

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Friday, May 2, 2025
11:05 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.

BILLS: 250195, 250196, 250197, 250198,
250199, 250200, 250201, 250202,
250210, 250211, 250212
RESOLUTION: 250214

1 - - -

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Good morning, everyone.

4 (Good morning.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

6 JOHNSON: Good morning, everyone.

7 (Good morning.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: This is the public
10 hearing and public meeting of the
11 Committee of the Whole regarding
12 Bill Nos. 250195, 250196, 250197,
13 250198, 250199, 250200, 250201,
14 250202, 250210, 250212 and
15 Resolution No. 250214.

16 Ms. Loughhead, will you
17 please call the roll to take
18 attendance.

19 THE CLERK:

20 Councilmember Squilla.

21 (No response.)

22 THE CLERK:

23 Councilmember Gauthier.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Present.

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember Jones.

4 (No response.)

5 THE CLERK:

6 Councilmember Jones.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES:

8 Present.

9 THE CLERK:

10 Councilmember Young.

11 (No response.)

12 THE CLERK:

13 Councilmember Driscoll.

14 (No response.)

15 THE CLERK:

16 Councilmember Lozada.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

18 Present.

19 THE CLERK:

20 Councilmember Bass.

21 (No response.)

22 THE CLERK:

23 Councilmember Phillips.

24 (No response.)

1 THE CLERK:

2 Councilmember O'Neill.

3 (No response.)

4 THE CLERK:

5 Councilmember Gilmore Richardson.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Present.

8 THE CLERK:

9 Councilmember Thomas.

10 (No response.)

11 THE CLERK:

12 Councilmember Harrity.

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

14 Present.

15 THE CLERK:

16 Councilmember Ahmad.

17 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

18 Present.

19 THE CLERK:

20 Councilmember Landau.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

22 Present.

23 THE CLERK:

24 Councilmember Brooks.

1 (No response.)

2 THE CLERK:

3 Councilmember O'Rourke.

4 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

5 Present.

6 THE CLERK: Council

7 President Johnson.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Present. Thank you. A
10 quorum of the Committee is present
11 and this hearing is now called to
12 order.

13 Ms. Loughhead, will you
14 please read the titles of the
15 resolutions.

16 THE CLERK: Bill No.
17 250195, an ordinance amending
18 Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia
19 Code, entitled "Wage and Net
20 Profits Tax," by revising certain
21 tax rates, under certain terms and
22 conditions.

23 Bill No. 250196, an
24 ordinance adopting the Operating

1 Budget for Fiscal Year 2026.

2 Bill No. 250197, an
3 ordinance to adopt a Fiscal 2026
4 Capital Budget.

5 Bill No. 250198, an
6 ordinance to adopt a Capital
7 Program for the six Fiscal Years
8 2026-2031 inclusive.

9 Bill No. 250199, an
10 ordinance amending Chapter 19-2600
11 of The Philadelphia Tax Code,
12 entitled "Business Income and
13 Receipts Taxes," to revise certain
14 tax rates and end certain
15 exclusions from the tax on
16 receipts, all under certain terms
17 and conditions.

18 Bill No. 250200, an
19 ordinance amending Chapter 12-100
20 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
21 "Traffic Code" to revise the fee
22 for the use of parking meters, all
23 under certain terms and conditions.

24 Bill No. 250201, an

1 ordinance amending Chapter 19-1800
2 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
3 "School Tax Authorization," to
4 provide for an increase in the tax
5 of the Board of Education of the
6 School District of Philadelphia is
7 authorized to impose on real
8 estate; and amending Chapter
9 19-1300, entitled "Real Estate
10 Taxes," to establish an equivalent
11 reduction the tax rate for the City
12 real estate tax, all under certain
13 terms and conditions.

14 Bill No. 250202, an
15 ordinance amending Chapter 19-1806
16 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
17 "Authorization of Realty Use and
18 Occupancy Tax," to eliminate
19 certain exemptions, all under
20 certain terms and conditions.

21 Bill No. 250210, an
22 ordinance amending Chapter --
23 amending Section 10-1001 of The
24 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Fees

1 of the Commissioner of Records," to
2 increase the portion of fees for
3 the recording of deeds and
4 mortgages in related documents to
5 be used for Housing Trust Fund
6 purposes, under certain terms and
7 conditions.

8 Bill No. 250211, an
9 ordinance amending Chapter 19-1400
10 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
11 "Realty Transfer Tax" revising the
12 rate of the tax, all under certain
13 terms and conditions.

14 Bill No. 250212, an
15 ordinance to amend Chapter 19-4400
16 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
17 "Development Impact Tax" to end
18 imposition of the tax, under
19 certain terms and conditions.

20 Resolution No. 250214,
21 resolution providing for the
22 approval by the Council of the City
23 of Philadelphia of a Revised Five
24 Year Financial Plan for the City of

1 Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years
2 2026-2030, and incorporating
3 revisions with respect to Fiscal
4 Year 2025, which is to be submitted
5 by the Mayor to the Pennsylvania
6 Intergovernmental Cooperation
7 Authority pursuant to an
8 Intergovernmental Cooperation
9 Agreement by and between the City
10 and the Authority.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
12 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.
13 Today, we continue the public
14 hearing of the Committee of the
15 Whole to consider the bills read by
16 the Clerk that constitute proposed
17 operating and capital spending
18 measures for Fiscal Year 2026, a
19 Capital Program and a Forward-
20 looking Capital Plan for Fiscal
21 Year 2026 through Fiscal Year 2031.

22 This morning we will
23 hear testimony from the Office of
24 Homeless Services and in the

1 afternoon we will hear testimony
2 from the Fire Department and
3 Licenses and Inspections. As we
4 are starting at 11:00 as opposed to
5 10:00 , we will provide two minutes
6 so members can ask directly their
7 questions and we can have a
8 response so we can get as much work
9 that we can do get done between now
10 and 4:00 p.m.

11 Ms. Loughead, will you
12 please call the first witness to
13 testify.

14 THE CLERK: The first
15 person to testify is Cheryl Hill,
16 Executive Director office of
17 Homeless Services.

18 (Witnesses approached
19 Witness table.)

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
21 JOHNSON: Good morning. If you
22 could just state your name and
23 title and then you can begin your
24 testimony.

1 MS. HILL: My name is
2 Cheryl Hill, Executive Director of
3 the Office of Homeless Services.
4 Good morning, Council President
5 Johnson and members of City
6 Council. Joining me today, our
7 Chief of Staff David Holloman and
8 Deputy Managing Director Crystal
9 Yates-Gale. Our work is made
10 possible by the support of our
11 dedicated Office of Homeless
12 Services colleagues, some of whom
13 are with us in Council chambers
14 today, while others are currently
15 hard at work serving our most
16 vulnerable populations in
17 Philadelphia. I am pleased to
18 provide this testimony for the
19 Office of Homeless Services'
20 proposed Fiscal Year 2026 operating
21 budget.

22 The Office of Homeless
23 Services provides leadership,
24 coordination and planning and

1 mobilization of resources to make
2 homelessness rare, brief and
3 nonrecurring in the city's pursuit
4 of the Mayor's vision for a safer,
5 cleaner and greener city with
6 access to economic opportunity for
7 all.

8 Philadelphia's Homeless
9 Services system consists of more
10 than 75 homeless housing and social
11 service providers, mostly
12 nonprofit, working together with
13 local, state and federal government
14 entities. Since I stepped into the
15 role of Executive Director in
16 September, our team has been
17 focused on strengthening OHS's
18 foundation while setting bold goals
19 for the future.

20 For instance, we
21 launched an agency improvement plan
22 rooted in transparency, equity and
23 performance. We listened to staff
24 at every level of our organization,

1 identified inefficiencies and began
2 laying the groundwork for a culture
3 of continuous improvement, one that
4 supports our employees and better
5 serves our city's most vulnerable
6 residents.

7 One of our first steps
8 towards addressing this is to add
9 more administrative staff to
10 bolster our efficiency efforts
11 agency-wide. Those positions are
12 included in this proposed budget.
13 Our proposed budget supports Mayor
14 Parker's H.O.M.E. Initiative and
15 Wellness ecosystem. Both programs
16 are critical pathways to ending
17 street homelessness, offering
18 options that meet people where they
19 are, whether through recovery
20 housing, supportive housing or a
21 hybrid model anchored in dignity
22 and tailored to individuals' needs.

23 This will require a
24 shift in how we approach housing

1 referrals, assessments and shelter
2 stays, moving towards a system that
3 reduces time in shelter and
4 increases access to permanent
5 housing with greater speed and
6 equity. Prevention, diversion and
7 intake or PD&I remains the
8 cornerstone of our approach, and we
9 intend to modernize these services
10 by streamlining application
11 processing and leveraging
12 technology to connect people to
13 assistance faster and more
14 efficiently.

15 By collaborating with a
16 wide range of governmental and
17 community partners, OHS aims to
18 reduce the number of individuals
19 and families entering homelessness,
20 ensuring that prevention services
21 are accessible and effective in
22 stabilizing households before
23 crisis situations escalate. The
24 Emergency and Temporary Housing

1 Unit provides immediate shelter and
2 short-term housing for people
3 experiencing homelessness.

4 OHS will work to reduce
5 the length of stay in shelters by
6 piloting initiatives that
7 facilitate faster transitions from
8 shelter to permanent housing,
9 focusing on efficiency and client-
10 centered care. In FY26, we plan to
11 formalize the enhanced Code Blue
12 protocol, piloted this winter, to
13 ensure that individuals
14 experiencing homelessness have
15 access to warming centers and safe-
16 shelter options during the
17 extremely frigid temperatures.

18 We've also implemented a
19 new shelter monitoring process to
20 make sure that every facility we
21 fund offers safe, decent and
22 sanitary environments.
23 Additionally, in FY26 we will
24 complete the assessment of the City

1 Fund Emergency Shelters in
2 compliance with Americans with
3 Disabilities Act. Providing
4 permanent, safe and affordable and
5 accessible housing with wraparound
6 services is the best way to resolve
7 homelessness.

8 We are also requesting
9 the necessary resources to ensure
10 that our nonprofit partners, many
11 of which are on the front lines
12 every day, can meet the City's
13 living wage requirements without
14 compromising the quality of their
15 services. Fair pay for their
16 workforce is not only a matter of
17 equity but essential to building a
18 sustainable homelessness response
19 system.

20 The Fiscal Contracts and
21 Asset Management system or FCAM
22 Division will prioritize equity and
23 accountability in its policies,
24 practices and provider network to

1 ensure fair and inclusive service
2 access. We will continue our
3 review to ensure equitable
4 processes, adherence to our
5 policies or contracts in ?? err of
6 transparency, which I refer to with
7 the team as the Show Your Work
8 model.

9 In addition to the
10 internal process review, we are
11 working with a consulting firm to
12 look at our fiscal practices to see
13 how we can improve establishing key
14 controls in our fiscal operations.
15 Once the risk assessments and
16 recommendations are finalized, the
17 results will be shared with
18 Council.

19 Earlier this year, in
20 collaboration with our colleagues
21 in the Managing Director's Office
22 and Finance, OHS took a proactive
23 look at our fiscal oversight and
24 payment processes to ensure we

1 maintain operations as funded in
2 FY25. Once it was confirmed that
3 the FY25 budget obligations were
4 funded as planned, a \$4.7 million
5 reserve was established to support
6 unanticipated costs in FY25.
7 Funding from the reserve was
8 subsequently earmarked for enhanced
9 Code Blue, wage increases for our
10 service providers and an infusion
11 of homeless prevention assistance
12 dollars and funding for facility
13 maintenance.

14 The proposed Fiscal Year
15 2026 General Fund budget totals
16 \$84,188,038, a decrease of
17 5,055,830 from the Fiscal Year 2025
18 estimated obligation levels. This
19 decrease is primarily due to the
20 allocation of one-time funding in
21 FY25 for unanticipated needs and
22 the transition of budget authority
23 to other departments for contracts
24 previously managed by OHS, such as

1 facilities management and security
2 at Philly Home at Girard.

3 However, it does not
4 signify a decrease in the
5 Administration's prioritization and
6 dedication to addressing the
7 homelessness crisis. Instead we
8 are continuing to break down silos
9 and create a holistic strategy.

10 The Wellness budget
11 under the Managing Director's
12 Office includes new funding for
13 wellness vouchers that will be
14 administered by OHS to provide a
15 seamless transition from recovery
16 housing such as Riverview Village
17 to permanent housing using a model
18 similar to Rapid Rehousing. In
19 addition, the H.O.M.E. Initiative
20 includes strategies to prevent
21 homelessness as well as preserve or
22 build housing units for people at
23 or below 30% AMI.

24 OHS will also continue

1 to partner with PHA, DHCD and PHDC
2 to leverage funding programs such
3 as the Federal Home Investment
4 Partnership Program, HTF, LIHTC
5 set-asides to strengthen our
6 efforts to end homelessness. Our
7 proposed budget allows OHS to
8 continue funding our existing
9 programs with increases to
10 accommodate the city's minimum
11 wage, increase winter and Code Blue
12 services and add fiscal
13 administrative staff to ensure
14 contracts are accurate and
15 completed in a timely manner.

16 This budget strategy was
17 developed by taking into
18 consideration all of our resources,
19 including other funding sources
20 such as grants and strategic public
21 and private partnerships.
22 Meanwhile the Planning Policy and
23 Performance Division, also known as
24 P3, will launch a new strategic

1 planning process with the Continuum
2 of Care Board and service providers
3 to ensure alignment with Mayor
4 Parker's H.O.M.E. Initiative.

5 OHS will also continue
6 the collaborative review of our
7 continuum care initiatives and
8 application process as we work to
9 safeguard and increase our
10 permanent supportive housing units.
11 Thank you for the opportunity to
12 share how OHS with the ceaseless
13 support of our dedicated team
14 members strive to meet its mission
15 every day and will continue to do
16 more in an effective manner.

17 And before I turn it
18 over and look forward to answering
19 your questions, I do want to just
20 say publicly thank you to Dave
21 Holloman who has been a partner
22 with me even before I joined the
23 City and continues to help with the
24 strategies today. Thank you.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Thank you. We're glad to
3 see Dave is still here taking care
4 of business since the last time we
5 saw you, Dave. Continue to keep up
6 the good work. Okay?

7 MR. HOLLOMAN: Thank
8 you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: The Chair recognizes
11 Majority Leader Councilmember
12 Katherine Gilmore Richardson.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
15 very much, Council President.

16 And thank you all very,
17 very much for your testimony and
18 for the work of the entire OHS
19 team. We all have been working
20 really closely over the last year.
21 So I wanted to thank Cheryl Hill
22 and welcome you to your first
23 budget season, also to Dave
24 Holloman for all of your work.

1 And then I want to give
2 a shout-out to Bruce Johnson, who's
3 been helping us place a number of
4 individuals who are unhoused and
5 getting them connected to service,
6 even helped us on a Saturday
7 evening with an elderly woman who
8 was in a car outside of a park.

9 So I just wanted to make
10 sure that I put that on the record
11 because I recognize that this work
12 is not easy work. It's difficult
13 work. It's selfless work. And
14 you're meeting many Philadelphians
15 at their lowest and at that their
16 point of need. And so, I just
17 wanted to thank you all very much
18 for that work.

19 I also wanted to ensure
20 that I put on the record that since
21 2018 City Council has increased
22 OHS's budget by \$41 million. So I
23 think you know the commitment is
24 there from City Council, that we

1 want to fund this work. We want to
2 fund good quality service from our
3 OHS.

4 And then you all know
5 that we've worked together closely
6 over the past several months to
7 ensure we had additional dollars
8 for the Family Intake Shelter,
9 which you all did get up and
10 running in the Northwest in
11 Councilmember Cindy Bass' District.
12 So I'm very, very appreciative of
13 that.

