pleasure
5 to serve as Mayor Nutter's representative
6 to the Fairmount Park Commission and was
7 an elected member of the Fairmount Park
8 Commission, serving as its Vice President
9 for five years. During my tenure on that
10 former Park Commission, I took the lead
11 in facilitating and negotiating the lease
12 of Memorial Hall to the Please Touch
13 Museum. For me, nothing was more
14 representative of the great possibilities
15 for the Park and the City than when I
16 stood in the wonderfully remodeled
17 Memorial Hall when Please Touch Museum
18 opened its doors.

19 I currently serve on the Board
20 of Fairmount Park Conservancy and have
21 served on the Board of Fairmount Park
22 Historic Preservation Trust, the Friends
23 of the Wissahickon, the Green Space
24 Alliance and other organizations.

25 My professional career in

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2 addition to my volunteer work is
3 dedicated to parks, recreation and open
4 space. I run a legal and consulting firm
5 that works on behalf of the Commonwealth
6 of Pennsylvania, local municipalities,
7 non-profits, land trusts and private
8 property owners to preserve open space
9 for environmental and recreational use.
10 I also serve as Regional Advisor for the
11 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation
12 and Natural Resources that funds and
13 develops municipal parks and recreational
14 facilities in Southeast PA. I've written
15 articles and guides on conservation
16 easements, bond funds to fund open space
17 preservation and liability issues for use
18 of land for recreational purposes.

19 In closing, I would like to use
20 my experience and passion for parks and
21 recreation to continue to serve on the
22 Parks and Recreation Commission and make
23 our city's park and rec system the best
24 it can be.

25 Thank you for your time.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
3 so much.

4 Do we have questions?
5 Councilwoman Brown.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.
7 Good morning, everyone. I
8 would be remiss not to seize the moment
9 to say a huge thank you in bold letters,
10 exclamation points for the work and the
11 service, because I think the key word
12 here is "service" for those who want to
13 donate their time, talent and energy, and
14 sometimes folks would say treasury to
15 making a document real.

16 You've heard many of the, I
17 believe, very legitimate praises and
18 concerns raised by former candidates.
19 Speak, if you will, to the balance or not
20 of attention to parks and open space,
21 stacked with attention to our rec
22 communities and the linkage or not
23 between parks and our rec communities, to
24 those who have served already, and I'd be
25 thrilled to hear your ideas or

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2 perspective as well.

3 MS. GOLDSTEIN: I guess I'll
4 start. I think, first of all,
5 Commissioner Michael DiBerardinis is
6 really to be congratulated on leading the
7 merger of these two organizations. I
8 think he took two organizations that had
9 very different missions. One was
10 focused, of course, on natural resource
11 preservation and it was to the benefit of
12 that organization to have as few people
13 as possible, if you will, use the
14 facilities because it just required more
15 maintenance. On the other hand, you had
16 a Recreation Department, with a mission
17 of bringing as many people as possible,
18 and he has led the merger in a way that
19 has eliminated overlap between the two
20 organizations and really tried to create
21 one culture for the two.

22 I think it's still a work in
23 progress in terms of creating programming
24 at the recreation centers and playgrounds
25 that will inform the kids and their

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2 parents about the park and create
3 programs to teach them about the park. I
4 think one of the main goals of the
5 strategic plan, as you are well aware,
6 Councilwoman, is to create a constituency
7 for parks and recreation at large, one
8 entity that would create more pressure
9 both at City Council and the state and
10 even federal levels for more funding,
11 which is what we really need.

12 There are many wonderful ideas
13 have been raised today and people have
14 come up with ideas, but what we really
15 need is more funding from the state and
16 federal levels, because the state of our
17 recreation centers is very inconsistent,
18 and really there's no excuse for that.
19 It's the hub of the community in many
20 cases. It's where kids can learn so many
21 new skills and meet new people, and we
22 have a duty to bring those up to certain
23 standards, and we can do that with
24 funding, because we have the energy and
25 the ideas here.

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2 MS. GOLDENBERG: I think it's
3 hard to separate the two because I think
4 parks and recreation are linked at the
5 hip, and that's why I've always been an
6 advocate for joining the -- merging the
7 two different departments.

8 As we've traveled around the
9 City listening to citizens, I think the
10 concerns, whether they are from the
11 recreation side of things or the park
12 side of things, are very, very similar -
13 the concerns about safety, about
14 maintenance, both parks, recreation
15 centers, programming as well. I think
16 there are -- clearly, the rec centers are
17 also in parks, so it's very hard to
18 separate them.

19 I think that in terms of new
20 initiatives that can happen, we should
21 reach out more to our schools and bring
22 the neighborhood schools, the teachers in
23 the schools and after-school programs
24 more in line with recreational
25 programming, bringing those kids to the

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2 parks and recreation centers. I think
3 there can be better alignment between
4 what we do in phys ed classes and art
5 classes and things like that that can
6 take part in parks and in recreation
7 centers, all throughout the year, not
8 just during summer months but also during
9 school.

10 So I really -- I am a proponent
11 of not thinking in terms of parks or
12 recreation, but bringing them together
13 and thinking -- and the more and more we
14 enforce that, I think the long separation
15 of the two will begin to come together
16 and improve.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sir.

18 MR. GEORGE: I feel like we
19 could talk about funding for weeks on end
20 in this room, but we don't really have
21 the time. What I want to piggyback on
22 what the current Commissioner said,
23 education. We have to tap into these
24 schools. We have to tap into civic
25 associations. We have to tap in and

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2 create more partnerships.

3 I have a successful partnership
4 with the DCNR. That's a state group that
5 Deputy Mayor DiBerardinis used to be the
6 head of. So I mean we can create
7 different partnerships. This funding may
8 not come our way. Then what? We could
9 talk about it and keep fighting and
10 fighting and fighting for it, but in the
11 meantime, we have low-cost ways to create
12 partnerships, awareness and education
13 through our schools and community groups
14 throughout the City.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:

16 Philosophically I'm completely where you
17 are with regards to funding, because we
18 have leadership in Harrisburg that is at
19 a different place and some might argue on
20 a different planet, and time does not
21 permit us to philosophically move someone
22 to where we are, because the time simply
23 isn't there. So we have to reckon with
24 what is in front of us.

25 I want to commend the

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2 Commission members for indeed reaching
3 out to many of those other candidates
4 last year who have brilliant ideas, one
5 of whom was here, Mr. Denison. I mean
6 absolutely brilliant ideas. You had so
7 much to start with. So I commend your
8 willingness to do that and recognizing
9 that the group think is really useful
10 when it comes to extending the mission of
11 the Commission.

12 The final question I would have
13 is, it is clear that it took a
14 partnership with the Center City District
15 and others to make Dilworth Plaza real,
16 and there's no secret that members of
17 Council had some serious concerns about
18 making sure that the work product and the
19 composition of work that's there looks
20 like Philadelphia. That's no secret. So
21 going forward, is there anything on your
22 docket or your work task sheet that
23 speaks to a similar type of effort,
24 partnership with neighborhood groups? I
25 mean, the beauty of Center City District

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2 is all that it represents and is and the
3 relationships in place to make Dilworth
4 Plaza happen.

5 What I heard in Councilman
6 Kenyatta's observation and what I agree
7 with equally is a similar level, some
8 might argue attention, others might argue
9 time and strategic thinking given to some
10 parts of our neighborhoods trench as well
11 to get the kind of yield that we see now
12 happening on Dilworth Plaza. Is that on
13 the work plan going forward, anything
14 along those lines? I'm just curious to
15 hear from current Commissioners.

16 MS. GOLDSTEIN: As Nancy
17 mentioned, we took the show on the road
18 this year and have been out in the
19 recreation centers throughout the City,
20 and as a big part of the agenda, people
21 from the community have voiced their
22 concerns, both with programming and
23 capital facilities and other things, and
24 we've started the process of the very
25 next meeting that we have, we have

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2 someone from the Park and Recreation
3 Department reporting back, here's what we
4 can do for you, here's what we've started
5 to do, here's what we cannot do because.
6 And so I think that we've been able to
7 bring a level of responsiveness and an
8 ability to have people feel that their
9 voices are heard in some places for the
10 first time.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very good.
12 Very good. And then the last thing I
13 would say, this notion about schools is
14 what I was saying in my heart and my head
15 with other testimony. That is an
16 opportunity, and to hear that that's on
17 your docket for going forward, because it
18 is truly still -- when we listen to the
19 School District, it is clear to us that
20 linkages with not just our parks but with
21 other parts of government are really not
22 where they could be or should be. So I'm
23 thrilled to hear that you see that as
24 ripe territory for the Commission and
25 schools going forward.

