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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

COMMITTEE ON PARKS, RECREATION

4

AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

5

- - -

6

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, March 18, 2009
9:20 a.m.

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PRESENT:

11

COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN, CHAIR

12

COUNCILMAN DARRELL L. CLARKE

13

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.

14

COUNCILWOMAN MARIA QUINONES-SANCHEZ

15

COUNCILMAN BILL GREENLEE

16

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RESOLUTION 090057 - 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...

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COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good

3

morning. A quorum has been established.

4

The City Council Committee on Parks,

5

Recreation and Cultural Affairs is now in

6

a public hearing to hear testimony on

7

Resolution No. 090057.

8

I wish to name all of the

9

members of the Committee. To my

10

immediate right is Councilman Curtis

11

Jones, Vice-Chair of our Committee on

12

Recreation, Parks and Cultural Affairs.

13

To my extreme left is my colleague and

14

partner in this nine-year endeavor -- let

15

me repeat, nine years. We're finally

16

here -- Councilman Darrell Clarke, and

17

Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez.

18

I will now ask the Clerk to

19

please read the title of Resolution

20

090057.

21

THE CLERK: Resolution No.

22

090057, authorizing Council's Committee

23

on Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs

24

to hold public hearings for applicants

25

seeking nomination to serve on the

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2 Commission on Parks and Recreation, and
3 further authorizing the Committee to
4 recommend for Council's consideration
5 nominations to be forwarded to the Mayor.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

7 You should know and I will
8 state for the record publicly David
9 Forde, my Chief of Staff and member of
10 the technical staff, and the President's
11 Office worked courageously over the last
12 many days to accommodate, receive, log
13 more than 250 applications from a diverse
14 mix of Philadelphians who care about the
15 future of our parks. So I would be
16 remiss not to say thank you to the
17 enormous amount of preparation they had
18 to do prior to us getting to this table.

19 Let me open by thanking my
20 colleague Councilman Clarke, who was
21 joined to my hip on this long road to get
22 to this day. I must also thank our
23 Mayor, Mayor Nutter, who supported this
24 effort, has been strong well before his
25 tenure as Mayor. Finally, let me say

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2 thank you to the Recreation and Park
3 advocates and employees from across this
4 city who each and every day devote their
5 time, their talent, their energy to
6 improving our Park and Recreation
7 facilities.

8 The text of why and how we got
9 here: In 2000, the Philadelphia Daily
10 News began a series, entitled "Acres of
11 Neglect." That ultimately led to the
12 City and the William Penn Foundation
13 together funding a strategic plan for
14 Parks and Recreation. That strategic
15 plan process lasted about 18 months,
16 where Park experts were called in and
17 interviewed persons, stakeholders up and
18 down the ladder, from the user to the
19 Park Commissioners and everyone in
20 between. This led to a series of events
21 and improvements and ultimately led to a
22 City Charter change which allows for a
23 best practices management structure, thus
24 putting us now in the top ten cities
25 around the country that have what we now

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2 have in the City of Philadelphia, and
3 that leads us to today.

4 Recently, the Philadelphia
5 Inquirer in an editorial said, quote,
6 "Nothing less than a stellar Commission
7 will do," end quote. That is the goal of
8 this Council and this Mayor, to have a
9 stellar, talented, committed Commission
10 of members.

11 As this process moves to the
12 Committee -- I chair Parks, Recreation
13 and Cultural Affairs -- and ultimately
14 through all of City Council, I commit to
15 you that we will be finding the best and
16 the brightest candidates that reflect a
17 diversity of this city and a diversity of
18 the users of Philadelphia's Recreation
19 and Park facilities. So let me repeat
20 that. We're looking for the best and the
21 brightest in terms of talent, expertise
22 and commitment of candidates that we will
23 then send to the Mayor's desk.

24 This is a monumental challenge,
25 one that myself, this team and City

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2 government is excited to face head on.

3 It is really an unprecedented, exciting

4 time. We're going to find a dedicated

5 and passionate Commission on Parks and

6 Recreation, and that search starts today.

7 I look forward to working with all

8 interested in achieving this important

9 goal.

10 And now the ground rules. As a

11 former teacher, ground rules are

12 important when we're dealing with large

13 numbers. So we will be calling you up in

14 groups of three. And it's three because

15 that's how many chairs are seated for you

16 comfortably at the table. As stated in

17 the e-mail that you all received, remarks

18 will be no longer than two or three

19 minutes. Unlike normal hearings where

20 you can really speak as long as you'd

21 like, because we have such an enormous

22 number and we're under a time window with

23 this particular process, we're going to

24 ask you to honor the time clock, two to

25 three minutes. And most often we do not

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2 have a clock. Today we do. So please do
3 not move us to become time police.

4 Council staff will be
5 collecting your written testimony. And
6 that is desirable. If you don't have
7 written testimony today, you're certainly
8 welcome to get it to us, and any other
9 documents you wish to share with the
10 Committee.

11 We have a lot of interested
12 people -- the number again is about
13 250 -- to listen and learn from over the
14 course of these hearings, which for us
15 are going to last about three and a half
16 days. So we want to ask you to honor the
17 clock.

18 And this also is not customary:
19 We will not be asking a lot of questions.
20 We may ask questions for clarity purposes
21 on the facts that you present, but we
22 will not be engaging in the type of
23 thorough, detailed questioning that we
24 prefer.

25 One last note. I would be

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2 remiss if I did not mention again the
3 hard work of Hal Thickhandler -- where are
4 you, Hal? Stand up so we can see your
5 face -- and other City Council staff and
6 Sharon Ortiz from the President's Office,
7 who I mention very, very, very, very
8 closely -- worked closely with David
9 Forde. They have been extremely helpful
10 in working with my staff to pull together
11 this very important hearing, and I want
12 to know and say thank you to them
13 publicly.

14 We will now move on to our
15 first group of testifiers. And in an
16 effort to be efficient, I'm going to call
17 the first six. So what we will do is,
18 the first three will move to their seat
19 and then the next three will move to the
20 seats behind them, and that allows us to
21 chip off a few seconds as we move through
22 this process.

23 Hello?

24 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Yes.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: The first

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2 six -- the first three to the testifier
3 witness table are -- and please forgive
4 me if I do not pronounce your name
5 properly -- Noel Abejo, Cynthia Affleck,
6 Paul Agostini. If you would move to the
7 witness table. Behind them please move
8 Lacey Alexander, Patricia Baldt and
9 Charles Baltimore.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I would
13 ask all of you to remember, we want to
14 take the record, and you help us when you
15 state your name for the record prior to
16 giving your testimony.

17 And so, sir, we're going to ask
18 you to move to the witness table since
19 there are only two there.

20 Ernest Barile, III, Gregory
21 Benjamin, Shaun Bennett. If you are
22 here, you're welcome to move to the next
23 three seats behind them.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So then
3 let me stipulate another rule. For those
4 persons who completed an application, did
5 confirm their attendance but are not able
6 to be here at the time that we call them,
7 we'll have to move you to the back of the
8 list and we will circle back for those
9 who are not here when we start.

10 Good morning, gentlemen.

11 Please state your name for the record.

12 Sir, if you could start.

13 MR. ABEJO: Good morning. My
14 name is Noel Abejo.

15 MR. BALTIMORE: Good morning.

16 My name is Charlie Baltimore.

17 MR. AGOSTINI: Good morning.

18 My name is Paul Agostini.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.
20 And we'll need you to repeat your names
21 once we move into your testimony.

22 Please, sir.

23 MR. ABEJO: Good morning. My
24 name is Noel Abejo. I would like to
25 thank the City Council and the Committee

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2 on Parks, Recreation and Cultural
3 Affairs, Committee Chair Blondell
4 Reynolds Brown, Vice-Chair Curtis Jones,
5 Committee members Councilwoman Maria
6 Quinones-Sanchez, Councilman Darrell
7 Clarke and Frank DiCicco for giving me
8 the opportunity to give an overview of my
9 background, education, work, volunteer
10 and leadership experience and the reasons
11 why I should be considered in serving on
12 the newly created Commission on Parks and
13 Recreation.

14 I have been a resident of
15 Philadelphia for 37 years. I have lived
16 in West Philadelphia, South Philadelphia,
17 North Philadelphia and now Northeast
18 Philadelphia. Why is this important?
19 Because this gives me a bigger
20 appreciation for what we need in the many
21 neighborhoods. I have benefited from the
22 Parks and Recreation Departments, and I
23 want to help others continue to get
24 improved benefits throughout the entire
25 system.

I earned a Bachelor's Degree from Widener University and a Master's Degree from LaSalle University. In addition to the advanced degree, I have continued taking courses through the years, which I feel is of great benefit for the new organization. Courses include Diversity, Management, Communications and Leadership Training.

My professional background is concentrated in information technology, which includes 23 years in a management and leadership role. Responsibilities include documenting standards and procedures on a corporate level. As Vice-President of IT, I am involved with a group whose function is to provide the organizational structure to enable a culture of continuous improvement. I believe the skills and attributes gained in the corporate environment can be transferred to the new organization. I've also been involved with several mergers of companies and departments, so

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2 I fully understand the task at hand,
3 which is trying to do more with less.

4 I've been involved on a
5 voluntary basis for the Filipino American
6 Community Athletic Association. I was a
7 Founder and past President and currently
8 the Advisor. We are in our 15th
9 consecutive basketball season, where we
10 served over 700 players since 1995.

11 I'm also a member of the
12 Filipino Executive Council of Greater
13 Philadelphia, an umbrella group
14 consisting of 24 organizations in the
15 region. I was the past Vice-President
16 and currently the Press Relation Officer
17 responsible for communication and website
18 administration.

19 I was also a member of the
20 Police Commissioner's Advisory on Asian
21 Affairs, where we facilitated open
22 communications with the Asian community.

23 I'm also a member of
24 Philadelphia CARES, where I assisted with
25 the Dash for Democracy, the Broad Street

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2 Run and the Philadelphia Marathon. And
3 I'm also a member of WorkReady
4 Philadelphia Business Mentoring Youth
5 Program. I was the instructor for the
6 workshop on business expectations,
7 communication skills, resume writing and
8 interview skills to prepare high school
9 students for the job market. I've worked
10 with assigned students for three-month
11 segments to gain skills in the workplace.

12 In summary, you need a
13 candidate with a broad background who is
14 willing to contribute professional
15 knowledge and personal resources to
16 benefit the preservation and use of the
17 Park system. I believe I am that
18 candidate.

19 Thank you, Councilmembers, for
20 your interest and leadership in this
21 area. I look forward to working with the
22 Commission on Parks and Recreation to
23 ensure our citizens have access to our
24 treasures. I would be pleased to answer
25 any questions you may have.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any

3 questions from members of the Committee?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,

6 sir.

7 Please, sir.

8 MR. BALTIMORE: Good morning.

9 My name is Charlie Baltimore. Let me
10 first thank the Mayor and Council for
11 affording me this opportunity to
12 interview for a seat on the new Parks and
13 Recreation Commission. Opening up
14 government to include ordinary citizens
15 as myself is not only civic engagement in
16 its purest form, it is reflective of the
17 national mood and direction of our
18 country.

19 I am the Dean of Learners and a
20 health and physical education educator at
21 the High School of the Future.

22 Very pleased to hear, Madam
23 Chairwoman, that you are a former
24 educator.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

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2 MR. BALTIMORE: My interest in
3 fitness and recreation has been
4 life-long. As a coach I once assisted,
5 for it he once told me, You have to be
6 what you sell. Eating healthy and
7 exercising regularly is a part of who and
8 what I am. Understanding the benefits of
9 both is why I am seeking a seat on the
10 Commission.

11 Each morning at 5:00 a.m., my
12 wife and I are out the door for a visit
13 to our gym. The visit sets the tone for
14 the day, awakens our minds, stimulates us
15 physically, and truly has an impact on
16 our self-confidence. Not every
17 Philadelphian can afford a club
18 membership of any cost. What more can
19 these two City entities do to make
20 programming more adaptable, accessible,
21 relevant and effective? These are the
22 questions that I bring to the selection
23 process.

24 For the past year, I have
25 helped with flag football and youth

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2 basketball at the Palumbo Recreation
3 Center. Palumbo is a blue ribbon
4 facility, by any standards. What makes
5 it successful? Programming directed
6 towards its neighborhood interests,
7 programming that strives to expand
8 neighborhood interest, a dedicated and
9 hard-working staff, and community
10 volunteers. Teams are coached by fathers
11 and relatives, neighbors help with
12 events, and the community uses the center
13 as a central gathering point. How do we
14 replicate this model in areas where adult
15 involvement is rare or non-existent?

16 By global standards, our Park
17 system is truly a treasure, offering
18 endless opportunities for connecting with
19 nature, understanding our past and
20 leisure activities. In my mind, the two
21 most pressing questions for the system
22 are: How do we keep the facilities and
23 grounds in top shape in these economic,
24 challenging times, and how do we ensure
25 use of the Park maximizes its potential

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2 and is relevant?

3 The answers to my questions are
4 twofold. Dare to self-reflect boldly,
5 creatively and critically, free of
6 political allegiances and self-interests.
7 What are our assets, what are the needs
8 and interests of our community and how do
9 we leverage our assets to reach our
10 goals?

11 Second, we must be willing to
12 look at our expenditures and decide if we
13 are making the correct decisions based on
14 our desired outcomes. We cannot
15 continuously use the same policies simply
16 because that's the way it has always been
17 and yet expect to move forward.
18 Partnerships are a key to sustainable
19 success for any organization. We must
20 decide if our current partnerships are
21 beneficial to the Department and citizens
22 and if we are effectively utilizing
23 organizations which share many of our
24 department goals; i.e., the AmeriCorps
25 and Philadelphia School District.

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2 Lastly, there was little
3 interest in applying for this appointment
4 until Mayor Nutter nominated Michael
5 DiBerardinis to head the new department.
6 I recall Mr. DiBerardinis' previous
7 tenure with the Recreation Department.
8 He has proven he has the fortitude,
9 skills and vision to address all the
10 issues I have discussed today and more.
11 It would be a privilege to support his
12 efforts to make two great departments one
13 exceptional organization.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

16 Any questions from members of
17 the Committee?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Proceed,
20 sir.

21 MR. AGOSTINI: Good morning.

22 My name is Paul Agostini and I'd like to
23 thank the Committee on Parks, Recreation
24 and Cultural Affairs for conducting these
25 hearings and providing me the opportunity

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2 to present my testimony before the
3 Committee today.

4 The Department of Parks and
5 Recreation may be the one department that
6 can truly provide something for everyone
7 in Philadelphia. I would relish the
8 opportunity to contribute to the newly
9 created department as a member of the
10 Commission on Parks and Recreation. I
11 would bring the same level of dedication
12 and determination to the Commission that
13 has brought me success in my career and
14 volunteering endeavors.

15 I have extensive professional
16 experience working with colleagues,
17 clients and vendors with diverse
18 backgrounds in multiple industries,
19 covering both the public and private
20 sectors. My management consulting and
21 financial industry experience developed
22 my team-building and problem-solving
23 skills, and I have a strong understanding
24 how project work should be executed. My
25 previous exposure to City employees has

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2 demonstrated to me that they are a
3 dedicated group of individuals who take
4 pride in their work. I would welcome
5 another opportunity to work with these
6 professionals.

7 My intention for participating
8 on the Commission would be to advise the
9 Department of Parks and Recreation on
10 what I thought was in the best interest
11 of the City and its residents. I do not
12 have a personal agenda, nor would I seek
13 recognition for my participation on the
14 Commission. I have no political platform
15 and I am not seeking favor with any
16 religious, social or civic organizations.
17 I simply want to draw on my professional
18 and personal experiences to provide
19 thoughtful, logical insight and advice to
20 the Department of Parks and Recreation.
21 I have benefited from the recreational
22 facilities and public parks in the City
23 for years, and my goal is to contribute
24 to their continuing success as a member
25 of the Commission on Parks and

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2 Recreation.

3 While the Department of Parks
4 and Recreation may offer benefits for all
5 of the citizens of Philadelphia, I think
6 particular attention should be paid to
7 serving the youth of the City. After the
8 School District of Philadelphia, I think
9 the Department of Parks and Recreation
10 should be the most influential City
11 agency on its young residents.
12 Additionally, I think the Philadelphia
13 Park system is one of the City's best
14 assets for retaining young professionals
15 after they have completed their studies
16 at one of Philadelphia's many fine
17 institutions of higher education. I
18 would enjoy working with the Department
19 raising awareness, soliciting
20 participation, seeking financial
21 contributions and serving in any other
22 capacity that could benefit such
23 worthwhile pursuits.

24 I appreciate your consideration
25 to serve on the Commission on Parks and

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2 Recreation, and I thank you for your time
3 this morning.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
5 questions from members of the Committee?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Mr. Paul
8 Agostini, for clarify for me, second
9 paragraph, first sentence, you indicate
10 that you've worked with colleagues,
11 clients and vendors. Cite examples of
12 each.

13 MR. AGOSTINI: Well, colleagues
14 would be any co-workers I had with my
15 consulting companies, Xenture in
16 Philadelphia. The clients would include
17 the City of Philadelphia Department of
18 Records, AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals,
19 Vanguard Financial. And vendors would
20 include software companies such as
21 Investran, Eagle Software and larger
22 vendors like Oracle and Microsoft.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
24 then. Thank you very much.

25 Anyone else?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
4 you all for your testimony.

5 MR. BALTIMORE: Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Ernest
7 Barile, Gregory Benjamin, Shaun Bennett,
8 please step to the witness table. Harry
9 Benson, Max Berger, Randolph Blakeney.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any order
13 you prefer, gentlemen.

14 Scott Bluebond, Blaine Bonham,
15 Samuel Botts, if you could please move
16 forward to the chairs behind them, that
17 would be appreciated.

18 (Witnesses approached witness
19 table.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
21 morning, gentlemen. You may proceed.
22 State your name for the record and
23 proceed with your testimony.

24 MR. BLAKENEY: My name is
25 Randolph Blakeney. Can you hear me?

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

3 MR. BLAKENEY: Randolph
4 Blakeney.

5 First, I want to thank you for
6 allowing me to come here this morning.

7 The reason why I feel I should
8 be nominated for the Commission of Parks
9 and Recreation, because I have a passion
10 for organized sports and I believe that
11 the development of a well-rounded
12 youngster is important, and adequate
13 facilities is a must to develop the
14 potential and learning the fine art of
15 team work. This passion is an outgrowth
16 of my years of involvement with
17 youngsters and knowing that a void was
18 filled in my life when I was introduced
19 to team sports. I know to develop an
20 outstanding Park and Recreation
21 Commission system requires tapping into
22 the community for funding and so forth,
23 and I believe I have the kind of
24 experience, expertise that will allow me
25 to negotiate, brainstorm and seek help

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2 for the City's Parks and Recreation,
3 develop a plan best used for valuable
4 wealth within the City in the form of
5 parks, trails, woodland and unutilized
6 recreation centers.