14 You know that I have to
15 ask the tough questions only
16 because we have to get this on the
17 record, but I know that we all
18 collectively care deeply about the
19 quality of service that we're
20 providing to our most vulnerable
21 residents at their point of need.

22 So it's just a few
23 things that I wanted to also
24 mention because we had just

1 received this Pew report last week
2 around the amount of Philadelphians
3 who are experiencing homelessness
4 in recent years. And while we know
5 that we've had a reduction in our
6 city's poverty rate, which is the
7 lowest it's been since 2000, we
8 also know that household incomes,
9 while they may be increasing
10 slightly here, that too many
11 families are cost-burdened, and
12 particularly by the strains that we
13 have relative to housing and also
14 utilities.

15 And so, we recognize
16 that we received a report that
17 homelessness is on the rise in the
18 city of Philadelphia. And that's
19 the reason why I want to continue
20 to have a laser-beam focus on this
21 issue. So I'm going to start off
22 with a few questions. And
23 everything that I ask are things
24 that I really need to just get on

1 the record so that we have a
2 starting point for moving forward.

3 I know that you all have
4 a financial consultant. We were
5 able to see that in the detail as
6 well, and they have completed their
7 review and their analysis of OHS
8 and they've issued recommendations.
9 Have those recommendations been
10 made public? And if you all could
11 share those recommendations with
12 the Council President for
13 dissemination to all members of
14 Council, including our Chair of
15 Housing Councilmember Gauthier
16 before we have the callback; is
17 that possible?

18 MS. HILL: Yes, it's
19 possible. We just met with the
20 consultants this week so we just
21 received the information. They
22 gave us an updated draft this week
23 as well, so we'll be able to share
24 those recommendations with Council.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Okay. And we'll be
3 able to receive that before the
4 callback?

5 MS. HILL: Yes -- oh,
6 not the final. It's still a draft.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Okay. It's still a
9 draft. Okay. But will you all be
10 able to share anything with us
11 prior to --

12 MS. HILL: I'll call up
13 Crystal Yates-Gale.

14 (Witness approached
15 Witness table.)

16 MS. YATES-GALE: Good
17 morning, Majority Leader. Crystal
18 Yates-Gale, Deputy Managing
19 Director, Health and Human
20 Services. The engagement with the
21 fiscal consultant just started so
22 it's going in three phases. The
23 first phase was a risk assessment.
24 The second phase is going to be

1 making recommendations to
2 operationalize their
3 recommendations to us. The third
4 phase will be to implement training
5 for the team. And so, there is a
6 report that is shared with us after
7 each phase, and we have your team
8 specifically but Council as a whole
9 on the books to be invited to that
10 meeting.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be
13 great. I heard the bell so I'll
14 honor the clock. I just need to
15 get this last question on for this
16 round and I'll come back hopefully
17 for several rounds.

18 On April 22 of last year
19 the Inspector General released a
20 report of preliminary findings
21 around the overspending for OHS.
22 I'm not sure and just please let us
23 know if a final report has been
24 issued, if you all have received a

1 final report from the OIG? And if
2 not, if there's an update regarding
3 that report?

4 MS. HILL: So we've
5 received the draft version and
6 we've met with OIG as well as the
7 consultant that they've been
8 working with, but we haven't
9 received the final report.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: Okay. So I'll then
12 ask again once you receive the
13 final report, if we could receive a
14 copy via our Council President for
15 dissemination to all members of
16 Council.

17 And I'll come back on
18 the second round. Thank you,
19 Council President.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: (Inaudible).

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
24 very much, Council President.

1 Last year you all
2 provided my office with a list of
3 all the FY23 and '24 contracts. I
4 still have a copy of it here
5 because we had to print it out the
6 long way to go through it and it's
7 been a part of our Bible that we've
8 been using for the last year.

9 But you all were able to
10 give me a list of all the FY23 and
11 '24 contracts, and it had the
12 following information: The date
13 the contract was conformed, the
14 amount encumbered on the date of
15 the contract confirmation, date of
16 all the invoices for the work
17 provided, date of all the payments
18 with the invoice numbers, any funds
19 that were rolled over from a
20 previous contract and the contract
21 number associated so that we can
22 match it up, and any unpaid
23 invoices from the previous contract
24 that were paid under FY25 contract,

1 which is some of the stuff that we
2 could find.

3 And I'll be honest,
4 we've been up all night because we
5 just got this at 4 o'clock in the
6 afternoon. So it's very difficult
7 to be able to go through all of
8 this and receive it at 4:00. And I
9 know that's not to any fault of
10 your own, but we have to also have
11 an opportunity to go through it and
12 we had a Budget town hall last
13 night until 8 o'clock. So if you
14 all could provide us with that same
15 information this year, that would
16 be helpful.

17 MS. HILL: Thank you.
18 And on behalf of the team because
19 it was a collaborative effort, we
20 do want to apologize for getting
21 that information to you so late,
22 but we'll be able to give you that
23 updated information.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: Okay. And that would
2 be for all the FY25 contracts. And
3 I'm only asking because of all the
4 movement that's happening in the
5 detail. When we did get it, we
6 were still here. I was able to go
7 through from my desk here the
8 contracts that immediately stood
9 out to me relative to the numbers
10 that did not match up. And then I
11 had my team do the research to
12 ensure that what I thought I was
13 reading was an accurate assessment.

14 I'll get this last
15 question on for this round and then
16 I can come back. But I wanted to
17 go under Emergency and Temporary
18 Housing in Class 200, but
19 specifically that portion of the
20 detail on Page 27. It shows a
21 decrease in emergency and temporary
22 housing of \$4,531,571. That's in
23 Class 250. \$641,343 in Class 290.
24 \$1,632,710 decrease in 299. So the

1 total decrease will be \$6,805,623
2 in Class 200.

3 Now, when you go back
4 and go down in the further pages at
5 29, 30 and 31 and you review all
6 the specific spending breakdowns on
7 those pages, the numbers just don't
8 add up. So it could be that it is
9 a typo or that -- that's why we
10 need to see the invoices so we'll
11 be able to match it up.

12 But the difference on
13 those pages in the Class 250 is
14 \$4,906,070 and the Class 290
15 difference is \$1,942,290. So
16 essentially the Class 299
17 difference is correct, but it is
18 also a set-aside around the
19 inflationary needs that you all are
20 stating that you'll need to
21 address, but there are no specifics
22 on what the \$2.7 million was spent
23 on last year and then what the \$1.1
24 million appropriation may be spent

1 on for next year.

2 And so for the record,
3 and you all might not be able to do
4 this today but I wanted to get this
5 on the record, if you could explain
6 the movement and around the
7 discrepancy in the totals versus
8 the line item spending in Class
9 200, and that would be strictly for
10 emergency and temporary housing.
11 And then provide the detail for the
12 inflationary spending for FY25
13 under that same category.

14 And then specifically
15 for the one-time costs on Page 30,
16 if you could provide the detailed
17 information on the \$1.9 million, I
18 think that's for the facility
19 needs. And then which vendors that
20 we're going to work with and sort
21 of the timeline and the scope. So
22 I'll start there, emergency and
23 temporary housing.

24 MS. HILL: Thank you.

1 And we'll be able to get you the
2 detail. But I'll add for clarity
3 as we went through this budget in
4 detail we realized that some of the
5 projects were actually in the wrong
6 department, so some of the moves
7 were actually just putting them in
8 the correct area. But we'll be
9 able to get you more detail behind
10 that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Right, and that was
13 the difference between I thought
14 the original detail we received and
15 then we got an updated detail at
16 3:58 to try to match it up. But
17 basically, typically what is in the
18 earlier section of the detail and
19 once you get the breakdown on the
20 following pages, typically you're
21 able to add up the numbers and it
22 matches, but in this instance it
23 does not. So I wasn't sure -- do
24 you understand where I'm going with

1 that?

2 MS. HILL: Yep.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Okay. For the
5 additional increase in prevention
6 support, you shared with our office
7 in one of our many meetings that
8 these funds were to provide
9 additional dollars to those at risk
10 of losing their rental units, and
11 that's after a permanent supportive
12 housing option did not pan out due
13 to the rent costs.

14 So could you please
15 notate where in the detail we can
16 see the original project and how it
17 was budgeted?

18 MS. HILL: Sure. So the
19 original prevention dollars are
20 primarily funded by grants and we
21 can give you the detail behind
22 that. We realize, and we've
23 mentioned it before in other
24 Council meetings, that we had the

1 increase of individuals that
2 experienced prevention. But just
3 to provide clarity, not all of them
4 need the permanent supportive
5 housing dollars. They just need
6 additional help with security
7 deposit or just a few months' rent.
8 So that's why it's a little bit
9 different in that program.

10 But what we found was
11 that we ran through that money
12 pretty quickly because we had about
13 4000 people ask for assistance.
14 And so, now --

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: I saw the post. I saw
17 the post. Everybody was sharing it
18 online. I know what you're
19 referring to.

20 MS. HILL: Yes. And so,
21 what we did do in the budget for
22 FY25 was add additional funds to
23 help cover some of those costs
24 because we realized that we were

1 out of the money probably around
2 March. So we've added additional
3 funds to be able to help so that we
4 can provide support for more
5 individuals.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Sure. And I only ask
8 because there was only I think it
9 was \$336,000 that was listed under
10 the permanent supportive units for
11 this fiscal year but it's only one
12 time. So if it's something that we
13 need to continue to address, we
14 would want to see it more than
15 once, which is why I had asked
16 about the original detail so that
17 we can understand if it moves
18 somewhere where it is.

19 MS. HILL: Absolutely.
20 And I will add that earlier this
21 year we added an additional 700,000
22 that you don't see separated out
23 specifically for prevention
24 dollars. But because we awarded

1 that a while ago, it's the only
2 reason that it's not separated out
3 in that funding because that was
4 specifically about using some of
5 the additional reserve dollars,
6 where the 700,000 we were able to
7 allocate all of our original
8 budget.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: Okay. Thank you.

11 Thank you, Council
12 President. I'll come back for
13 another round.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Thank you.

16 The Chair recognizes
17 Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr.
18 Then Chair of Housing Councilmember
19 Jamie Gauthier.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
21 you so much, Mr. President. And
22 thank you, colleague, for raising
23 this issue several cycles ago to
24 talk about it from a macro point of

1 view and fiscal stability, but I
2 want to approach this from a micro
3 standpoint.

4 The way I look at
5 government sometimes, if I see one
6 pothole, I fix it. If I see
7 several potholes, there's something
8 wrong with the system. And thank
9 you for meeting with me aside to
10 kind of explain that system, and it
11 gave us some insight as to some of
12 the challenges that you have to
13 face. So thank you for that in
14 advance.

15 I did give you some
16 homework, and that homework was to
17 provide a linear view of how people
18 coming through different doors
19 wound up in shelters. Whether you
20 come from a domestic abuse point of
21 view, whether you come from an
22 ex-offender point of view, whether
23 you come from a child who is couch
24 surfing, how do you do intake? And

1 then what are the times associated
2 before someone gets temporary to
3 permanent placement? Did you get a
4 chance to do that?

5 MS. HILL: I'll turn
6 that over to Dave Holloman.

7 MR. HOLLOMAN: Good
8 morning, Council, and thank you for
9 that question and thank you again
10 for having the time to meet with
11 us. So just to give a quick
12 synopsis of when someone comes
13 through the door, whether it's from
14 incarceration or coming from the
15 streets and from a hospital,
16 everyone comes to central intake
17 and they get an assessment.

18 And so, you have the
19 option to either have an overnight
20 bed or what we consider to be case
21 management bed, which we have 30
22 shelters that has case managements
23 in those beds. That path leads to
24 a long-term housing placement or a

1 treatment placement. And so, once
2 you come to the first door, you get
3 a housing assessment. And if
4 you're in there for seven days in
5 that initial placement, you're
6 meeting with case management to
7 determine what type of housing --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm
9 going to stop you because I hear
10 that -- did you do the chart?

11 MR. HOLLOWMAN: Yes, we
12 do have a chart and we can turn it
13 over to your offices through
14 Council President.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Will
16 you give that to the President to
17 distribute to members? Because
18 that gives us here's how long it
19 takes and as important, how much
20 does it cost. So for example, and
21 I think you gave me a number
22 before, how many people go through
23 your system a year?

24 MR. HOLLOWMAN: Yeah. On

1 average we have seen anywhere
2 between 15,000 to 19,000 people
3 that come to our intake services.
4 Doesn't mean that all of them get
5 placed for housing, but they come
6 in seeking some type of services.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: And
8 if you were to do a pie chart of
9 who they are, tell me the
10 demographic, tell me the
11 circumstance of who your shelter
12 participant is.

13 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah. As
14 we have seen over the last few
15 years in homelessness being up
16 nationwide, we are starting to see
17 more of an older population. That
18 means when we say older, 55 and
19 up -- excuse me, 55 and up. And
20 also, we're starting to see youth,
21 what we consider to be youth is 18
22 to 24 years of age. But the
23 biggest population of people is in
24 that age between 25 to 45 where we

1 see the majority of people that
2 come to our system. But we can
3 provide in that infograph a
4 breakdown of a pie chart showing
5 who's hitting our system for first
6 times and also repeated people who
7 are coming in.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: So as
9 we -- I know I heard the bell. How
10 much does it cost a night?

11 MR. HOLLoman: On
12 average we spend about \$55 per
13 night. Depending on the shelter,
14 some of that can range between 55
15 upwards to 85, depending on the
16 type of services and the type of
17 shelter based on square footage,
18 its location, if it's a recent
19 lease.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
21 for the next round the question
22 that I want answered is -- and
23 again, the best examples are
24 examples that come through my

1 office. And one of them is someone
2 that is dual diagnosed, that they
3 have several challenges that they
4 have to face. How are you equipped
5 to be able to assess that and then
6 give them the proper placement and
7 care that they need? That'll be
8 ready for round --

9 MS. HILL: I can just
10 address part of that. We do have
11 some mental health specialists in
12 our intake centers, but we are not
13 behavioral health specialists which
14 is why we do partner with the
15 Department of Behavioral Health and
16 Intellectual Disabilities to get
17 additional assessments when
18 necessary. But we do keep some
19 available in our intake centers as
20 well.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: So
22 since you answered that, I got one
23 more. And, that is, President
24 Johnson and my staffer Lena there

1 went out on Code Blue, and they
2 were out talking to people about
3 coming in. One of the most
4 disturbing things out of the 30 or
5 so people that they contacted was
6 that some of them were reluctant to
7 go into our shelter system out of
8 fear of public safety and they felt
9 safer in jail than they would in a
10 shelter. How are we attacking
11 that?

12 MS. HILL: Thank you.
13 If I can answer that quickly. Our
14 team actually does monitoring of
15 all of our shelters. They monitor
16 for case management, they monitor
17 for the physical qualities and they
18 monitor for making sure that they
19 meet the standards.

20 If the shelter does not
21 pass the assessment, then there is
22 a corrective action plan that they
23 have to implement. We do think to
24 continue to monitor those and those

1 who are not, we would have up to
2 and subject to termination of that
3 contract. But we've done all of
4 them this year.

5 We've also had our
6 inspectors go out and do some
7 physical inspections as well to
8 make sure that people are in
9 shelters that we would want to be
10 able to have to our standard, and
11 the team has heard me talk several
12 much -- several times about the
13 fact that I did have family in our
14 shelters and they told me about the
15 fact that they would rather be on
16 the street and then to be in the
17 shelters. So it is important to me
18 to make sure that the shelters are
19 meeting a certain standard.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'll
21 save the rest of my questions for
22 Round 2.

23 Thank you,
24 Mr. President.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: You're welcome.

3 The Chair recognizes
4 Chair of Housing Councilmember
5 Jamie Gauthier.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

7 Thank you, Council President.

8 Thanks to you both for
9 being here and thanks to you and
10 your whole team for the critical
11 work that you do every day. We
12 really appreciate working with you.
13 As the Majority Leader alluded to,
14 the most recent point-in-time count
15 released in September 2024
16 reflected a near 40% increase in
17 unhoused individuals.