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2 You wanted to add, Nancy?

3 MS. GOLDENBERG: I just wanted
4 to add that Philadelphia, every single
5 neighborhood, is so rich in history and
6 why read it in a book when you can
7 actually physically walk there and feel
8 and hear the lesson outdoors and really
9 be where the Battle of Germantown took
10 place, for example. You don't have to
11 read about these things in books. You
12 can actually experience them, and I think
13 that is the beauty of Philadelphia.

14 On the issue of justice and
15 reaching all neighborhoods, I think Debra
16 articulated that perfectly. We're still
17 learning, we're still listening, and
18 we're making our way through every
19 neighborhood in the City to try and
20 address people's concerns.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very good.
22 Thank you all for your testimony. Thank
23 you for your work.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: One moment.
25 Councilman Johnson.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes. Just
3 one small comment. I guess moving
4 forward in the context of parks and
5 recs -- and this is just my personal
6 observation, that I do come across
7 various sites in the City where the
8 recreation centers are in parks and still
9 isn't the same level of detail depending
10 on what part of the City that you're in.
11 But that's not a conversation really for
12 you as just being Commission members.
13 I'm thinking more if we had this before
14 we had the parks and recreation hearings,
15 it would have been more of a fruitful
16 dialogue, but nevertheless, when you talk
17 about education, one of the first things
18 that Madam Chair introduced when we first
19 got here was a hearing and a resolution
20 on how can we merge and utilize the
21 Department of Recreation and the School
22 District of Philadelphia. And so
23 hopefully as you move forward, while we
24 go through this restructuring of the
25 Philadelphia public school system, that

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2 this should be a cornerstone part of the
3 dialogue that we should put forward to
4 the SRC as a part of the conversation as
5 it relates to what this new school system
6 is going to look like while they're going
7 through all these changes.

8 But we do commend you for doing
9 your work, because it's service. You
10 don't really have to do it. So obviously
11 if you're doing it beyond your
12 professional responsibilities, it's based
13 upon passion.

14 And also, George, you work with
15 a former colleague of mine, State
16 Representative Brendan Boyle, and I sat
17 on the equivalent to the environmental
18 committee in Harrisburg. I sat on the
19 Joint Water and Pollution Commission, and
20 so we deal with DCNR and we deal with
21 advocacy on the state level, making sure
22 that Philadelphia is in the equation when
23 you talk about parks and recreation. But
24 just thank you for your testimony.

25 (Thank you.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
3 so much.

4 And next up we have Tracey
5 Gordon, Jeffrey Hackett and Annie
6 Heckenberger. And following them, if we
7 could have next on deck behind them,
8 Wayne D. Humphrey, II, Mikal Jennings and
9 Stephen Kerzner.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So Tracey,
13 Jeffrey and Annie.

14 And, Stephen, you want to come
15 around and Mikal.

16 MR. HUMPHREY: I'm Mr.
17 Humphrey.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
19 Mr. Humphrey, okay. Is Mikal Jennings
20 here?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So why
23 don't we have Drew Kondylas, if he's
24 here.

25 Thank you very much. And why

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2 don't we begin with Tracey Gordon. Thank
3 you.

4 MS. GORDON: Hello.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
6 morning.

7 MS. GORDON: Good morning --
8 good afternoon now.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
10 afternoon.

11 MS. GORDON: Thank you for this
12 opportunity. Congratulations, Ms. Bass,
13 Councilwoman Bass. I believe you're the
14 Chair now.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

16 MS. GORDON: And you were the
17 Chair, Blondell. Of course, you always
18 work with me, and you know my letters
19 date back for years in regards to some
20 quality of life issues with Cobbs Creek,
21 and every time I called you, they picked
22 the phone and called me back. So I thank
23 you, and I'm glad you're still on the
24 Commission. And also I'd like to
25 congratulate my new Councilman, Kenyatta

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2 Johnson. Me and Mr. Johnson just had a
3 long conversation in regards to -- that
4 was one of my major issues, wasn't it?

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

6 MS. GORDON: Also, we worked on
7 the issues that the parks in reference to
8 Cobbs Creek years ago when you was a
9 State Representative, employee of some of
10 the -- so I've been around and I've been
11 really active with this. So I'll just
12 read this real short.

13 I would love to serve on the
14 Philadelphia Park Commission because I
15 could be a strong advocate for the
16 maintenance and upkeep for all sections
17 of the park and recreation centers. For
18 the past five years or so, I have been a
19 vocal advocate in regards to the
20 importance of making sure all of our
21 parks and facilities get the attention
22 they deserve. I currently live on Cobbs
23 Creek Parkway and see where there needs
24 to be more volunteers for its maintenance
25 and upkeep. There needs to be a strong

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2 advocate for sections of the park that
3 tend not to have representation.

4 For well over 15 years, I have
5 assisted in bringing it to the attention
6 of the Deputies and Commissioners the
7 challenges we are having at the Mt.
8 Moriah Cemetery, which is part of
9 Fairmount Park and surrounds this
10 historical landmark. I hope to bring
11 relevant information to the Board as well
12 as ideas that I believe will be useful to
13 the Commission.

14 I have been a strong advocate
15 throughout the City advocating for basic
16 system repairs, quality of life
17 improvements, recruiting volunteers to
18 clean the park and holding meetings with
19 the community to inform them of the
20 special events as it regards to the parks
21 and recreation. I have partnered with
22 Villanova University for the past five
23 years helping them organize cleanups at
24 McCreesh Recreation Center. I have
25 partnered with Philadelphia More

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2 Beautiful, Keeping Philadelphia

3 Beautiful, Philadelphia Horticultural

4 Society, Villanova University, the

5 Mayor's NTI program, Mayor Nutter's Keep

6 Up the Sweep Up initiative, Southwest CDC

7 and my own organization, Southwest

8 Concerned Citizen. I'm also a master

9 gardener. I graduated from Penn State in

10 2005.

11 I believe that I could be the

12 voice on this Board that advocates for

13 the average neighborhood resident and

14 residential area. I have a proven track

15 record, which is in my resume. What I

16 can also bring is outreach capabilities.

17 I believe the Board has some challenges

18 on getting information out to the

19 neighborhood as it regards the park and

20 recreation programs, safety initiatives

21 and goals. I believe when people are

22 alerted on what their assets and values

23 are, and certainly Fairmount Park is one

24 of our largest assets in the City, it

25 should be a cash cow. It should really

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2 pay for itself.

3 But I believe that when people
4 are alerted on what they assets and
5 values are, they tend to take more of a
6 responsibility to volunteer in its
7 upkeep. The fact that Cobbs Creek has a
8 new walking path and we barely see the
9 community taking advantage of this asset
10 shows us that we need someone who can
11 organize the community of the value of
12 the many assets that surround them and
13 how they can better support the
14 Commission by utilizing the parks while
15 at the same time taking care of their
16 parks.

17 We need to have a better way to
18 attract volunteers to help recreation
19 supervisors utilize the fields so that
20 families in all parts of the City get
21 involved and have tee ball, football,
22 baseball, soccer for all centers and not
23 just a few. As part of this Board, I
24 believe I have the ability to disseminate
25 information and get results. I'm a born

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2 leader and organizer, and I really care
3 about this historic part of our city. I
4 believe it can be better. We just need a
5 Board that has a little bit of everyone
6 on the Board to be productive for all.

7 And I didn't hear the comment,
8 but I had spoken with my Councilperson,
9 Mr. Johnson, Friday in regards to I drive
10 around in some of the inner cities and
11 some of them are totally empty, and then
12 I drive in other neighborhoods and
13 they're totally full. I just think that
14 the taxes are coming out of everybody's
15 pockets. And, for instance, I think --

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Tracey, I'm
17 sorry. I don't want to cut you off, but
18 we are out of time. So why don't -- can
19 we come back to your comments after
20 everyone has had a chance to speak, and
21 then I'm sure that there'll be some
22 questions.

23 MS. GORDON: Okay.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So why
25 don't we move on to Jeff.

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2 MR. HACKETT: Good morning,
3 Councilpeople.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
5 afternoon.

6 MR. HACKETT: Good afternoon.
7 I'm so sorry.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's all
9 right.

10 MR. HACKETT: This is a big
11 risk. I woke up this morning. I have
12 four grandchildren, all three of my kids
13 back home and there's a stomach virus,
14 and it's my turn. So I medicated up and
15 I come down here, because I don't believe
16 this is a business. This is a
17 life-style. You know, I'm probably going
18 to get in trouble, like I always do, but
19 I've been sitting on the Commission and I
20 need to say this.

21 The transparency that the Mayor
22 asked for is not there. The changes that
23 really happen aren't really there. I've
24 been in the battle the whole time I've
25 been sitting on the Commission.