7 Aside from the passion I have
8 for the recreation and sports and my love
9 for nature, I wish to give the City,
10 which provided me with so many
11 opportunities, my family childhood home,
12 memories of me and my dad going to the
13 park to drink the water from the park to
14 fill up a jug, an opportunity to get
15 education that includes team sports,
16 playing for a City championship team back
17 in 1960, a place of employment until I
18 retired, which was 2004.

19 It is time to give back. Even
20 though I have moved out of the City, I
21 still utilize their golf course, and I
22 feel that I must give back.

23 Thank you. Any questions?

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
25 questions from members of the Committee?

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2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please.

4 You may proceed with your testimony.

5 MR. BARILE: My name is Ernest
6 Barile. Good morning, Chairwoman
7 Reynolds Brown, Vice-Chairman Jones,
8 Committee members Councilwoman
9 Quinones-Sanchez, Councilman Clarke and
10 other members of City Council. Thank you
11 for your time and the opportunity to
12 share my information.

13 I would like to first reflect
14 on my work history. I was employed by
15 the Fairmount Park Commission and
16 Recreation Department for over 23 years.
17 I started as a tree climber for the
18 street trees. I progressed to computer
19 programmer. I worked in the Park and
20 Recreation Property Division overseeing
21 the golf courses, park properties and
22 Mann Music Center, Horticulture Center,
23 things of that nature.

24 One thing I'm passionate about,
25 I currently work for the Philadelphia

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2 Prison System and I see how valuable our
3 Park and Recreation system is, as every
4 day I'm in the jails, where we're
5 crowded, nearly 10,000 inmates. That is
6 why I'm so passionate about it.

7 I've dedicated my life to civil
8 service and community activism, and as a
9 member of the Commission, I will fight to
10 improve, preserve, promote and protect
11 the entire Fairmount Park and Recreation
12 system and will work tirelessly to ensure
13 its availability to the public.

14 To support the Commission, I
15 would work to organize friends groups,
16 advisory boards, community organizations,
17 civic groups and other shareholders. I
18 would ensure public input and involvement
19 in creating a strict set of bylaws and
20 guidelines.

21 The Park and Recreation system
22 of the City of Philadelphia has impacted
23 and influenced my life. I had the
24 privilege of growing up on Fairmount Park
25 property in the historic Thomas Mansion

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2 when I was three years old, and I was
3 able to experience the Park environment
4 in all of its glory and share in its
5 splendor. My father was employed by the
6 Park for 40 years, so our conversations
7 always involved the Park and Recreation
8 system. I remember the Park at its
9 greatest and I desire to work to restore
10 it for the generations of today and the
11 future.

12 As we know, Fairmount Park is a
13 gem of a natural resource, offering our
14 citizens the chance to enjoy fresh air
15 and beautiful scenery. I will work to
16 guarantee that those resources are used
17 to their maximum potential. I will be a
18 watchdog for the communities,
19 neighborhoods, friends and volunteer
20 groups. I will listen to input from the
21 community and stakeholders, work to
22 provide a peaceful refuge.

23 As an employee of the Park and
24 Recreation system for over 23 years, I
25 have tremendous insight into the inner

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2 workings of both departments, and
3 combining this with my community
4 involvement, I believe that I will be the
5 perfect candidate to serve on this
6 Commission. Since I am heavily involved
7 with all aspects of the Park and
8 Recreation system, I will bring extensive
9 knowledge relating to the adoption of
10 standards and guidelines necessary to
11 improve the facilities and the land use
12 while promoting its preservation. I will
13 incorporate public comment into the need
14 to convey and acquire parkland and
15 facilities.

16 To promote and invest in the
17 Commission, I will lobby City Council,
18 the Mayor, state and federal officials
19 for dedicated funding. I will
20 incorporate a grant-writing program,
21 allow the Park and Recreation to keep all
22 generated funds, appeal to corporate
23 sponsors and professional sports teams
24 for financial assistance. I will sell
25 advertising space in the prime Park and

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2 Recreation areas and utilize special
3 events, the trolleys, golfing, skating,
4 biking as fundraising tools and seek
5 private and philanthropic donations.

6 I will work to create a task
7 force to reevaluate the uses of our
8 recreation centers and parkland and
9 ensure that the needs of the public are
10 being met. Our mission should be to
11 properly serve each specific community.
12 I will utilize user surveys to maximize
13 the program and facility uses that work
14 to move beyond basic recreation and
15 establish youth development programs,
16 gardening, debate teams, landscaping, et
17 cetera. We must expand and innovate and
18 meet the needs of each community.

19 Our Park and Recreation system
20 contributes greatly to the physical and
21 aesthetic qualities of our neighborhoods
22 and strengthens our communities. We must
23 invest in them, since their improvement
24 equates to positive change in the
25 community. I will work tirelessly to

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2 provide the youth of our community with
3 the forum to voice their concerns and
4 interests, as we must get our young
5 people involved.

6 As we know, the nationwide
7 trend is to take advantage of the
8 public-private partnership to renovate
9 Parks and Recreation facilities. This
10 has proven successful over and over
11 again, and we must work to strengthen
12 those ties in our city.

13 To refurbish the Park and
14 Recreation areas, despite battling budget
15 constraints, we must combine the current
16 public infrastructure - buildings, land,
17 employees, et cetera - with the private
18 sector's flexibility - fundraising,
19 attracting political support, promoting
20 civic group participation. Our
21 diversified interest and our broad-based
22 constituency are our greatest assets, and
23 the Park and Recreation system must bond
24 with the civic, community, environmental,
25 historic and nature groups and partner

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2 with universities, businesses and
3 corporations.

4 We are very fortunate that the
5 citizens of Philadelphia historically
6 show support for our Park and Recreation
7 systems and they're willing to invest in
8 that and come out and fight for it. We
9 are obligated to cultivate that
10 relationship and join forces to improve
11 the quality of life for all. I am the
12 right person to create that unity.

13 I believe that my work history,
14 life experience, community service and
15 love for our Park and Recreation system
16 allows me to be a valuable resource and
17 outstanding candidate for a seat on the
18 Commission of Park and Recreation.

19 Thank you very much for your
20 time.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
22 for your testimony.

23 Please, sir.

24 MR. BERGER: Honorable
25 Councilmembers, my name is Max Berger. I

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2 have testimony and recommendations
3 contained in here, as requested.

4 I am here today for three
5 reasons: I love the City, I love the
6 Park system, and I wish to serve.

7 What we have in our Park system
8 is unique to any city in the world. We
9 have a phenomenal recreational resource
10 in the Park and its amenities, which are
11 part of the founders and grantors gift to
12 all of us who live and work in and around
13 Philadelphia. I refer you to my
14 application regarding my specific
15 academic and professional qualifications.

16 In addition to some of the
17 charitable boards which I am currently
18 involved with, I have been fortunate to
19 serve this City in other capacities in
20 the past. I was trained as a literacy
21 trainer in the 1980's and served in that
22 capacity for a number of years. In the
23 '90s, I was a Fair Housing Commissioner
24 for the City of Philadelphia. In the
25 2000's, I was also a member and an

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2 ambassador for the City of Philadelphia
3 of the Airport Advisory Board. For the
4 past five years, I've remained involved
5 in and have been on the Board of
6 Fairmount Park Historic Preservation
7 Trust and have been intimately involved
8 in promoting Park activities and creating
9 revenue opportunities for the Park
10 system. Recent Trust success stories
11 include the Centennial Cafe at the Ohio
12 House and the Allen's Lane Art Center.
13 Total investment to these Park facilities
14 totaled over \$1.5 million, mostly private
15 dollars.

16 In conclusion, the Recreation
17 Department is vital to the civic health
18 of our community. We need to develop
19 ways to make sure our citizens have
20 access to clean facilities and open pools
21 for continued enjoyment now and in the
22 future. While it may be difficult to pay
23 for these facilities, it has been proven
24 time and time again that given
25 opportunities to participate in organized

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2 activities, children grow and develop
3 self-reliance and purpose. This
4 Commission, once formed, must find a
5 sustainable path to keep our Recreation
6 Department facilities open and provide
7 these opportunities to the youth of our
8 city for success.

9 Thank you for this opportunity
10 to provide testimony. I wish us all
11 success in this endeavor.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Questions
13 from members of the Committee?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
16 you for your testimony very, very much.
17 And we thank you also. The first six
18 panelists have honored the clock. So
19 they've set the tone.

20 Following our next panel, I'd
21 like to ask Samuel Botts, Andre Bright,
22 David Broida, Richard Brown to please
23 move closer to the witness table.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

3 Thank you. You may proceed with your
4 testimony.

5 MR. BLUEBOND: Good morning.

6 My name is Scott Bluebond. Thank you for
7 considering my application today and for
8 your time. I'm a Philadelphia native. I
9 went to Central High School and I have a
10 BA Degree from Penn State and an MA
11 Degree from Colorado State, both in
12 speech communications.

13 I've spent a good deal of my
14 life in Fairmount Park. Some of my
15 fondest childhood memories were of family
16 picnics there. And, fortunately, I was
17 young enough that I didn't have to get
18 there at 6:00 in the morning and get dibs
19 on the covered picnic areas, as my family
20 members took turns doing that growing up.

21 I have 25 years experience in
22 marketing and public relations, and the
23 last 15 have been for non-profit
24 organizations. I'm currently the
25 Marketing and Communications Director for

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2 the Wellness Community of Philadelphia.

3 We provide free support services for
4 people with cancer and their loved ones.

5 We're located in West Fairmount Park in
6 the lovely historic Ridgeland Mansion.

7 So I've been promoting the Wellness
8 Community and marketing it for ten years,
9 as well as Ridgeland Mansion.

10 Since 1999, we've had 15,000
11 people make approximately 100,000 visits
12 to our home in the Park. I dare say that
13 is a larger number, many times over,
14 compared to all the other historic sites
15 and recreation in the Park. I
16 coordinated and promoted with the Mural
17 Arts Program and Girard College to place
18 a beautiful and inspirational mural at
19 the latter, named "Beyond Our
20 Door...There is Hope."

21 Councilman Clarke, you spoke
22 that day at our dedication back in
23 October of 2002.

24 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown, I
25 know you're aware of the Wellness

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2 Community's growth since you served on
3 our Board for several years. I'd like to
4 be able to do for Fairmount Park on the
5 whole what I've been able to do at a
6 smaller level for the Wellness Community
7 of Philadelphia.

8 Prior to working at the
9 Wellness Community, I was Vice-President
10 of Marketing and Public Relations for
11 Please Touch Museum.

12 My contributions in raising the
13 profile of Please Touch Museum
14 undoubtedly have played a major role in
15 allowing it to land in the spectacular,
16 revitalized, improved Please Touch Museum
17 at Memorial Hall.

18 Prior to that, I served as
19 Public Relations Manager for Dorney Park.
20 I acted as the park's official emergency
21 spokesperson, tactfully handling several
22 crises there. Undoubtedly, my skills in
23 tourism, marketing, public relations and
24 crisis communications would help the
25 Commission.

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2 I understand the sacrifices
3 that have to be made to reduce expenses
4 and to help raise funds.

5 I've worked with city, state
6 and federal government officials on
7 promotions, events and appearances, from
8 presidential candidates on down. My
9 experience working for both non-profits
10 and for-profits has provided me with
11 insights on the challenges that both
12 face.

13 I've worked -- having worked in
14 the Park for so many years, I understand
15 many of the issues it faces, especially
16 from a public relations standpoint. The
17 newly found Commission is going to need
18 to continue to do the best work done by
19 the prior Commission, but will now have a
20 chance, in effect, to start over with
21 fresh ideas and a clean slate.

22 Most of all, I want to continue
23 to advocate for Fairmount Park, because I
24 think it's just a fascinating place -
25 trails and gardens and rivers and

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2 streams, picnic areas, historic homes,
3 the Mann, the Zoo, the Art Museum and now
4 the Please Touch Museum and so much more.
5 What a tremendous place.

6 I don't have any hidden
7 agendas. I don't have any past political
8 connections to interfere in my
9 decision-making. I have no reason to be
10 on the Commission other than to serve for
11 the city that I love. I will work hard
12 to accomplish the Commission's goals.
13 I'd be honored to be selected to steward
14 the assets of the Park and to serve on
15 the Commission. And I thank you for your
16 time.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 Point of information.
20 Councilman Jones.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes. And I
22 promised the Chairwoman I would limit my
23 questions, and I will honor that, but my
24 colleague Maria Sanchez wants to know
25 where exactly is the Please Touch Museum?

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2 Do you know what district? And where is
3 the Wellness Community, just for the
4 record?

5 MR. BLUEBOND: Well, the
6 Wellness Community is in West Fairmount
7 Park.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Which would
9 be what district; do you know?

10 MR. BLUEBOND: Yours.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: There you
12 go. Continue.

13 MR. BLUEBOND: I missed that
14 breakfast that day when you came in not
15 too long back.

16 And, of course, Please Touch
17 Museum is right around the corner.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
20 for your testimony.

21 MR. BLUEBOND: Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
23 morning.

24 MR. BONHAM: Good morning,
25 Madam Chair and members of the Council

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2 Committee on Parks, Recreation and
3 Cultural Affairs. I'm Blaine Bonham, and
4 I appreciate the opportunity to apply to
5 serve on the Philadelphia Commission on
6 Parks and Recreation.

7 The potential for Philadelphia
8 to be both the next great city and Mayor
9 Nutter's dream as the greenest city in
10 America is inextricably tied to the
11 preeminence of the Fairmount Park system
12 and our places of recreation. The
13 challenge for the Commission and the
14 newly created Parks and Recreation's
15 Department is to preserve our open space
16 system in this challenging economic
17 climate, while fixing their sights firmly
18 on the future. We must create a dynamic
19 and stellar asset in the City's portfolio
20 that will enhance our image significantly
21 to help position Philadelphia as one of
22 the successful and vibrant regions
23 globally of the 21st century. I believe
24 I can serve the City well in meeting this
25 challenge.

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2 I'm a four-decade resident of
3 our city, living in many different
4 neighborhoods over that time, and as an
5 avid City dweller, I have been an active
6 contributor on a personal level to
7 improving the quality of life in our
8 city. Spanning almost that entire
9 period, my professional career has been
10 with the Pennsylvania Horticultural
11 Society, where I have been rooted in the
12 experience of working across the City on
13 a wide variety of open space and greening
14 issues through my development of the
15 Philadelphia Green program. I believe
16 this experience will be invaluable to
17 establishing citywide priorities and
18 policies for land use, preservation and
19 strong and healthy communities.

20 Innovation will be especially
21 critical to the Commission as it works to
22 create a new paradigm for the future
23 operation of Fairmount Park. In this
24 economy where we all have to do more with
25 less, the Commission must work with the

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2 Administration to focus on increasing
3 volunteerism, developing strong
4 collaborative public-private partnerships
5 and creating a public relations and
6 marketing strategy to promote our open
7 space and recreational assets.

8 To that end, I believe I can be
9 an excellent partner, as at PHS we have
10 successfully raised private and public
11 funds to create new greening models with
12 a broad array of City agencies,
13 community-based organizations, businesses
14 and other non-profit intermediaries to
15 address open space challenges. These
16 include the Park's Revitalization program
17 with the Department of Recreation and the
18 Fairmount Park Commission, the Vacant
19 Land Management program for the Office of
20 Housing and Community Development, Tree
21 Tenders, now replicated across the state,
22 City Harvest program, storm water
23 management projects and open spaces with
24 the Philadelphia Water Department, and
25 the citizens' engagement process for the

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2 Philadelphia's GreenPlan.

3 The talents at PHS are deep and
4 broad. The organization's staff of
5 highly skilled and innovative landscape
6 architects, horticulturists, community
7 organizers and planners will support and
8 advocate, as our resources permit, the
9 goals of the Commission and the City for
10 its Fairmount Park and open space system.

11 As a passionate Philly booster,
12 I would make a good candidate for the
13 Commission because I bring over three
14 decades of experience and commitment to
15 the greening of Philadelphia. If I'm
16 selected for the Commission, I will be an
17 active and involved member, and am ready
18 to serve in this capacity.

19 Thank you very much for your
20 consideration.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
22 questions from members of the Committee?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
25 for your testimony.

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2 Please, sir.

3 MR. BOTTS: Good morning,
4 ladies and gentlemen of City Council. I
5 would like to thank you for the
6 opportunity to speak before you this
7 morning and present my case for being
8 appointed to the Philadelphia Commission
9 on Parks and Recreation.

10 My name is Samuel Botts, Jr.
11 and I am the owner of VIGORworks, LLC,
12 parent company of VIGORworks Fitness
13 Center, VIGORworks Management Solutions
14 and B&R Wellness. VIGORworks is also the
15 creator of a childhood obesity program
16 called the Youth Challenge. The program
17 allows teens receiving state medical
18 assistance the chance to participate in a
19 12-week physical activity and nutritional
20 education program. The program was
21 created in Philadelphia and, after being
22 piloted for the past three years, will be
23 offered in community recreation centers
24 and churches in Philadelphia's
25 underserved communities. For my work in

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2 childhood obesity, former Pennsylvania
3 Secretary of Health, Dr. Calvin Johnson,
4 nominated me for a seat on Governor
5 Rendell's Advisory Council on Physical
6 Fitness and Sports, which the Governor
7 appointed me to last week.

8 Virtually all of the kids that
9 have been in our programs are overweight
10 because they are not engaging in the
11 proper amount of exercise and healthy
12 eating to maintain a healthy weight.
13 While attitudes towards healthy living
14 may play a part in their condition, our
15 experience has shown that lack of access,
16 perceived or real, is the real culprit.
17 Many families share that they do not have
18 safe places to be physically active or
19 that there are no programs that they can
20 afford where they can participate in
21 routine exercise. With all of the parks
22 and recreation centers in our city, it
23 saddens me to know how underutilized they
24 are by the communities they are designed
25 to serve.

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2 The problem with the parks is
3 that primarily it is only the flagship
4 parks that receive routine maintenance
5 and upkeep. Parks in underserved
6 neighborhoods, by definition, do not
7 receive the attention they deserve to
8 make them attractive venues to engage in
9 recreational activity. As a frequent
10 user of parks throughout the City, I have
11 witnessed myself the presence of drug
12 paraphernalia, used condoms, broken glass
13 and other debris that poses real risks to
14 anyone who uses these parks. Lack of use
15 by residents also attracts those who
16 engage in other illicit activity.

17 While City resources are
18 limited, I do believe that we can work
19 hard to identify other resources and
20 create community service projects to help
21 make all of our parks havens for fun,
22 friendly, family activities that will
23 ultimately result in a healthier
24 population.

25 In regards to the recreation

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2 centers, I believe there is significant
3 opportunity to increase awareness of the
4 types of programs offered. While
5 basketball programs always seem to enjoy
6 high participation rates, these centers
7 offer a host of other programs and
8 services that are of extreme benefit to
9 the community. I feel that the
10 Commission can work to help the
11 recreation centers promote these programs
12 and services in a way to increase
13 utilization of these facilities.