18 At the same time, the
19 proposed OHS budget is 6% less than
20 the previous year. I've been in
21 conversation with you all about
22 this seeming decrease and have some
23 follow-up questions that I wanted
24 to get on the record:

1 The Administration

2 provided my office with a memo
3 explaining that the reduction was
4 not programmatic but a line item
5 called "funding for unanticipated
6 needs." Can you expound on the
7 intended purpose of this reserve,
8 and doesn't a drastic increase in
9 homelessness count as an
10 unanticipated need?

11 Next, although you said
12 there are no programmatic
13 reductions, I do see an overall
14 \$1.3 million reduction in the area
15 of prevention, diversion and
16 intake. Why does it seem like
17 we're cutting programs while
18 homelessness is going up in the
19 city by really large amounts?

20 Finally, the memo stated
21 that an additional \$3.65 million
22 was added to MDO for wellness
23 vouchers and that would offset any
24 decrease to the OHS budget. Even

1 if we were to consider that money
2 and offset, it's still \$1.4 million
3 less than what was available in
4 FY25.

5 And so, I want to close
6 this series of questions in the
7 same way that I started. Why are
8 we reducing the OHS budget while
9 homelessness is going up in very
10 concerning ways?

11 MS. HILL: Thank you for
12 that question. So to address the
13 first part of it, as I mentioned in
14 my opening testimony while the OHS
15 budget did decrease, the services
16 for people experiencing
17 homelessness has increased. As I
18 mentioned the vouchers and you
19 mentioned the same vouchers are
20 through the Managing Director's
21 Office, but those will be
22 administered by the Office of
23 Homeless Services.

24 In addition, there were

1 funds that were originally part of
2 the Philly Home at Girard budget
3 that we transitioned and will now
4 be managed by the Managing
5 Director's Office. So we have not
6 cut any services in the Office of
7 Homeless Services. Everything that
8 we set out to do has been funded
9 this year.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 Respectfully, we've gone over this
12 a lot, in meetings, over email. I
13 still do not understand from a pure
14 math and numbers perspective how
15 this is not a cut. Nothing that
16 we've been shown shows that this is
17 not a cut. And at the same time,
18 we have real evidence of
19 homelessness going up.

20 I need to understand
21 this and I think that all of us
22 need to understand how we're
23 meeting the needs of unhoused
24 individuals while at the same time

1 having less money in the actual
2 budget.

3 MS. HILL: Thank you.

4 So our needs have gone up and
5 actually our new count is even
6 higher. So I do agree with you
7 that there is a bigger need.
8 However, I will say that I'm seeing
9 a level of collaboration that I did
10 not see when I was a service
11 provider nor did I see when I first
12 came in. And I will say the
13 Community Wellness Office as well
14 as the H.O.M.E. Initiative I think
15 are two initiatives that will
16 benefit those experiencing
17 homelessness.

18 The Riverview Wellness
19 Center, to enter that one right now
20 are people experiencing
21 homelessness or at risk of
22 homelessness, as well as some of
23 the initiatives under the DBHIDS
24 portfolio as well. They've added

1 additional beds too.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 If we could pause for just a
4 moment. These are wonderful new
5 programs. They're also very
6 specific. They're for a very
7 specific population. And we all
8 know that to get into Riverview,
9 one has to go to a 30-, 60-, 90-day
10 program to even be referred to that
11 site.

12 So I don't understand
13 how adding these programs that are
14 very specific to a particular
15 population helps us overall to deal
16 with a 40% increase of people on
17 the street. And I would ask that
18 you follow up with the detail that
19 shows in whatever department you
20 all want to point to and whatever
21 project you want to point to, how
22 are we going to serve 40% more
23 people on the street with kind of
24 these adjustments that we've made

1 in our budget and in our services?

2 MS. HILL: We can follow
3 up in writing. But I will add
4 lastly that the Philly Home at
5 Girard, while that is not an OHS
6 project, that was 180 new beds that
7 are for people directly off the
8 street. There are no preconditions
9 for entering. That is a safe
10 haven. It's funded through DBHIDS,
11 but it's solely for people who are
12 coming directly off the street.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
14 I would love to see this
15 comprehensively and to understand
16 not only the numbers but the full
17 picture of services that are going
18 to get us to where we need to be
19 and allow us to support our people.
20 Thank you so much.

21 Thank you, Council
22 President.

23 MS. HILL: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: You're welcome.

2 The Chair recognizes
3 Councilmember Jim Harrity,
4 Councilmember Rue Landau.

5 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

6 Thank you, Council President.

7 Good morning, everyone.

8 Thank you for coming down.

9 MS. HILL: Good morning.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Can
11 you tell me or tell us what
12 specific populations are being
13 prioritized in the budget? Are
14 there targeted initiatives for
15 veterans, women with children,
16 individuals with disabilities?

17 And then secondly, many
18 individuals, especially women with
19 children, flee abusive situations
20 and they find themselves homeless
21 without affordable housing options.
22 Do we have specific programs for
23 these individuals? And if so, can
24 you explain how these individuals

1 connect to these housing
2 opportunities?

3 MS. HILL: Thank you for
4 that question. So we do have some
5 targeted initiatives. For example,
6 we are trying to ramp up a specific
7 Violence Against Women Act transfer
8 process, so those who may be
9 experiencing some domestic violence
10 issues who need to move quickly and
11 are already experiencing services
12 through us, they'll be able to
13 transfer and relocate to someplace
14 safe.

15 We also fund some
16 programs through Women Against
17 Abuse currently that are
18 specifically for individuals who
19 are experiencing domestic violence.
20 We have shelters that are family-
21 specific as well. As well as when
22 we look at some of our prevention
23 and permanent housing support,
24 there are units of all sizes,

1 including those for families.

2 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

3 Okay. How about -- just on a

4 follow-up how about some of the

5 homeless people who have animals?

6 What's the policy when it comes to

7 that because something like that

8 could keep them actually out there?

9 I've actually been out there when

10 they were talking to somebody who

11 had a dog and he wasn't able to

12 take his dog. And he said, well,

13 if I can't take the dog, I'm not

14 going nowhere, you know what I

15 mean. So are there any housing

16 opportunities like that?

17 MS. HILL: Yes. So our

18 recent -- I will speak specifically

19 to our shelter. Our recent RFP

20 that we put out indicated that we

21 are prioritizing shelter, you know,

22 in responses that take in pets

23 because we do recognize that that

24 is a barrier.

1 All of our sites are
2 required to bring in anyone who has
3 been animal deemed, an assist
4 animal or service animal, but we
5 are trying to expand the level of
6 shelters that will allow
7 individuals who bring in pets. So
8 that was our new initiative under
9 the RFP that we just put out.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

11 Yeah, that's interesting. How do
12 they go about getting the animal
13 listed as a worker animal, for lack
14 of better word?

15 MS. HILL: To have the
16 animal qualified, it just takes a
17 qualified professional. It doesn't
18 have to necessarily be a medical
19 professional. It's just someone
20 who's deemed qualified to say
21 whatever the service animal is
22 providing that, that animal is able
23 to do that or that there's a need
24 for it. So they make the nexus

1 between whatever the disability or
2 emotional support is to the
3 individual. That isn't something
4 that we do. It is a qualified
5 professional that does that for the
6 animal.

7 However, anyone who
8 comes in can request a reasonable
9 accommodation either to the shelter
10 or the intake center that they come
11 into. If they are denied for any
12 reason, we actually have an appeals
13 process that comes directly to our
14 office, so we're not leaving that
15 at the service provider level. The
16 appeals comes to our office for
17 review. And we put up flyers at
18 all of our sites to make sure that
19 individuals know that they can
20 request that appeal.

21 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
22 Okay. Thank you. Did the bell
23 ring?

24 (No response.)

1 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

2 Well, since I'm not -- can you tell
3 me how many shelter beds are
4 available now and what is our goal
5 for the number of beds for 2026?

6 MS. HILL: So I would
7 have to look up right now our
8 shelter beds, but we have roughly
9 about 90% utilization in our
10 shelters and we have approximately
11 3000 shelter beds. And so, on any
12 given day it averages 90% to 95%
13 occupied on our shelters. But we
14 take a census every day so that
15 changes every day, because people
16 either may not return or discharge
17 or they're placed in permanent
18 housing. But we can provide
19 today's census in writing.

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

21 Yeah, that brings up another
22 question. How many people are
23 sitting on waiting lists?

24 MS. HILL: Sitting on

1 waiting lists? I'm sorry.

2 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: If
3 you're only at 90%, so that would
4 be 10% of the people are, right?

5 MS. HILL: So it's not
6 that there's a waiting list. We
7 have beds available. It's just
8 that we have more beds available
9 than people who have come in to ask
10 for the beds.

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Got
12 it. Okay.

13 Thank you, Council
14 President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
16 JOHNSON: Thank you. Councilmember
17 Rue Landau, then Councilmember
18 Dr. Nina Ahmad and Councilmember
19 Quetcy Lozada.

20 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
21 Thank you. Thanks so much. Thank
22 you both so much for being here.
23 We appreciate you so much and
24 really appreciate the collaboration

1 that you're doing and feel like
2 we're on the right trajectory. It
3 feels awesome.

4 I wanted to follow up a
5 little bit on the budget cut, what
6 we're seeing as a budget cut first
7 and the demand. And my first
8 question is -- well, let me say
9 that I did a panel the other night
10 with former State Rep. Donna
11 Johnson Bullock who's now running
12 Project HOME, and she said to this
13 entire room of small landlords that
14 in Philadelphia we are basically
15 lucky for having only about 1000
16 unhoused people on the street, that
17 similarly situated cities have
18 thousands and thousands more.

19 And it was that moment
20 that gave me a little bit of hope
21 we could tackle this problem. And
22 I also have concern that our
23 numbers are starting to rise. So I
24 wanted to know what strategies

1 you're utilizing to ensure that we
2 keep our numbers down. And also
3 want to underscore when we talk
4 about the budget that it would be
5 very helpful for us to see a
6 comprehensive chart that not only
7 explains an individual and family
8 going through the shelter process,
9 but also where we're funding other
10 initiatives in the city that are
11 also helping homeless people.

12 For us, we just see this
13 budget being cut. What we want to
14 see is if they put more money in
15 another area to help folks with
16 vouchers or something like that,
17 that it's all inclusive and that we
18 want to also know who is overseeing
19 all of that. Are you guys
20 basically the project manager
21 regardless of where that money is
22 or is it spread out in a bunch of
23 ways? So I want to hear a bit
24 about that.

1 I also wanted to ask as
2 somebody who worked at the City of
3 Philadelphia before for many, many
4 years, whether if I had a magic
5 wand and gave you 20 million more
6 dollars right now, would you accept
7 it or would you put it in a
8 different department?

9 MS. HILL: Oh, that's a
10 dangerous question that I think I
11 will pause on for a minute.
12 However, I will say that I do agree
13 homelessness is on the rise and it
14 is on the rise everywhere. And
15 what we do is we track comparable
16 cities but also some of the larger
17 cities like New York has 140,000
18 people experiencing homelessness
19 right now. So our numbers pale in
20 comparison.

21 However, we are looking
22 to find strategies which is why we
23 partner with other city
24 departments. Not all of the

1 vouchers are administered by us,
2 but some directly earmark them for
3 the people experiencing
4 homelessness.

5 We also partner with PHA
6 who has units that are identified
7 just for individuals who are
8 experiencing homelessness. So it
9 does look different when you're
10 looking specifically just at our
11 budget to your point, which is why
12 similar to the Majority Leader, we
13 can give you details on how that
14 money is spent and where we see
15 that other departments are
16 supporting it.

17 But I think ultimately
18 to end homelessness we need more
19 housing, if I'm just going to be
20 straight with it. There are
21 between our shelters and our --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
23 JOHNSON: Point of information
24 right along the lines of your exact

1 statement. So in terms of the
2 Mayor's housing initiative, what's
3 the targeted number of units
4 dedicated to OHS to address the
5 issue of homelessness?

6 We know there's 30,000
7 units, the goal is, the focus --
8 well, that's a combination of
9 preservation and built units. But
10 is there a target for specifically
11 those who are in need of housing,
12 who are homeless a part of that
13 plan?

14 Now, I rest the time
15 back to Councilmember Landau.

16 MS. HILL: So thank you
17 for that question. So we have been
18 working with Director Lawrence and
19 Angela Brooks as well to come up
20 with what is the strategy for
21 addressing homelessness. As many
22 of you know, Angela Brooks comes
23 from a supportive housing
24 background so we've already started

1 having some of those conversations,
2 but the exact number hasn't been
3 identified yet.

4 But what I will say is
5 any housing that's earmarked for
6 people who are 0% to 30% of AMI
7 would ultimately benefit
8 individuals in our population
9 because that is the typical Area
10 Median Income that our population
11 falls in. But I will add to that,
12 if you don't mind, that as we work
13 with PHA one of the things that we
14 have realized is that they have
15 some units, again as I mentioned,
16 that they want to target for
17 individuals experiencing
18 homelessness.

19 What they've said is
20 they need some wraparound support
21 and dollars for that. So we've
22 looked at our budget and said,
23 well, while we can't financially
24 sustain a rental subsidy into

1 perpetuity like PHA can, we can
2 look at some of our dollars and be
3 able to provide the support
4 services for those units. So that
5 is some of the models that we're
6 currently looking at where they're
7 providing the subsidy and then we
8 are adding some service dollars to
9 that.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: I just think it kind of
12 boggles my mind that if we're in
13 the process of borrowing \$1
14 billion, \$1 billion, and we see
15 there's a housing crisis but yet we
16 don't have a targeted number in
17 partnership with the Office of
18 Housing Services specifically to
19 produce more units for housing is
20 something we have to take a look at
21 prior to this budget being passed.

22 Councilmember Landau.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

24 Just to follow up on this line of

1 questioning, it's really who or
2 what entity is overseeing all of
3 this for the City of Philadelphia?

4 It seems that we don't have a
5 housing plan. We don't have a plan
6 that starts with how do we start --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: We do have a plan. We
9 have a plan in front of us. Could
10 you clarify that, Councilmember
11 Landau?

12 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: We
13 have a funding plan, but we need to
14 have an actual plan that goes in
15 every city single avenue. It
16 starts with how to eradicate
17 homelessness, how to give
18 supportive housing, how to give
19 transitional housing, how to get
20 people into independent home
21 ownership with services if they
22 need it, how to give them all of
23 the services they need and then
24 leave them in a place where between

1 job readiness and whatnot, they can
2 actually be on their own.

3 But there's the funding
4 system and there is no plan. I'm
5 very concerned about the thought
6 that we have put pockets of money
7 and pockets of vouchers and things
8 in different departments and units
9 and there is no driving plan of who
10 is overseeing it and making sure it
11 all goes together.

12 MS. HILL: Thank you.
13 If I could add that again in
14 partnership with Angela Brooks, we
15 are working with them and
16 discussing how to prevent and end
17 homelessness. It is early on my
18 part to say what the numbers are
19 because I know that she's still
20 working on the plan.

21 I don't know what day it
22 is that she's been here now, but I
23 am excited that she's here and I do
24 think she'll be able to come up

1 with a plan that will support
2 ultimately our goal to end street
3 homelessness.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

5 Excellent. We are equally excited
6 that she is here and want to work
7 with her and you and everyone, but
8 this is something that the money
9 has to come with the blueprint and
10 we will be happy to see that when
11 it's done.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

14 Councilmember Dr. Nina
15 Ahmad, Councilmember Lozada and
16 Councilmember O'Rourke.

17 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

18 Thank you, Council President.

19 And thank you all for
20 being here and doing this really
21 critical work for our most
22 vulnerable community members. The
23 National Foster Youth Institute
24 reports that child welfare system

1 is sometimes described as a highway
2 to homelessness with an estimated
3 20% of young adults who are in care
4 becoming homeless the minute they
5 age out of the system.