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2 I'm a grassroots type guy. I
3 got ex-gang members on my basketball
4 team. I'm one of those guys that I know
5 the City of Philadelphia, not just a
6 playground. I feel comfortable in
7 everybody's park. And what I'm not
8 really seeing is -- and I would love to
9 see, whether I'm chosen again or not --
10 is City Council being more involved in
11 what the Commission Board is actually
12 doing and how things are being disbursed
13 into the City of Philadelphia. None of
14 us are naive, and politically correct is
15 not going to help our kids that have more
16 guns than basketballs right now. It's
17 time to really open up and let's dialogue
18 about some real things that's going on in
19 the City of Philadelphia.

20 I took a playground. It was
21 getting ready to close, and we getting
22 ready to get a \$4 million building.
23 We're going to have -- the City of
24 Philadelphia is going to have the first
25 east to west official football field in

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2 the nation. Determination and the need
3 for your community means you just don't
4 hear no anymore. You do what you need to
5 do for these kids.

6 I can go on for hours, but I'm
7 a little sick, but I'm going to go ahead
8 with my statement.

9 This is the hard part, because
10 accomplishments being announced, it's
11 almost like bragging, and accomplishments
12 from the hearts really don't need
13 recognition. Because when you see a
14 kid's face sometimes, that's the only
15 recognition you need. And a title is
16 like a leader, man, and the leader is who
17 is standing up that day. That's really
18 not an important thing, you know.

19 For the last 20 years, I've
20 been charged to help the unfortunate and
21 children of our community I have lived
22 in. It all started when I was a driving
23 home. I kept noticing a group of boys
24 flipping -- and this actually was at
25 Morris Estate Playground -- on an old

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2 mattress. I went home and said to my
3 wife, Someone should help these boys get
4 involved in sports. She coined a phrase
5 I love to throw around. "If you don't
6 see a leader, then it must be your turn."
7 Boy, did I ask for it.

8 I went to the rec center and
9 asked how could I get helping. They told
10 me that there were no coaches at the
11 time, so I thought I'd start a baseball
12 team. I had a group of kids in no time,
13 and not one of them could hold a baseball
14 bat right. Wow, my work was cut out for
15 me.

16 Before the season was over,
17 every one of my players had gotten a hit
18 and we won two games. I was hooked and
19 have been blessed ever since. I got
20 involved with everything I thought would
21 help the kids. I became a committee
22 person. I'm the Vice President of
23 Melrose Park Gardens Civic Association.
24 I'm also the President of the Helen G.
25 Sturgis Advisory Board currently, and I'm

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2 now the Chair and President of the 35th
3 District Police Advisory Board. I also
4 sit on the All City Parks and Rec Board,
5 and I'm a current member of the
6 Commission now.

7 We've had a great two years
8 passing legislation on land and sale use.
9 We toured parks and recreation areas and
10 just touched the surface of what needs to
11 be -- what the needs of people. I look
12 forward, if chosen, to continue our goals
13 to make our parks and recreation and
14 green space the best in this fine nation.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Finished?

16 MR. HACKETT: Yeah.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
18 Jeff.

19 And next, Annie.

20 MS. HECKENBERGER: My name is
21 Annie Heckenberger. I've spent nearly 20
22 years working in the marketing domain
23 with expertise in both PR and
24 advertising. My clients have spanned
25 everywhere from Fortune 500 companies to

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2 national trade associations to tourism
3 and art festivals. I have spent nearly
4 two years working for the Greater
5 Philadelphia Tourism Marketing
6 Corporation, and I was part of the
7 founding group that developed and
8 implemented the Uwishunu initiative for
9 Philadelphia. I currently work across
10 the street for a creative agency, Red
11 Tettermer Partners, where I lead the PR
12 and social media practices for that ad
13 agency. In this position, I continue to
14 work for the State of Pennsylvania's
15 tourism office and GPTMC as well as other
16 clients, some local, like SEPTA, others
17 national, like Under Armour, Dial for Men
18 and Fox Networks.

19 I am an active member of the
20 Philadelphia community. I created and
21 co-hosted Blog Philadelphia in 2006.
22 That was a social media conference that
23 brought 250 attendees to the City to
24 share knowledge. And I was part of the
25 inaugural team that produced the sold-out

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2 event TedxPhilly in 2010 and again in
3 2011, the theme of which was the City and
4 spotlighted remarkable people in the
5 Philadelphia area that were elevating and
6 advancing our city.

7 I founded the Philadelphia
8 chapter of the International Association
9 Social Media Club, which continues to
10 grow and has now over 400 members.
11 Additionally, I have some expertise. I
12 served as a research assistant in the
13 British House of Commons in 1994 during
14 which time I learned a lot about
15 infrastructure, maintenance, parks and
16 planning in London and surrounding areas.
17 But most recently and the reason that my
18 interest was sparked regarding this
19 Commission is that I organized a local
20 event called the Philadelphia Foursquare
21 Games, which celebrated something called
22 Foursquare Day, and we held them at the
23 Marian Anderson Recreation Center and
24 gathered donations accepted to benefit
25 the rec center. It was there, like I

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2 said, that my interest was piqued,
3 because I was able to look around the
4 facility and see how valuable it was and
5 what an important service that it
6 provided to the community. And I also
7 noticed that they're low on resources,
8 both human and financial, and no doubt
9 that this center isn't alone in that
10 regard.

11 My nearly two decades working
12 for global brands has given me a unique
13 experience in the workings and practices
14 of parks departments all over the
15 country. On behalf of brands, typically
16 we would do things like sampling events
17 and other broad sometimes concert events
18 in there where the brand actually pays
19 parks and recs a very decent sum of money
20 to host those type of events during the
21 day and off hours that it wouldn't affect
22 the community using the parks. This is
23 the type of expertise that I'd like to
24 share with the Committee to benefit
25 Philadelphia.

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2 There are a number of
3 private-sector businesses that I'd like
4 to see get more involved, both
5 financially and human resource-wise, with
6 parks and related facilities. I'd like
7 to see a bigger citywide privately funded
8 bench, brick or even tree program put
9 into place, generating additional revenue
10 for the parks.

11 And, last, some of the
12 questions that I asked myself when I
13 thought about our city's park and recs
14 is, are we generating as much revenue as
15 we could from these spaces without
16 overtaxing residents and the community?
17 Are we disbursing those funds equally
18 throughout the City? Are we planning the
19 future with these resources in the most
20 progressive and eco smart way possible?
21 Are we collaborating in the best ways
22 possible with the community at large and
23 especially the private sector? And I'd
24 like to offer my commitment, my
25 collaboration, my expertise, my personal,

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2 my professional contacts and just my
3 general enthusiasm for the City to the
4 Committee.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

7 Any questions from the Council?

8 Councilman Johnson has a
9 question.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Sure.

11 Thank all of you for your
12 testimony. And so, Mr. Hackett, we might
13 as well dive in together just to get your
14 views and your perspective on how Council
15 should be more active in the Department
16 of Parks and Recreations as it relates to
17 their duties, their responsibilities and
18 just their day-to-day business operations
19 as it relates to parks and rec.

20 MR. HACKETT: Councilman
21 Kenyatta Johnson, some dialogue can be
22 here, some can't. I'm going to be
23 polite. Most sports programs managed
24 correctly are self-sufficient. How
25 they're managed is where the problem is.

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2 When you have registration
3 fees, it usually covers the costs.
4 Coaches pay the ref fees, which is a
5 dollar, two dollars per game per child.
6 What we have a lot of times is for-profit
7 within the Department of Rec, which needs
8 to be exposed, which eliminates some of
9 the underprivileged children in the
10 community or financially strapped parents
11 in the community.

12 There are fields that are still
13 gravel. There are fields that are green
14 grass. There's one entity. Why is
15 gravel? Why is grass? One has an
16 advisory board; one doesn't. One group
17 of people are being paid to take care of
18 all of it. There shouldn't have to be
19 noise to do the job you're being paid
20 for. If there's a green field, people
21 will come. People will see you care,
22 they start caring.

23 We changed our bathroom and the
24 boys don't go the bathroom on the floor
25 anymore. We just put table cloths,

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2 flowers and the stuff in chantries. They
3 saw the change, they started respecting
4 it. Nobody got hollered at. Nobody got
5 a spanking. They just respected the
6 change in atmosphere. There's a simple
7 thing as a deodorizer.

8 We have a basketball league for
9 the last seven years. I have not had a
10 fight yet, because it's zero tolerance.
11 Things that can be done certain places
12 can be done citywide if it's managed,
13 like you said -- I think you said it
14 earlier -- with a blanket standard, not a
15 who-you-know standard, a blanket standard
16 to the people that are being paid.