14 In my role as business owner,
15 identifying quality resources on a tight
16 budget has become a key attribute that
17 has allowed my company to remain in
18 business in a very competitive
19 environment. Not only does this skill
20 allow me to operate efficiently, it
21 forces me to think creatively, especially
22 in marketing ourselves to customers. In
23 my role on the Commission, I will regard
24 my responsibility to the citizens of
25 Philadelphia in relation to

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2 Philadelphia's Parks and Recreation
3 system in the same fashion that I regard
4 my responsibility to my customers in
5 their relation with my health club. Like
6 our customers, the citizens want clean,
7 safe, well-maintained facilities,
8 offering programs that cater to their
9 exercise and activity needs. I am
10 confident that I will be someone that the
11 Commission can rely on to carry out its
12 mission and objectives.

13 Again, thank you very much for
14 your time and consideration. My main
15 goal today was to provide you with
16 insight into the underlying reasons of my
17 intention to be on the Commission on
18 Parks and Recreation. I hope with this
19 insight you will be able to make the
20 best, informed decision regarding my
21 recommendation to the Mayor for
22 appointment to the Commission.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
24 questions from members of the Committee?

25 (No response.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Let me
3 thank you all for your testimony. Thank
4 you very much.

5 I'm going to repeat the next
6 series of names. Andre Bright, David
7 Broida, Richard Brown, John Barry,
8 Michael Burch, Richard Cantor, Jeremiah
9 Carber.

10 Any one of the other gentlemen,
11 please, you're welcome to take the seat
12 at the witness table.

13 Good morning, gentlemen.
14 Welcome. Please state your name for the
15 record and proceed with your testimony.

16 MR. CANTOR: Good morning. My
17 name is Richard Cantor.

18 MR. BROIDA: David Broida.

19 MR. BRIGHT: Andre Bright.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
21 Mr. Cantor.

22 MR. CANTOR: Thank you. My
23 name is Richard Cantor, and having
24 recently moved to the City two years ago
25 from Abington, I would like to thank the

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2 Council for affording me the opportunity
3 to appear before you. I'd like to be
4 very brief and just touch on a couple of
5 points.

6 It's my understanding that the
7 Commission would serve and the folks who
8 you are going to be nominating would
9 serve in an advisory capacity to the
10 Commissioner, and I think that the
11 position requires an understanding, some
12 goals that would be set, and the folks
13 who would be nominated would be
14 instrumental in setting those goals and
15 building consensus within the Board and
16 certainly the community that it serves.
17 The Board would be also responsible for
18 being extraordinarily supportive of the
19 Commissioner, Council and the Mayor.

20 It's been my experience, having
21 served on a number of Boards, that in
22 order to effectively facilitate the goals
23 that are set, that one has to be very
24 supportive of -- on the Boards that I
25 served, it was Executive Director. In

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2 this particular instance, it would be the
3 Commissioner. And although we all have
4 some issues that we may personally
5 identify with, in fact, it would be the
6 Commissioner who would be -- we would be
7 supportive of.

8 Since this is a new endeavor
9 for the City, the infancy of the Board,
10 as it learns to structure itself and
11 function, would be an important purpose
12 of this new Commission and the Board
13 members, and I feel that my experience,
14 having served in various capacities with
15 Pennsylvania Legal Services and having
16 served as the President of that Board and
17 been instrumental in its restructuring,
18 in its securing a permanent source of
19 financing, having served as
20 Vice-President of the Abington School
21 Board and dealt with the reasonable
22 expectations that the community and the
23 Board could provide, that was an
24 important criteria, again, in terms of
25 being able to balance the expectations

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2 with the realities of the budget. And
3 having served on various other Boards, I
4 would think that I would appreciate and
5 be honored to have the opportunity to
6 serve on this new Board and help with its
7 being able to find its appropriate
8 footing to be supportive of the
9 Commissioner, Council and the Mayor.

10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
12 questions from members of the Committee?
13 Councilman Clarke.

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
15 Madam Chair.

16 Madam Chair, real briefly, I
17 don't have a question, but I just want to
18 make a brief statement with respect to
19 what we anticipate this Commission will
20 ultimately be.

21 During the course of the
22 debate, there were some concerns that the
23 newly formed Commission on Parks and
24 Recreation would essentially be a paper
25 tiger, and that, to a large degree,

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2 created a significant level of difficulty
3 to get people to buy into this, and I
4 would just like to say today that we hope
5 that it will be anything but that.

6 The reality is is that in our
7 cursory review of the written
8 applications of individuals who will be
9 coming to testify, frankly speaking, we
10 are going to have a significantly
11 difficult decision to whittle this down
12 to 25 people, because we have some very
13 strong candidates. Frankly speaking, I
14 don't know how we're going to do it.
15 We'll figure it out. And I would hope
16 that the individuals who are not selected
17 to be the 25 nominees will still be
18 engaged.

19 Probably next week City Council
20 will be introducing legislation that will
21 enhance both this process as it relates
22 to participation and open up an
23 opportunity for those of you and any
24 other individuals who want to continue to
25 participate in a meaningful role in this

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2 very important endeavor, not just
3 Fairmount Park but also Recreation.

4 So I say all that to say that
5 we're going to be leaning on the
6 Commission heavily, both for support, and
7 when we say we want the Commission to
8 talk about -- make recommendations on
9 guidelines relating to Park
10 disposition/acquisition, watershed
11 management, all of those types of things,
12 we really mean that. I mean, we're going
13 to be looking to you.

14 We also would like to see this
15 Commission be proactive. One of the
16 issues that I had in my prior life as a
17 member of the Park Commission and then
18 President of my advisory council is that
19 we weren't out in the community nearly as
20 much as we should have been. We
21 essentially sat in Memorial Hall. We did
22 our thing. And for those individuals who
23 had an opportunity to come and see what
24 was going on -- and it wasn't a lot of
25 people, because Memorial Hall was

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2 somewhat removed from the community --
3 was a little disappointed in that
4 process.

5 So for the individuals who are
6 going to be on this, we're going to be
7 expecting you to be out on the road quite
8 a bit and to really touch base with the
9 citizens to make sure that you give us
10 the significant input that we so sorely
11 need as we develop our policy.

12 So with that, Madam Chair, I
13 have met my three-minute time limit and
14 I'm now going to defer to you. Thank
15 you.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
17 very much, Councilman Clarke.

18 For the record, please share
19 with us skill set. We learned of your
20 experiences, but if you could cite
21 examples of what skill sets you would
22 bring to the Commission.

23 MR. CANTOR: With regards to
24 skill sets, I've been an attorney
25 practicing for almost 35 years. I've

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2 served as general counsel for
3 manufacturing companies. I'm currently
4 general counsel for an issues management
5 company.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That is
7 helpful.

8 MR. CANTOR: Okay. Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Your
10 previous testimony didn't capture that
11 information. Okay, then. Thank you.
12 Please.

13 MR. BROIDA: Good morning. My
14 name is David Broida, and I have no idea
15 how you're going to be able to
16 distinguish all 250 or so of us, but I'm
17 going to make it easy for me. There's a
18 provision in the application process in
19 the law that allows for residents of
20 adjacent counties to apply for the
21 Commission. I live in Lower Merion
22 Township. I'm probably the only
23 applicant from Lower Merion.

24 What interests me in being a
25 Commissioner are two things. One is my

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2 professional experience. I worked for 32
3 years as the Director of Parks and
4 Recreation in Upper Merion Township in
5 King of Prussia. So everything that's
6 done on a large scale in Philadelphia,
7 I've done on a somewhat smaller scale.
8 I've written requests for proposals, for
9 acquisition, development, design for park
10 projects, and I've created a full-time,
11 year-round recreation program for
12 residents of all ages and interests.

13 In addition to my professional
14 experience, where I also served as the
15 Interim Executive Director of Arthur Ashe
16 Youth Tennis from last August to this
17 January, I also feel like a resident of
18 the City of Philadelphia after having
19 paid wage taxes and parking fines. But
20 in addition to my professional
21 experience -- and I have a Smart Card
22 also.

23 In addition to my professional
24 experience, I'm also a 35-year-old patron
25 and user of Philadelphia parks and an

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2 active volunteer. Among other things in
3 Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez's district,
4 I spearheaded, raised money and directed
5 the project for Eric Casiano Memorial
6 Field that renovated that baseball field.

7 I worked constantly with
8 Anthony Washington at Nelson Playground,
9 getting Phillies tickets, getting
10 donations to sports equipment and other
11 ways to improve that.

12 At Pennrose, I've been involved
13 with Arthur Ashe and the Love to Serve
14 program. We had a great project, a joint
15 project, for Martin Luther King national
16 holiday. And at Rose Playground and
17 Arthur Ashe itself, we've been involved
18 with Councilman Jones in terms of helping
19 increase the funding.

20 Just cutting to the chase, I've
21 participated in a million things. I
22 bring my kayak down to Lloyd Hall and
23 paddle up the Schuylkill River. I've run
24 in the Broad Street Run four times,
25 Philadelphia Half Marathon, I've been a

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2 volunteer, the Philadelphia Marathon, but
3 I'd just like to just focus on what my
4 interests are in the parks.

5 I've been all over the City as
6 a volunteer and with Arthur Ashe. I've
7 seen the playground, the ball fields at
8 24th and Jackson that are totally
9 overused. They have football, baseball,
10 soccer all day long and then until 2
11 o'clock at night. Some of the residents
12 come out and play nighttime soccer under
13 the lights. I've seen the tennis courts
14 at 52nd and Wyalusing Street. They're
15 absolutely unplayable. Same thing for
16 the tennis courts at 10th and Montgomery.

17 What I would like to see and
18 everybody in this room would like to see
19 is every tennis court in the City look
20 like the courts at Mander Playground,
21 look like the courts at Water Tower.
22 That would be great. One of the ways to
23 get there is to look at how Philadelphia
24 stacks up against other cities in the
25 country and even against small places

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2 like some of the suburban places, like
3 Abington or Upper Merion, in terms of per
4 capita expenditures on parks and
5 recreation services.

6 We can do better, and I think
7 one of the roles of the Commission is to
8 come right back to the Council, the Mayor
9 and also the state Legislature and our
10 federal officials and try to improve the
11 funding for the parks. So as the
12 Commissioner, I would be interested in
13 that. And whether I'm appointed on the
14 Commission or not, I'm going to stay
15 active and keep working to make
16 Philadelphia parks and recreation
17 services better.

18 I appreciate the opportunity to
19 be here today. And I have two letters of
20 recommendation from Phil Goldsmith and
21 also from Kenny Holdsman, Arthur Ashe's
22 new President.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Are you
24 submitting those today or were they with
25 your packet?

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2 MR. BROIDA: I submitted them.
3 They collected those letters. They have
4 them.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Today?

6 MR. BROIDA: Yes.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

8 Thank you for your testimony.

9 Let me just say for the record
10 that in the deliberations that Councilman
11 Clarke and I had with the Park advocates,
12 we wanted to be as inclusive as possible.
13 I mean, that's one of the reasons why
14 we've started down this road, because we
15 felt that the predecessor was not at a
16 place we felt it needed to be given the
17 mix not only of the City but of the
18 region. And so it was a very tactical
19 decision for us to open it up to parts of
20 the region.

21 MR. BROIDA: Thanks. I also
22 just want to add, I'm an active member of
23 the Philadelphia Parks Alliance, who is
24 here in the audience today. We're also
25 deeply interested, as you know. Thank

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2 you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
4 welcome.

5 Please, sir.

6 MR. BRIGHT: Hi. My name is
7 Andre Bright. I am a lifelong resident
8 of Philadelphia.

9 My interest in being a member
10 of the Commission comes basically from my
11 interest in being a part of the City,
12 being one who utilizes the parks
13 frequently. I've always believed that
14 the parks represent an opportunity to
15 expand the City, to promote the City, and
16 I would welcome the opportunity to be a
17 part of that.

18 I firmly believe that by
19 implementing this new Commission, we are
20 able to take advantage of some untapped
21 resources that the parks provide for us.
22 I believe that the parks also represent
23 an opportunity to show us what
24 opportunities are available. I also
25 believe that the parks will also

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2 demonstrate an opportunity to take
3 advantage of various functions within the
4 City.

5 I'm sorry. That's all I have.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
7 questions from members of the Committee?

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Then we
10 thank you all for your testimony. Thank
11 you very much.

12 Jeremiah Carber, Harvey Cantor,
13 Richard Carfagno, Carlos Cartegena, Marc
14 Caserio. If you could please move closer
15 to the witness table.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
19 welcome to join us, sir, at the witness
20 table.

21 Andrew Celwyn, Joseph Certaine,
22 Robert Chimchirian. I'm trying to
23 pronounce that phonetically. I failed.

24 (Witnesses approached witness
25 table.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,
3 gentlemen. Please state your name for
4 the record and proceed with your
5 testimony.

6 MR. CARBER: Thank you,
7 Mrs. Brown. My name is Jeremiah Robert
8 Carber. Let me just start by saying I'm
9 from Sellersville, Pennsylvania, Bucks
10 County, Montgomeryville, Pennsylvania. I
11 started coming to Philadelphia since I
12 was 14 getting my hair cut in Chinatown.
13 I've been raised in an environment where
14 I'm very cultural and very business
15 friendly, and I believe competition
16 brings business.

17 Let me just say that I'm a
18 small business advocate and that I work
19 for getting small businesses back in this
20 country to help them grow and get our
21 economy back on its feet the way it
22 should be. Right now it's a struggle for
23 everyone in all classes, and if we just
24 be happy with what we have, I mean, our
25 Park has 9,200 acres of land, which is

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2 just quite a lot.

3 I've been privileged to work in
4 Fairmount Park for the past two summers
5 and I've gotten to know the people and
6 I've gotten to know the clan, so to
7 speak, that come there and they
8 rollerblade and they bike and walk and
9 they run and they enjoy what they have,
10 and that doesn't cost a lot when people
11 are just happy.

12 So I'm also a very big
13 tourism-friendly person. I like culture.
14 I like different things on my dinner
15 plate. So what I bring to the table is a
16 strong representation for business and
17 tourism. I've tried to get my certain
18 businesses -- how do I say it --
19 advertised or, so to speak, out there for
20 people to see and enjoy.

21 So I'm really happy with the
22 way things are going with this reform and
23 I'm really happy to support and do the
24 best I can. And even if I don't get
25 picked for the application for the

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2 position, I'm still going to come out to
3 the Park like I do regularly and I'm
4 going to support whoever is here working
5 hard. And I'm just happy that everybody
6 showed up. I thought there was only
7 going to be 25 applicants. It turns out
8 there's 250, 208. I don't know. I'm
9 just happy to get to know Curtis, to get
10 to know Laverne. I've gotten to know a
11 bunch of people on the Park system.

12 From what I understand from the
13 library when I read a book that talks
14 about Fairmount Park and the history for
15 last hundred years, I also got to see
16 Mr. Darrell Clarke in his position with
17 Fairmount Park. So I really know that
18 we're on the right path.

19 I don't want to take up too
20 much time, but I'm very open to questions
21 and any ideas that anyone may have of
22 interest.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
24 questions from members of the Committee?

25 (No response.)

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
3 you for your testimony.

4 MR. CARBER: Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
6 welcome.

7 Sir.

8 MR. BARRY: Good morning. My
9 name is John Barry and I'd like to thank
10 you for this opportunity to be here
11 today.

12 I'm born and bred Philadelphia,
13 46 years. I have utilized almost every
14 aspect of the Parks and Recreation
15 Department or the future Parks and
16 Recreation Department - played ball on
17 the fields, skated in the ice rinks, swam
18 in the pools. I currently bike and run
19 through the Kelly Drive and the
20 Wissahickon.

21 I've seen the City of
22 Philadelphia at its best and at its
23 worst, but yet everything that I've
24 always done through those things even
25 still today, riding a bike and running

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2 through the trails, it still works for
3 many, whether it's good or bad.

4 Currently, I am a realtor and I
5 have the privilege of showing people
6 moving into the City of Philadelphia --
7 almost half my business is relocation --
8 showing them the best parts of the City.
9 And I also serve as a Board of Director
10 of the Washington Square West Civic
11 Association and I am the liaison to the
12 Police Commissioner for the gay, lesbian,
13 transsexual and bisexual communities. In
14 those capacities, my main goal is to
15 build communications between government,
16 between either quasi-government, as in a
17 civic association, or in the Police
18 Department through their communities. So
19 we build relationships in the sense of
20 community that allows us to maintain and
21 improve the City of Philadelphia, the
22 place where we live.

23 We need to find alternate
24 sources for funding for this particular
25 Commission. As a member of Washington

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2 West Civic Association, we wanted new
3 lights for the streets, and the City had
4 no money. We raised \$900,000 on our own.
5 We went and knocked on doors, some
6 Councilpeople's doors, but we went and
7 knocked on doors and got that money and
8 got those lights put up. That's what
9 we're going to need to do for this
10 Commission, and I'm not afraid to knock
11 on doors at all.

12 I've owned four businesses.
13 Through my life I've owned four of my own
14 businesses. I know what I need to do to
15 get money. It's not easy, but that
16 doesn't mean that it's hard. Most people
17 think that because it's not easy, that
18 it's hard, and it's just not the case.

19 When I was nine years old, we
20 were playing ball at a park in South
21 Philly where I grew up, and the City did
22 the worst thing to a ten-year-old that
23 could ever happen. They decided to take
24 that park and build a library there,
25 which for a ten-year-old kid a library is

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2 not a good thing. So they took our ball
3 field. That was the concern. And after
4 we moaned about that for about 15
5 minutes, we went two blocks away and
6 found a new vacant field, and that's what
7 we made our ball park at.

8 So there's something to be said
9 for the ingenuity of children. We need
10 to bring that to this and find other
11 ways. We need to go knock on the doors
12 of our private, public, institutional and
13 corporate partners and make them
14 partners. And it's as simple as sitting
15 down with a cup of coffee and saying,
16 Give me a little money, we just need this
17 much, we need this much to do this. And
18 it starts like this, one little step at a
19 time, and that's what I can do for this
20 Committee.

21 Thank you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
23 for your testimony.

24 Good morning.

25 MR. CANTOR: My name is Harvey

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2 Cantor. I want to thank the Committee on
3 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs
4 for allowing me as an applicant to the
5 new Commission on Parks and Recreation to
6 testify.

7 I believe I'm qualified for the
8 position on the Commission of Parks and
9 Recreation. I retired in December 2007
10 from a 33-year professional career with
11 the City of Philadelphia, initially as an
12 auditor in the City Controller's Office
13 and finally as an Accounting Manager in
14 the Revenue Department. Moreover, I'm
15 mostly proud of my over 20 years as an
16 officer of the Friends of Pennypack Park.
17 Currently, I hold the title of
18 Vice-President. I also had the privilege
19 to serve as a member of the Fairmount
20 Park Commission Advisory Council.