6 I wanted to know how you
7 have specifically targeted that
8 population. Do you know what that
9 number is? Do we have a plan in
10 the budget to address that?

11 Because if we can arrest it at that
12 point, we can really go a long way
13 in making sure they never
14 experience homelessness and they
15 are set up for life to prosper.

16 MS. HILL: Thank you for
17 the question. So, yes, we do have
18 some programs that are specifically
19 for young adults experiencing
20 homelessness. We have a Youth
21 Homeless Demonstration program that
22 was funded from HUD where we
23 provided funding to providers that
24 are specifically engaged with young

1 individuals.

2 But in addition, we have
3 staff within our school system
4 that's working with individuals,
5 not just those who are aging out of
6 foster care but those who may be in
7 families that are experiencing
8 homelessness as well.

9 Our point-in-time count
10 in 2024 showed approximately 355
11 people who between the ages of
12 youth and young adults that were
13 experiencing homelessness. So we
14 want to come up with strategies,
15 which is why the Demonstration
16 program was so important. And we
17 are also looking at that funding
18 and seeing how we can be able to
19 expand some of the services that we
20 are providing specifically to youth
21 and young adults experiencing
22 homelessness.

23 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
24 to Council President's point, we

1 are allocating \$2 billion. So you
2 still don't have numbers for this
3 small group of people how they're
4 going -- where do they fit in the
5 plan, what are the numbers around
6 it, what is the money being
7 allocated.

8 In our CCP Community
9 College testimony we heard that PHA
10 has -- they have a relationship
11 with PHA for 16 units only, right.
12 That makes no sense. So I want to
13 know that who is in charge, just
14 like my colleague Rue Landau was
15 saying, who is the central
16 clearinghouse to say, for this
17 specific population what is the
18 number, what is the money, when do
19 we need to see it, how are we
20 following them, what are the
21 wraparound services because this
22 could save us so much money if we
23 invested now?

24 I just want a plan. And

1 I want a plan with actionable data
2 that tells us this is how we can
3 follow it. So one year out you
4 should be able to come back and say
5 all of these things, this is where
6 we are, this is what we did, this
7 is how much money we invested, and
8 this is the outcome. In all of
9 this stuff you give us there's none
10 of that. Very frustrating I have
11 to tell you.

12 MS. HILL: So if I can
13 clarify, our young adult program is
14 separate from our general fund. We
15 do have some grant funding that we
16 received specifically for young
17 adults. In FY23 just the third
18 quarter alone, we were able to
19 place six young adults in permanent
20 supportive housing, 21 in Rapid
21 Rehousing.

22 We had approximately 110
23 exit shelter. We have some that
24 are receiving services. So we are

1 tracking specifically young adults,
2 again separate from the rest of our
3 programs. And with the access
4 points, we also have access points
5 in centers that are just for people
6 who are age 18 to 24. They can
7 still go to our other centers, but
8 we do have a plan that we are
9 working with and we work with the
10 service providers that are working
11 with young adults to make sure that
12 there is a plan targeted just for
13 young adults.

14 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
15 we really should be able to handle
16 this completely. There should be
17 no young adult who's in the foster
18 care system, particularly those
19 aging out, who should have this
20 issue at all. The number is small.
21 It's not massive. In fact, the
22 homeless number is only 1000 point-
23 in-count. That's a very manageable
24 number.

1 We are spending so much
2 overhead to solve this problem. I
3 want to really understand why is it
4 such an intractable issue when we
5 really should be -- when we look at
6 the money spent and the actual
7 target problem, why are we having
8 this issue, why are we not able to
9 crack this nut?

10 MS. HILL: And I think
11 homelessness is a complex issue,
12 period. And when you add the
13 complication of aging out of foster
14 care I certainly understand, which
15 is why we do partner with DHS. We
16 have both the family unification
17 vouchers and then the fostering
18 youth independence vouchers that we
19 are able to issue to make sure that
20 those that we issue those vouchers
21 who do not enter into homelessness.
22 But could there be more?
23 Absolutely. But we are partnering
24 with the providers like DHS or the

1 departments like DHS to make sure
2 that we have some comprehensive
3 plans to address this issue.

4 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I
5 would love to get a report sent to
6 you to say what is that
7 comprehensive plan, what does it
8 look like, what is the timing, what
9 is the money and how are we going
10 to follow outcomes. I would really
11 appreciate that. Thank you.

12 MS. HILL: Yeah. And we
13 can also provide some of the things
14 that we are funding today to you in
15 writing just so you can have that.
16 Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
18 JOHNSON: Thank you.
19 Councilmember Quetcy
20 Lozada, Councilmember Nicolas
21 O'Rourke.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
23 Thank you, Council President.

24 Thank you for being with

1 us this morning. My questions are
2 similar or along the same lines as
3 some of my colleagues. I recognize
4 that one of your FY26 strategic
5 goals is to strengthen your
6 collaborative partnerships with
7 providers and others.

8 How many providers or do
9 you know how many providers you
10 have in the Kensington community or
11 the 7th Council District? And of
12 those providers, how has the
13 progress been or how has the P3
14 division tracked their progress?

15 MS. HILL: So thank you
16 for the question. We'd have to
17 respond in writing to the question
18 about how many specific providers
19 are in Kensington. And then are
20 you asking about tracking progress
21 of the providers --

22 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Of
23 those same -- of those providers.

24 MS. HILL: So I can give

1 you some of the monitoring that I
2 spoke of about the shelters and
3 some of those providers that
4 applies to all of our providers.
5 However, I do want to clarify that
6 our providers are primarily shelter
7 providers. And so, we will be able
8 to give you that and I can give you
9 the monitoring in writing of what
10 we have for those specific shelters
11 that are in Kensington.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: That's it?

16 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

17 Yes.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

20 Councilmember O'Rourke.

21 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

22 Thank you, Mr. President.

23 Good morning to the

24 entire OHS team. I'd like to start

1 by thanking you for the crucial
2 life-sustaining work that you all
3 do. I want to ask about the
4 federal Continuum of Care funding
5 for permanent supportive housing,
6 which provides long-term subsidized
7 housing for people with
8 disabilities for the listening
9 public.

10 A few weeks ago our
11 office heard that a number of long-
12 term providers in this space were
13 not receiving renewals for their
14 contracts under this funding
15 stream. We also heard that this
16 was due to an administrative error
17 on the City's part. So my staff
18 took the question to y'all itself
19 and we're told to the contrary that
20 certain Tier 2 contracts were not
21 renewed at HUD's discretion. So
22 I'm seeking clarity within that
23 realm.

24 In these exchanges, my

1 team learned that around \$3 million
2 of funding impacting 250 housing
3 units was lost due to this
4 particular shift. This means that
5 hundreds of Philadelphians with
6 disabilities will no longer have
7 permanent supportive housing
8 beginning the 1st of July, more
9 than there are already currently
10 without shelter on the streets now.

11 So here's what I'd like
12 to know and I imagine we'll
13 probably need to get some of this
14 in writing to submit to the
15 President, but I'd like to get them
16 on the record now. Can you please
17 explain how it's possible to all of
18 a sudden lose permanent supportive
19 housing funding like this? It
20 doesn't make sense to me that the
21 money can just evaporate because of
22 a ranking system.

23 MS. HILL: Thank you for
24 that question. So OHS is the

1 collaborative applicant for the
2 entire City of Philadelphia's
3 Continuum of Care application.
4 During the local application we are
5 required, as all cities are, to
6 rank the applications 1 to whatever
7 the last application is.

8 There is a certain
9 dollar amount that HUD says is, I
10 hate to say guaranteed in this
11 Administration, but in essence
12 there's a cut or there's a dollar
13 amount that they fund and then
14 everything else is part of a
15 national application. So anything
16 that falls below that Tier 2 is
17 subject to the national application
18 or the national competition.

19 So we send in our
20 application, and then we were
21 awarded up to, right, I think about
22 our Tier 2 level. So there was
23 those that fell below the Tier 2
24 were cut as well as there were some

1 new applications that we tried to
2 get in that were not funded.
3 However, I will add that I
4 recognize and the team recognizes
5 that there are some ways that we
6 can strengthen our application,
7 because that is part of it, because
8 we are being ranked with other
9 cities and we want to make sure
10 that we strengthen our application
11 in the future. So that's what
12 we're working on for FY27 because
13 that's when the next application
14 will come in.

15 But in the meantime,
16 what we did for our FY26 funding is
17 we submitted an RFP for those who
18 did lose funding to make sure that
19 no one was put out on the streets
20 July 1st, as long as the provider
21 itself was deemed that there was no
22 other deficiencies in their
23 program. So that application or
24 that RFP just went out. And again,

1 that is to bridge that program.

2 But I'll also add we
3 have a permanent supportive housing
4 RFP out too that providers can
5 apply to with the intention of
6 being able to expand our permanent
7 supportive housing. So between the
8 two of those, our goals are not to
9 make sure that no one's held
10 harmless in a unit where the
11 program itself is meeting the
12 standards, but also we're still
13 trying to expand our permanent
14 supportive housing.

15 This is a little bit
16 complicated in the fact that these
17 were not City-managed contracts.
18 So even through this application,
19 they are HUD direct, which means
20 they get their funding directly
21 from HUD after the application and
22 the award is announced from HUD.
23 Those are not managed by OHS at
24 all. That's all direct with HUD.

1 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: On
2 the RFP point, I did hear about the
3 RFP that you had out to mitigate
4 the impact of loss of funding.

5 Will that RFP be enough to provide
6 housing to all Philadelphians who
7 are losing housing?

8 MS. HILL: Are you
9 saying for the CoC?

10 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
11 Say again.

12 MS. HILL: Are you
13 asking specifically for the
14 Continuum of Care?

15 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
16 Yes. Within that realm, yes. Will
17 that RFP be enough to provide
18 housing to all Philadelphians who
19 are losing housing?

20 MS. HILL: It is enough
21 to cover the permanent housing
22 dollars for the programs that again
23 were meeting the acceptable
24 standards, so they weren't at the

1 bottom for any issues with the
2 actual housing. And if they
3 applied and they meet all the
4 criteria in the RFP, then the team
5 will make the assessment at the
6 time. But because it just closed,
7 it's a little challenging to
8 address what's happening in the
9 scoring system currently. But I
10 will say we put enough funding in
11 there so that if everyone applied
12 and they meet the criteria, it
13 would cover the housing, short
14 answer I guess.

15 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

16 There may be (inaudible). I heard
17 the bell so I'll pass it on, but
18 I'd like to request a list of all
19 providers that would be impacted by
20 all of this shortfall, those that
21 aren't fully funded and those
22 seeing their contract terminated,
23 if that's the case, including the
24 number of Philadelphians served by

1 each provider in the District that
2 each provider operates in. I think
3 that would be super helpful for us
4 to know.

5 If there's another
6 round, I'll come back. Thank you,
7 Mr. President.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Thank you.

10 Councilmember Brooks,
11 Councilmember Phillips and
12 Councilmember Young and we'll
13 officially be in our second round.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

15 Thank you, Council President.

16 I have one clarifying
17 question. You mentioned the Philly
18 Home at Girard and it's straight
19 from the street. Is that because
20 of the sweeps or is it just when
21 someone goes through -- because I'm
22 so -- how it was set up and how
23 it's running I'm very confused as
24 to what exactly the Philadelphia

1 Home of Girard is. So if we can
2 get -- you don't have to explain it
3 now, but if I can have a written
4 explanation that kind of go to
5 Council President because I'm kind
6 of confused exactly what's
7 happening at Philly Home at Girard.

8 And then my other
9 question was about we've seen a
10 number of encampments over the past
11 year. How many of the people
12 experiencing homelessness that were
13 impacted by the suites and how many
14 of them are currently in permanent
15 supportive housing?

16 MR. HOLLoman: Thank you
17 for that question again,
18 Councilmember Brooks. In terms of
19 encampments and service
20 coordination, from July 1st of 2024
21 to April 1st of 2025 we had 1176
22 service connections with two
23 encampments which consist of 30-day
24 posting. And in that, that was at

1 30th Street Station where 17
2 individuals along with pets were
3 placed into shelters, and the other
4 one that was in the Councilmember's
5 7th District where it was at
6 PennDOT at the end of Aramingo
7 where 10 people were placed.

8 We don't consider them
9 sweeps. We look at this as a
10 deeper engagement because there's
11 multiple service providers that are
12 out there that are providing a wide
13 range of services. And to go back
14 to that question when you mentioned
15 about 2100 Girard, this was an
16 opportunity for outreach teams,
17 housing issues people who do
18 service connection to have a direct
19 referral right into those sites and
20 they were designed for individuals
21 who are living on the street
22 without any prerecords. As long as
23 they said yes, they were able to go
24 right in.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So
2 how many of those folks that you
3 talked about ended up in permanent
4 supportive housing?

5 MR. HOLLOMAN: I'm
6 sorry?

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
8 How many people ended up in
9 permanent supportive housing?

10 MR. HOLLOMAN: We can
11 get that number directly to you. I
12 don't want to put out a number
13 that's not accurate.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
15 Okay. And my next question is
16 about we understand that folks who
17 relapse while at Riverview are
18 being discharged. Has OHS
19 encountered any of these
20 individuals on the streets of
21 Philadelphia who were part of the
22 Wellness ecosystem, but they were
23 discharged? And if you have, how
24 have you handled those cases?

1 MR. HOLLOMAN: We can
2 get back to you on numbers of
3 people that's coming out of
4 treatment. But just for the
5 record, we work with all service
6 providers and anybody who goes into
7 any type of housing, whether that's
8 shelter, whether that's treatment,
9 we make sure that our outreach
10 teams or case management team have
11 that relationship so that they can
12 directly go back to them if there's
13 any issues there.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:
15 Well, I think the question is
16 trying to get to while people are
17 in the ecosystem, when they come
18 back in the ecosystem are we
19 tracking them because the
20 likelihood is they can be back in
21 the system again? We're trying to
22 make sure if people have a
23 transition plan if they're coming
24 back in our system again, once

1 they're discharged from relapsing
2 after the 90-day treatment, then
3 once you're on the street, you're
4 considered homeless again. They
5 get picked back up, what do we do.
6 I just was trying to understand
7 what the process is.

8 MS. YATES-GALE: Thank
9 you, Councilmember Brooks, for the
10 question. Crystal Yates-Gale,
11 Deputy Managing Director Health and
12 Human Services. I will make the
13 answer as clear and succinct as I
14 can. Because multiple departments
15 touch the Wellness ecosystem, our
16 Executive Director of the Community
17 Wellness and Recovery position does
18 have all of that data. So it is
19 monitored. I don't want to use the
20 word tracked these days. But
21 people are monitored from beginning
22 of the system to end and
23 connections after they leave the
24 system for whatever reason that is.

1 And we can get you some of that
2 data returned in writing from the
3 Managing Director's Office through
4 Council President.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

6 Okay. And one other question. How
7 many outreaches do you have and do
8 you intend on having more as we
9 continue to track these systems and
10 as the homeless numbers are,
11 outreach workers?

12 MS. HILL: So outreach
13 is actually managed through the
14 Department of Behavioral Health and
15 Intellectual Disabilities.
16 However, we do have our housing
17 team that is on the streets and
18 there are two different teams as
19 well as we have the encampment
20 resolution team that we contract
21 with that works with them. But the
22 actual outreach teams are part of
23 DBHIDS.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So

1 I think --

2 MS. YATES-GALE: Ma'am,
3 if I can add that in DBHIDS's
4 budget, which they'll be here on
5 Monday, they have requested
6 additional dollars to add outreach
7 workers to their teams also.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

9 Okay. I'm just trying to figure
10 out this housing plan around
11 ecosystem. Everyone's using these
12 different words. And, Dave, you
13 know I've been doing this housing
14 thing for a long time so I'm just
15 trying to understand what's the
16 system because I don't understand
17 it anymore. I'm kind of out of the
18 reach on what exactly is happening,
19 who's going where, who's tracking
20 the data, how does people end up in
21 the system. Because I've worked
22 with you before in finding a
23 missing person and it took you like
24 three days to find somebody, he was

1 sleeping at the airport.