17 On the Commission, there are a
18 lot of things I heard about from my
19 friends and not from the Commission. So
20 the network system still is part of the
21 network system of old. It needs to be
22 exposed.

23 We were put together for
24 transparency. I'm embarrassed sometimes
25 when I go to work and don't know what my

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2 Commission that I'm on is doing. I've
3 been privileged to work for the School
4 District. School District told me that
5 they would feel funny talking to somebody
6 that they're employed by. And we were
7 talking about putting green space in.
8 I'm not employed by you at this moment.
9 We're talking about all these asphalt
10 driveways.

11 So that dialogue needs to be
12 open by a power a lot greater than myself
13 to let them understand, stop playing.
14 You're going to help the kids or you're
15 not going to help the kids, you know.

16 But I think all of us that are
17 involved in this, especially Councilwoman
18 Blondell Reynolds Brown, it's about the
19 kids right now. Stop the bureaucracy.
20 Stop the politics. Let's see what we can
21 really do. There's a whole lot of stuff
22 we won't be able to do, but the dialogue
23 could be open and the people that are
24 really ready to be involved can stop
25 being forced down and forced up.

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2 Some of us don't mind
3 volunteering. Some of us -- it's a lot
4 of people in this room don't mind
5 helping. It's not always about the
6 salary or the promotion. Those people I
7 think City Council can help bring forth,
8 and there's a whole lot more volunteer
9 groups out here that you can believe that
10 are willing to just help if some of the
11 other folks are doing certain things.

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And just
13 one last statement. Thank you for the
14 insight --

15 MS. GORDON: Can I add
16 something to that real quick?

17 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Sure.

18 MS. GORDON: I have passed this
19 up to you all, and this is -- I believe
20 him. I believe him. And I passed this
21 up. This was a skate park that we had
22 the kids all organize. It was -- they
23 were doing it for free. They was only
24 asking the City to pay for the supplies,
25 which would mainly be cement, and they

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2 had a presentation at McCreesh Playground
3 in Southwest Philly. We had the kids.
4 We did fundraising. They even brought
5 makeshift wood, and then it was \$125,000.
6 Yet, you know, the project is on here,
7 that's beautiful, but we couldn't find
8 \$125,000 to do a skate park? It shows
9 all types of statistics where crime goes
10 down and, like he said, that's why it's
11 important to have a Commission that's
12 going to speak on behalf of everybody,
13 because we have a beautiful park over
14 there and there's no -- we got two
15 softball fields. They not even being
16 utilized.

17 And I'm thinking that, real
18 quick, as far as the management, it
19 should be a standard management, and if
20 that particular supervisor of that
21 particular area don't have programs and
22 stuff going on, then they need to get a
23 promotion. Seriously. Because that's
24 not fair to us. That's not fair to -- my
25 younger son is 20, but there's a whole

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2 bunch of little kids in our area that are
3 sit ting around not doing anything
4 because all of the recreation centers
5 don't have top-notch supervisors, and
6 that's where I think we need to change
7 most definitely about this.

8 A hundred twenty-five thousand,
9 Councilwoman Blondell. I know you
10 probably didn't hear about that, but they
11 were doing it free. They doing it free.
12 Everything is free. They had their own
13 insurance and everything. They had it
14 all measured out, and we heard nothing
15 about it. And now people are looking at
16 us, Southwest Concerned, like, you know,
17 we were like paper tigers. And this was
18 the City never addressing it. Nobody
19 ever came from the -- the Deputy -- the
20 Commissioner never showed up for the
21 grand opening or anything. This is just
22 sad.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Right.

24 Right.

25 Councilman.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes. I
3 just want to thank you for the additional
4 insight and, of course, Ms. Gordon, just
5 to follow up in our conversation, we will
6 be doing -- we've been doing site tours
7 of various recreation centers. So my
8 staff is working on the McCreesh -- did I
9 pronounce it right?

10 MS. GORDON: McCreesh.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: McCreesh
12 Rec Center, but also let's take a
13 possible look at how did this project
14 stall, at least from a dialogue
15 standpoint, but really making sure that
16 this was a priority moving forward in
17 terms of, again -- my mindset is always
18 making sure all the rec centers are
19 treated equally in terms of distribution,
20 resources, support. Again, as
21 Councilman, my Majority Leader, would
22 say, similar to what I always say, most
23 of these rec centers are neighborhood
24 Disney Lands for folks who will probably
25 never ever leave the four corners of

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2 their block, the radius of the actual
3 area they live in, and that's why -- and
4 also, Annie, when you talked about
5 private partnerships, I think
6 public-private partnerships are good, but
7 let's also be mindful that the government
8 still has a part to play. And so I think
9 the reason why probably the flat-lining
10 process has been taking place, because
11 when you depend so heavily on private
12 funding, we can cut parks and rec because
13 we can just do some additional private
14 partnerships to kind of make up. And in
15 government, resources are tough, but I do
16 know you have to be mindful that there's
17 a balance. So you want to engage in
18 public-private partnerships, but you also
19 still want to make sure that if there's a
20 commitment and a dedicated level of
21 funding, it still goes up while you're
22 doing the public-private partnership.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I want to
25 recognize Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds

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2 Brown.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

4 Thank you.

5 Thank you is in order to all of
6 you. The service is unquestionable. I
7 do want to follow up on the concern
8 you've raised offline just for my own
9 knowledge base and to get all
10 perspectives of that circumstance.

11 Mr. Hackett, I appreciate your
12 candor and the -- that's the beauty of
13 having a Commission that is richly
14 diverse, that captures all different
15 perspectives, and you bring us the trench
16 warfare, if you will, that we need to
17 hear about. The good news is that I am
18 very well aware of the circumstance
19 you've mentioned and the District
20 Councilperson in question is very much
21 aware, and that issue -- that
22 circumstance has been exposed in the way
23 that it needs to be and is being dealt
24 with.

25 MR. HACKETT: Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So the
3 beauty of these hearings is that we get
4 to hear all perspectives and insight,
5 because being at large, I'm not able
6 to -- I want to see the big picture.
7 District Councilmembers have the chance
8 to do the individual walk the walk
9 visits, if you will, to what's happening
10 in their district. So your feedback is
11 incredibly important, and know that it's
12 very much appreciated.

13 MR. HACKETT: Thank you.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And I'd
15 like to take a moment to recognize that
16 our Majority Leader, Councilman Curtis
17 Jones, Jr., has joined us and would like
18 to make a comment.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes. I have
20 been able to hear some of the testimony
21 and the tenor and tone and direction that
22 we are going in. We're making real
23 difficult choices this fiscal year. We
24 make them every year, but in particular,
25 this fiscal year as we struggle with some

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2 of the large deficits, not necessarily of
3 our own causation, federal, state and
4 others. And so we're making tough
5 choices.

6 One of the assets that we have
7 is the park, and I won't go on, because
8 the Commission can talk about that asset
9 better than all of us. But one of the
10 things that comes to our rec centers and
11 why that is particularly important and
12 when we talk about \$8 million, how we get
13 it, the Chairperson is keenly aware of
14 there's equal -- every time there's a
15 cause and effect. If you take it or add
16 it, you got to get it from somewhere, and
17 I think this is prudent on behalf of our
18 Chairperson as we look at these things.

19 Two things. One, the closest
20 to Disney World some of the kids in my
21 district are going to get is their local
22 recreation center. And I have
23 approximately 30 in the 4th Councilmanic
24 District. I don't know. It's probably
25 close to that in your respective

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2 districts. The amount of money that we
3 appropriate for that to be spread out in
4 equal parts doesn't even come close to
5 covering. Doesn't even come close to
6 covering.

7 So there's a couple of
8 alternatives and things that we are
9 looking at. One is that when I
10 discovered in my district I had to pay
11 \$45,000 for a scoreboard when probably
12 arguably, being a procurement guy from a
13 couple of Administrations ago, we could
14 have got it for 30. We start to look at
15 those things and, as a result, look at
16 internally increasing the capacity of the
17 maintenance people to do work in-house.
18 Whether it's small roofing jobs or
19 restoration of a bathroom, to look at
20 that. And that's one of the things we
21 would love to get involved with the
22 Commission about.

23 And then, bottom line, if we
24 can find those savings, then run them
25 back directly into investments, capital

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2 investments, into these aging rec
3 centers. I have Kendrick, which is one
4 of my rec centers. It has got to be the
5 second oldest rec center in the City of
6 Philadelphia. People use it. People
7 love it. But after a certain point, the
8 grand old lady on Ridge Avenue, we can't
9 patch our way through this. It's time to
10 make a major capital investment.