21 The Friends of Pennypack Park,
22 with close to 2,000 members, has become a
23 role model as a roll-up-your-sleeves
24 volunteer organization as the custodian
25 of a 1,600-acre urban woodland park.

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2 However, the FOPP is just one group of
3 many dedicated volunteers that give of
4 their time in the parks and recreation
5 centers throughout the City. We
6 volunteers will look to the new
7 Commission for guidance and an open arena
8 to address the many problems that we face
9 in our endeavors.

10 I have been involved with such
11 problems, issues and activities with the
12 Friends of Pennypack Park and the
13 Fairmount Park Advisory Council - natural
14 land and watershed management issues,
15 animal management issues, storm water
16 issues, pollution problems within the
17 Park and the Pennypack Creek, illegal
18 dumping, bike and natural paths, and the
19 promotion of the Park in the community,
20 including the outreach in the schools.

21 As a Park historian, I am
22 dedicated to preserving the past. I was
23 instrumental in obtaining improvements to
24 our Park at the Holme's Crispin Cemetery
25 within the Park, which is the resting

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2 place of Thomas Holme, who was William
3 Penn's planner of Philadelphia.

4 While a member with the
5 Fairmount Park Commission Advisory
6 Council, I was involved with public
7 safety issues in our parks.

8 In these difficult economic
9 times, the Commission must support and
10 improve the promotion and investment in
11 the City and Parks and Recreation system.
12 Our major cities are doing much more to
13 fund their parks and recreation
14 facilities. There must be a more
15 aggressive, long-term plan for funding.

16 To achieve these goals, the
17 Commission must be involved in dedicated
18 funding sources, whether it's a portion
19 of current assessed taxes or fees for
20 things like street trees or a user tax on
21 recreational and athletic activities for
22 profit events. The City must earmark
23 back to the Parks and Recreation monies
24 collected from their activities to the
25 Parks and Recreation budget and not to

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2 the General Fund pool.

3 There has to be an active and
4 aggressive program to have corporate
5 sponsorship of Parks and Recreation
6 facilities. There should be a dedicated
7 promotion of the Fairmount Park as a
8 destination in such things as national
9 publications. Special attention should
10 be made to the historic mansions in
11 Fairmount Park, which are an undervalued
12 jewel in the system. That would include
13 promoting historic sites, the Zoo, the
14 Art Museum and the mansions and the river
15 drives.

16 Most importantly, the
17 neighborhoods of this diverse City must
18 have representation to improve and add
19 recreation facilities in their
20 neighborhoods. There must be an
21 atmosphere of cooperation and a listening
22 to the residents by the new Commission
23 and not a feeling that the powers-to-be
24 operate in a vacuum.

25 I feel, as a resident and

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2 active community volunteer of Northeast
3 Philadelphia, I will fill a void on the
4 Commission of Northeast Philadelphia
5 representation that is currently lacking
6 on the Fairmount Park Commission.

7 I am committed to the welfare
8 and success of the City of Philadelphia.
9 Good parks and recreation facilities are
10 such a vital part of the life of this
11 city. I hope you will allow me to serve
12 on the Commission to apply my experience
13 and commitment to help maintain and
14 sustain green open space and facilities
15 for the recreation and the relaxation of
16 the citizens of Philadelphia and to those
17 who visit our great city.

18 Thank you very much.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
20 all very, very much for your testimony.

21 Any questions from members of
22 the Committee?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
25 you, gentlemen.

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2 Sir, you're going to leave
3 copies of your -- okay, then.

4 If you have testimony, it would
5 be helpful to us to get it prior to the
6 start of your testimony.

7 Richard Carfagno, Carlos
8 Cartagena, Marc Caserio, Andre Celwyn,
9 Joseph Certaine, Robert Chimchirian,
10 Robert Clothier, Luther Collins, Peg
11 Connor. Thank you.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
15 morning, gentlemen.

16 (Good morning.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Welcome.
18 Please provide us with your testimony.
19 State your name for the record and then
20 you may proceed.

21 MR. CELWYN: Good morning. My
22 name is Andrew Celwyn.

23 MR. CARTAGENA: Good morning.
24 My name is Carlos Cartagena.

25 MR. COLLINS: Good morning. My

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2 name is Luther Collins.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very well.

4 Okay, then. Please.

5 MR. CELWYN: Good morning. I'd
6 like to start by thanking the Committee
7 for taking the time today to meet with
8 the candidates, myself included. There
9 are obviously a large number of people
10 who are qualified to sit on the new
11 Commission, and I don't envy you in the
12 task of choosing which ones to send to
13 the Mayor.

14 When my wife and I decided to
15 move to East Falls, we did so to be just
16 a few blocks from Schuylkill River and
17 the pass on Kelly and Martin Luther King
18 Drives. Aside from the occasional
19 flooding, it's been a great choice for
20 us. Whether walking our dogs, going for
21 a run or taking a leisurely walk, we have
22 thoroughly enjoyed our mix of city and
23 park living.

24 I'm very thankful for the life
25 that we have in East Falls and I've tried

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2 to give back to my community in several
3 ways. I coordinated a petition to have
4 my street institute permit parking and
5 alleviate some of our parking woes. My
6 wife and I applied for a grant to erect
7 bat houses and put up one on our street
8 and one on an adjoining street. With any
9 luck, the bats will start nesting this
10 spring and help reduce the mosquitos in
11 the area.

12 Finally, this past year I
13 volunteered for the Obama campaign and
14 was Precinct Captain during the primary
15 for East Falls, Roxborough and Manayunk.
16 Through all of these experiences, I've
17 developed stronger relations with both my
18 neighbors and my community.

19 It would be a pleasure to take
20 the experiences I've had with my
21 neighbors in East Falls and build on them
22 by working with the Commission on Parks
23 and Recreation. In addition to my work
24 within the community, I also have 20
25 years of experience working as a manager

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2 for both large corporations and small
3 businesses. In this time of tightening
4 budgets, we need people on the Commission
5 who have both the desire to protect and
6 develop parks and recreation, as well as
7 the ability to analyze budgets and
8 promote growth with the private sector.
9 It is this mix of skills that would be my
10 foundation and contributions to the
11 Commission.

12 Thank you for your
13 consideration.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
15 very much.

16 Councilman Jones.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
18 for choosing East Falls, and we're going
19 to try to work on the flooding conditions
20 there, but bear with us.

21 MR. CELWYN: Thank you.

22 MR. CARTAGENA: Good morning,
23 Councilwoman and Madam Chair Blondell
24 Reynolds Brown, Councilman Vice-Chair
25 Curtis Jones, Jr., members of the

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2 Committee, Councilman Darrell L. Clarke,
3 Councilman Frank DiCicco and Councilwoman
4 Maria D. Quinones-Sanchez.

5 First and foremost, I would
6 like to thank you for the opportunity to
7 testify before you in order to be
8 considered as a participant on the
9 Philadelphia Commission on Parks and
10 Recreation.

11 I am testifying today on my
12 interest and qualifications for
13 requesting the Committee to consider me
14 as a candidate to participate on the
15 Commission on Parks and Recreation.

16 I was born and raised in
17 Philadelphia and have been a Philadelphia
18 resident most of my life. I currently
19 reside in the Rhawnhurst section of
20 Northeast Philadelphia with my wife and
21 two-year-old daughter.

22 My interest in the Commission
23 on Parks and Recreation is to be in a
24 position of leadership in which I could
25 contribute to the improvement of the

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2 quality of life for Philadelphia and its
3 residents. Through my experience in
4 community building and community work, I
5 believe that I will bring a fresh
6 community perspective to the
7 Commission -- or I would, rather. As a
8 member, I would pledge to commit to
9 supporting families and communities with
10 the creation of new innovations and
11 ideas. I will also support initiatives
12 that help to identify more green space
13 through green job initiatives, thus
14 bringing jobs to the community and its
15 members.

16 I currently work as a manager
17 of community initiatives for a non-profit
18 organization in Philadelphia. I have
19 worked with the Philadelphia community in
20 different capacities in the last nine
21 years. Through my experience in
22 community building and community work --
23 I'm sorry. Through my career as a social
24 worker and community participant, I have
25 been privileged to have represented

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2 families, youth, as well as community
3 groups. I have worked for some very
4 outstanding organizations in Philadelphia
5 in the non-profit sector. I've also
6 provided direct services, managed youth
7 programs and organized community groups
8 in Philadelphia.

9 I hold a Bachelor's Degree in
10 Social Work from Temple University. I am
11 currently in my last semester obtaining
12 my Master's in Social Work, concentration
13 in community and policy, specializing in
14 health and mental health. I'm practicing
15 policy at Pennsylvania's 179th
16 Legislative District out of the office of
17 State Representative Tony Payton, Jr.

18 I believe that the creation of
19 new ideas and innovations involving
20 community participation can eventually
21 help families and youth enjoy our City's
22 parks and recreation facilities even
23 more. I believe that populations such as
24 youth and families, the elderly, as well
25 as all Philadelphia residents should

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2 enjoy quality recreation and leisure time
3 in their own neighborhood parks.
4 Improving quality leisure time and
5 activities in communities that involve
6 its community residents can contribute to
7 the improvement of the quality of life as
8 a whole for our families and residents in
9 Philadelphia.

10 Because of my interests,
11 qualifications and beliefs, which I
12 previously mentioned, I would like to be
13 considered to participate in the
14 Philadelphia Commission on Parks and
15 Recreations.

16 Thank you very much.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any
18 questions from members of the Committee?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.
21 Councilman Jones.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: I just want
23 to thank you for what you do out in Papa
24 and working with young people there, and
25 thank you for every year stepping up for

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2 free to work with those young people. On
3 opening days, their faces have lit up and
4 the amount of parent participation is
5 impressive, and I just want to on the
6 record say thank you.

7 MR. COLLINS: Thank you,
8 Councilman, for your support, and
9 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown, who
10 has always been a supporter of us there,
11 and Councilman Clarke for starting this,
12 and then Councilman Jones and Sanchez for
13 what I have been at several recreation
14 meetings with.

15 My name is -- good morning. My
16 name is Luther Collins, and for over the
17 past ten years, I have been a parks and
18 recreation community organizer, volunteer
19 coach for youth sports, and mentor and
20 parks stewardship program.

21 I think this is just a great
22 thing here this morning to all the
23 volunteers, the 250 people who come out.
24 I represent three groups, and, that is,
25 the Morris Park Restoration Group, that

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2 is also the Arroyo Gardens Association
3 and Papa Playground. So we bring
4 together three groups to the table to sit
5 on 300 acres on the western end of the
6 Park bound by the City line.

7 If I had to say there was one
8 event that was most important to me, I
9 could not. Every project has been to us
10 most important. But there is one project
11 that I don't know that everyone is aware
12 in the City that happens every fall and
13 it happens at different locations. Papa
14 happened to be the recipient and Morris
15 Park in 2003, and it's the Falling for
16 Your Park event. This is an event which
17 I've been involved in with planning that
18 event at our location, at Papa Recreation
19 Center and Morris Park, and in the
20 Overbrook -- in the Overbrook section of
21 Philadelphia, also along with
22 Philadelphia Green's Park Revitalization.

23 This is a most important event
24 because in spite of departmental
25 barriers, this yearly event brings

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2 together volunteer groups from all over
3 the City and coordinated efforts of many
4 City agencies and private companies. I
5 know that the newly formed Parks and
6 Recreation Commission is an outgrowth of
7 this event. You have the Recreation
8 Department, Fairmount Park works
9 together, Philadelphia Water Department,
10 Streets Department, Fire and Police and
11 Philadelphia Greens together with one
12 common goal, and, that is, to improve
13 Recreation sites and Park areas. Yes,
14 the Mayor and City Councilpersons do come
15 out and work with us in those events.

16 I would like to leave you with
17 this thought. And we just painted for
18 our MLK 2009 365-Day of Volunteer Service
19 a mural, which we will unveil when the
20 Councilman comes out and throws out the
21 first ball this baseball season, and on
22 the banner on the top, it reads "Outreach
23 and Civic Pride Will Start With the Newly
24 Formed Commission." And I just have to
25 say, we all went through elementary

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2 school. I think it's one thing that we
3 all share, and, that is, civic pride.

4 Thank you very much.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
6 very, very much, gentlemen.

7 Any questions from members of
8 the Committee?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I would
11 like to acknowledge our colleague
12 Councilman Bill Greenlee who has stopped
13 down, which clearly indicates and is
14 evidence of his interest in the process
15 and the candidates.

16 Councilman Clarke.

17 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: That's
18 okay, Madam Chair. I already had my
19 three minutes.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, the
21 good news is, we're ahead of time and
22 you're absolutely welcome to three more
23 minutes.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: No. That's
25 okay.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
3 gentlemen.

4 Now, if you hear me repeat
5 names, I'm backing just to make sure I
6 capture everyone, although I will be
7 circling back at the very back end of
8 this for any persons whose schedule did
9 not permit them to be here when their
10 names were called.

11 Next up, Robert Clothier, Peg
12 Connor, Scott Collins, Nehemiah Davis,
13 Andrew Denison.

14 (Witnesses approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Again, if
17 you have written testimony, we would
18 welcome it prior to your testimony. I'm
19 a note-taker and I would rather put it on
20 your testimony.

21 Okay. We're going to start
22 from, according to my list, Ms. Peg
23 Connor.

24 MS. CONNOR: Yes.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So welcome

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2 to all of you, and if you could please
3 state your name for the record and
4 proceed with your testimony.

5 MS. CONNOR: Good morning. My
6 name is Peg Connor, and thank you for the
7 opportunity to allow me to testify at
8 this public hearing. Open and
9 transparent processes are crucial
10 building blocks in further strengthening
11 the public trust in City government, and
12 I appreciate it.

13 Simply put, my career in sports
14 marketing is a direct result of my
15 participation in a parks and rec tennis
16 program at age 10. My sisters and I
17 would grab our rackets and walk up to the
18 tennis courts every day during the
19 summertime, and it didn't take long
20 before I was hooked. My love for the
21 sport of tennis led me to become a
22 competitive player, a certified teaching
23 professional, a collegiate coach and
24 instructor, a professional sporting event
25 manager and finally to my current

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2 position as a Director of Sports

3 Marketing Logistics at Prince Sports, a
4 leader in the tennis equipment industry.

5 I've seen firsthand the power
6 of Park stewardship and community
7 leadership through my involvement with
8 Friends of Schuylkill River Park, a
9 501(c)(3) organization. I currently
10 serve as President of the Board, with
11 oversight of 14 directors and a
12 membership list of over 400 people.
13 Through memberships, donation and grants,
14 our organization raises an average of
15 \$25,000 on an annual basis to support the
16 Park and its programs.

17 The boundaries of the Park
18 encompass Markward Playground, a "Best of
19 Philly" Dog Run, basketball and tennis
20 courts, a baseball, softball and soccer
21 field, a CCRA community garden and ample
22 green space lined with winding pathways,
23 benches and trees that attract many
24 diverse users from all parts of the City.

25 Major initiatives spearheaded

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2 by Friends of Schuylkill River Park over
3 the past five years include development
4 of a Master Plan to prioritize allocation
5 of funds, a capital fundraising campaign
6 for purchase and installation of new
7 playground equipment, creation of an
8 informational website that also solicits
9 memberships and donations, maintenance
10 and enhancement of the tree canopy, and a
11 fall festival that attracts several
12 thousand people and raises significant
13 funds for our organization.

14 In addition, I also serve on
15 the Boards of several other community
16 organizations such as the Schuylkill
17 River Park Alliance, the Philadelphia
18 School Neighbors Committee and the
19 Markward Playground Advisory Board.

20 The experience gained over my
21 20-plus-year career in sports marketing
22 has given me a broad perspective on the
23 business side of sports, from amateur to
24 professional sports, participation to
25 spectator sports and everything in

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2 between. The current fiscal crisis that
3 is facing us simply provides motivation
4 to dig in and create solutions to drive
5 revenue, a necessary mindset in this day
6 and age.

7 My ability to see the big
8 picture, find common ground and build
9 consensus among groups with competing
10 agendas has evolved significantly as a
11 result of my community leadership
12 activities.

13 Schuylkill River Park
14 encompasses both Fairmount Park and the
15 Department of Recreation in one location,
16 giving me unique insights into the
17 opportunities and challenges that lie
18 ahead as these two departments are
19 combined.

20 Bottom line, my husband and I
21 decided to make our home in Philadelphia
22 after graduate school at Temple
23 University in large part because of
24 Schuylkill River Park. My career is a
25 direct result of participation in a

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2 recreation program when I was a child.

3 The power of the Parks and Recreation

4 programs to shape lives is undeniable,

5 and I am living proof and a powerful

6 advocate as a result. I feel I have the

7 skill set, the passion and the enthusiasm

8 to contribute in a significant manner.

9 It is time to pay it forward, and I hope
10 you grant me the opportunity.

11 Thank you in advance for your
12 kind consideration of my application and
13 I'll look forward to next steps.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

15 Good morning.

16 MR. DAVIS: Good morning.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please
18 state your name for the record and
19 proceed with your testimony.

20 MR. DAVIS: Nehemiah Davis.

21 Good morning, Council. I want
22 to thank you guys for the opportunity to
23 serve. I'm Nehemiah Davis, a 21-year-old
24 student, entrepreneur and community
25 activist. I'm the President and CEO of

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2 Indent Worldwide Group, LLC and the
3 Chairman of a forming non-profit
4 foundation, the Nehemiah Davis
5 Foundation.

6 Presently, I believe our
7 youth -- presently, I am trying to serve
8 on the Youth Commission, and I strongly
9 believe our youth is the future. I'm an
10 advocate for youth.

11 Presently, I work with Veronica
12 Joyner in a homeless school project,
13 which we feed less fortunate Thursdays as
14 well as Mondays. With my foundation as
15 to date, we gave 15 families Thanksgiving
16 dinner. For Christmas we provided toys
17 for over 250 children. And for the
18 future, we're also giving an Easter egg
19 hunt, as well as a clothing drive and
20 canned good drive for the whole -- the
21 entire West Philadelphia community.

22 These activities are relevant
23 in my participation to serve on the
24 Commission of Parks and Recreations. I
25 strongly believe that our youth believe

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2 that -- I strongly believe that our youth
3 participates in parks and recreation
4 daily and is a vital source for
5 Philadelphia.

6 I'm proactive, ambitious and
7 driven for change, and these
8 characteristics will make a great
9 candidate to serve on the Commission of
10 Parks and Recreations.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.
13 Please.

14 MR. CLOTHIER: Good morning.

15 My name is Robert Clothier. I'm honored
16 to be here today before you all. I know
17 your time is precious and I won't repeat
18 what I said in my application.

19 What I would like to say is
20 this: Having lived almost all of my life
21 in the Philadelphia area, I am bullish on
22 this city and believe that an even better
23 future lies before it. I want to be able
24 to help shape that future any way I can.
25 Given my interests and experiences, I

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2 believe that I could make a real
3 contribution to the work of the
4 Commission and thereby serve the City and
5 all of its citizens.