2 So I'm just trying to
3 get to understand what is our
4 current system and model to deal
5 with homelessness and how are we
6 tracking or whatever the word we
7 want to use? How are we keeping in
8 touch with our houseless
9 individuals, whether they're going
10 through treatment or going into
11 supportive housing or just living
12 on the street? If you can give it
13 to me in writing, that would be
14 helpful.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: An additional point of
17 information, because I do have a
18 working group on homelessness,
19 right. I think even some of your
20 team or some representative may be
21 at the table -- but, no, actually
22 not at this moment, this is mainly
23 stakeholders, right. But my direct
24 line of questioning is piggybacking

1 off on what Member Brooks just
2 mentioned.

3 In terms of the system,
4 from my understanding we don't have
5 a system to share information
6 amongst the various different
7 service providers but other states
8 do, and I think we established it's
9 the HIPAA law that prevents us.
10 But I'm trying to understand
11 because other states, one agency
12 can talk to another agency in terms
13 of tracking and making sure
14 services are provided in a
15 comprehensive way. So could you
16 elaborate on the actual system off
17 of what was just asked as well?

18 MS. HILL: Sure. So the
19 system that we use to track the
20 services that are provided is
21 called HMIS is what is referred to,
22 the Homeless Management Information
23 System. All of the providers that
24 contract with us utilize that

1 system. I do agree one of the
2 challenges with our current model
3 of HMIS is that it is kind of
4 sheltered provider-by-provider so
5 it's not shared across, so we are
6 looking at how we can expand that
7 system so that multiple providers
8 can see what's happening with one
9 person. Because similar to you,
10 I've seen other models where the
11 data is shared.

12 We currently have an RFP
13 out for that as well to change our
14 system so that it can be more
15 comprehensive and bring it into a
16 new way of tracking everyone who
17 comes in. We are not a HIPAA-
18 covered entity. That's the
19 distinction. So our services is
20 not bound by that same restriction.
21 However, we still want to make sure
22 the information is protected which
23 is why we're trying to bring in a
24 new software system so that we can

1 monitor and see what actual
2 services someone's providing from
3 the moment they enter the shelter
4 system to the moment that they're
5 placed in permanent housing.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Member Brooks.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I
9 just need it in writing because
10 like I said, I'm not clear and I
11 don't want to have you just talk to
12 me in circles. I'd rather look at
13 it and then I can ask my questions
14 more directly. Because I've been
15 involved -- you helped us find
16 people before so I'm not
17 understanding what's the new
18 system, is it a new system or why
19 we can't figure out this
20 information. So I look forward to
21 having a deeper conversation so we
22 can kind of be on the same page.
23 Because I'm --

24 MS. HILL: Yeah, we can

1 provide that to you in writing.

2 And we can also share the

3 information that's in our current

4 RFP so you can see what type of

5 technical specs we're asking for

6 from the service provider.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Perfect.

11 The Chair recognizes

12 Councilmember Phillips and

13 Councilmember Young.

14 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

15 Thank you, Council President.

16 Thank you all for

17 attending today. OHS plans to

18 reduce the length of stay and

19 shelters by piloting new

20 initiatives. What specific

21 barriers currently prevent faster

22 transitions to permanent housing

23 and how will these new pilots

24 address them differently than past

1 approaches?

2 MS. HILL: Thank you for
3 that. So one of the things that we
4 realize is that we're using an old
5 assessment system. You may have
6 heard it referred to as the
7 VI-SPDAT, and that is an old system
8 that tracks and assesses and
9 prioritizes individuals who need
10 housing. So we are looking to
11 change that model to make sure we
12 are addressing everyone who's in
13 the shelter system because under
14 that model, individuals are given a
15 score.

16 And so, someone who just
17 came in may actually get
18 prioritized over someone who's been
19 there for a long time. So we want
20 to look at that and come up with a
21 system that is specific to
22 Philadelphia and addressing the
23 needs that are in Philadelphia.

24 The other thing that we

1 want to do is just make sure that
2 we're monitoring all of the
3 available options for housing that
4 we have that. You know, we have
5 the set-asides that we get from the
6 Low Income Housing Tax Credit. We
7 have other providers that are
8 providing permanent supportive
9 housing. So we want to make sure
10 that our list is comprehensive, not
11 just from those that we fund but
12 also those who may have other
13 funding sources so that when they
14 need someone to go into the unit,
15 that we are also looking at being
16 able to provide those units
17 quickly.

18 Also, we are looking at
19 the fact that there are units that
20 get turned down. And so, we want
21 to make sure that we're
22 understanding why those units get
23 turned down, so they actually sit
24 vacant for quite an amount of time.

1 And so, is there a way that we can
2 make sure that we know what the
3 participants want so that we're not
4 referring them to units that they
5 are eventually going to turn down
6 that, then stay vacant for a long
7 time.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

9 Okay. Thank you. And then I want
10 to ask you this: Philadelphia has
11 one of the highest rates of student
12 homelessness in the state. How is
13 OHS working with the School
14 District to identify and support
15 students experiencing homelessness?
16 And what portion of the FY26 budget
17 is allocated towards youth and
18 students-focused homeless --
19 housing intervention, excuse me,
20 housing intervention.?

21 MR. HOLLOWMAN: Thank you
22 for that question. So we have a
23 staff member that works very
24 closely with the School District

1 along with us working with DHS to
2 work collaboratively for tracking
3 those students. It is very unique
4 with students that are
5 unaccompanied because as you know,
6 most young people under the age of
7 18 really don't identify as being
8 homeless because of the things that
9 are stereotyped that are with that.
10 And so, we're working
11 collaboratively with that.

12 We have someone who's at
13 our intake site that works closely
14 with families that have children
15 under the age -- I mean, yeah,
16 children under the age of 18 that
17 helps track with the School
18 District, but we work closely with
19 Kimberly Ali at DHS to try and
20 understand that population even
21 more. But again, we can be better
22 in that.

23 What we do with our
24 youth homelessness, which is called

1 Young Adult Leadership Academy,
2 they go out work with Valley Youth
3 House, Covenant House and all of
4 them to do outreach to potential
5 kids that are under the age of 18.
6 But we have to get better in that
7 system of tracking and identifying
8 them.

9 MS. HILL: And if I can
10 just add, as I mentioned earlier we
11 have access points and intake
12 that's specifically for individuals
13 who are under the age of 24 so that
14 we can make sure that they are
15 getting services that they need,
16 that are targeted for them as well.

17 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
18 Thank you so much. Yeah, I'm just
19 looking forward to seeing more of
20 that. And also, just in general I
21 know that a lot of people are
22 curious about what you're going to
23 be doing with people who are on the
24 streets not only in Center City,

1 but also throughout the city of
2 Philadelphia and how you engage
3 them to get housed. We're curious
4 about what that looks like,
5 especially with some of our Center
6 City businesses. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 Councilmember Young.

10 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
11 you, Mr. President.

12 And good afternoon.

13 Just a couple questions just for
14 some clarity or some definitions.
15 Do you guys differentiate between
16 what is someone experiencing
17 homelessness versus someone who is
18 unhoused? Is that a distinction
19 that is made between OHS? Or if
20 not, can you define for us what is
21 your definition essentially of
22 homelessness and who creates that
23 definition?

24 MS. HILL: So we use the

1 HUD definition of homelessness,
2 which has several different
3 categories of individuals that are
4 experiencing homelessness. But I
5 think the distinction that you
6 sometimes hear, especially for
7 unhoused, is because someone in the
8 shelter is still someone who is
9 experiencing homelessness but they
10 are not in a place that they can
11 lay their head at night.

12 So a lot of times you
13 hear individuals say unhoused. I
14 use them interchangeably.
15 Sheltered, unsheltered, housed,
16 unhoused. But unhoused usually
17 includes a lot of individuals. But
18 ultimately, when we are making our
19 definitions, because we want to
20 make sure we're always using the
21 correct ones, we use HUD's
22 definition of homelessness as well
23 as the qualified populations that
24 are there. And usually it's people

1 who do not have a permanent
2 location to lay their head at night
3 as well as individuals who may be
4 at risk of homelessness is a
5 category and then formally homeless
6 as a category, which are people who
7 do not have a permanent location to
8 sleep at night.

9 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: I ask
10 that because to access your shelter
11 services, right, you don't allow
12 folks who are couch surfing to have
13 access to those systems -- to have
14 access to the housing resources to
15 get transitional housing and things
16 like that. You have to go through
17 the shelter system is what I'm
18 being told.

19 And so, if you have a
20 definition that includes those
21 people who are couch surfing who
22 don't have a permanent place to
23 live, how come they don't have
24 access to the same level of

1 services that someone who is living
2 on the street does?

3 MS. HILL: So there are
4 different types of services. We
5 have prevention services that are
6 there for people to prevent them
7 from being homeless and that could
8 qualify for someone --

9 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Well,
10 no, they're couch surfing, right.
11 They are homeless. They don't have
12 a permanent place to live, right.
13 So that's the population that I'm
14 talking about. What is --

15 MS. HILL: So we don't
16 turn around anyone from our
17 services. Let me say that clearly
18 first. However, there are certain
19 populations that qualify for
20 different housing depending on what
21 their current homeless status is or
22 their current status is. Couch
23 surfing by HUD's definition is not
24 considered homeless. Especially

1 when we are providing housing that
2 is funded by HUD, we have to use
3 HUD's definitions of homeless.

4 However, there are some
5 housing models. And unfortunately,
6 I don't have them in front of me.
7 And perhaps we can find the ones --
8 I don't know if I can find the ones
9 that are not funded by the City.
10 However, I want to say that some
11 funding is for people who are at
12 risk of homelessness. And couch
13 surfing is one of those categories
14 that are considered at risk of
15 homeless.

16 However, someone having
17 a place to go while it may not be
18 the house that they own, in HUD's
19 eyes they consider that a different
20 category than someone who is but
21 for the shelter would be on the
22 street that night.

23 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: If
24 you don't mind if you can share

1 with us those definitions
2 specifically from HUD. Because in
3 one instance you said someone that
4 lacks permanent housing is
5 homeless. And if I'm couch
6 surfing, I lack permanent housing.
7 But then you say, well, I don't
8 qualify. They don't meet the
9 definition under HUD's standards.

10 So I'm just trying to
11 get clarity on what is considered
12 to be someone who is homeless. So
13 as constituents call us, I know how
14 to direct them to the appropriate
15 resources that they may be eligible
16 for or not eligible for.

17 MS. HILL: We can put it
18 in writing, yes. Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
20 you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
22 JOHNSON: And thank you. I just
23 had a question in terms of the
24 leadership team. How often do you

1 go out yourselves and inspect our
2 shelter facilities, not sending out
3 an inspector? And I'm asking this
4 question to follow up with Member
5 Jones' line of questioning and
6 statements that when we did a
7 point-in-time, it was super
8 freezing cold. And so, I don't
9 even know why I voted to manage the
10 (inaudible) ski masks because it
11 was very cold that night and I
12 could have used it appropriately
13 for what it was supposed to be used
14 for because it was that cold,
15 right.

16 And in talking to
17 different individuals and we did --
18 like myself I met a couple of
19 different individuals who talked
20 about they prefer to stay outside,
21 right, than to be inside some of
22 the shelters. And some talked
23 about staff as well as individuals
24 who are being housed here, right.

1 And so, I just want to get an idea
2 how often do you as a team go out
3 and inspect the facilities.

4 And then also, when it
5 comes to health do we provide
6 health-related support staff,
7 nurses, nurses assistants on the
8 sites for those who may be in need?

9 MS. HILL: Thank you.

10 So for the first question, I think
11 I'm in Month 8. I'm not sure what
12 month I am. But however, I've been
13 out to several of the shelters as
14 well as Dave goes out to the
15 shelters. Sometimes our staff goes
16 out announced. Sometimes it goes
17 out unannounced. Because as we
18 know, an announced visit everybody
19 shines the silver, right.

20 So our goal is to make
21 sure that we are visiting the
22 shelters. I've been out to several
23 of them so far and I plan to go out
24 to all of them. They all know that

1 that I plan to visit as well as
2 Dave and the housing team goes out
3 on a regular basis to visit as
4 well.

5 When we get complaints,
6 we do unannounced visits because we
7 want to see again what the
8 participants see at the moment that
9 they are concerned about something.
10 So part of our monitoring is to
11 make sure that not only the direct
12 monitoring staff goes out but
13 eventually all of us go out as
14 well.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
16 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes Majority
17 Leader Gilmore Richardson.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
19 RICHARDSON: Please don't take me
20 out of the queue because I've been
21 patiently waiting. I'll --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
23 JOHNSON: Got you.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: -- put that on the
2 record.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: I see that. I see that.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: I think I was No. 1
7 for Round 2 so I'll just put that
8 on the record.

9 No, you just mentioned
10 the complaints. When you receive
11 complaints, you do unannounced
12 visits?

13 MS. HILL: Yes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: But do you all do
16 proactive visits?

17 MS. HILL: Yes.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Right?

20 MS. HILL: Mm-hmm.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Okay. I just wanted
23 to make that clarification. And I
24 only said that because of the boots

1 on the ground, which I love that
2 name because it's all the rave line
3 dance, with the corrective action
4 plans. So as a part of that you
5 all were supposed to be improving
6 the monitoring and evaluation of
7 the emergency shelter providers.

8 So if you could to
9 Council President's question, I
10 just wanted to put it on the record
11 that you all are doing proactive
12 inspections, but you're also doing
13 complaint-driven, what we would
14 call reactive inspections. And I
15 would say to Council President's
16 question, if you could just give a
17 layout of the corrective action
18 plan like the boots on the ground
19 program?

20 MS. HILL: Sure. And
21 they go out without their fans
22 unfortunately, so they can't do
23 that part of boots on the ground.
24 But this year our team has gone out

1 to 28 sites. They go out twice a
2 year is their goal. That's
3 separate from the unannounced
4 visits.

5 They're looking at case
6 management. They're just doing a
7 general site visit and then they're
8 looking at the standards,
9 especially if it has different
10 funding sources. We went out to
11 all of them. We have the data on
12 which ones passed, which ones
13 failed, which ones are pending.

14 If they fail, they have
15 to come up with a corrective action
16 plan. Now, depending on the
17 severity of why they failed, some
18 of those corrections need to happen
19 a lot faster than others. We then
20 will send out an additional team or
21 the team will go back and follow
22 up.

23 In some cases, we sent
24 out our inspectors that normally do

1 our housing quality inspections to
2 go look at the physical building to
3 see what is missing or what needs
4 to be repaired in those buildings
5 and then they will do a follow-up
6 as well. But in the cases of the
7 complaints, that is when the team
8 will go out and do an unannounced
9 visit and they'll see whatever
10 staff is currently there and be
11 able to ask questions and address
12 things, including sometimes the
13 fact that the staff that was
14 supposed to be there may not be
15 there. And so, then they're
16 addressing that directly with the
17 provider.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
19 JOHNSON: Okay. And I'll probably
20 do -- well, two small brief
21 questions. One, you talked about
22 piloting new initiatives to
23 accelerate transition from shelter
24 to permanent housing. So I just

1 want you to give an idea the
2 details of the pilot programs,
3 which I think is great helping
4 individuals become homeowners or
5 have permanent housing. I think
6 that's excellent. And then also,
7 what are we doing around addressing
8 housing for those who have
9 disabilities?

10 MS. HILL: Thank you.
11 So currently we have -- and I'll
12 address the second question.
13 First, we have a consultant that's
14 going out to all of our shelters to
15 do an assessment of the
16 accessibility standards for those
17 shelters. And with that, they are
18 identifying both physical
19 modifications as well as program
20 modifications that may be able to
21 happen in those shelters, and some
22 of them are simply things that just
23 need to be repaired, like cracks in
24 the sidewalk or making sure the

1 ramp is up to standards. Others
2 are changes that need to happen as
3 in changing a paint color for
4 wayfinding for someone who may not
5 be able to distinguish what's
6 happening there or lowering some of
7 the soap dispensers so that someone
8 in a wheelchair can have access to
9 it.