11 So we're keenly aware, both
12 from stewards on this Committee, but
13 keenly aware from our constituents who
14 use it every day, the importance of these
15 assets. And we're not just going to look
16 at how we've done things in the past, but
17 how we can do them better in the future.
18 I want you to know that.

19 Thank you. Thank you, Madam
20 Chair.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

22 Seeing no more questions, thank
23 you so much for your comments and
24 testimony.

25 And so if we could have the

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2 next panel come forward. That's Wayne
3 Humphrey, II, Stephen Kerzner and Drew
4 Kondylas. And why don't we call up our
5 next panel that's coming after them just
6 to move things along. Donna M. Lewis,
7 Leslie Anne Miller -- I'm sorry. Shawn
8 Michael Lawson, Donna M. Lewis and Leslie
9 Anne Miller.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Why don't
13 we have -- why don't we start with
14 Mr. Humphrey.

15 MR. HUMPHREY: I have a copy of
16 my statement and my letters of
17 recommendation.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Someone
19 will pick it up. Thank you.

20 MR. HUMPHREY: I would like to
21 begin by stating that my sole intention
22 for applying for this position is a
23 genuine interest and intent to ensure the
24 preservation and care of our wonderful
25 green space and recreational centers that

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2 we have here in our fine city for our
3 future generations. My experience in
4 this field is one of the reasons why I
5 came forth to make this statement today,
6 and I thank you guys for the opportunity.
7 Once again, my name is Wayne David
8 Humphrey, II.

9 My experience in this field has
10 been a lifelong achievement and touches
11 on many of the described responsibilities
12 of this Commission. My open-minded
13 thinking allows me to evaluate situations
14 and create solutions without reinventing
15 proverbial wheel. I find that my ability
16 to work with many different personalities
17 has allowed me to be an important asset
18 in group projects.

19 To briefly go into detail about
20 my applicable experience, I started my
21 career 17 years ago in turf grass, site
22 and building management where I worked in
23 all aspects of the green and contracting
24 industry, from operating equipment to
25 project management. I have designed and

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2 managed multiple solutions in watershed
3 site and landscape management. I believe
4 my working knowledge in these areas will
5 be an attribute that I can offer to the
6 Commission, as I have saved associations
7 and organizations that I have consulted
8 with notable amounts of their budgets
9 while increasing their efficiency.

10 As a small businessowner in the
11 contracting field, I understand the
12 challenges in which the Commission on
13 Parks and Recreation are under and will
14 face in the future. As the cost of labor
15 and materials are forever increasing in a
16 primarily labor-driven industry, the need
17 for community involvement is key in the
18 future preservation of our parks, green
19 spaces and recreation centers.

20 This community involvement on a
21 fiscal or physical level will require a
22 strategic marketing plan and public
23 relations campaign to increase the
24 perceived ownership and pride in our park
25 system. I currently have the privilege

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2 of working with the Morris Animal Refuge
3 in exactly this type of a strategic
4 conceptualization and implementation, as
5 I am a Board member and Director of the
6 marketing aspect of the Refuge, which is
7 basically increasing the awareness of the
8 organization's history and community
9 impact. And when you look at the history
10 of the Fairmount Park Association and the
11 Parks and Recreation of this city, it has
12 set basically the template for other
13 cities to follow in our footsteps. With
14 the immense size, I can totally
15 understand and that's why I speak about
16 the struggles in which we'll have the
17 future.

18 In closing, I would like to
19 simply state that the Philadelphia park
20 system gives me a sense of pride in our
21 city and in fact sets us apart from other
22 metropolitan cities. It is too often I
23 believe that my generation finds it
24 easier to be the critic than the
25 criticized, and it is for that reason

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2 that I wish to take the challenges that
3 the Commission for Parks and Recreation
4 faces, with an open mind and abundant
5 ambition that would contribute to the
6 long lasting legacy of our green spaces
7 and recreational facilities.

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

10 And Stephen.

11 MR. KERZNER: Good afternoon,
12 everybody, and thank you for this
13 opportunity. My name is Stephen Kerzner
14 and I currently reside in Germantown.

15 Briefly, there are four main
16 reasons why I should be considered to
17 serve on the Board of the Commission on
18 Parks and Recreation. One, my love and
19 pride for the City of Philadelphia. I'm
20 a longtime resident. I was born and
21 raised, went to school here, did leave
22 Philadelphia for New York in the '70s.
23 For ten years I lived in Paris and Milan.
24 So I also had access to some of the most
25 beautiful parks in the world. Came back

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2 to Philadelphia in 1980, resided in
3 Center City for 25 years, where I was on
4 the Board of the Friends of Rittenhouse
5 Square, and moved up to Germantown seven
6 years ago.

7 My love and appreciation for
8 anything aesthetically beautiful. It's
9 as simple as that.

10 I have a strong background in
11 marketing and public relations and highly
12 developed people skills due to 35 years
13 of retail experience, which I think would
14 be an asset to the Commission.

15 Finally, I am the most
16 passionate person, whether I'm pouring
17 water for the homeless at St. Vincent's
18 in Germantown, promoting the Germantown
19 Deaf Ministries Fellowship, which I am
20 the Treasurer and in charge of
21 fundraising, or working in the gift shop
22 of the Woodmere Art Museum in Chestnut
23 hill. I feel that passion and commitment
24 are necessary to achieve one's goals and
25 aspirations.

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2 If appointed to this
3 Commission, I would help to assist in
4 achieving any and all goals that the
5 Commission may set forth as I read about
6 in the role and responsibilities of the
7 Commission on Parks and Recreation.

8 I also want to submit two
9 letters of recommendation from Bill
10 Valerio, who is the Director of the
11 Woodmere Art Museum in Chestnut Hill, and
12 Phyllis Taylor, Chaplain Phyllis Taylor,
13 who is on the Board of Face to Face
14 Germantown and St. Vincent's Church.

15 Thank you very much.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
17 Thank you for your testimony.

18 And, Drew, we'll hear from you
19 now.

20 MR. KONDYLAS: Thank you. My
21 name is Drew Kondylas and I live in the
22 Francisville neighborhood of
23 Philadelphia.

24 First, I would like to thank
25 the members of City Council and the

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2 citizens of Philadelphia for giving each
3 of the applicants the chance to speak
4 today.

5 When I arrived in Philadelphia
6 15 years ago to attend Drexel University,
7 I had no idea how quickly I would become
8 enamored with this great city. I lived
9 in Powelton Village while I was in
10 school, but I often found myself
11 wandering to areas all around the region.
12 As I explored this new environment, I was
13 always struck by the beauty of the
14 tree-lined streets and the amazing
15 grandeur of the homes in what would
16 become my first neighborhood. If you
17 visited Baring Street or Hamilton Street
18 between 33rd and 37th, you know that area
19 of the City is specially green at this
20 time of year.

21 Those green urban spaces are
22 what really drew me in, but I've always
23 loved the outdoors and continuously tried
24 to make it part of my life.

25 Since I've been in

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2 Philadelphia, I've played soccer in
3 Fairmount Park or the field of the W.B.
4 Sault High School almost every week, even
5 in the rain and the snow. I can't count
6 the number of times I've taken my
7 mountain bike around West River Drive or
8 walked from Boathouse Row up to Lemon
9 Hill or taken pictures on a path that I
10 found just because I was curious where it
11 went. I even commute through the park
12 when I can to avoid the highways.

13 I use the parks in Philadelphia
14 every day, and I can't imagine living
15 here without them.

16 After I graduated from Drexel,
17 I moved to the Museum District, where
18 residents and visitors are clearly
19 spoiled with access to the parks, and
20 then eventually bought my first home in
21 Francisville. And Francisville is where
22 I really became engaged with the
23 community.

24 Service has always been a big
25 part of my life, and you'll see that in

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2 my application and in the kind words from
3 people that wrote me letters of
4 recommendation. I've tried to contribute
5 to my neighborhood and to learn how to
6 serve Philadelphia not just as a resident
7 but as a advocate as well.

8 You will also see in my
9 application that I've worked in the
10 media, radio, magazines, television,
11 digital and social media for my entire
12 career, and that I founded a non-profit
13 in February called Friends of Ogden Park.
14 Ogden Park is a small slice of open space
15 in Francisville that is becoming
16 increasingly important to the neighbors,
17 but needs help to stay clean and green.

18 I'm also on three committee for
19 the Francisville Neighborhood Development
20 Corporation. I'm registered as a
21 neighborhood liaison for 3-1-1 in
22 Francisville, and last year I completed
23 certification with the Citizens Planning
24 Institute through the City Planning
25 Commission.