6 While our parks and
7 recreational facilities reflect the good
8 service of so many over the years, all
9 can agree that there is ample opportunity
10 to do better, so long as we all pitch in
11 and pull together. Our City government
12 is not and, given the current economic
13 climate, cannot be solely responsible for
14 our parks and facilities. Everyone is
15 responsible. And I believe we need the
16 active effort of everyday citizens, civic
17 organizations, foundations and
18 businesses. If everyone takes ownership,
19 great things will happen.

20 The Commission on Parks and
21 Recreation must play a fundamental role
22 in bringing these wide-ranging human and
23 capital resources together and working
24 productively towards a common goal of
25 making our parks and recreation areas

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2 strong and sustainable.

3 Since you may not have my
4 application in front of you, I'll just
5 add just a couple of comments about my
6 experiences and whatnot.

7 I'm a First Amendment attorney
8 and a partner at a large Philadelphia law
9 firm. I do quite a bit of marketing and
10 PR for myself and my firm. I know that's
11 one of the qualifications you're looking
12 for.

13 I've served on numerous
14 non-profit Boards, whether it's school,
15 art organizations and civic
16 organizations, including the Chestnut
17 Hill Station Train Committee. I live in
18 the Chestnut Hill section of
19 Philadelphia.

20 I know how Boards operate and I
21 know what works and what doesn't from
22 these experiences, and I think that's a
23 very important skill to a newly formed
24 Commission that's going to have to create
25 a way of doing its work.

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2 I use the parks and recreation
3 facilities. I coach my daughter's indoor
4 soccer team. I've seen all the rec
5 facilities around the City, gotten to
6 know my way around the City. I bike and
7 hike in the Wissahickon. I bike to work
8 increasingly going down Valley Green and
9 Kelly Drive. I actually biked this
10 morning. And I'm concerned about our
11 environment and about the preservation of
12 our parks.

13 If given this opportunity, I
14 promise you and the City and its
15 residents the following: Energy and hard
16 work, solid judgment, creative and
17 visionary thinking, a long-term approach,
18 the ability to make difficult decisions,
19 persistence and focus in achieving goals,
20 respect for different opinions and
21 perspectives, a consensus-building style,
22 and last, but not least, good humor.

23 Thank you for the opportunity
24 to speak with you today.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, we

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2 thank all of you for your testimony.

3 Comments, questions from
4 members of the Committee?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
7 all very much.

8 MR. CLOTHIER: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Scott
10 Cummings, Andrew Denison, Danielle Denk,
11 Charles Dilks, Joanne Denworth.

12 (Witnesses approached witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any one of
15 you are welcome to take the remaining
16 open seat.

17 Good morning to all. And we'll
18 proceed with your testimony, sir.

19 MR. DENISON: My name is Andy
20 Denison. First off, members of Council,
21 thank you for the opportunity to present
22 my credentials for your consideration for
23 a position on the Commission on Parks and
24 Recreation. I think it's wonderful that
25 you are recognizing the value of citizen

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2 input into guiding this new department.

3 An effective Commission on
4 Parks and Recreation should act as a
5 supportive and collaborative partner for
6 the people in City government who will
7 manage our parks and recreation centers
8 in a fair and fiscally responsible way.

9 Having lived in Philadelphia
10 for more than 25 years, I do have a broad
11 understanding of the diverse offerings
12 now contained in the new Parks and
13 Recreation Department. I've been
14 involved in sports teams that played on
15 the Recreation Department's fields and
16 gyms all across the City. My children
17 have benefited from the programs offered
18 in the recreation centers and other
19 facilities as they grew up in the City.
20 I've ridden the rugged trails on my
21 bicycle, hiked the serpentine paths and
22 taken advantage of the glorious historic
23 and cultural facilities with family and
24 friends.

25 I also know some of the

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2 dedicated people in the Recreation
3 Department and in the Fairmount Park
4 Commission who have worked selflessly to
5 make this system work at its best. I
6 know they take their jobs seriously, and
7 so should we.

8 In these challenging times,
9 it's more important than ever that the
10 mission of the Parks and Recreation
11 Department is clearly understood by the
12 diverse communities served by the Parks
13 and Recreation Department.

14 My experience in business as a
15 marketing and communications executive
16 for one of the largest advertising
17 agencies in Philadelphia -- our offices
18 are just across the street from
19 Philadelphia City Hall -- has given me
20 unique capabilities that will serve me
21 well in collaborating with others to
22 promote the new role of the Parks and
23 Recreation Department and any new
24 programs that they would have.

25 As an experienced member of the

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2 news media, more than eight years at
3 KYW-TV, I have a good understanding of
4 the role and responsibilities of
5 government and the dynamics that exist in
6 the public arena. I am familiar with how
7 public policy is shaped and respect the
8 public servants, including members of
9 this Committee, who devote their lives to
10 making our communities better. I
11 understand the need for sound fiscal
12 management and strong political
13 leadership to maintain a public treasure
14 like Fairmount Park and get the most out
15 of precious community-based playgrounds
16 and recreation facilities.

17 I'd also like to say that I'm a
18 long-time Board member of the Fairmount
19 Sports Association. We're involved in
20 youth baseball and basketball programs
21 and have for more than 30 years.
22 Thousands of children have been able to
23 get their first taste of competition on
24 the hardwood or the baseball diamond by
25 participating in our programs. And many

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2 of those children who played in the
3 league have stayed involved as coaches,
4 referees and umpires. Even though my
5 children have outgrown the league, I have
6 continued as a league Commissioner and
7 volunteer umpire and referee, because I
8 love doing it and I understand the value
9 it provides to our community.

10 If I were honored with an
11 appointment to the Parks and Recreation
12 Commission, my experience in business and
13 in my community will give me the tools to
14 help see that our parks and recreation
15 facilities enter a new area of relevance
16 for our city.

17 I've spent all my years in
18 Philadelphia making good calls, whether
19 it's in business, directing news coverage
20 for KYW or as a volunteer umpire at a
21 youth baseball championship game,
22 although some may question some of my
23 calls at home plate. Now, more than
24 ever, this guidance is critical to seeing
25 the resources contained within the Parks

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2 and Recreation Department survive and
3 thrive for all to enjoy.

4 In these uncertain times, the
5 challenges will be many, but the
6 opportunity will be great to make the
7 Parks and Recreation Department the envy
8 of every other city in the world and the
9 pride of every citizen of Philadelphia.
10 I do hope you choose the best to help
11 guide this new department, and I hope you
12 choose to give me that chance.

13 Thank you very much.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
15 for your testimony.

16 Councilman Clarke.

17 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair.

19 Mr. Denison, I just want to say
20 that I'd also like to thank you for your
21 work with the Fairmount Sports
22 Association, a great association, and I
23 have been practicing over the winter and
24 I guarantee when I throw the first pitch,
25 it will make it to the plate this year.

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2 MR. DENISON: If I'm behind the
3 plate, I'll be sure to make it a strike.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right.

5 Thank you, Madam Chair.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
7 morning.

8 MS. DENK: Good morning. My
9 name is Danielle Denk. Thank you,
10 Council, for the opportunity to speak
11 today.

12 I would like to present to you
13 three reasons why I should be considered
14 on the Commission of Parks and
15 Recreation. One is my professional
16 credentials as a landscape architect and
17 as an architect. Two is my use of
18 Fairmount Park. I am frequently in the
19 park, and it is my passion. Three is my
20 ability to think outside the box and
21 strategic visioning for the City with
22 regards to sustainability.

23 One, I am both a landscape
24 architect and an architect. I have a
25 Master's Degree from Penn in Landscape

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2 Architecture and a Professional Degree in
3 Architecture as well. I received
4 numerous international design awards, and
5 in particular, I was fortunate to work
6 with Alan Greenberger on the Master Plan
7 for the Centennial District and the
8 Vision Plan for the WaterWorks Gardens.
9 During these designs, I was doing
10 historic research and came to find
11 immense inspiration from the Park, from
12 the history of how the Park started, how
13 it was set aside as a special place for
14 clean water for the City, and it was
15 these inspirations that led me to not
16 just love using the Park, but love the
17 ideas behind the Park, and I think that
18 with that, we can bring forward a new way
19 of thinking about our resource in a new
20 light.

21 With my skills as a designer, I
22 understand the technical aspects of
23 grading for sports fields and the safety
24 requirements for play equipment. I
25 understand the requirements of restoring

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2 riverbanks and the need for clearly
3 marked trails, from the planning of new
4 green spaces to the detailing of new
5 guardrails. I can assist the Commission
6 with my design expertise.

7 Two, personally I'm an avid
8 Park user. In all weather my family is
9 often found hiking the trails in the
10 Wissahickon. In snowy weather my family
11 is found sledding down the Belmont
12 Plateau. In summer we frequent the Kelly
13 Pool. There really hasn't been a week of
14 my life in Philadelphia without an
15 experience of Fairmount Park or the Rec
16 Department, for that matter. That one
17 can encounter sublime nature in the City
18 is remarkable.

19 My daily life in University
20 City revolves around Clark Park, be it
21 the tot lot, the bowl, the farmers
22 market. Clark Park is a truly successful
23 neighborhood park, but it wasn't always.
24 I had been around to assist and witness
25 its transformation. Recently our family

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2 has begun to frequent Kingsessing Park,
3 and I look forward to a day when West
4 Philly can claim that as another jewel in
5 its neighborhood. We basically grew
6 roots here in Philadelphia because of the
7 Wissahickon, and we thrive here because
8 of the neighborhood parks.

9 Three, I believe that Fairmount
10 Park has the potential to reclaim its
11 status as one of the nation's greatest
12 urban parks. It contains the historic
13 and natural fabric necessary to weave an
14 experience for visitors of centennial
15 history, of sustainable planning, of
16 visionary design and of sublime nature.
17 I foresee a time when again people will
18 travel the world over to Philadelphia,
19 not just to see the Liberty Bell but to
20 see Fairmount Park. It's the emerald
21 jewel on the City's historic necklace,
22 and the potential of our wonderful Park
23 is unlimited.

24 The current state of our Park
25 is a sad result of neglectful funding and

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2 limited confidence, but I believe we
3 stand poised to shift that perspective
4 back towards grandeur and can celebrate
5 the civic resource by learning from it.
6 I speak of the foresight of sustainable
7 planning that brought about the large
8 tract of land to be set aside for the
9 citizens of the City, to hold strategic
10 acreage safe from development so that our
11 city could benefit from clean drinking
12 water. It is this vision that allowed
13 for our healthy Victorian City of
14 Philadelphia to thrive giving us this
15 great space here. Fairmount Park gave us
16 this historic city and it again can give
17 us the great green city.

18 Mayor Nutter believes that
19 Philadelphia can be the next great green
20 city, and it is Fairmount Park who can
21 deliver on that dream. As a member of
22 the Commission, I would promote this
23 dream by challenging short-term fixes. I
24 will call for visionary thinking about
25 the entire city and use the Park as a

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2 vehicle for sustainable change. I
3 imagine a new crew of green-collar jobs
4 set to improving the infrastructure of
5 our city by improving the Park.
6 Specifically, there are large pools of
7 federal money available for
8 infrastructural improvement, and I would
9 propose projects classified as such to
10 gain access to these federal dollars.
11 Infrastructural improvement does not
12 begin and end with highways. It must
13 include recreation. Like the WPA that
14 constructed many of the bridges in West
15 Park, the current economic crisis calls
16 for a reemployed population. We can
17 think of these green-collar jobs as the
18 "new green deal."

19 Charged with the creation of
20 the next great green city, Philadelphia
21 needs someone on the Commission who knows
22 how to merge good design with
23 sustainability. Philadelphia needs
24 someone on the Park -- on the
25 Commission -- I'm sorry. Philadelphia

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2 needs someone who uses the Park on the
3 Commission, and Philadelphia needs
4 someone who is passionate and
5 knowledgeable about the rich history who
6 is inspired by this history to move that
7 thinking forward. Philadelphia needs
8 someone on the Commission who understands
9 a challenge of reducing global climate
10 change, someone who is excited by that
11 challenge of supporting this mission and
12 knows that Fairmount Park will inevitably
13 be the lynchpin in any truly sustainable
14 city.

15 Thank you for the opportunity
16 to present my case to you. I look
17 forward to a time when I can turn my
18 passion for the Park into action by
19 joining the Commission.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You just
21 made it. Thank you for your testimony.

22 MS. DENK: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
24 very much.

25 Good morning.

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2 MR. DILKS: Good morning. My
3 name is Charles Dilks. I'm a life-long
4 resident of the City of Philadelphia and
5 I appreciate the opportunity to present
6 my credentials here today and to serve,
7 if possible, on the Commission.

8 I wanted to present myself in
9 two ways. One is a volunteer and
10 activist for the environment, and two is
11 a professional person that has been
12 involved in economic development in West
13 Philadelphia at the Science Center where,
14 Blondell, I know you know what we've been
15 doing out there.

16 So, first, in my environmental
17 volunteer activities, I will mention
18 some, but I want to also say that all
19 cases, I've been on the Board of
20 Directors of these organizations. In
21 almost every case, been an officer and
22 often President or Chairman. So I've
23 done more than just serve. I've actually
24 taken the leadership responsibilities.

25 One of my more recent

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2 activities have been with the Friends of
3 the Wissahickon where I was President.
4 That organization when I got involved had
5 a budget of about \$40,000 a year, no
6 staff. It currently has a budget of
7 about \$400,000 now, staff of three and a
8 half people, and is in the midst of doing
9 a major trails renovation project in the
10 Wissahickon and is in the process of
11 raising \$1 million towards that effort,
12 as well as put in in volunteers to do a
13 lot of the work themselves.

14 Also, I've been very involved
15 with Valley Green Inn, as you may know,
16 and is a good example of public-private
17 partnership where the Friends are
18 actually the tenant and have leased
19 it/subleased back to an operator, and the
20 funds that result from that go towards
21 the improvement of Valley Green Inn and
22 some of the nearby improvements.

23 I'm also very active in the
24 Natural Lands Trust. I was Vice-Chair
25 there for almost 20 years. It's the

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2 largest easement and open space
3 organization in the region. We have
4 raised an endowment of nearly \$50 million
5 there over the years to acquire, preserve
6 and to manage open lands, and I was
7 Chairman there of the Acquisitions
8 Committee, making many of the decisions
9 as to the properties we should select.
10 Many of them, some of which are in the
11 City of Philadelphia, and many are in the
12 three state region.

13 I was also Chairman of the
14 Schuylkill Valley Nature Center, or the
15 Schuylkill Center now. And that
16 organization, as you may know, has a
17 large tract of land that is used by the
18 children primarily of the City to go and
19 get environmental education
20 opportunities. Besides actually
21 maintaining that property, they've also
22 put together programs to bring
23 environmental education programs to
24 schools by either eco vans or training
25 materials that teachers are made

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2 available to them over the summer so they
3 can get their environmental education
4 curriculum in order.

5 I am currently Treasurer of the
6 Pennsylvania Environmental Council, a
7 statewide environmental advocacy group,
8 and, in fact, I was supposed to be at a
9 Board meeting of theirs today, but I am
10 here with you instead. But that
11 organization, as you know, has offices
12 around five parts of the state, has a
13 large staff and has been very active in
14 all kinds of advocacy issues regarding
15 the environment in this area, both at the
16 state and the city levels.

17 I might also say that I was a
18 Board member of the Philadelphia Parks
19 Alliance, and I know the people, some are
20 here today, and I enjoyed that work as
21 well.

22 I have letters of support, by
23 the way, from the Friends of the
24 Wissahickon and Natural Lands Trust,
25 Pennsylvania Environmental Council as

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2 well and the Schuylkill Center.

3 The last and second part I

4 wanted to mention is that I was involved

5 for 35 years with the development of the

6 Science Center in West Philadelphia.

7 It's a two million square foot

8 development primarily set up to grow

9 young technology businesses that spin off

10 the University of Pennsylvania and

11 Drexel. That project involved

12 complicated public-private partnerships,

13 involves very sophisticated real estate

14 transactions, and I think that that kind

15 of experience also would be valuable as

16 you think about the Park and some of its

17 financial issues and some of the

18 transactions that will come before the

19 Commission.

20 So I present myself in two

21 ways, then. One is an environmental

22 advocate and a leader in that field as a

23 volunteer, and two as a professional that

24 has been involved in economic development

25 issues for the benefit of the City of

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2 Philadelphia.

3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Any

5 questions from members of the Committee?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

8 all very, very much for your testimony.

9 Scott Cummings, Joanne

10 Denworth, Paul DiLorenzo, James

11 diMartino, Maureen DiStefano.

12 (Witnesses approached witness

13 table.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good

15 morning. Thank you all for your

16 presence.

17 Please state your name for the

18 record and proceed with your testimony.

19 MR. CUMMINGS: Good morning.

20 Scott Cummings.

21 MR. DiLORENZO: Paul DiLorenzo.

22 MS. DENWORTH: Joanne Denworth.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

24 Okay, Mr. Cummings.

25 MR. CUMMINGS: Good morning,

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2 Madam Chair, members of the Council.

3 I'll take a moment to thank you and
4 realize how important this Committee is
5 of you folks being here in the midst of a
6 crucial budget meeting tomorrow. So I
7 think to acknowledge that, it means much
8 more to me knowing how important it is
9 for you to be here and how much more this
10 Commission is being looked upon by City
11 Council. I think it's very important to
12 make mention.

13 One of the reasons I'm applying
14 for this position is, 2002 I was asked to
15 rejuvenate a civic association in
16 Northeast Philadelphia; namely, Mayfair
17 Civic Association. It had been defunct
18 for about seven years. I was assigned
19 that from the local CDC, and I'm happy to
20 report that we have about 2,000 members
21 in the civic association, and basically
22 it was done by hard work and encouraging
23 people to volunteer.

24 Since I've been President over
25 the last seven years, we've taken on a

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2 lot of civic issues in the neighborhood,
3 a lot of problems, a lot of constituent
4 services. I since have taken on to
5 become President of the 15th Police
6 District Advisory Council, which we work
7 closely with the Police Department in the
8 community handling some of the crime
9 issues with the Captain.

10 I'm on the Board of the Holy
11 Terrors Youth Organization, which has
12 about 1,800 families, and I've been a
13 coach there for the last 11 years
14 coaching three teams per season. I'm
15 also an advisor to the Northeast Peanut
16 League, one of the Northeast's premier
17 organizations, has about 500 teams,
18 soccer, basketball, baseball. So I've
19 been locally involved in advising that
20 group. I'm also on the Board of the
21 Mayfair Town Watch, and I'm the proud
22 coach of City of Philadelphia Tarken
23 Recreation Center, which is also named to
24 be a member of the Advisory Council.

25 I have a Bachelor's Degree from

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2 Mansfield University in Criminal Justice.