10 But in addition, as I
11 mentioned before our reasonable
12 accommodation process has been
13 updated so that if someone does not
14 get the accommodation that they
15 requested, that they can request an
16 appeal directly to OHS and that we
17 will monitor that and then
18 ultimately give a decision. We are
19 trying to get that word out because
20 so far even though we've had that
21 operational for the past few
22 months, we have not received any
23 appeals.

24 And just because I've

1 been doing accommodation work for a
2 long time, I expected to see some
3 appeals. So we put out flyers.
4 We're trying to make sure that
5 everybody knows that in the event
6 that they need to get an
7 accommodation and they're not
8 getting the accommodation that they
9 need, they can request an appeal
10 with OHS directly. And then the --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Permanent housing pilot
13 initiative.

14 MS. HILL: So we are
15 looking at different models to be
16 able to try to get individuals in
17 quickly. As I mentioned before,
18 one of them is looking at our
19 assessment so that we can make sure
20 that we are placing individuals
21 quickly to the housing that's
22 sitting there. Because as I
23 mentioned, especially some of the
24 smaller units tend to stay vacant a

1 lot longer because people are
2 holding out for the one bedroom or
3 some bigger unit.

4 So one of the pilots
5 that we were looking at is do we
6 change the strategy and just make
7 sure that everyone is getting
8 referred to those smaller units
9 first so that we can get them
10 filled. If people know that they
11 can hold out for a bigger unit,
12 then we have those units stay
13 vacant.

14 But the other part of
15 that model that we are looking at
16 is do we find out the criteria that
17 the individual wants, you know, do
18 they need something with no stairs,
19 do they need something on a
20 particular side of town because
21 maybe that's where their doctors
22 are so that we can then make sure
23 that they're getting referred to
24 those units.

1 But as part of that
2 strategic plan that we talked about
3 earlier in bringing the service
4 provider community in, we really
5 want to have that conversation
6 about what are we missing. Because
7 one thing that I used to see when I
8 was on the provider side, it would
9 take several referrals to find
10 somebody who wanted the unit. And
11 a lot of times we were waving our
12 hand like we know somebody who
13 wants the unit, just let them move
14 in, they meet all the criteria. We
15 just want them to move in. So
16 rather than just refer people to
17 places they're going to turn down,
18 let's turn it on its head and do an
19 assessment so that people are
20 getting referred to the units that
21 we know that they will accept.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
23 JOHNSON: Now, when a person comes
24 and they're looking for housing, in

1 a certain instance we will get them
2 a voucher, correct, the kind of
3 system to help them with the rent,
4 right. Do we do an assessment of
5 the people who the renters are
6 renting off? That would be the
7 landlords, correct, right?

8 MS. HILL: Yes.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Do we assess them in
11 terms of are they -- because
12 they're accepting the voucher that
13 we're providing the renter. The
14 person nine times out of -- well,
15 in my case I'm speaking of a case
16 where an individual was disabled,
17 right, they got the assistance for
18 the down payment so they can move
19 in, right. But the landlords
20 weren't up to par, right. They
21 basically were slumlords, I mean to
22 be quite frank with you.

23 Do we evaluate the folks
24 who benefit from the voucher money

1 that we give the renters to hold
2 them accountable to make sure that
3 who we're supporting are still
4 being treated with a level of
5 dignity in terms of the housing
6 that they're going into? Because
7 some of it is private too, right --

8 MS. HILL: Absolutely.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Well, I know a private
11 situation specifically. But I'm
12 talking about on the grand scheme
13 of things to hold those folks
14 accountable. It's kind of like PHA
15 with Section 8, right. But in this
16 case, I'm speaking of an individual
17 who had this disability, right.
18 But there's other cases where they
19 get support from OHS to move in a
20 home or rent a home?

21 MS. HILL: Thank you for
22 that. So part of our Landlord
23 Gateway program is designed to not
24 only recruit landlords who will

1 work with our population but also
2 help monitor. And, in fact, we met
3 with some of the providers
4 yesterday and they talked about
5 some of those landlords. And
6 that's exactly what the team said,
7 we need to know who they are so
8 that we can address that. And
9 that's part of the complication.
10 We want to make sure that
11 individuals are telling us about
12 those individuals who are not
13 meeting the standard.

14 In addition though
15 depending on the program, we have
16 our inspectors go out before we
17 provide the subsidy to make sure
18 that the unit is up to par. But
19 ultimately, we also rely on the
20 providers that we are giving the
21 funding to, to manage the Rapid
22 Rehousing program or whichever
23 voucher it may be to make sure that
24 they're keeping up with those

1 landlords and keeping up the
2 standard. But that is our goal, to
3 make sure that we're tracking
4 what's happening with those
5 landlords.

6 We can pull them off of
7 our website that where those
8 landlords are identified for people
9 with our subsidies so that they can
10 provide housing. But we are trying
11 to make sure that we are getting
12 the information, which is why we
13 were expressing yesterday in a
14 meeting with the providers or on
15 Wednesday with the providers that
16 we need to know who they are if
17 they're not holding up to their end
18 of it.

19 But we are also having a
20 Landlord Week conference in May,
21 May 19th to 23rd if anybody's
22 interested, where we are trying to
23 educate landlords but also educate
24 the community and the providers as

1 well on what it means to be a
2 landlord in our program, what are
3 some of the needs. And so, there's
4 a variety of different topics that
5 we are trying to address, including
6 making sure that our quality is up.

7 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Where
8 is that?

9 MS. HILL: It is in a
10 variety of different places in the
11 city, but we'll be able to get you
12 that in writing as well.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
14 JOHNSON: And my last question as I
15 turn it over to my colleagues for
16 Round 2, what's your rubric to make
17 sure that equal distribution of the
18 housing funds in terms of how it's
19 distributed equitably across the
20 board? You have some groups that
21 are smaller, right. Then you have
22 the bigger organizations. How do
23 you make sure that it's equitable
24 across the board?

1 MS. HILL: So one of the
2 things --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: I have Outley House in my
5 District, right. I have Outley
6 House in my District, so that's
7 like one of the semi-bigger ones
8 and then you have smaller ones in
9 between. So give me an idea how do
10 you handle that?

11 MS. HILL: So one of the
12 things that we have really been
13 intentional about this year is our
14 RFP process. So during the RFP
15 process, we have a variety of
16 different sizes of providers that
17 apply. And the team looks at that,
18 including the smaller providers,
19 and making sure that we can provide
20 support to those that we award the
21 funding to. But that is something
22 that is ongoing and continuing to
23 make sure that we are equitable.

24 You guys probably heard

1 me say that several times in my
2 opening testimony to make sure that
3 we have an equitable process so
4 it's not just all of the larger
5 ones that are getting the funding
6 but that there are other smaller
7 nonprofits that have the funding
8 source. But part of that is also
9 the technical assistance to make
10 sure that the smaller providers
11 understand the funding source that
12 they're asking for.

13 Some of them, especially
14 the HUD funding, requires a lot of
15 prework in order to get the
16 funding, and that does become cost-
17 prohibitive to some of the
18 providers or they may apply for a
19 certain type of funding not
20 realizing that their housing unit
21 is not eligible for it. So we're
22 trying to look at processes to do
23 training on the front end so that
24 anybody who's interested in getting

1 into this space they will
2 understand the service, the grants
3 or the funding source, what is
4 required, if there's an
5 environmental review that's
6 required or if it can take a
7 tenant-based voucher versus a
8 project-based voucher.

9 All of that requires
10 education for those who may not be
11 in this or don't have a huge
12 administrative team to figure it
13 out for them. And so, we are
14 looking at ways through our RFP
15 process to be able to educate more.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

18 Chair recognizes
19 Majority Gilmore Richardson. Then
20 Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr.
21 Then Councilmember Jamie Gauthier,
22 Chair of Housing.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you

1 very much, Council President.

2 I wanted to go back to
3 the question quickly that Council
4 President asked regarding sort of
5 the inspections and the corrective
6 action plans that we know were put
7 in place after last year. If you
8 all could just detail for the
9 record how many of the emergency
10 shelter providers have been through
11 that initiative or that program,
12 how many of them remain?

13 And then how did you
14 sort of decide the order of
15 evaluation or order of inspection,
16 so to speak? And how many
17 providers were placed on corrective
18 action plans? How many providers
19 have been recommended for
20 non-renewal based on lack of
21 cooperation with the corrective
22 action plan? And how many
23 providers are at risk for potential
24 non-renewal based on lack of

1 cooperation or other issues
2 relative to the corrective action
3 plans?

4 MS. HILL: Thank you.

5 So we have monitored 28 shelters to
6 date. And of those, initially 12
7 failed and we have 13 that are
8 still -- or 12 failed on the case
9 management, let me clarify. 11
10 failed onsite visits, meaning the
11 team went out and looked at some
12 things. And then 4 failed on
13 meeting the shelter standards, you
14 know, our policies.

15 Of those, we still have
16 3 that are pending. Meaning,
17 they're still under their
18 corrective action plan as far as
19 their failure during the site
20 visit. And 13 are still under a
21 corrective action plan as a result
22 of their meeting the standards.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: So let me ask you this

1 question because I want to put this
2 on the record because I do think
3 it's important because there's a
4 couple sort of trends that I've
5 been seeing here overall in the
6 detail that I have additional
7 questions regarding even down to
8 the U.S. Facilities contract as
9 well as Scotland Yards contract
10 because there are noticeable
11 decreases, right.

12 And if we need to
13 increase services, I want to --
14 I'll delve into that on the next
15 round. But I wanted to know if you
16 all have a mandatory line item for
17 the providers around maintenance
18 budget, ensuring that folks could
19 address the concerns really on the
20 front end. If you could talk about
21 if that's included and if you all
22 are addressing that? And I bring
23 that up because of specifically
24 what I've been seeing even with the

1 U.S. Facilities contract.

2 MS. HILL: Yes, thank
3 you. And Dave will address the
4 U.S. Facilities, but if I can just
5 speak to the maintenance. One of
6 the things that we've been doing is
7 looking at what people are
8 budgeting for and why. And there
9 is a variety of budget amounts that
10 have been submitted on maintenance.

11 Part of what you saw in
12 our current budget about one-time
13 maintenance cost was to address or
14 is to address that. So we are --

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: I apologize for the
17 interruption, but will you all have
18 a line item for that so that it's
19 clear? Meaning, that it's not so
20 many additional one-time
21 allocations because those are very
22 hard to track and you know that
23 there is a need. That came up
24 earlier. Even when I notated where

1 you all have under emergency and
2 temporary housing, you have the
3 provider wage increases notated as
4 a one-time expense as well. But
5 will we need to maintain those
6 higher levels over Fiscal Year '26
7 and beyond? So are you building
8 those into the increased payments
9 that 23 of the 33 listed vendors
10 are receiving or is that the reason
11 why it's only listed as a one-time
12 and then you're going to build it
13 in moving forward?

14 And I ask that because
15 remember, last year we had 16.1.
16 We went back and forth on that
17 16.1. And remember, we had
18 submitted the additional letter to
19 you all sort of detailing the
20 discrepancies within a variety of
21 the contract documents from last
22 year. And I bring that up because
23 I don't want to be in a
24 circumstance where we're setting

1 ourselves up to do it again because
2 we're just not budgeting and
3 allocating correctly where we can
4 follow the numbers on the budget
5 details.

6 So I just want to give
7 you this example which may help
8 sort of underscore this more. So
9 we compared last year's materials
10 to this year's materials and it's a
11 number discrepancy, right. And so,
12 as an example if you look at the
13 increases and decreases detail
14 portion of the detail, like
15 Bethesda Project, they were listed
16 as \$1,354,894 increase. But under
17 the contracts page for 29 on the
18 FY26 detail, it shows a decrease of
19 \$530,955 from FY24 to '25.

20 Same thing, even with
21 New Journey CDC, total \$1,499,002
22 across two contracts for FY24, but
23 they were listed as having a
24 \$706,967 increase in the FY25

1 increases and decreases page. But
2 they actually really only saw a
3 decrease of \$46,329, and that was
4 after they ended the migrant
5 shelter funds. And there was a
6 decrease in their general shelter
7 contract.

8 So I ask all of that,
9 the one-timers versus if you're
10 putting it inside of the actual
11 contracts because we need to be
12 able to follow those dollars
13 because again, we know homelessness
14 is on the rise. But we need to be
15 able to keep track of what we have
16 so that we know how much more we
17 can do, need to do. Everything is
18 not -- meaning, the numbers aren't
19 matching up.

20 MS. HILL: Understood.
21 So if I could address the first
22 part about the wage increase. That
23 one-time wage increase is in there
24 because it was not in their

1 original FY25 budget. However, our
2 FY26 budget does include that for
3 the providers. And so, that's
4 part --

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: I told y'all that was
7 going to happen.

8 MS. HILL: I'm sorry?

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

10 RICHARDSON: I told y'all that was
11 going to happen for the FY25, yeah.

12 MS. HILL: And that's
13 part of the reason that we want to
14 make sure that it was addressed and
15 put in the budget. So it's called
16 out in there specifically because
17 we want to make it clear that we
18 are increasing the budgets for
19 FY25. It's embedded in our FY26
20 budgets. And so, that's why you
21 don't see it called out as a
22 separate line. But that was
23 intentional to make sure that we
24 are covering that this year and

1 then we also have a plan to cover
2 it next year.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: No, I understand that.
5 But again, with what we see now we
6 have to be able to track it.
7 That's the challenge, that we're
8 not able to track it effectively to
9 ensure that everything that we have
10 received matches up. I mean, we
11 told you guys that was going to
12 happen.

13 So we need to figure out
14 how we prevent that from happening
15 in the future so that we're not in
16 a circumstance where just because
17 the information is not correct, now
18 we're back at a circumstance where
19 at the end of the day we would have
20 to allocate additional money to no
21 fault of our own, right. You
22 understand what I'm saying?

23 MS. HILL: Mm-hmm. And
24 what we did was looked at all of

1 the providers, what their current
2 funding amount was for their
3 budgets and then be able to come up
4 with the numbers, so we can be able
5 to provide additional detail on
6 that. Now, as far as some of the
7 contracts that are decreasing that
8 you identified, some is a
9 combination of things.

10 Some of them, the
11 contract actually ended this fiscal
12 year so those are now being RFP'd.
13 So we removed it on our FY26 budget
14 from whatever the contract is that
15 is ending and then put it -- you
16 will see a line that says TBD, and
17 that is for the ones that are
18 currently out for RFP. We want to
19 make it clear which ones were
20 ending and then which ones were
21 RFP'g.

22 Now, if they're awarded
23 or whoever is awarded, then our
24 budget then will reflect those

1 awards. But currently they're
2 listed in one lump sum for all of
3 the providers that receive
4 decreases in those lines because of
5 their contracts ending this fiscal
6 year.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Sure. With the
9 embedding that's happening and with
10 the additional discrepancy that
11 like I said we knew would happen
12 because of the detail and then the
13 contracts from last year, how are
14 you all, one, avoiding that from
15 happening again in the future but,
16 two, I don't know how you're able
17 to move -- is it that other
18 contracts are decreasing enough for
19 you in the same class and under the
20 same unit, you're able to move
21 money around? Meaning, where's the
22 extra money coming from?

23 MS. HILL: Are you
24 referring to the wage increases? I

1 just want to make sure I'm clear.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: The one-time
4 allotments, the wage increases, the
5 differences in the emergency and
6 temporary housing shelter
7 contracts, where is that money
8 coming from? I'm only asking
9 because we weren't asked -- and I'm
10 Vice-Chair of Approps. We weren't
11 asked to move anything around for
12 OHS this year.