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2 I realize that I'm in
3 extraordinary company in this room. The
4 other applicants are smart, passionate,
5 dedicated and have resumes with long
6 lists of amazing accomplishments as well.
7 You have a very difficult decision ahead
8 of you, but I believe what sets me apart
9 is that I know firsthand the benefits of
10 recreation and the challenges with
11 maintaining open space, and that I have
12 mass media, marketing, PR and branding
13 experience. I even spent some time as a
14 civil and traffic engineer. I also
15 happen to think in my resume tells a
16 great story of an emerging leader with a
17 drive and determination to do great
18 things and to give back more than I have
19 been given. You'll see that phrase in my
20 application as well, to give back more
21 than I have been given. It's something I
22 keep with me at all times.

23 I want to thank each of you
24 again for giving me the chance to apply
25 for such an amazing opportunity. I hope

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2 you'll consider my application, and look
3 forward to working with you should you
4 find me to be a good fit for the
5 Commission.

6 Thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
8 very much for your testimony. And we
9 have a question from Councilwoman
10 Blondell Reynolds Brown.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes. I
12 was curious to know how many more panels
13 we have, because I don't want to shortcut
14 anyone. And, again, you're right, the
15 company you're in is extraordinary and
16 the skills are rich, and it will not be
17 comfortable. And so my question to you
18 as I posed to some others, if you had to
19 look into a crystal ball and you could
20 pick one thing, one area where you want
21 to make a difference in the park system
22 going forward, what would that be?

23 MR. HUMPHREY: I think if I was
24 to look into a crystal ball moving
25 forward, I think that by the Parks and

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2 Recreation Commission creating a unified
3 branding and PR campaign that would touch
4 on multiple different demographics,
5 especially our youth, that through their
6 involvement being very young, like as in
7 Councilman Johnson, it is what sparked
8 his increased involvement as an adult. I
9 think Frederick Douglas said it best when
10 he said it is much easier to create a
11 strong youth than fix a broken man, and I
12 think that that's really the type of
13 mentality that I see being most
14 beneficial to the Parks and Recreation
15 Commission moving forward.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
17 very much.

18 Please, sir.

19 MR. KONDYLAS: I would concur
20 and say that outreach is probably going
21 to be one of the key challenges moving
22 forward and something that's also going
23 to line up success in a very important
24 way. The services are great. There's
25 obviously a lot of work that needs to be

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2 done both in open spaces and in our
3 recreation centers. But getting the word
4 out about what we have available in the
5 City, communicating the programs,
6 communicating when there's a new baseball
7 team or a soccer team available,
8 communicating when there's literacy
9 programs at the recreation center, that's
10 key. And in addition to building a
11 strong brand for parks and recreation,
12 getting the word out and letting
13 everybody know that the services are
14 there for their use and should be
15 utilized is going to be very important,
16 especially as we continue to go down the
17 road of mobile technology, emerging
18 technology. That's going to be a huge
19 part of the future of this city and of
20 every city in the U.S.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very
22 instructive.

23 Please, with your international
24 experience that I'm envious of here.

25 MR. KERZNER: Thank you. I

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2 think my focus would be simply to make
3 the parks safe and beautiful for the
4 children and for the elderly. Where I
5 live in Germantown, across from me is a
6 small park called Gilbert Park, and the
7 last number of years I worked with the
8 now defunct Wisternak group in
9 maintaining the park. We cleaned it up.
10 The minute we cleaned up the park and we
11 had some activities, all the children
12 came. I'm involved with Vernon Park.
13 I'm involved with the Germantown Deaf
14 Ministry. We have a summer camp for the
15 hearing impaired just for one week next
16 door to where I live, at St. Stephen's
17 Church. Everybody comes from around the
18 City to this hearing impaired camp
19 because they feel safe. And also I'm
20 involved with the Face to Face Germantown
21 and Safe Instance. For years we have a
22 summer camp. We don't have enough spaces
23 for all children that want to come.
24 There aren't enough places -- I see it
25 right on Germantown Avenue where I am.

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2 So many children really don't have a
3 place to go.

4 And the elderly, I talk to them
5 all the time at the dining hall at St.
6 Vincent's, on the street. They don't
7 always feel safe. They live at Center in
8 the Park, Vernon Park, and they don't
9 always feel safe going there because of
10 some of the not such good activities that
11 are going on there.

12 I think there's so much to do
13 in the City, but my focus would be simply
14 safe and beautiful parks for the children
15 and for the elderly, which we sometimes
16 forget.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
19 all very, very, very much.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
21 so much for your testimony.

22 Now we're going to have our
23 next panel. Shawn Michael Lawson, Donna
24 M. Lewis and Leslie Anne Miller. And
25 last up would be Eugene Pough. Is Eugene

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2 here?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No, okay.

5 And James Bennett Straw. You want to
6 come forward.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Why don't
10 we start with Shawn, when you're ready.

11 MR. LAWSON: Good morning. My
12 name is Shawn Michael Lawson. I am the
13 Vice President and Operations Manager for
14 Bustleton Services. It's a tree/fence
15 landscaping and land clearing company
16 that has been doing work in the City for
17 well over 25 years. Most of the work --
18 I can't say most of the work, but a lot
19 of the work that we do is for the
20 Commission and has been for over 25
21 years. In the fence division, we install
22 backstops and foul ball fences and
23 perimeter fencing of all types in all
24 different playgrounds throughout the
25 City. Our landscaping division does

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2 green roofs and bio-retention ponds,
3 hydro-seeding. We plant trees on various
4 projects for the Commission and have been
5 doing that for years and years. And our
6 tree division is one of the largest tree
7 companies in the tri-state area. We've
8 been working for Fairmount Park for,
9 again, years and years doing street trees
10 and trimming and pruning and removal of
11 dangerous trees. I myself am a ISA
12 certified arborist, and what I do for the
13 company is the actual work itself. My
14 references show that I am a dedicated guy
15 that knows what he's doing and can count
16 on to get the job done. I have
17 tremendous experience.

18 So the reason I'm here is to be
19 part of the Commission, and when the
20 ideas come up, I'd like to be someone
21 that knows firsthand what it's like in
22 the field to avoid any common mistakes,
23 whether it be scheduling or just using
24 the right material so we do the job right
25 the first time. I think in that we would

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2 save money.

3 Also, I'd like to do a training
4 program. When I do work for Philadelphia
5 Housing Authority, it's written into the
6 contract and into the bid packet that you
7 utilize individuals from that area where
8 the work is being performed. If it's in
9 Strawberry Mansion, you take a few young
10 guys and you pay them and you teach them
11 and you train them in the job that's
12 being done, and when it's all done, they
13 take personal pride in that and then they
14 also have something to fall back on later
15 if they choose to follow that path.

16 So my crystal ball would be to
17 see that bid packets are written right
18 time the first time and that we train our
19 youth in performing this work so they
20 have a common goal and an interest in it.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

23 Ms. Lewis.

24 MS. LEWIS: Good afternoon.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

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2 afternoon.

3 MS. LEWIS: Good afternoon,
4 City Council. I count it a privilege and
5 an honor to sit before you today. I'm
6 going to be brief. I don't have a long
7 lengthy biography.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That's
9 okay.

10 MS. LEWIS: But I just want to
11 let you know my stand on what I believe.

12 Good afternoon, City
13 Councilmembers, Parks and Recreation
14 Committee. My name is Donna Marie Lewis.
15 I've been a resident of the City of
16 Philadelphia for about 21 years. I
17 currently reside in North Philadelphia.
18 I've lived in South Philadelphia. I've
19 also lived in West Philadelphia. I am a
20 member of a neighborhood -- I am a member
21 of a North Philadelphia neighborhood and
22 it's called Bridgeway Incorporated, which
23 is an empowerment and outreach
24 organization that has a great concern for
25 our youth and to help guide them in the

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2 right direction. And since I've become a
3 member of Bridgeway, I have done more
4 volunteering than I ever have. I'm used
5 to working full time. So in the past, I
6 haven't had time to really volunteer, but
7 since I've been with Bridgeway
8 Incorporated and been in North
9 Philadelphia, I have been able to be part
10 of an outreach organization, an outreach
11 organization that wants to partner
12 together with other businesses and like
13 you, City Council, to see that the
14 parks -- not only the parks and
15 recreations, but to see that the young
16 people have something to do besides hang
17 out on the corner, get in trouble, doing
18 other things besides doing the right
19 thing.

20 And to me, my main concern is
21 with the parks and recreation, safety and
22 maintenance is everything. I had a
23 chance to go last year to the Visitors
24 Center and I was like, Oh, this is really
25 marvelous. It's really maintained well.

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2 That attracts people. That attracts
3 people, because everybody knows something
4 about the City of Philadelphia.