3 Some of my previous positions, one here

4 in the City of Philadelphia, was Chief of

5 the Bench Warrant Unit for Family Court,

6 Court of Common Pleas responsible for all

7 the dead-beat parents, support domestic

8 warrants. So I've learned a lot about

9 some of the children here in the City of

10 Philadelphia and some of the cards that

11 they've been dealt with.

12 I've also served as a Director

13 of Security for former Secretary of State

14 Dr. Henry Kissinger. Got a chance to

15 leave my Philadelphia roots for a short

16 time and travel the world, Africa, Japan

17 and China, and got a chance to see what

18 some of the other world is about.

19 I'm sitting here as living

20 proof that the Department of Recreation

21 works. I had an option as a teenager, as

22 a young youth in order to go to the dark

23 side where you had the graffiti, the drug

24 use, the alcohol with some of the teens.

25 As I see it now with my children, they

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2 have a choice to either play sports or to
3 go to the dark side, and thanks to the
4 Department of Recreation and some of the
5 leaders back then, they had led me to the
6 right way, to play sports, where I was
7 athlete in three or four different
8 sports. So the Department of Recreation
9 does work. That's why I feel a need to
10 become more active with the Department of
11 Recreation and the Parks Commission.

12 I sit here today as a father of
13 three and soon to be four children that
14 I've brought up and raised in
15 Philadelphia. Part of the problem is, is
16 people don't realize how important the
17 youth is. Part of society's problem
18 today is the time that we did not spend
19 with our youth, and it's very, very
20 adamant now with the crime rate in
21 Philadelphia. I think if people decide
22 to spend more time with youth, volunteer
23 their time, spend some time in the
24 guidance to these youth, I think you have
25 a better shot of making a nice

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2 five-year-old a nice 15-year-old and then
3 finally a nice 25-year-old and one of our
4 neighbors.

5 I think one of the things I'm
6 good at is cultivating volunteers. If
7 I'm in a civic meeting and I have
8 somebody throwing grenades -- and I'm
9 sure being a member of Council you have
10 been to those meetings -- I try to
11 cultivate them and work them into
12 volunteers and teach them how to join and
13 make them a part of our group and make
14 them a part of our decision-making.

15 I've been very active in
16 fundraising, and I believe that there's a
17 lot of corporate sponsors sitting out
18 there just waiting for us to knock on the
19 door. Score boards, vending machines,
20 there's lots of opportunities.
21 Sponsoring bricks at the local recreation
22 centers is other way of raising funds.

23 Partially there is how many
24 thousands, maybe even millions of trees
25 in Fairmount Park? Sponsoring A Tree

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2 program would be nice to walk our kids
3 through one day and say, I sponsored that
4 tree, I helped the Department of
5 Recreation, I helped the Department of
6 Parks and Recreation with that.

7 One of the most important
8 things right now that we're doing up in
9 Mayfair is, we have a defunct playground.
10 We're rebuilding that. We're doing it
11 not by City money. We're selling bricks,
12 we're selling benches, we're selling
13 trees to rebuild that playground. I'll
14 be happy to report back later how we're
15 doing. We just got the assignment
16 recently.

17 One of my main reasons for
18 coming here today is to be a part of the
19 Department of Recs and Parks and to say
20 that my motto is, "Kids in sports stay
21 out of courts." And I believe that if
22 you can guide these children with more
23 time in the sports -- and I'd also like
24 to ask the judges in the City of
25 Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas to

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2 allow community service to be dedicated
3 to this Board under their direction to
4 allow them to clean the parks, to become
5 part ownership, to sweep and guide the
6 Recreation Departments. There's not
7 enough volunteers out there. The budget
8 situation is, it's crunch time. We need
9 volunteers. The local groups have to
10 step up. And I believe I'll be out there
11 knocking on doors and getting people to
12 volunteer for this organization.

13 And I thank you for your time,
14 Councilwoman, Councilman.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
16 very, very much for your testimony.

17 Please.

18 MR. DiLORENZO: Good morning
19 and thank you for the opportunity to
20 address the Committee regarding my
21 application to serve on the Commission of
22 Parks and Recreation. In my written
23 application I noted that I have over 30
24 years of public service experience at the
25 local, state and national levels. I

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2 worked in the state and local government
3 here in the City of Philadelphia. I have
4 been a consultant to government agencies,
5 as well as non-profit organizations. I
6 serve on a number of both state, national
7 and local boards and currently I serve as
8 a Senior Director at Casey Family
9 Programs, a national operating foundation
10 based in Seattle.

11 More importantly, though, I
12 have been and continue to be a life-long
13 user of the recreation programs, parks
14 and libraries in the City. As a kid
15 growing up in Overbrook, I played summer
16 league basketball and I was a frequent
17 user of the City's libraries. At least a
18 few times a month now, I still go running
19 or biking in Valley Green and the river
20 trail areas.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Pause
22 button. We need to hear your name for
23 the record. We have your testimony, but
24 our recorder needs to know that as well.

25 MR. DiLORENZO: My name is Paul

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2 DiLorenzo.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

4 MR. DiLORENZO: My first date
5 with my wife was at Belmont Plateau and
6 the Mann Music Center. So the well-being
7 and survival of the parks and recreation
8 centers is a personal issue for me.

9 I understand that the City of
10 Philadelphia is at a crossroads with its
11 parks and recreation, but I think that
12 there are both challenges and
13 opportunities that lie ahead.

14 Let me offer a few quick
15 thoughts. There's an ancient African
16 proverb that says, "When you plant a
17 tree, plant three - one for shade, one
18 for fruit and one for beauty." I believe
19 that this provides us with some wonderful
20 guidance about how to manage the City's
21 resources. Our parks and recreation
22 centers should reflect our appreciation
23 for beauty and practicality. The reality
24 is that people come from all over the
25 region to utilize the City parks because

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2 they are unparalleled in size and the
3 richness of the species. But the parks
4 need to be more than that. We should
5 view them as resources that must be
6 nurtured, protected and managed within
7 our means. The parks and recreation
8 centers are not just for fun. They are
9 wonderful sources for learning, and they
10 are opportunities for us to demonstrate
11 responsible stewardship.

12 World-class cities understand
13 that parks and recreation centers can
14 attract people from all over and make
15 them part of something that's greater
16 than themselves. Caring for the parks
17 and recreation centers is a social
18 contract between the citizens of the City
19 and their government. I believe the
20 Commission will embody that social
21 contract.

22 Here are a few specific
23 recommendations that I might offer as a
24 Commission member: With input from the
25 City's residents, right size the City's

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2 recreation center and the public park
3 areas. Where it no longer makes sense to
4 maintain a center, be willing to make the
5 hard decisions to focus the resources on
6 a smaller number that will offer greater
7 quality.

8 Further decentralize the
9 responsibility and participation for the
10 recreation centers and parks so that
11 locals can have a greater say and a hand
12 in managing the resources.

13 Reduce the role of City
14 government from the rowing to the
15 steering of resources. With more local
16 control, the City's responsibility might
17 shift to providing dollars and other
18 resources, setting benchmarks for success
19 and technical assistance. There are
20 community groups and non-profit
21 organizations that would be willing to
22 step forward to manage the work if they
23 were given the adequate resources. This
24 might be done through a formal proposal
25 and bid process. In return, the City

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2 should establish and emphasize clear
3 guidelines for successful operations of
4 the centers. The City will need to
5 provide technical assistance to these
6 organizations and will require day-to-day
7 management of selected parks and
8 recreations.

9 Find new ways to connect
10 non-profits and businesses to the
11 recreation centers and parks. This could
12 include the use of the centers and the
13 parks as public service outlets for
14 children and families, as well as
15 opportunities for corporate sponsorships
16 of sporting events.

17 I agree with the idea of having
18 the courts have kids do volunteer and
19 community service work there.

20 Create links between the parks
21 and recreation centers to the City at all
22 levels. Parks and recreation centers
23 represent creative ways to engage
24 families and newcomers to the City, as
25 well as those people in need of

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2 additional support; for example, senior
3 citizens, young people at risk for
4 delinquent behavior and citizens looking
5 for volunteer activity. But there might
6 be other opportunities as well, including
7 things like summer internships.

8 Finally, a media campaign is
9 needed to highlight the value of the
10 parks and the recreation centers,
11 including the history of great sports
12 figures that played in the City's
13 recreation centers or the miles of hiking
14 and biking trails within the City limits.

15 Thanks for your attention
16 today. I do appreciate the opportunity
17 to share a few of my ideas. I welcome
18 any questions you might have.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

20 Proceed. Good morning.

21 MS. DENWORTH: Good morning.

22 I'm Joanne Denworth. Madam Chair,
23 Councilman Clarke, I'm very pleased to be
24 here to have an opportunity to talk to
25 you about my application to be a member

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2 of the new Commission on Parks and
3 Recreation in the City of Philadelphia.

4 I have to say, I'm somewhat
5 daunted by the number of applicants
6 competing for these positions, but I
7 really take that as a very positive sign
8 that so many Philadelphians see the
9 importance of parks and recreation
10 facilities and libraries too to the
11 health and life of the City and that even
12 in these tough economic times want to
13 embrace and be part of the new vision and
14 commitment to parks and recreation that
15 Mayor Nutter, City Council and the voters
16 have made.

17 Also, with Mike DiBerardinis as
18 Commissioner, whom I've seen do great
19 work in Harrisburg and around the state,
20 I see a really flourishing future. It
21 may take some years, but for the park and
22 recreation system.

23 I believe I am a strong
24 candidate for the Commission because I
25 have deep background and expertise on the

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2 issues the Commission will likely address
3 and a great deal of experience in
4 leadership positions working
5 collaboratively with others to develop
6 sound policies and programs at the local,
7 regional and state levels. I have been
8 President of two statewide organizations
9 where vision, collaboration with public
10 and private organizations, fundraising,
11 marketing, public relations and fiscal
12 management were essential to success.

13 I've lived in Philadelphia
14 since the '60s when I came here to go to
15 Penn Law School, met my husband Ray and
16 never left. We became urban pioneers in
17 the early days of Society Hill, renovated
18 an old shell into a great house, where I
19 still live, and brought up our twins in
20 the City. As a family, we made huge use
21 of Fairmount Park, biked out there on
22 Sundays for picnics, walked the
23 Wissahickon, hiked on many parts of the
24 park, played tennis, and believed in the
25 parks, but saw the state they were in and

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2 the need for a lot of work and money and
3 time that many have spent, but still
4 needs more. And I'm so glad to see the
5 kind of commitment that the Mayor and
6 City Council have made, even though I
7 know exactly what the difficult
8 challenges are of doing this fiscally.

9 As a young lawyer while
10 practicing with two large firms, I really
11 got involved in civic issues in the
12 neighborhood, posing the crosstown,
13 getting involved with promoting
14 affordable housing in crosstown
15 neighborhoods, and I even did some
16 private development restoring historic or
17 old buildings for new uses.

18 I was appointed by Governor
19 Shapp to the Environmental Hearing Board
20 in the mid '70s, I guess it was, and in
21 that job, which really changed my career
22 course, I decided environmental cases on
23 all kinds of issues from all over the
24 state, and it really led to my focusing
25 and have focused in my career ever since

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2 on environment, community development and
3 land use, as well as the related issues
4 of transportation, housing, water,
5 resource management, open space,
6 including recreation and parks.

7 The two organizations -- I
8 should say I'm a lawyer. I graduated
9 from Penn Law School. I did work as a
10 lawyer at Ballard Spahr and then Drinker,
11 Biddle and Reath. I began running the
12 Pennsylvania Environmental Council as
13 President back in the mid '80s and worked
14 there for 12 years, and we did a number
15 of things. A lot of it is in my resume
16 and in the submissions that I made and
17 the essays, so I'm not going to go over
18 all of that, but there are a few things I
19 would highlight.

20 I think we were the first to
21 have the green city platform as a mayoral
22 platform for the 1992 -- I guess it was
23 when Governor Rendell was first
24 running -- mayoral race. We developed
25 the Green Space Alliance, which is still

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2 going as a regional network of
3 organizations in Southeastern
4 Pennsylvania in the five counties.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thirty
6 seconds.

7 MS. DENWORTH: Thirty seconds,
8 whoa. Okay.

9 Well, let me skip to what I
10 think we need to do, and I must say, I
11 agree with some of the suggestions that
12 have been made this morning and with some
13 of the things that these gentlemen have
14 said. But I would very much like to
15 bring my experience to bear on the
16 challenge to the new Parks and Recreation
17 Commission, the financial challenges
18 certainly.

19 I do believe that there is such
20 enthusiasm for the parks and the new
21 vision for the river parks that might
22 expand the green network that Mayor
23 Nutter and I think many City Council
24 members are leading. And I think we can
25 do this, but we're going to have to think

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2 about it very carefully, make careful
3 choices, explore all the financial
4 options that there are that parks have
5 used in all parts of the nation and the
6 world. And I'm quite familiar with the
7 New York park system where a lot of
8 private fundraising of various kinds,
9 including some of the kinds of
10 fundraising suggested by these gentlemen,
11 have been very successful. So some
12 combination of public and private,
13 volunteers, of hard work I think can
14 really help to make our park system and
15 recreation system central.

16 I guess most important to me is
17 the role a vibrant, healthy, park and
18 recreation system can play in helping all
19 the children from wherever background,
20 neighborhood or income level they come
21 become great adults who contribute to
22 their families and their communities.
23 Education and freedom from crime are
24 first priorities for many of our
25 children, but a free park and recreation

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2 system where children and teens can enjoy
3 sports and discover the wonders of nature
4 and libraries where they can learn and
5 discover the world will nourish the
6 development of our children, who are the
7 future of our city and our country.

8 I believe that I have a very
9 strong background in collaboration,
10 consensus building and decisive action
11 based on consensus, and I would very much
12 welcome the opportunity to serve on the
13 new Commission on Parks and Recreation
14 and Libraries.

15 Thank you so much.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
17 welcome.

18 We thank you all for your
19 testimony very much.

20 MS. DENWORTH: I do have two
21 letters.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We would
23 welcome them as part of your packet.

24 James diMartino, Maureen
25 DiStefano, Edward Drayton, Virginia

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2 Duerr, G. Barry Esslinger.

3 Prepare for the next round of
4 testifiers. Leslianna Federici, Vincent
5 Fenerty, Johannah Fine, if you can move
6 closer to the witness table.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
10 morning. Thank you for your patience and
11 indulgence. Please state your name for
12 the record and proceed with your
13 testimony.

14 MS. DUERR: Good morning. My
15 name is Ginny Duerr.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Did you
17 have testimony?

18 MS. DUERR: Yes. I handed it
19 to the gentleman. Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

21 MR. DRAYTON: Good morning. My
22 name is Edward Drayton.

23 MS. DiSTEFANO: Good morning.
24 My name is Maureen DiStefano.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,

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2 Ms. Duerr. Proceed.

3 MR. DUERR: I will, yes. My
4 name is Ginny Duerr. Good morning and
5 thank you for accepting my application to
6 become a member of the Commission on
7 Parks and Recreation.

8 Without fail, every garden
9 client I've ever had over the years has
10 asked me for more color, and my answer is
11 always the same: Green is a color, too.
12 I would be honored to advocate for the
13 greenest and I think largest park in
14 America.

15 I firmly believe that all
16 things have their season. Spring is here
17 literally and figuratively, as this panel
18 dusts off an idea born in March of 1867
19 and opens the doors to the future.
20 Politically, we are in a season of
21 reawakening as new local and national
22 leaders re-envision our green future.

23 Seasons exist for individuals,
24 too, and I believe this is my season of
25 service to a place and a cause that I

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2 love, the crown jewel of Philadelphia,
3 Fairmount Park. For over 30 years, I
4 have been building my resume as a
5 business owner, a marketer, an investor,
6 a designer, a horticulturist and as a
7 community activist to be ready to serve
8 this Commission with passion for the
9 land, proven leadership skills, creative
10 vision and solid ideas for the future.

11 I think it could be argued that
12 during the most challenging moments
13 people with ideas and a willingness to
14 work together and give of themselves
15 cannot only meet but rise above and
16 succeed brilliantly. We are at such a
17 moment.

18 And I am ready with energy, new
19 ideas and a desire to serve.

20 Thank you for taking my
21 testimony.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
23 for your testimony.

24 Please, sir.

25 MR. DRAYTON: Good morning.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Make the
3 mike comfortable for you. So bring it
4 closer --

5 MR. DRAYTON: Actually, would
6 it be okay if I stood up?

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Whatever
8 is comfortable for you.

9 MR. DRAYTON: Yes, ma'am.
10 Thank you.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Sure.
12 State your name for the record.

13 MR. DRAYTON: Edward Drayton.

14 Good morning, Councilmembers.

15 My name is Edward Drayton. I am applying
16 for the position on the Board of Parks
17 and Recreations. Before I begin, I'd
18 just like to take a brief moment to thank
19 God for putting me in a situation just to
20 be up here to be able to speak to you
21 guys. So I wanted to thank him first.

22 I'd like to start by saying
23 that I'm a father, I'm a husband, I'm a
24 mentor, I'm a friend and I'm a concerned
25 citizen. My reasons for applying for

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2 this position is really quite simple.

3 I'm qualified, I'm creative, I'm

4 courageous and, most of all, I'm

5 concerned about the future of our city.

6 I currently am on the Advisory

7 Council of the Houseman Recreation

8 Center. I volunteer at the Holy Lutheran

9 Church Communion at the Welcome Center

10 feeding homeless people. I'm also on the

11 Hope Coalition Board advocating to

12 prevent homelessness. I am a member of

13 Data University. I just started my own

14 youth organization called Street

15 Knowledge Youth Organization.

16 The reason that I feel as

17 though I should be on this Committee,

18 because I sit back every day wondering

19 what could I or what should I be doing to

20 help make a difference in the lives of

21 the City's youth, and every day I come up

22 with something different. The City's

23 parks and recreation centers are

24 instrumental in the sense that they

25 provide safe havens for those who need

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2 it. They provide a place to relieve
3 stress and others, and they also provide
4 a platform for our future athletes,
5 musicians, artists, cooks and so on. You
6 see, one thing I've always believed in is
7 that it was legal to surround yourself
8 with people who have an attitude of
9 indifference about the goals that our
10 youths try to attain in life. There are
11 many issues that could be corrected
12 through teaching and leadership. I for
13 one know this to be true. But you can't
14 teach someone to care or have passion
15 about a cause. You see, when the person
16 has no passion for change and the
17 tolerance for listening and
18 understanding, a serious problem entails;
19 i.e., basically the growing problem that
20 is affecting our youths today.

21 The answer to that has been
22 eluding the powers-that-be for some time
23 now, and by starting with the appointment
24 of a new Director, which basically means
25 a new direction, it shows that we are

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2 taking necessary steps to put things in
3 their proper perspective.