13 MS. YATES-GALE: So I
14 will just jump in here. I remember
15 sitting here with you last year and
16 promising you that we would not ask
17 for more money. So OHS, Finance,
18 Budget and MDO literally meet every
19 Wednesday to go through OHS's
20 budget needs every week. And at
21 the close, we're here. We're close
22 to the end of the year. There are
23 funds that we can help providers to
24 do the wage increase. We can help

1 providers that are at risk.

2 We do have providers
3 that are at risk for termination of
4 their contract because of the
5 quality issues, so we have an
6 opportunity to help the providers
7 with that one-time maintenance
8 cost. And then for the budget line
9 item, Cheryl said that we are going
10 to look at what the providers
11 submit in their budgets that they
12 submit to us. They are not
13 consistent across the board in how
14 much they request in their budget
15 for maintenance, so we're trying to
16 do some education with them as
17 well. But the '25 costs are that,
18 just us making sure we're not
19 coming back to you for more money
20 and knowing that homelessness is a
21 real problem.

22 So Councilmember
23 Gauthier has said to us, if you
24 have extra money, why aren't you

1 using it. So we went right to the
2 table and talked to Budget to say
3 we think that that's true, like we
4 need to use this money that
5 currently exists to provide those
6 assistance to the providers that
7 are there.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Okay. So the
10 maintenance line items will be
11 embedded moving forward?

12 MS. YATES-GALE: The
13 maintenance line item will be
14 embedded into the providers'
15 budgets they submit to us. So
16 you'll see contract changes to the
17 provider lines, but there won't be
18 a single maintenance line from OHS.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Understood. Okay.
21 Thank you.

22 I'll come back on the
23 next round. Thank you, Council
24 President.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Leader.

3 Councilmember Curtis

4 Jones and Councilmember Jamie

5 Gauthier.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
7 you, Mr. President.

8 On your impromptu
9 inspections, I'd like to volunteer
10 me and Member Harrity to go
11 undercover. And if you can get us
12 through the paperwork, I trust him
13 to go in with -- maybe O'Rourke
14 too, but definitely Harrity. And
15 I'm serious, we will impromptu
16 volunteer to do that.

17 If you would have done
18 that chart that I mentioned early
19 as homework, a third of your
20 questions would have been self-
21 explanatory, not Majority Leader's
22 questions because they were very
23 financial. But the process of this
24 would have been a little more

1 understandable. So I'm going to
2 urge you to when you on the
3 callback please do that.

4 I want to focus on
5 particular populations. I'd like
6 to talk about returning citizens,
7 people coming home from
8 incarceration, how they are infused
9 into the system and older males.
10 We had a situation in my office,
11 young -- well, a man who grew up in
12 Wynnefield. And he went the course
13 of I live with my mom, my mom's no
14 longer with us, I no longer can
15 afford this house, it's a big
16 house, they sold it. He wound up
17 in your care.

18 I mentioned him because
19 that is becoming more and more
20 prevalent, that folk that did not
21 take the precautions at a certain
22 point in their life be self-
23 sufficient are a growing population
24 of folk there. So I want to know

1 how are we treating ex-offenders,
2 that process, and older males that
3 are kind of finding themselves at
4 the last resort coming to you.

5 And at the end of the
6 day, this individual from
7 Wynnefield, the President knows
8 about Wynnefield has traveled up
9 there a lot. You helped him, and
10 you've always been helpful. But
11 when the help came, it was in an
12 area, another part of my District,
13 and when he's used to Wynnefield,
14 that reality, he started barking
15 out crying, like literally, like,
16 how did my life wind up here. So
17 how are we addressing that?

18 MS. HILL: Thank you.
19 So to answer the first question
20 about ex-offenders, our housing or
21 at least the majority of our
22 housing does not have a criminal
23 history restriction with the
24 exception of sex offenders. So

1 with that, anyone who comes in with
2 criminal history should be able to
3 come, especially in the Continuum
4 of Care housing that we have. So
5 they can come in, come to our
6 intake centers, get the assessment
7 and then upon placement, we work
8 very closely with the providers to
9 make sure that there aren't any or
10 very minimal barriers to entry into
11 the housing depending on the needs.
12 And again, with the exception of a
13 few cases of certain criminal
14 charges that is the case.

15 Now, as far as
16 individuals who may be experiencing
17 homelessness for the first time,
18 that's part of the reason that we
19 are looking to make our prevention
20 program a little bit more
21 streamlined because the goal of
22 prevention is to prevent someone
23 from entering homelessness. So we
24 have the program that we partner

1 with the various City providers in
2 order to be able to provide some
3 additional dollars.

4 We work with the
5 Eviction Diversion program. We
6 provide some rental arrears
7 assistance. We also provide some
8 security deposit or maybe a couple
9 months' of rent assistance so that
10 someone can get the jumpstart they
11 need to be able to get housing
12 without experiencing homelessness.
13 So those are just a couple of the
14 ways that we're trying to enhance
15 our programs off the top of your
16 head.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES:
18 What's the population of senior
19 males coming into that system,
20 percentage?

21 MS. HILL: I don't have
22 it off the top of my head, but --

23 MR. HOLLOMAN: How we
24 define senior males -- well,

1 seniors in general 55 and older. I
2 know. We're seeing at least
3 between about 18% to 22% of people
4 who are in that age category that's
5 coming in. Again --

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: And
7 is it growing?

8 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yes,
9 homelessness overall.

10 MS. HILL: So just to
11 give you clarity, our shelter on
12 Wednesday had 76 people in it that
13 were 65 and older. And that was
14 just on Wednesday.

15 MR. HOLLOMAN: And
16 that's 65.

17 MS. HILL: We didn't do
18 the 55 but --

19 COUNCILMAN JONES:
20 O'Rourke is ready to go undercover.

21 MR. HOLLOMAN: Council
22 President, I do want to go back to
23 Majority Leader to answer a
24 question that we did not and you

1 mentioned about U.S. Facility and
2 Scotland Yards. First of all, let
3 me just say thank you for your
4 advocacy and just holding us
5 accountable for everybody's tax
6 dollars. That's the right thing to
7 do.

8 So as we relate to U.S.
9 Facility, what we did in trying to
10 be fiscally prudent we know U.S.
11 Facility was causing significant --
12 they do great work. Let me just
13 say that. But it's a very
14 expensive contract. And so, what
15 we did was reduce that contract to
16 hire more City staff, labor staff
17 to do maintenance in our shelters.
18 And so, when you see that number
19 reduced at 2100 Girard, that was a
20 direct result of us being able to
21 hire about 12 custodial workers, at
22 that time \$240,000 that saved
23 tremendous amount of money from
24 where the U.S. Facility contract

1 was.

2 Same thing with Scotland
3 Yard. We were paying -- and
4 previous to Cheryl coming on, we
5 had Scotland Yard Security doing
6 security on Kensington Avenue. As
7 a result of Mayor Parker and other
8 initiatives, there were other
9 resources that could have been
10 allocated there which was
11 Philadelphia Police. And so, we
12 decided to reduce that contract and
13 spend that money other places
14 because there were adequate police
15 resources on Kensington Avenue that
16 we did not need to spend out of our
17 Homeless Services budget.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Point of information,
20 Majority Leader Richardson.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Yes. Thank you very
23 much, Council President.

24 If possible, I will

1 still submit the questions that I
2 have -- that makes sense. I will
3 still submit the questions I have
4 specifically for those two
5 contracts because of the changes in
6 the numbers, but that clarifies
7 partially what we were seeing. And
8 even in the changes in the Class
9 100 allocations, there was a bunch
10 of different changes there where it
11 was noticeable decreases in the
12 lower-level positions.

13 Thank you, Council
14 President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: You're welcome.

17 Councilmember Jamie
18 Gauthier. Then Councilmember
19 Nicolas O'Rourke and Councilmember
20 Rue Landau.

21 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

22 Thank you, Council President.

23 Before I get into my
24 questions, I just wanted to respond

1 to something that I heard. When
2 you're on this floor, you'll hear
3 different things come up,
4 especially from different
5 Councilmembers. Majority Leader is
6 always going to be the fiscal hawk.
7 Councilmember Ahmad is always going
8 to ask about data. I'm always
9 pushing for services. And
10 Councilmember Jones always talks
11 about balance, so I'm going to
12 reach for Councilmember Jones in
13 this moment.

14 I'm hopeful that we can
15 find balance with what we're doing
16 here. I greatly appreciate the
17 focus on fiscal responsibility. We
18 absolutely have to be responsible
19 with tax dollars and that's the
20 right thing to do, but it really
21 startled me to hear you say that
22 you promised not to come to us to
23 ask for any more money. I believe
24 that while we're being fiscally

1 responsible one thing that we
2 should not be shy about is spending
3 on unhoused people. We spend so,
4 so much on so many things in this
5 city.

6 Every single year I go
7 to the Homeless Memorial Day and we
8 read off a really long list of
9 people who died in homelessness,
10 and it's one of the most
11 heartbreaking events that I attend
12 on an annual basis. And I go every
13 year and I'll continue to go every
14 year, but I'm hopeful that we don't
15 have that event at some point.

16 And so, I want us to
17 achieve the balance of fiscal
18 control, but also to spend whatever
19 we need to spend to house people in
20 the city of Philadelphia --

21 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

22 RICHARDSON: Can I just have,
23 Council President, a point of
24 clarification. I want to have a

1 point of clarification. Because
2 what we were directly referring to
3 was the 16.1 million. It was not
4 the overall OHS budget. We were
5 referring to the 16.1 that was in
6 question from last year to say
7 don't come back after we give you
8 this 16.1 because we had settled on
9 an amount that they needed that we
10 agreed upon for last year. So I
11 don't know that that is indicative
12 of what we have been in discussion
13 regarding -- because you know that
14 in Council we've done an extra
15 \$41 million since FY18 for homeless
16 services. So when they ask, we do.
17 So that was specific to the issue
18 around the fiscal concerns around
19 the contracts where we allocated
20 the additional money and
21 appropriation for the last year. I
22 just want to be clear about that
23 because --

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you. I almost jumped out of
2 my chair when I heard that.

3 MS. YATES-GALE: Thank
4 you for that, Majority Leader. But
5 that's true, we always need more
6 money. We know that homelessness
7 is increasing and we hope and pray
8 that it doesn't continue, but we
9 think it will in this time of
10 uncertainty. So more than likely
11 we will ask for more every year,
12 but that was in relation to the
13 \$16.1 million.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
15 Thank you for the clarification.
16 On to my questions, the City
17 typically maintains about 3600
18 year-round shelter beds and adds
19 roughly 250 to 300 extra beds
20 during the winter Code Blue, cold
21 weather emergencies. What
22 operational or budgetary changes
23 would it take to keep those
24 additional Code Blue beds available

1 year-round, for example, additional
2 staffing, extended provider
3 contracts or facility costs? And
4 has OHS considered this expansion?

5 And next, has the Office
6 of Homeless Services estimated the
7 cost of providing these winter
8 overflow beds on a year-round
9 basis? And does the FY26 proposed
10 budget allocate any funding toward
11 expanding year-round emergency
12 shelter capacity or piloting a
13 year-round model for cold weather
14 beds?

15 And I really started to
16 focus on this issue due to what I
17 was seeing in my District. As an
18 example, we have an emergency
19 shelter for women and I was getting
20 quite a lot of complaints from
21 residents that they would see women
22 lining up outside the shelter,
23 which doesn't open until I believe
24 5:00 p.m., women lining up as early

1 as noon, all of their things
2 standing on the sidewalk because
3 that's how they can assure they're
4 going to get a bed for the night,
5 that they have to leave at I think
6 6:00 a.m.

7 And when I started to
8 talk to the shelter staff about
9 this, they said, well, we don't see
10 this in the winter as much because
11 we have the beds that we need. But
12 once that supply gets cut, then
13 we're back to the same situation of
14 people trying to ensure a bed by
15 standing outside for hours. And my
16 residents were complaining about
17 this, not because they find it
18 unsightly or inconvenient, they
19 find it inhumane. And so, I wanted
20 to ask have we thought seriously
21 about this as a solution?

22 MS. HILL: Yes, thank
23 you. So to keep the winter beds
24 online, we have calculated the

1 numbers, it's approximately \$6.1
2 million extra a year to keep those
3 beds that we have during the winter
4 year-round. We also are looking at
5 ways to stretch those dollars a
6 little bit more between the
7 enhanced Code Blue and our winter
8 dollars. We're looking to see if
9 there's a model that does add
10 dignity to that so that -- because
11 I agree, lining up to hope for a
12 bed is not dignified. So we are
13 looking to see how we can do
14 something different with that.

15 But the reality is
16 that's about the budget to make
17 sure that the beds that we have
18 during the winter can expand, but
19 we have been looking for different
20 ways to see how we can stretch
21 that. What we did this year with
22 our RFPs, rather than have everyone
23 come up with an operating budget,
24 we came up with a per bed per diem

1 and that enabled us to add
2 additional beds and still cover the
3 cost that the providers had for the
4 shelters and during the winter. So
5 we're looking at different models
6 to be able to add additional beds
7 during the winter in particular,
8 but even outside of the winter.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

10 Does the FY26 budget account for
11 this at all, having these beds
12 online year-round in a way that
13 keeps supply open?

14 MS. HILL: Not currently
15 for the winter beds, no.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

17 Thank you. If you could get
18 your -- I'm not sure. I know we
19 asked for this. If you haven't
20 provided that to my office, if you
21 can get that, both the full cost
22 and the sort of per bed cost, we
23 would be appreciative.

24 MS. HILL: Yes, we

1 provided the winter cost, but we
2 can get you the per bed cost.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

4 Thank you very much.

5 Thank you, Council
6 President.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 Councilmember O'Rourke.

10 Then Councilmember Young and
11 Councilmember Harrity.

12 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

13 Thank you, Mr. President.

14 While homelessness is a
15 complex problem and the reasons for
16 each specific instance of
17 homelessness may vary, your clarity
18 stood out to me on what was
19 necessary to solve homelessness,
20 and that being more housing. If
21 there are only currently about
22 75-ish, I think is what you said,
23 senior men -- I would venture to
24 guess they're probably Black -- who

1 are not housed. It just emphasizes
2 to me in my mind why, and I
3 appreciate Council President and
4 other members of this body,
5 emphasizing what the Catholic
6 social tradition calls the
7 preferential option for the poor,
8 that as opposed to us finding all
9 of the reasons to incentivize
10 housing, commodify housing, what
11 have you, that we need to
12 hyperfocus on the least of these.

13 And I just want to put
14 that on the record. It's just
15 heartbreaking to me that we have
16 this problem and we just cannot
17 figure out to solve it. I know
18 that the idea is to limit it or
19 what have you, but I think that's
20 the thing that can be resolved.
21 That's not my question. I just
22 needed to get that off my chest.

23 You mentioned FY27 in
24 your responses to my questions in

1 the first round, which makes me
2 feel a little better that though we
3 aren't finished with hearings for
4 FY26, I'm good to look ahead. Each
5 budget season is hard. But if
6 trends in D.C. continue, then I
7 imagine next year's process will be
8 frankly, incredibly painful. And
9 on this inauspicious morning, the
10 President is sharing his budget and
11 brief with Congress.

12 In that document, the
13 details aren't out yet, but the
14 reporting notes that the document
15 calls for federal block grants to
16 be eliminated or consolidated and
17 envisions significant cuts to HUD
18 and we already know the Feds want
19 to have HUD's workforce.

20 Meanwhile your testimony
21 at the back ends by stating that
22 any reductions in federal funding
23 would have a significant impact
24 across the office, not small

1 reductions, not medium reductions,
2 any reductions would deeply impact
3 your work. So I have some broader
4 questions meant to do some
5 municipal forecasting, meant to
6 kind of forecast in light of FY27.
7 I heard the bell so I'll try to get
8 them out real quick.