5 Everybody knows where you're located,
6 what kind of history, because the City of
7 Philadelphia has so much history. I
8 mean, so much history, and everybody
9 knows the Declaration of Independence was
10 founded here. It was signed here. Ben
11 Franklin was the founder. Everybody
12 knows about Philadelphia, and to me it's
13 one of the most historical cities in the
14 United States.

15 Now, I believe that I would be
16 a great asset to the Park Committee
17 because I am motivated. I like to work
18 as a team member or, so to speak, as a
19 team player, and I am an outdoors type of
20 person. In high school I played
21 basketball. I ran track. I did the high
22 jump. And these are activities that goes
23 on in several of the parks.

24 I'm an outdoors type of person.
25 I have a great concern for our parks

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2 because they are a foundation for our
3 young people to go and have a place to
4 play, a place to meet, a place to have
5 different events. So actually the parks
6 and recreation are just more for --
7 they're just more than a facility for
8 summer camps.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. I'm
10 sorry. I'm going to ask you to
11 summarize.

12 MS. LEWIS: I would be a great
13 asset to the Committee because I would
14 bring my new ideas, expertise and
15 professionalism to add more continuity to
16 the Parks and Recreation Commission. And
17 I want to say that I'm very pleased that
18 you offer more than just summer camp,
19 because those are places that offer job
20 fairs and community meetings,
21 neighborhood watches. So that's a good
22 thing.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
24 very much.

25 MS. LEWIS: You're welcome.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Ms. Miller.

3 MS. MILLER: Thank you, Madam
4 Chair, members of the Commission. Thank
5 you for the opportunity to testify here
6 today.

7 Before I begin my own brief
8 statement, if I may, a brief personal
9 observation on today's proceeding.

10 As was the case when I
11 testified before some of you four years
12 ago, I've been struck as I sat here today
13 by the abundance of extraordinarily
14 talented individuals who, number one,
15 recognize the importance of our park
16 system and the overall economic and
17 physical well-being of this city; number
18 two, who are passionate about their
19 support of this Philadelphia resource;
20 and, number three, and most importantly,
21 who demonstrate that passion by
22 contributing their time, their talents
23 and their energy for the betterment of
24 the system in so many ways, some of which
25 we've heard here today.

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2 I think that any one of them
3 would be a welcome addition to the next
4 chapter of the Commission, and I
5 certainly don't envy the choice that you
6 all are going to be confronted with when
7 you retire to your chambers tomorrow
8 afternoon at the conclusion of testimony.

9 Having said that, I'd like to
10 hopefully complicate your choice just a
11 bit further by talking a bit about myself
12 and my appreciation of the opportunity to
13 appear before you today and respectfully
14 ask that my name be included in the list
15 of the individuals that you will
16 recommend to the Mayor or, in my case,
17 recommend for reappointment to the
18 Commission on Parks and Recreation.

19 My reason for asking you to do
20 so is straightforward. Having had the
21 opportunity to serve for four years on
22 the newly formed Commission and helped
23 with its initial phase, I'd like to help
24 to continue the process of developing the
25 Commission's identity and its role within

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2 the system of parks and recreation here
3 in Philadelphia.

4 As you've heard already here
5 today, and I would concur, our group of
6 Commissioners has been a congenial and
7 committed one, who has taken its
8 responsibility to the department I
9 believe very seriously. Having been in
10 existence for several years, however, I
11 think that we're at the next phase and
12 one of the things that we need to do is
13 start to evaluate our strengths and
14 weaknesses, and I would submit that
15 having some continuity of membership will
16 certainly facilitate that process.

17 I believe that my ongoing work
18 not only with the Commission but with
19 related groups; specifically, the
20 Fairmount Park Conservancy, Pennsylvania
21 Horticultural Society, the Philadelphia
22 Museum of Art, just to name a couple and
23 which are further detailed in my
24 application, keep me fully abreast of all
25 of the issues confronting our parks. And

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2 further, that the experience gained from
3 working for these organizations as well
4 as my legal background has been
5 invaluable in helping to be a startup
6 member of the Commission.

7 I originally applied to the
8 Commission because of my own strong
9 personal belief that Fairmount Park is a
10 fabulous resource, economic and
11 environmental, that has the potential to
12 become an engine of growth for our city
13 and indeed our region. And I would say
14 that four years later, the efforts of the
15 newly formed Department of Parks and
16 Recreation, along with many others -- and
17 I underscore that, many others -- has
18 proven to be the case, and as we're
19 seeing, the public support for this
20 system is growing.

21 But as the importance of the
22 park to Philadelphia and the lives of its
23 citizens continues to increase, along
24 with a demand for resources to sustain
25 it, so too will the work of the

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2 Commission, one component part, in
3 reaching out to neighborhoods in
4 providing a forum for citizens to voice
5 their concerns and in helping to increase
6 and diversify revenue sources and
7 providing advisory opinions on issues.

8 While only an advisory body, as
9 we all know, I believe that the first
10 four years have demonstrated that there
11 is an emerging and important role for the
12 Commission, and I'd like the opportunity
13 to help continue to further and
14 strengthen it.

15 Thank you for listening to me
16 here today, and thank you for the work
17 that you all are doing for the system.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

19 And the Chair recognizes
20 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.
22 Again, it would be important to
23 acknowledge and say thank you publicly to
24 all of our Commissioners who have given
25 of your time over the past many, many

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2 months. And let me thank you also for
3 what -- this is my personal point of
4 view, and we all have one, an opinion --
5 the balance in your testimony in
6 recognizing that the work of the
7 Commission is indeed complex but also
8 multi-faceted in the audience that we're
9 trying to make happy. So to hear that is
10 very, very reassuring for me, because,
11 again, as Councilman Kenyatta has
12 observed, young people and all that
13 matters to them has to be a part of the
14 equation when we think about both open
15 space and rec centers. So to hear that
16 in your testimony, again, is deeply
17 encouraging for me.

18 Thank you both as well for your
19 perspective, and you're right, this does
20 further deepen our complex and
21 complicated decisions. We appreciate all
22 that you do.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
24 Councilwoman.

25 Thank you so much for your

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2 testimony today.

3 I do want to make a notice or
4 give notice that the Committee on Labor
5 and Civil Service, there's a hearing
6 scheduled for today in this room at 1
7 o'clock and that hearing will begin
8 shortly, as soon as this hearing is over.

9 And our last -- I believe our
10 last speaker for the day is Mr. James
11 Bennett Straw.

12 MR. STRAW: Good afternoon.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
14 afternoon.

15 MR. STRAW: Look like I have
16 about one minute.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No. We're
18 going to give you three. Like everybody
19 else, we'll give you three minutes.

20 MR. STRAW: My name is Jim
21 Straw. I am a sitting Commissioner and I
22 was appointed by Mayor Nutter about six
23 months ago to fill an expired term. So
24 I'm the new kid on the block. In a
25 sense, I am just kind of getting into the

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2 groove of the Commission, and I am deeply
3 hoping that I can continue my service to
4 this wonderful community.

5 My experience with the parks
6 and recreation system date back to about
7 1972. I moved here from New York City in
8 '71. I met my wife on Seger Playground
9 tennis courts. So that was my first
10 exposure to the rec side of the system.

11 I am an architect. My
12 specialty is historic preservation, and I
13 am a community planner. Over the years,
14 my professional life has intersected with
15 parks and recreation many times. We
16 prepared the Master Strategic Plan for
17 the Recreation Department when Michael
18 DiBerardinis was then Commissioner.

19 I am the architect for the
20 Please Touch Museum in Memorial Hall.
21 That is the crowning achievement of my
22 architectural career. We recently
23 completed the Bathey House, which is a
24 conversion of the Trolley Barn in East
25 Falls, and we are currently working as

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2 the lead firm on the banks of the
3 Schuylkill, all the path system on the
4 west side of the river. So I know the
5 park system and the recreation system
6 probably equally.

7 The City's park and recreation
8 system has a profound and lasting effect
9 on both citizens and visitors. Perhaps
10 more than any other branch of government,
11 it is where the rubber meets the road,
12 the intersection of government investment
13 and its impact on daily life, education
14 and skill development and pure
15 recreational pleasure. It is where kids
16 grew up outside of school and home life.
17 It is where adults pursue their time off
18 with family and friends. It is one of
19 Philadelphia's greatest assets, without a
20 doubt. You all know this and much more.

21 My vision for the parks and
22 recreation system comes from the mind and
23 heart of a preservation architect, a
24 civic leader and an entrepreneur. The
25 City of Philadelphia needs to continue to

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2 improve, quantitatively and
3 qualitatively, its investment in the
4 system. Yes, dollars are tight, but
5 there is a perceivable return on
6 investment.