4 Now, it is understandable that
5 some financial restraint will limit the
6 scope of what we want to do and what is
7 necessary to do, but I think together as
8 a whole that we'll find a common solution
9 to some common problems. This is my
10 city, these are my neighborhoods, and
11 these youths are my responsibility. So
12 if a person has no passion for this
13 situation that we face, then I guess
14 they're in the wrong place. Because this
15 is a problem that we can't win if our
16 agenda is one of monetary or financial
17 growth, because it will ruin the very
18 fiber of productivity that we strive to
19 achieve. The Department needs people who
20 are willing to make certain sacrifices.
21 And Mr. Clarke was saying that knocking
22 on the doors and just putting your boots
23 on and just getting out there. In order
24 to move on into the future, that's what
25 needs to be done. That can only be done

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2 by finding the people who share your
3 vision, your dreams, your goals and your
4 hopes for the future of our youths and
5 our communities. You may ask, how will
6 we be able to tell? I heard that asked,
7 how are we going to pick from so many
8 people, how are we going to know? My
9 answer to that is, you're going to be
10 able to tell by passion. And I've heard
11 several people say the passion. We're
12 going to be able to tell by passion,
13 because basically I always had an
14 obsession with just striving to make our
15 city a better place. It comes from the
16 fact that at one time I believed that
17 life was fierce and formidable. My
18 obsession with freedom comes from the
19 fact that I once didn't have it.

20 I believe that growing and
21 wanting to make a change comes from
22 feeling that pain and dissatisfaction
23 that it causes to change the power to be
24 able to help make a difference by
25 focusing on solutions as a whole is a

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2 beautiful thing.

3 It's been said that we respect
4 and love in others what we value in
5 ourselves. Our youths' lives should be
6 about living, growing and knowing how to
7 overcome their fears. I think if we show
8 the confidence that's needed and the
9 passion and skills that's needed to be
10 successful, all should be well.

11 I always say a child's state of
12 mind is the result of their internal
13 representations, both of those which can
14 change in a matter of moments.

15 The one thing I do with the
16 guys in my youth organization is, I give
17 them -- we have ID cards at Houseman
18 Recreation Center. On the back of the ID
19 cards I have a quote from W.E.B. DuBois
20 that says, "There is no such force as the
21 force of a man determined to rise. The
22 human soul cannot be permanently changed.
23 Remember, success is not an accident."

24 Thank you for your time.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

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2 for your testimony.

3 Good morning.

4 MS. DiSTEFANO: Good morning.

5 My name is Maureen DiStefano. I reside
6 in the Art Museum/Fairmount area of
7 Philadelphia and currently I am employed
8 with Dunkin Donuts and I do licensing and
9 agreements for them in the East Coast.

10 I've heard so many things this
11 morning, just incredible passion for the
12 City, I'm in awe of the number of people
13 that have come out and the ideas and the
14 talent that has been discussed.

15 My children, just hearing three
16 of the testimonies, have been fortunate
17 enough to attend the Mark Art Summer Camp
18 in the Fairmount Sports Association, and
19 having been raised in Overbrook, I
20 remember the summer basketball leagues
21 very well. So it's in Philadelphia I
22 think that kind of community -- six
23 degrees of separation is always something
24 that you feel in this city.

25 In my research around the

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2 Committee and the members that comprise
3 the Committee, the one word that comes
4 out is "service," service to the
5 community and the greater good in
6 general.

7 My first job was as a junior
8 swimming counselor, and we had a camp
9 leader that, after morning meeting and
10 everyone saying hello to each other, at
11 the end would say, Does anybody have
12 anything for the good of the group? And
13 it was at that point that any small
14 camper or anybody could raise an issue, a
15 concern that would be addressed and
16 acknowledged. The example is a
17 willingness to be connected and to be a
18 listener, and it has stayed with me since
19 that first job at 13.

20 It is a challenge to present
21 what would qualify me as a standout with
22 so many good candidates. My addition to
23 the Commission and to serve would be a
24 personal achievement, and I hope that it
25 would provide long-term dividends for my

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2 children, their friends and the next
3 generation in Philadelphia.

4 I have been in the private
5 sector with Dunkin Donuts, which is a lot
6 of fun, and also as an owner of a small
7 business in Philadelphia and understand
8 controversy and the diverse thinking that
9 goes with organizations. Each need not
10 result in one person winning and another
11 losing. And my success has been focused
12 on fostering relationships with
13 individuals within larger organizations
14 to achieve those goals to provide a great
15 product and to make them profitable.

16 I was raised in the Overbrook
17 section of Philadelphia and have had an
18 opportunity through career changes to
19 live in many cities. Upon returning to
20 the City and getting married, we spent a
21 short time in the suburbs. In 2005, we
22 moved back to the City of Philadelphia
23 and to the Art Museum area, which I
24 adore, and we've developed a life where
25 out in the suburbs I felt very

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2 disconnected. We didn't have a lot of
3 people right next to us. In the Art
4 Museum you can't walk out your front door
5 and get back down the street in under 30
6 minutes, because you'll be stopped and
7 you'll be chatting with neighbors and
8 there's always somebody out, there's
9 always someone to play with. We walk to
10 our T-ball fields, the Franklin
11 Institute, classes at the Art Museum,
12 just unlimited possibilities for my
13 children to take advantage of the
14 treasures of the City.

15 Recently in our community --
16 and I'm not sure -- we had a fundraising
17 event for Save the Francisville Pool,
18 which was very well attended and just
19 showed the sense of community spirit that
20 drives our neighborhoods. I've never had
21 the luxury of being a stay-at-home mom,
22 but I do dream that I could be part of
23 something larger that results in making
24 the City that I care for a better place
25 for our children. Mayor Nutter and the

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2 talented individuals that are mapping out
3 the future have been an inspiration. I
4 would like to bring my enthusiasm,
5 business acumen and tenacity to this
6 group, asking for nothing in return but
7 the personal satisfaction to be "for the
8 good of the group," as I've learned so
9 long ago, and putting my energy and
10 skills to work for Philadelphia.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
13 very much.

14 Thank you all so very much.

15 Leslianna Federici, Vincent
16 Fenerty, Joanna Fine, Marion Fox, Matthew
17 Gionta, Leslie Miller, Alexander Scarola,
18 Francis Vargas, Nick Bucci. Those are
19 the candidates remaining.

20 (Witnesses approached witness
21 table.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
23 afternoon.

24 MS. FEDERICI: Good afternoon.
25 I'm Leslianna Federici.

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2 MS. FOX: Marion Laffey Fox.

3 MR. GIONTA: Matt Gionta.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

5 Okay. Ms. Federici, proceed with your
6 testimony.

7 MS. FEDERICI: Thank you very
8 much. First of all, I just would like to
9 say that with the abundance of applicants
10 and the small number of seats available
11 for this Commission, that I just request
12 that City Council and that the City of
13 Philadelphia utilize the remaining
14 applicants in some way. It would just be
15 such a loss for this city not to find
16 ways for the multitude of people who are
17 just dying to be of service.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well, let
19 me underscore that. I've taken a lot of
20 notes here, and that was certainly one of
21 them. The breadth and depth of passion
22 and commitment that has come through the
23 testimony has made me in awe, quite
24 frankly, as well, and it would behoove us
25 to find a way to go back to the table and

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2 figure out how we capture the enormous
3 amount of energy and ideas that have come
4 forth. So know that we have heard you
5 and we'll act accordingly.

6 MS. FEDERICI: It's very
7 moving. Thank you. Thank you.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
9 welcome.

10 MS. FEDERICI: Almost three
11 years ago, I purchased a home in what is
12 now the Newbold neighborhood of
13 Philadelphia. This neighborhood spans
14 from Washington Avenue to Passyunk Avenue
15 and from Broad Street to 18th Street. I
16 chose this home because I recognized a
17 seed of possibility, the possibility of a
18 thriving, integrated and diverse
19 neighborhood. I quickly became involved
20 in the horticulture club that served the
21 local DiSilvestro Recreation Center
22 immediately behind my home. Within a
23 year, I began to serve the students of
24 this rec center by teaching capoeira and
25 martial arts to the program, and this

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2 program continues to thrive at the
3 recreation center due to Activities Fund
4 Grants and a partnership that I
5 cultivated with the Philadelphia Capoeira
6 Arts Center.

7 After marking one enriching
8 year in my home and neighborhood, I,
9 along with other new neighbors, formed
10 the Newbold Neighbors Association to
11 address cleaning and greening, public
12 safety, zoning and social issues. Our
13 common commitment centered on the concept
14 that everyone currently residing in our
15 neighborhood could thrive and together we
16 could grow as a community. I contribute
17 my unique talent of community organizing,
18 my passion and history as a leader of
19 environmental clubs, my expertise in the
20 area of health and fitness and wellness,
21 and my skillful leadership. My
22 leadership is driven by having others
23 around me discover their leadership,
24 generating supportive winds in sails of
25 individuals such that each person I work

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2 with get what they need to step out and
3 be the leader in their family, on their
4 block and in their community.

5 Support by my leadership over
6 the last two years, we have planted over
7 40 trees in South Philly, started the
8 Bouvier Community Garden in conjunction
9 with Neighborhood Gardens Association and
10 a generous assistance from Council
11 President Verna's office. As Clean and
12 Green Committee Chair, I have made
13 certain that we are integrally involved
14 in the citywide clean-ups both in 2008
15 and currently coming up in 2009,
16 neighborhood-wide block clean-ups and
17 regular maintenance of the DiSilvestro
18 Playground, the health center and the
19 South Philadelphia branch of the public
20 library. Through the partnership that I
21 have created with the Pennsylvania
22 Horticultural Society, we are committed
23 to planting over 60 additional trees in
24 Newbold over the next six months. As a
25 result of my participation on the

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2 Advisory Board for DiSilvestro, we
3 obtained financial support for over a
4 half dozen programs at the recreation
5 center this year. Grants and programs
6 that I have specifically generated
7 include the Capoeira/Martial Arts grant,
8 the Wellness Grant, the Wellness
9 Workshops and the donation of over 15
10 Macintosh computers.

11 About two and a half years ago
12 I was about to leave the country and
13 settle myself in a beach town in Brazil,
14 happy to spend my time tending a garden
15 and serving tourists in a little
16 beach-side hotel. That at least is what
17 I was planning to do two years ago. Then
18 something happened. In April 2007,
19 standing in my kitchen, I got the phone
20 call that my dearest uncle and friend had
21 passed away. This man was the king of
22 taking life by the horns. He made a
23 difference with his life in the world.
24 He did this literally right up until his
25 last battle with lung cancer. It is said

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2 that moments like these are pinnacle
3 experiences that stand to change one's
4 life forever. Well, this was one of my
5 moments.

6 During the last few months I
7 got to be with him, I took on the
8 commitment to make a marked difference in
9 the world with my life just as he. For
10 me, it was clear that my connection to my
11 growing community, my passion for the
12 youth succeeding in my community and an
13 unwavering conviction that Philadelphia
14 pulse with laughter of people and the
15 breath of green life formed my stand that
16 not just South Philadelphia thrive but
17 all of Philadelphia thrive and be alive.

18 I have no question that my
19 talents as a leader, organizer, health
20 and fitness professional, manager of
21 people and coordinator of events will
22 serve this Commission and this city. My
23 commitment is to serve this Commission
24 and the City in accordance with the
25 highest good of the citizens that enjoy

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2 our parks and our recreation areas and to
3 honor the land and natural resources that
4 sustain our life in this great city.

5 Thank you for the generous gift
6 of your time and attention this morning
7 and I look forward to working with you in
8 any capacity.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

10 MS. FOX: Madam Chairwoman,
11 Honorable Councilmember, I have to
12 underscore my colleague's sentiment about
13 harnessing this energy. It is just
14 remarkable.

15 My name is Marion Laffey Fox.
16 Since my graduation from the University
17 of Pennsylvania, I have been a resident
18 of the Greater Philadelphia community.
19 As a journalist and author, I have
20 written books, including "Philadelphia -
21 World Class," a large coffee table book
22 that chronicles my love affair with the
23 City.

24 Much of my work focuses on
25 architecture, gardens, antiques,

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2 preservation and travel. As such, I have
3 visited and written about gardens, parks
4 and recreational facilities all over the
5 world.

6 In my career as a journalist, I
7 travel and am familiar with tourism,
8 marketing and public relations people
9 worldwide. In that regard, I have
10 learned what kind of campaigns work and
11 those that do not. I am at ease in
12 writing about subjects that need
13 attention and action and would be a
14 valuable member of the team and hope that
15 understanding would make me even more
16 valuable.

17 I have been and am presently a
18 member of the Park House Guides Program
19 at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, with a
20 full schedule of guiding visitors through
21 the Park and its illustrious homes, which
22 serve as living museums that testify not
23 only to Philadelphia's earliest years and
24 the Park's earliest years, but these
25 houses and their surrounding parkland

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2 must be preserved, rejuvenated and made
3 into must-see visit sites for visitors
4 from all over the world.

5 In researching my work and my
6 experience in guiding, as well as helping
7 some of the City's cultural institutions
8 such as the Franklin Institute, the
9 Philadelphia Museum of Art and the
10 Philadelphia Orchestra, I have come to
11 appreciate not only Philadelphia's
12 legacies but also its potential, and I
13 believe that potential can be realized by
14 magnetizing a host of diversified,
15 interested, talented and capable
16 individuals to get involved with the
17 Park. I think I can help in that effort.

18 This morning is an indicator
19 that it is time for those responsible for
20 the welfare of Fairmount Park, the crown
21 jewel of our city, to think outside the
22 box. The leadership of the Park cannot
23 be satisfied with its annual budget, for
24 over the long run as maintenance and
25 capital programs are reduced and

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2 deferred, the downward spiral becomes
3 more difficult to reverse.

4 The leaders of the Park have to
5 come up with new sources of capital
6 funds, new corporate benefactors and
7 individual supporters with the experience
8 in these areas. I believe I can be of
9 service in that comprehensive and
10 imaginative ways.

11 My goal is to see the river
12 crowded with boats, fountains spewing
13 high, flowers everywhere, and Park houses
14 filled with awestruck and appreciative
15 visitors.

16 This astounding number of
17 applicants that you received makes me
18 wonder if we all ascribe to the same
19 creed of life. The only thing necessary
20 for the triumph of evil is for a good man
21 to do nothing.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
24 very much.

25 MR. GIONTA: Good morning. I'm

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2 Matt Gionta from LaSalle University. I'm
3 the Director of Campus Recreation there.
4 And as a Catholic school with Christian
5 brothers, when they tell you to do
6 something, you do it. So I'm going to
7 give you two minutes and that's about it,
8 so I'll make it brief.

9 The formation of the Department
10 of Parks and Recreation comes at a time
11 of economic uncertainty and fiscal
12 crisis. This certainly makes the
13 Department's task more challenging, but I
14 believe it gives citizens of Philadelphia
15 a greater opportunity to make a
16 difference and have their voices heard.

17 The Commission on Parks and
18 Recreation provides that opportunity for
19 non-citizens. It is a responsibility I
20 have tremendous respect for. I am
21 confident that I can act as an ambassador
22 of my community in serving the newly
23 formed Commission.

24 I am currently employed at
25 LaSalle University as Director of Campus

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2 Recreation. I understand the challenges
3 that face many of the City's recreation
4 centers and parks. Funding is tight,
5 staffing is short, and new programming
6 can be difficult to implement. My
7 challenges at LaSalle are similar to
8 those of the Department of Parks and
9 Recreation and I feel that my varied
10 background in the field will help provide
11 a unique perspective to the Commission.

12 The Commission needs people
13 with dynamic ideas, who are willing to
14 challenge their fellow citizens and the
15 Department of Parks and Recreation to
16 create a better Philadelphia. I am
17 someone who can be a link between the
18 Department and the community, as well as
19 someone who will be able to strengthen
20 the bond between the two. Our current
21 economic climate will not allow us to
22 simply make up grades on facilities and
23 spend money we do not have to improve our
24 Parks and Recreation. We need strong
25 leadership from the Department, dedicated

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2 volunteers, and commissioners with
3 creative spirit and vision to get us
4 where we need to be.

5 Thank you for the opportunity
6 to speak with you and for your
7 consideration.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
9 you all for your testimony as well.
10 Thank you very much.

11 Leslie Miller, Alexander
12 Scarola, Francis Vargas, Nick Bucci.
13 (Witnesses approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
16 morning. Thank you for your patience.
17 Please state your name for the record and
18 proceed with your testimony.

19 MS. MILLER: I'm Leslie Anne
20 Miller. Madam Chair, Councilman Jones,
21 I, like everyone present in this -- I'm
22 sorry; Councilman Clarke. I need to get
23 my glasses changed. I certainly know who
24 you are. I'm off to a great start,
25 aren't I?

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2 I, like so many in this chamber
3 this morning, have been struck by the
4 array of talent who have testified, as
5 well as by the outpouring of love for the
6 Park. I think that in no small measure
7 it's a tribute to the new system that you
8 two have endeavored to create over the
9 past nine years. I hope that it provides
10 you some small measure of comfort as you
11 struggle to make your choice of the
12 individuals that you're going to forward
13 to the Mayor from this incredible list.

14 I appreciate the opportunity to
15 introduce myself and take a few minutes
16 to respectfully suggest why my name
17 should be included in the list that you
18 will ultimately forward to the Mayor for
19 his final selection of those individuals
20 who will serve on the new Commission on
21 Parks and Recreation.

22 As my application and
23 accompanying resume demonstrates,
24 throughout my 30-year career in
25 Philadelphia, I have combined the

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2 practice of law with community service.

3 And, by the way, I'd like to
4 refute the assertion of one of the prior
5 individuals who testified. I too live in
6 Lower Merion Township, but whenever
7 asked, I declare myself as a
8 Philadelphian.

9 During those 30 years, I've
10 been involved in a wide variety of
11 organizations, often in leadership roles.
12 There are five specific examples that I'd
13 like to point out which I believe have
14 particular relevance for my potential
15 service on the Commission.

16 First, the Kimmel Center for
17 the Performing Arts, where I became
18 Acting President at the request of the
19 Board and helped to complete the
20 fundraising on this \$265 million project,
21 just before it opened.

22 Secondly, the Women for the
23 Water Works, which I currently chair and
24 where I help to complete the remaining
25 renovations of the Cliffside Paths and

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2 the South Gardens by raising the final \$5
3 million of this 30-year \$30 million
4 project.

5 Third, the Fairmount Park
6 Conservancy, which, as you know, is the
7 official fundraising arm of the Park,
8 where I am currently Vice-President of
9 the Board.

10 Fourth, the Pennsylvania
11 Horticultural Society, where as Chair of
12 the Green City Strategy Committee, I am
13 leading an effort to build further
14 support for one of the nation's most
15 comprehensive greening programs.

16 Finally, the Free Library of
17 Philadelphia Foundation, where I am the
18 First Vice-President, and as you know,
19 that foundation is the financial support
20 of the Free Library system.

21 My work with these
22 organizations has educated me about the
23 importance of the Park as a natural,
24 recreational and economic resource. More
25 importantly, it has caused me to think

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2 increasingly about the untapped potential
3 the Park holds for Philadelphia's future,
4 particularly with the advent of the new
5 Parks and Recreation Department and the
6 current support of the Mayor.