7 We need to seek out community
8 partners, engage them in the investment
9 in our parks and recreation system. Go
10 Flyers, among others. And we need to
11 continue to do a better job attracting
12 corporate and foundation support. We
13 need to find new and innovative ways of
14 enhancing revenues through concessions,
15 adaptive reuse of built resources, and
16 cautious but planned development within
17 the system such as the
18 ever-so-controversial Barnes Foundation
19 but the more populous Centennial District
20 as an arts and culture destination.

21 As a member of the Commission's
22 Revenue Enhancement Committee under the
23 able leadership of Pete Hoskins, I
24 participated in a nationwide study of
25 best practices. Our report is a matter

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2 of public record, and I urge you to read
3 it. My work and the Commission's work
4 has just begun. Next on the agenda is
5 maintaining our assets, and as I and
6 other Commissioners have heard in our
7 meetings around the City, security is a
8 top priority.

9 The Commission is currently
10 beginning to address these issue and once
11 again learn best practices in systems
12 around the country. There is a lot more
13 to do over the next several years, and I
14 am very anxious to help.

15 Finally, the Commissioners are
16 committed to undertaking an internal
17 audit of the Commission's last four years
18 to identify areas where we have succeeded
19 and to identify areas where we need to
20 improve performance and outcomes. We
21 will, as our time expires, leave the
22 future Commissioners with a summary of
23 the past and hopefully a roadmap for the
24 future.

25 Thank you very much.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

3 Thank you for your testimony.

4 And we do have actually one
5 more, Mr. Noah Goldman.

6 Do we have anyone else here to
7 testify regarding the Parks and
8 Recreation Committee?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

11 MR. GOLDMAN: Good afternoon,
12 everyone.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
14 afternoon, Mr. Goldman. Please proceed.

15 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you for
16 allowing me to speak here.

17 This past year --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Please
19 identify yourself for the record.

20 MR. GOLDMAN: My name is Noah
21 Goldman. I've lived just outside of
22 Philadelphia my whole life, in Montgomery
23 County, and have spent every summer in
24 the greater northeast at summer camps, as
25 well as worked in the Philadelphia School

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2 District as an after-school counselor.

3 This past year I was working on
4 an architecture thesis that tackled the
5 redevelopment of North Broad Street.

6 Through my research, I found that the
7 transformation of open spaces into
8 healthy green spaces was actually a very
9 positive and lucrative investment for the
10 City. Now, obviously park spaces, as you
11 know, don't make too much money.

12 However, the real estate around them
13 does. And realizing the potential of the
14 parks and recreation, I propose that
15 North Broad become an Avenue of the Parks
16 that complements the southern half of the
17 Avenue of the Arts. It's its own
18 character, and the North Broad is like --
19 it's a tear in the fabric of the City and
20 I see a lot of the decay and neglect, and
21 I see that a lot of open space has very
22 much potential and I want to get across
23 that to the public and really engage the
24 public and utilizing the City's
25 educational resources especially will be

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2 able to lower costs and provide the
3 community with valuable lessons in
4 gardening and planting. And by giving
5 them the opportunity to be hands-on in
6 the development of new parks and in the
7 upkeep and revitalization of old parks,
8 it gives them the sense of ownership, of
9 pride that they actually did something.
10 It wasn't just given to them because they
11 live here. It really becomes part of
12 them.

13 Also, my plan for North Broad
14 was a revitalization of the Divine
15 Lorraine Hotel, and there's four and a
16 half acres around it. Just up the street
17 is the Metropolitan Opera House. Right
18 across the street from that is a vacant
19 lot, and up a little further are many,
20 many, many vacant lots and many beautiful
21 buildings. Just like the Ben Franklin
22 Parkway was built the same time that
23 North Broad was being established, the
24 City Beautiful Movement was happening and
25 more parks. The first idea of a modern

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2 city park was developed during this time,
3 during the same time that North Broad was
4 created.

5 Also, with the idea of engaging
6 the community in an educational aspect, I
7 want to put this on -- the 2007 census,
8 about 2,000 of out of the 20,000
9 Philadelphians that live in the area
10 around the Divine Lorraine high school
11 diplomas. A writer, Catharine Beecher
12 Stowe -- or Catharine Beecher, who is
13 Harry Beecher Stowe's sister, she wrote
14 about a healthy home and how a healthy
15 home should have a parlor with a piano
16 for music, it should have a greenhouse so
17 the children can know and understand the
18 life cycle of nature, life and death.
19 And Philly is our house, and our parks
20 should be able to give them that sense of
21 learning from nature, not just engaging
22 them in physical education but also in
23 science.

24 I remember in, I think, fifth
25 or sixth grade we planted a lima bean in

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2 a paper towel and then we did nothing
3 with it. Well, what if the children
4 actually planted a garden and was -- they
5 were part of the development of these
6 parks and the upkeep and the renovations
7 of every park.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
12 questions, Councilwoman?

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Mr. --

14 MR. STRAW: Straw.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

16 I did not want to mispronounce your name.

17 Welcome aboard. You say that
18 you have been now on the Commission for
19 six months?

20 MR. STRAW: Yes, ma'am.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I just
22 need to say, I appreciate hearing how you
23 believe now and you used the word
24 "internal audit," it's now a time for
25 that stage of self-examination, if you

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2 will, of where the Commission is.

3 MR. STRAW: Amen.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And you
5 mention the Centennial District that I
6 know would be of keen interest to
7 Councilman Jones. So just very, very
8 briefly, what were you referring to
9 around the Centennial District?

10 MR. STRAW: As you are well
11 aware, there is a plan for the Centennial
12 District, and it has been formally
13 adopted. And it does call for strategic
14 development within that area. Of course,
15 you have the Please Touch Museum, which
16 is a great success. There is the site of
17 the former Horticultural Hall, which is
18 up for redevelopment. I think that that
19 could be a remarkable asset in terms of
20 horticulture and agriculture, both. And
21 there is also call for other performing
22 arts developments in that district.
23 Tying it together with the Zoo, the new
24 High School for the Future really creates
25 a critical mass and a destination, not

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2 only for residents but for visitors to
3 enjoy that particular part of our parks
4 and recreation system.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

6 Thank you very much for that update.

7 MR. STRAW: My pleasure.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

9 Councilman Johnson? Nothing,
10 okay.

11 All right. And I had a
12 question for you, Mr. Goldman, in
13 reference to the redevelopment of North
14 Broad Street. Actually, let me back up
15 for one second. Do you live in
16 Philadelphia right now?

17 MR. GOLDMAN: Pardon me?

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Do you live
19 in Philadelphia?

20 MR. GOLDMAN: I live in
21 Montgomery County.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. But
23 you had done some thinking about
24 development on North Broad Street, which
25 is a part of my district. From what area

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2 to what area on North Broad Street did
3 you have in mind? I'm biased.

4 MR. GOLDMAN: Talking to Ben
5 Leech from the Preservation Alliance and
6 Bruce Laverty from the Athenaeum and
7 countless architects from Temple, Drexel,
8 UPenn, I felt that the intersection of
9 Ridge Avenue and Fairmount on Broad,
10 there's four and a half acre of vacant
11 land there, tons of redevelopment.
12 Stephen Starr is coming in, and the Home
13 Project, Harman Deutsch Architects are
14 building a four-story apartment building,
15 and there's this triangular park right
16 across the street from the Divine
17 Lorraine, and for that building to be
18 preserved, a public park has that ability
19 to protect the structure and keep it in
20 the future. So using that as a
21 jumping-off point, just radiating
22 outwards, upwards to connect as a gateway
23 to Temple and outward east and west to
24 the rest of the neighborhoods of North
25 Broad.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. I
3 think that that could be a good starting
4 point, but my district starts on Broad
5 Street between -- it starts at Lehigh and
6 goes up to Broad and Olney -- or actually
7 a little bit further than Broad and
8 Olney. So I think that there's a lot of
9 conversation about development around the
10 Divine Lorraine and in that area, but
11 North Broad Street goes a whole lot
12 further up. So just to keep it in mind
13 as we talk about redevelopment along
14 North Broad Street I think is really
15 important.

16 MR. GOLDMAN: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Absolutely.
18 Thank you.

19 And thank you, everyone, for
20 your testimony today.

21 Seeing that there's nobody else
22 here to testify on behalf of Parks and
23 Recreation, let the record reflect that
24 this hearing stands in recess until
25 Tuesday, May 22nd, 2012 at 1:00 p.m.

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2 Thank you.

3 (Committee on Parks, Recreation
4 and Cultural Affairs recessed at 1:15
5 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 on May 21, 2012, and that
this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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RPR-Notary Public

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