7 It is critical that the new
8 Park system be properly implemented. A
9 strong Commission on Parks and Recreation
10 should play a key advisory role in this
11 process and ultimately in the Park's
12 oversight.

13 I would like to continue my
14 work on behalf of the Park by helping to
15 define the Commission's role within the
16 new system. I believe that my
17 professional training and volunteer
18 experience will serve me well in this
19 process.

20 As should be obvious, I'm a
21 prodigious fundraiser, having honed my
22 skills on behalf of a wide variety of
23 not-for-profit and political causes.
24 This training can and should be readily
25 applied to the Park.

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2 As an individual with many ties
3 to the community, I believe that I could
4 also be helpful in building consensus on
5 key issues regarding the Park. It's
6 critical that the many Park-related
7 groups unify in support of the work of
8 the Commissioner and ultimately the
9 Administration. Our common agenda must
10 be to strengthen the Park.

11 A cleaner, greener Fairmount
12 Park, which generates more revenue, will
13 not only enhance life for all of the
14 citizens of the Philadelphia region, but
15 will support economic development in our
16 region. It needs to be sold as a reason
17 to visit and/or use the City of
18 Philadelphia for business or pleasure.
19 The Park is a resource whose potential
20 has yet to be fully realized, and now is
21 the time to do so.

22 I hope that I will be given the
23 chance to participate in this critical
24 period in the history of Fairmount Park.
25 In case you can't tell, I too love the

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2 Park and I want to do everything that I
3 can to make it truly the crown jewel of
4 our city's natural and economic
5 resources.

6 Thank you for your perseverance
7 here today.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 Good morning.

11 MR. SCAROLA: Good morning.
12 Alex Scarola. I'd like to be interested
13 for the Commission on Parks and
14 Recreation because I'm a resident of the
15 City of Philadelphia and I regularly use
16 the parks and I really want to help make
17 them better. I believe the Parks and
18 Recreation system in this city is a vital
19 part of what makes Philadelphia a great
20 place to live, work and visit, and I want
21 to help make sure this continues for
22 generations to come.

23 I've been using the parks in
24 this City for almost nine years. Four to
25 five days a week I exercise in

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2 Rittenhouse Square, Schuylkill River
3 Park, Boathouse Row or the loop around
4 East River and West River Drive. I
5 played a number of games of softball and
6 football in Fairmount Park. I've
7 participated in many charity runs, and I
8 even participated in the Philadelphia
9 Triathlon the past two summers. Yes, I
10 swam in the Schuylkill River, and I
11 enjoyed it.

12 Over the course of many years,
13 I've seen a lot of improvements to the
14 parks in the system and I believe that we
15 can continue to improve them for
16 everyone's benefit.

17 In addition to being a regular
18 user of the parks in Philadelphia, I am a
19 public finance lawyer who has worked on a
20 number of financing transactions for
21 local governments, some of which in the
22 past related to capital funding for parks
23 and recreation facilities. I can provide
24 ideas that have worked in the past
25 related to capital funding for the parks

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2 and recreation facilities. In addition,
3 I think it is very important, especially
4 in these economic times, to come up with
5 new and creative ways to finance
6 operating and capital costs to promote,
7 support and enhance the image of the
8 parks and recreation system in
9 Philadelphia. I can provide some unique
10 ideas related to funding of the parks and
11 recreation system.

12 I feel that the Department of
13 Parks and Recreation must be viewed as an
14 integral part of the growth and
15 prosperity of the City of Philadelphia,
16 and I want to be a part of that. Bottom
17 line is, I really just want to help.

18 Thank you very much for your
19 consideration.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
21 for your testimony.

22 MR. VARGAS: Hi. I'm Francis
23 Vargas. Good morning, members of City
24 Council and to those who have come to
25 participate in today's public hearings

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2 regarding the Parks and Recreation
3 Commission. I understand that I'm one of
4 the last to provide testimony today and
5 in the interest of time, I'll make every
6 attempt to provide a short and concise
7 statement.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Let me say
9 this: You do not have to rush. You do
10 have three minutes like everyone else.
11 So seize the moment.

12 MR. VARGAS: Great. I will.
13 Thank you.

14 Once again, my name is Francis
15 Vargas. I'm a life-long Philadelphian,
16 born and raised in eastern North
17 Philadelphia and a current resident of
18 East Mount Airy.

19 I want to first thank everyone
20 here for the opportunity to present
21 testimony in support of my application to
22 the Commission. I'm thrilled to see
23 there's so much interest in the process
24 and so many applicants. My interest in
25 the Commission is admittedly

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2 self-serving. As a Philadelphian and a
3 new father, I am deeply invested in our
4 city's future and, more specifically, our
5 children's future in this city. I worked
6 in community development for over 14
7 years now. I've worked at two great
8 non-profits, Asociacion de
9 Puertorriquenos en Marcha and Friends
10 Rehabilitation Program. I worked in City
11 government at the Redevelopment Authority
12 and currently am working in the private
13 sector for Allied Construction and the
14 Altman Group, where I concentrate mostly
15 on affordable housing in the Philadelphia
16 area.

17 Over the years I balanced my
18 career pursuits with volunteer activities
19 on various boards and advisory groups,
20 including Philly Green and the Community
21 Scholars Program at Germantown Friends
22 School, and I am currently on the Boards
23 of People's Emergency Center and Octavia
24 Hill Association.

25 I have been involved in

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2 planning, developing and building
3 hundreds of affordable housing units
4 throughout Philadelphia. While this has
5 been very rewarding, I feel that my
6 biggest accomplishments have been working
7 on the smaller-scale projects, like
8 working with Philly Green on community
9 gardens in North Philadelphia or working
10 with Jane Golden of the Mural Arts
11 Program to bring murals and children's
12 art projects to North 5th Street. It's
13 these smaller, low profile and grassroots
14 efforts in our community, coupled with
15 well-planned housing and commercial
16 development, that makes community
17 development and community building work.

18 I believe my participation in
19 the Parks and Recreation Commission would
20 be just as rewarding as the work that I
21 do day to day. I believe my work and
22 life experiences could be a valuable
23 perspective as we plan for the future. I
24 would urge us to look at our future
25 strategically, and while I readily

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2 acknowledge that we cannot always escape
3 the politics of our decision, we have the
4 responsibility as stewards of this great
5 task to think past the next round of
6 elections and think of our children. I
7 also understand that you have many
8 qualified candidates for this position
9 and urge you all to select wisely and to
10 select the most qualified applicants, and
11 wherever I fall in that process, I will
12 be happy to know that the best candidates
13 are serving the City.

14 I'd like to add a quick blurb
15 in addition to my written testimony, just
16 a reflection of some of the testimony I
17 heard today, and talk a little bit about
18 where I grew up at 7th and Cambria as a
19 child. There was a rec center at 5th and
20 Allegheny and we had a park at Fairhill
21 and Lehigh. I was prohibited to go to
22 both of those as a child. Fifth and
23 Allegheny was known as a dangerous spot.
24 There was drug dealings. There was
25 active shootings. I did not have a

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2 positive experience as a child at those
3 locations. The park was filled with
4 needles. It was filled with people that
5 will bring the associated drug trade to
6 the park, and my father prohibited me
7 from attending these areas.

8 In East Mount Airy, we have
9 thriving recreation centers. We have
10 access to a beautiful park that's used by
11 everyone around the City. I believe
12 strongly this inequity is unacceptable
13 and we have a responsibility to do
14 something about this.

15 I'd like to also reflect on a
16 comment that Councilman Clarke made many,
17 many years ago when I was at RDA and we
18 were working on a very small community
19 garden project or a side yard, and I was
20 very excited about it and Councilman
21 Clarke was very supportive of it and
22 looked at me said, You know, some day I
23 hope we can work on a project that's like
24 a Rittenhouse Square in North
25 Philadelphia. And it's a notion that

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2 stuck with me for many years and
3 something that I hope some day we can do,
4 and in the mean time, take our current
5 assets and make these available to
6 everybody of Philadelphia. They're not
7 just neighborhood assets. They're assets
8 of the City of Philadelphia.

9 So thank you for the indulgence
10 and the extra time. I've provided three
11 letters of recommendation and support,
12 with written copy of my testimony, as
13 well as my application and resume
14 outlining my interest and background in
15 much greater detail.

16 Thank you for your time and
17 consideration. I'd gladly welcome any
18 questions that you may have regarding my
19 application.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We thank
21 you all very, very much for your patience
22 as well and understanding this process.
23 Thank you so much for your testimony.

24 Welcome. Please have a seat at
25 the witness table. And might you have

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2 testimony for us? It's okay if you
3 don't. I just need to know for my
4 records here.

5 MR. BUCCI: I do not. I was
6 given a phone call yesterday and there
7 was a Sharon Ortiz who called me, and I
8 called her back all day long.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And you're
10 here.

11 MR. BUCCI: And I came here
12 because no one told me not to.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: It's okay.
14 It's all good.

15 MR. BUCCI: So I'm unprepared
16 in the matter of paperwork, but I've got
17 something to say and I'd be glad for the
18 opportunity to say it.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Terrific.
20 Please be seated. You're not unprepared
21 because you applied, and your application
22 alone warrants the next step, which is
23 for you to be here today --

24 MR. BUCCI: Very good. Thank
25 you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- to
3 offer testimony.

4 MR. BUCCI: I can provide
5 paperwork.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That's
7 your desire and your choice.

8 MR. BUCCI: Very good. Yes.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And I need
10 to hear your full name.

11 MR. BUCCI: Nicholas Anthony
12 Bucci.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And if I
14 could please ask Wendy Rosen to report to
15 the witness table. Terrific.

16 So let's give her a chance to
17 be seated.

18 MR. BUCCI: Sure.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So let me
20 just underscore, if you don't have
21 testimony today, that's not a problem.
22 You're welcome to submit it at a later
23 time.

24 MR. BUCCI: Very good. Thank
25 you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: We have
3 information because of your application.

4 MR. BUCCI: Very good. Shall I
5 start?

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please
7 state your name for the record and
8 proceed with your testimony. I might
9 add, you do have three minutes.

10 MR. BUCCI: Thank you. I'll
11 keep it short.

12 The reason I applied was that I
13 have a number of unique qualities to
14 offer, and I seek to offer them,
15 especially in Mr. Jones' district
16 regarding the Wissahickon. I am friends
17 with Bernie Strain, having recently met
18 him at the Kelpius celebration. I lead
19 tours in that area, and curiously people
20 do not know that that very ridge in the
21 Wissahickon is one of the oldest
22 geological formations in North America
23 and one of the most sacred sites in North
24 America within one of the largest cities.

25 Aside from that, I am a stone

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2 mason by trade, a restoration carpenter
3 and a classical cabinet maker. I'm a
4 master in each one of those crafts, and I
5 have two Ph.D.'s. And where I came up,
6 Ph.D. stands for post hole digger.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
8 for that.

9 MR. BUCCI: Yes. Therefore, I
10 am the person who is on the ground, and
11 because I'm on the ground and in it, I
12 have a rather unique view and
13 understanding of the Park in workings
14 that most people do not quite grasp or
15 understand, particularly with the
16 environment, the ecology, the geology and
17 all of the natural ideas and items
18 regarding the Park. Plus, the Park has
19 almost 200 antique or period structures,
20 most in dire need, and the time
21 unfortunately for half measures and talk
22 is over. Something very much needs to be
23 done, because we are in great danger of
24 losing some of these structures, Glen
25 Fern, for one. Even though it is

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2 somewhat maintained, it is reported to be
3 the second oldest house in Pennsylvania.
4 The Hermitage, of course, built on the
5 site of the very spot which was at one
6 time the Tabernacle and home of Johannes
7 Kelpius, a German pietist who came with
8 40 followers and who in turn his
9 disciples went on to become the
10 instructors of George Washington,
11 Benjamin Franklin, David Rittenhouse,
12 Benjamin Rush, John Bartram, those men
13 who framed our Constitution. So
14 essentially the freedoms, separation of
15 church and state, emanate very much from
16 the Wissahickon. And that is my area of
17 expertise.

18 Nobody really understands or
19 knows this. A number of people from all
20 over the country I've led on tours, and
21 I've seen how we need so very much in the
22 Park. Not as much as the money, and I
23 realize everything costs a lot of money,
24 but we need people. And I lead so many
25 volunteers so often who want to help and

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2 they don't have any money to spend, but
3 they are willing to make the time and not
4 the money to give, and those are what we
5 really need in the Park, because those
6 are the people -- it's their park. They
7 don't own it. They take care of it. And
8 those who care for it are the ones who
9 very much own the Park. And we need
10 those people. And I've interviewed 40
11 people, from one scale to the other, some
12 former Park employees, and everybody is
13 saddened at the fact that they have
14 difficulty trusting the hierarchy because
15 of the boondoggles that have constantly
16 been stumbling in the Park. And there's
17 no one in particular to blame. The
18 system is just failing as it were. And
19 what we need to do is essentially
20 formulate a new system through this
21 Commission, forming of people, the
22 locale. The Roxborough-Manayunk
23 Historical Society is very much
24 interested in formulating a coalition.
25 And I seek to form a coalition of the

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2 various historical societies, the various
3 groups and organizations that ring the
4 Park, that really use the Park, because
5 all of them are willing to help.

6 And I, in reaching out with
7 them, have listened to what they have to
8 say, but so many of them feel that these
9 hallowed halls are so far from their
10 reach, and because I'm on the ground and
11 in it, I seek to be a liaison between
12 they and you in order to bring these nine
13 of us together to formulate much more
14 than a commission, much more than a
15 committee, but an organization of people.
16 Because they make money every day, they
17 print it every day, but we don't get
18 people every day. So when we get them,
19 they are our most precious.

20 And the most important thing we
21 have is the children. No matter whose
22 they are, they are the future. And there
23 are so few children involved, and I seek
24 to bring an educational curriculum. And
25 I've approached a number of our

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2 institutions, colleges, that is, to
3 create an educational curriculum within
4 the Park, and through their educational
5 curriculums actually provide a labor
6 force by volunteer, which in turn will
7 help alleviate some of the cost.

8 And I've been working on
9 programs for the last several years in
10 regards to bringing environmental
11 stability between the Park, the people
12 and particularly the Philadelphia Zoo,
13 because the Park has so much land, so
14 much to offer, and it can actually create
15 a food source, which are, again, part of
16 the programs which I like to implement.

17 And the reason, bottom line for
18 doing all this is that it is for those
19 who I have known and loved and they
20 have --

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thirty
22 seconds.

23 MR. BUCCI: And for those who I
24 have never known and loved what they
25 left.

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2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you
4 very much for your testimony, and thank
5 you for being able to respond so quickly.

6 MR. BUCCI: Well, I can think
7 on my feet.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Good
9 afternoon.

10 MS. ROSEN: Good afternoon.
11 Wendy Rosen.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Please
13 pull the mike closer to you.

14 MS. ROSEN: How is that? Does
15 that work?

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

17 MS. ROSEN: Okay. Wendy Rosen.
18 I've been a resident of Center City
19 Philadelphia for over 25 years and I'm
20 also the President of the Friends of
21 Rittenhouse Square.

22 This is a landmark moment in
23 Philadelphia's history, with the merger
24 of the City's Parks Commission and
25 Recreation Department. I think it's a

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2 perfect moment to think differently about
3 our green spaces.

4 Obviously parks should be
5 clean, welcoming, restful places, but
6 they have the potential to be so much
7 more. They can generate revenue for the
8 City and limit the amount of expenses for
9 the City. They may eventually pay for
10 themselves. And when parks work well,
11 property values and quality of life
12 skyrocket.

13 Making this happen means
14 thinking creatively. It means learning
15 about innovative approaches taken by
16 other cities and transplanting those
17 ideas here. It means dreaming up our own
18 new ideas, imagining the unthinkable and
19 putting them into action.

20 Parks evolve over time.
21 Today's Rittenhouse Square was a product
22 of a redesign dating to World War I, the
23 work of a French-born Philadelphia
24 architect, Paul Cret, who literally did
25 some of his planning and sketching in a

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2 foxhole. It is important to remember
3 that parks can and should change over
4 time.

5 In Rittenhouse Square, we have
6 had a successful public-private
7 partnership with Fairmount Park, a model
8 that I can strongly recommend. It puts
9 more operational responsibility in the
10 hands of the public, while relieving the
11 City of the considerable burden of both
12 administrative and financial oversight.
13 Checks and balances are ensured by the
14 cooperation of the two parties.

15 Against this background of a
16 partnership with the former Fairmount
17 Park Commission, I feel I am perfectly
18 suited to continue this cooperative
19 relationship and I am honored to be
20 considered for this position. I am also
21 excited to contribute to and benefit from
22 the new energy, ideas and inspiration of
23 the Commission.

24 Thank you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you

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2 for your testimony. Are you providing
3 copies?

4 MS. ROSEN: They have them. I
5 already turned them in.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Terrific.
7 All right, then.

8 Councilman Clarke.

9 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
10 Madam Chair.

11 Madam Chair, I just want to
12 say, keep up the good work.

13 MS. ROSEN: Thank you. Thank
14 you, Darrell.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Is there
16 anyone else to testify on this
17 resolution?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Just for
20 the record, 53 were scheduled to offer
21 testimony today and 39 actually were able
22 to be here.

23 So with that said, Councilman
24 Jones.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, Madam

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2 Chair. I want to commend you on your
3 ability to endure all of those and
4 conduct this hearing in a timely,
5 efficient manner, and it speaks well of
6 your ability to be a chairperson of this
7 committee.

8 I also wanted to say that a lot
9 of the testimony, Ph.D. also must have
10 meant Philadelphia Historical Dean,
11 because you cited a lot of interesting
12 points, referencing the beauty of our
13 Park, particularly Rittenhouse up in the
14 Park and near Wissahickon, which is the
15 home of the first printing press ever
16 introduced to the continent of the United
17 States, or the Ohio House out in
18 Centennial District, which is the
19 celebratory building that sited the
20 centennial celebration for this nation,
21 and the Benedict Arnold's Mansion near
22 the 5th District, which Benedict Arnold
23 actually had as a summer home. These are
24 the things that enrich our Park.

25 And I wanted to say that today,

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2 Madam Chairwoman, I saw a variety of
3 people come out and show their support
4 for the Park. It's unfortunate that
5 there are only limited amount of slots
6 available, because I would hope that
7 whoever winds up successful, those who
8 don't wind up on the Commission still
9 keep their level of commitment to this
10 wonderful institution and this wonderful
11 park.

12 Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You're
14 very, very welcome.

15 We have a huge task ahead of
16 us, but the good news is that we have a
17 rich slate of candidates.

18 Let the record show that this
19 hearing stands in recess until March 19th
20 at 1:00 p.m.

21 Thank you.

22 (Committee on Parks, Recreation
23 and Cultural Affairs recessed at 12:15
24 p.m.)

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