9 I know this is broad
10 funding across a range of grant
11 programs, but let's say the office
12 received 10% less federal dollars
13 next year. What would be some of
14 the services that would be first on
15 the chopping block for OHS? Two, I
16 want to ask about the Community
17 Development Block Grants, which
18 this federal administration seems
19 ready to slash. How might any cuts
20 to CDBG impact OHS services and
21 specifically some of the H.O.M.E.
22 Initiative programs that have CDBG
23 dollars baked in? Specifically, is
24 there a clear prioritization of

1 where CDBG dollars will go in the
2 case of cuts?

3 MS. HILL: Thank you.

4 And if I can clarify about the FY27
5 statement, HUD now has an every
6 other year application process. So
7 when I mentioned FY27 is because
8 that's the next time we can apply
9 for that housing or for that
10 funding.

11 So to answer your
12 question about the federal funding,
13 obviously a lot of our services
14 dollars, not just directly through
15 OHS but also as we apply for that
16 impacts other service providers
17 will have a huge impact on those
18 experiencing homelessness. Our CoC
19 funding is roughly \$50 million, \$60
20 million that's just about providing
21 housing. So that would have an
22 impact. And you add on to it all
23 the other federal funding that the
24 City has.

1 So it's something we
2 think about and we thought about it
3 when, you know, they shut down
4 their system and we couldn't get
5 the funding out for a couple of
6 days, you know, what we were going
7 to do during that time. We work
8 closely with the Law Department and
9 the Finance Department to look at
10 the grant agreements that they're
11 sending to us and whether or not we
12 even should sign them just given
13 some of the language that they
14 changed in there. So we defer to
15 Law a lot on some of that.

16 But it is a risk. And
17 that's why every time we get
18 information from the federal
19 government we are reaching out to
20 Finance, we are reaching out to Law
21 just to see what our risk exposure
22 is and also what can happen in the
23 event that some of that funding
24 goes away. But it's compounded

1 more than even some of the grants
2 that you mentioned, again between
3 the service provider community and
4 OHS itself. It would be
5 devastating, just to be honest.

6 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
7 Can you say which services that
8 would actually be first on the
9 chopping block?

10 MS. HILL: It would
11 depend on the funding source
12 because some of them are very
13 specific on how we use that
14 funding. So, for example, our CoC
15 funding is about the permanent
16 supportive housing and Rapid
17 Rehousing. So if they cut that,
18 then we would lose some of the
19 units that we currently have.

20 Other funding that they
21 give us is specifically about the
22 planning for the city and how we
23 are going to implement the
24 services. So if they cut that

1 funding, then that limits that.
2 Some of our staff is actually paid
3 for out of some of those grants.
4 So if they cut that, we will lose
5 some of our staff or we'd have to
6 re-evaluate how we staff those
7 positions. So it's a little bit
8 complex because each of them fund a
9 different thing. But I just wanted
10 to give you a few examples.

11 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

12 Thank you for those examples.

13 Mr. President, I'd like
14 to request a CDBG funding priority
15 list jointly crafted between OHS
16 and the leaders of the H.O.M.E.
17 Initiative naming the programs that
18 our Administration sees as most in
19 need of these dollars. I think
20 Council needs to know how the Admin
21 is thinking about weathering the
22 storm that is clearly on the
23 horizon.

24 Thank you,

1 Mr. President.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Thank you.

4 Chair recognizes

5 Councilmember Harrity -- oh, it was
6 you?

7 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

8 (Gestured).

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: I'm sorry. Rue Landau,
11 then Harrity.

12 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I
13 just -- real quick if I could just
14 get a list of all shelter
15 providers --

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Member Harrity, speak in
18 the microphone.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Oh,
20 I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Council
21 President.

22 Real quick and you can
23 get it to me, I don't need it now.
24 Just a list of all the sites

1 contracted or city-run.

2 MS. HILL: Yes, we can
3 do that.

4 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
5 Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: Thank you.

8 Councilmember Rue
9 Landau. Then Councilmember Lozada
10 and Councilmember Young.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
12 Thank you. At our last Housing
13 Committee hearing we had a witness,
14 a community navigator, testify that
15 he often didn't know where to send
16 people who needed rental
17 assistance. As of yesterday
18 Phillytenant.org indicates that OHS
19 has no funding available for rental
20 assistance and has not had such
21 funding since January 8, 2025; is
22 that correct?

23 MS. HILL: That is not
24 correct. Now, during January it is

1 true that we paused accepting new
2 applications because at the time we
3 had the 4000 applications that we
4 had to sift through. But once they
5 were able to go through those and
6 determine which ones were eligible,
7 which ones may have resolved in
8 another way, we then reopened our
9 application process. So it's now
10 open. We're accepting
11 applications.

12 But again, as we talked
13 about or as I was alluding to
14 earlier we tried to streamline the
15 process. So before people came in,
16 they told us what they needed, we
17 told them what we needed and then
18 they went back and got it. Now, we
19 actually give the information
20 upfront and says if you need
21 assistance, here are all the
22 documents we want you to bring in
23 when you come so that we can do
24 some of that analysis at the moment

1 that the person enters our office.

2 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

3 How can outsiders get the
4 information that they need to know
5 when you have the funds and when
6 you don't have the funds, if this
7 is on a kind of cyclical seasonal
8 basis?

9 MS. HILL: We are hoping
10 that it's not seasonal. However,
11 what we are trying to do is use
12 technology to monitor and be able
13 to process applications in a
14 different way. We've looked at
15 changing our phone system because
16 people call and they leave
17 voicemails right now, so we're
18 looking to use, you know, different
19 technology within our phone system
20 to be able to let people know.
21 When we did have the temporarily
22 paused, we posted it everywhere.
23 We send it to our mailing list and
24 they absolutely can join our

1 mailing list to get information on
2 any services that we provide so
3 that we can keep individuals
4 informed.

5 Any time you email
6 OHS@phila.gov, it actually gives
7 the information, including our
8 prevention information. At the
9 time that we had to pause, it also
10 said on that auto-response that
11 there was a temporary pause. So
12 we're trying to make sure we're
13 getting the information out as
14 quickly as possible when there are
15 changes.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
17 I'm just as concerned if you're
18 going to send information out about
19 a pause, then you're going to have
20 to send information out about it's
21 restarting again.

22 MS. HILL: Absolutely.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
24 Let's just try to make sure there's

1 funding year-round so we won't have
2 to do any of that. I wanted to get
3 back to the technology question
4 though because I know I've talked
5 to you guys about this before. I
6 am the Chair of the Technology
7 Committee and it seems that you are
8 one of the departments that so
9 desperately needs more technology
10 in order to be able to run your
11 very complicated business you're
12 running, between your phones and a
13 database that will help us not just
14 track humans but track open beds,
15 maintenance requests, other
16 concerns that are happening and
17 making sure that we have a holistic
18 view of beds that are available,
19 families who need them and you guys
20 can be the Craigslist, Match.com of
21 making sure that we are giving
22 people the unit available for what
23 they need. How far along are you
24 in this request process or in this

1 production process of technology
2 and is it funded?

3 MS. HILL: So currently
4 we have the RFP out for our HMIS
5 system. And in those specs we are
6 asking for a lot more innovation
7 than what we currently have in our
8 HMIS system, so we are looking to
9 enhance that. There are systems
10 that will track individuals. It'll
11 attract the services, so on and so
12 forth, including bed reservation,
13 which is one of the things that
14 we've looked into.

15 Near term what we've
16 talked about is putting our daily
17 census on our website so that
18 anyone who wants to know at least
19 what the current census is, granted
20 it changes every day, but that is
21 one thing that we've talked about
22 as well as our permanent housing.
23 That one would be a little bit more
24 less frequent because it's not a

1 daily change. But our goal is to
2 put as much information on our
3 website as we can so that
4 individuals can go out.

5 We actually do that now
6 with our service days. Every week
7 we post where we are going, what
8 the locations are so that the
9 community and the providers know,
10 especially if they have
11 participants or clients that
12 they're working with, that we're
13 coming there to do a service day or
14 an encampment resolution depending
15 on the needs.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: So
17 you've already put out the RFP.
18 There is funding for this
19 available? Is it being funded?

20 MS. HILL: Yes, but as
21 the Councilmember mentioned it's
22 federal funds. So it's one of the
23 projects that we have -- or part of
24 it is federal and part of it is

1 general funds, but it's part of our
2 Continuum of Care.

3 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

4 How about the enhanced phone
5 system? Is that out -- what kind
6 of change would that have to be?
7 Is that an internal City of
8 Philadelphia change or is that
9 something that you would --

10 MS. HILL: We would have
11 to work with OIT to look at exactly
12 what is changing. The team has
13 started drafting what it would look
14 like even from an IVR system, which
15 is simply you can either say or
16 push the button on what the
17 services you need so that you can
18 get directed to the right location.

19 I would also add one of
20 the changes we did do in technology
21 in our intake is we're using a
22 keyless system. In the past,
23 people came in, they signed their
24 name and they just waited to be

1 called. Now, we're using
2 technology so that there's a unique
3 ID that posts so that they can see
4 when it's their turn rather than
5 coming in and writing on paper what
6 they need and then hoping that
7 someone can read their handwriting.

8 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

9 Excellent. Last comment is that I
10 am very excited for FreshStartPHL,
11 which I know will enhance the
12 support that you're giving people
13 whether it's to triage them to
14 ensure they're not going into the
15 shelters or to help them have a
16 quicker and safer way out. So
17 looking forward to having more of
18 those conversations. Thank you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: Thank you.

21 Chair recognizes
22 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada, then
23 Young and then Majority Richardson
24 will wrap us up.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

2 Thank you, Council President.

3 I actually walked out
4 because I was trying to respond to
5 an issue that was related to
6 Homeless Services in the office,
7 and I'm trying to figure out your
8 process, right. We have an
9 individual who is living in an
10 alleyway who has been throwing
11 urine on people and consistently
12 fighting with the residents,
13 breaking into their homes. And
14 we're being told that, oh, we just
15 can't do anything about it.

16 I'm trying to figure out
17 your process and as we work towards
18 improving the quality of life in
19 Kensington, when situations like
20 this occur how are we going to
21 respond to them, right. What's
22 different from what you've been
23 doing in the past now?

24 MS. HILL: Thank you.

1 So to address any criminal
2 activity, the one thing that we
3 communicate to everyone is the
4 answer is still to call 911. And
5 then the other part with Behavioral
6 Health, we definitely advocate for
7 988. We have been working again
8 with DBHIDS to make sure that when
9 people call homeless outreach, that
10 that information is also shared.
11 But ultimately, if there's a crime
12 being committed, that has been our
13 answer is to still call 911. I do
14 agree that we are limited in that
15 scope, that if it's a crime, 911.
16 And then if there's a mental health
17 crisis, 988. However, outreach and
18 all of those teams that are out
19 there, they are aware of those same
20 services and hopefully be able to
21 share that information.

22 But again, because
23 outreach is a separate entity I
24 think DBH might be able to explain

1 a little bit more. And I would
2 have to defer to them on what
3 outreach is doing there. But if
4 they call us, that is usually our
5 response, to call one of those
6 numbers for crimes that are being
7 committed.

8 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

9 I'm concerned because community
10 residents are going to become
11 emboldened, right. And I have a
12 bunch of residents now on a block
13 who are extremely frustrated.
14 They've called Homeless Services.
15 They've called 911. They've called
16 311 and can't get a response to do
17 something with this individual or
18 help them respond to this
19 individual who is also exposing
20 himself to people on the block.

21 And so, they are now
22 committed to taking matters into
23 their own hands. I have seniors
24 who are living with unsheltered

1 people on their porches who have
2 also been threatened and can't get
3 these people off of their private
4 property. And so, we're going to
5 continue to push to improve quality
6 of life in the Kensington community
7 and we understand that community
8 residents have to be partners. But
9 at some point, folks are going to
10 get sick of responding through the
11 process if the process is not
12 supportive of them.

13 MS. YATES-GALE: Can
14 I -- Councilmember, if we could
15 connect during the break to get the
16 information about that particular
17 person, I'll have DBHIDS and
18 someone from crisis out now today.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
20 Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
22 JOHNSON: Thank you.

23 How many Homeless teams
24 that we have going on specifically

1 dealing with also mental and
2 behavioral health that's a part of
3 our strategy to get people off the
4 streets?

5 MS. HILL: OHS has four
6 teams that go out. But again,
7 because it's a collaborative
8 effort, DBHIDS has quite a few more
9 teams that they contract with, and
10 we can certainly partner with them
11 to get that information to you but
12 they would have that more accurate
13 number.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
15 JOHNSON: Yeah, please do. But I
16 just want to know separate from
17 DBHIDS, right, I'm thinking because
18 OHS deals with those who are
19 homeless, right, and we want to get
20 people off the streets, right,
21 we're not even only looking at
22 incarcerating because individuals
23 are homeless, but the goal is to
24 actually get them off. And

1 obviously a lot of it deals with
2 mental health, right, and mental
3 stability. And so, I want to get
4 an idea from your department,
5 right, you said four teams, but
6 DBHIDS has additional teams.

7 Were you looking to
8 expand your own teams because of
9 the level of homelessness that
10 we're dealing with? Because DBHIDS
11 to me is a different conversation
12 compared to your role as
13 specifically getting homeless
14 people off the street, right. And
15 so, I would think we would have an
16 aggressive strategy with the mental
17 health piece to try to get people
18 off the streets that sometimes may
19 not want to get off the streets
20 because of the mental health issues
21 that they're dealing with.

22 MR. HOLLOWMAN: Yeah, and
23 thanks for that. And you're right,
24 we do need additional resources.

1 But the individuals that we're
2 seeing on the street these days
3 have co-occurring diagnosis,
4 meaning their mental health and
5 substance abuse underlying their --

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: You said dual diagnosis,
8 right?

9 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah,
10 they're dual diagnosis.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Okay. I'm familiar with
13 it.

14 MR. HOLLOMAN: So we do
15 need additional staff that can help
16 focus on that. But again, we work
17 with our partners at DBHIDS who has
18 some level of staff that can do
19 that, but we will welcome that.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Okay. Cool. Thank you.

22 Councilmember Jeffrey
23 Jay Young and then Majority Leader
24 will take us home.

1 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
2 you. I'll just get both my
3 questions on the record. First
4 question is over the summer I met
5 some young women who are staying
6 the shelter in my District, and
7 they basically told us that from
8 9:00 to 3:00 they kick them out the
9 shelter with no services, nothing
10 like that is provided. And also,
11 as a meal all they feed them is
12 tuna and lettuce, right.

13 So can you tell us what
14 I guess is there a standard for
15 meals to be provided in shelters
16 and if there are other social
17 services that are required by the
18 shelter to provide to some of their
19 participants? That's the first
20 question.

21 And the second question
22 is about Philly Home at Girard. I
23 know Councilmember Brooks asked
24 for -- her question is my question.

1 She asked for it to be in writing.
2 I'm asking if you can put it on
3 record, like what is the process to
4 get -- what's intake process for
5 Philly Home at Girard? Who are the
6 participants? Is it only for folks
7 who are experiencing substance
8 abuse or does the mobile outreach
9 workers, are they able to get folks
10 from anywhere in the city to
11 provide them with shelter at Philly
12 Home at Girard?

13 MR. HOLLOMAN: Thanks
14 for that question. I'll answer the
15 first part as it relates to food
16 quality and shelter. So we provide
17 three meals and a snack in all of
18 our shelters and we follow the City
19 Health Department Healthy Meal
20 Snacks. And if there's a children
21 and food program, we follow what we
22 call CA -- children and food
23 programs, there's a child
24 nutritionist program that we have

1 to do with protein, grain, fruits
2 and so forth.

3 So if anyone is
4 reporting that they have not gotten
5 a meal, this is part of our
6 standards. We have a food service
7 unit that goes out and monitor food
8 quality in all of our shelters. So
9 we definitely want to know that,
10 Councilman Young --

11 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: So do
12 they know when you're coming to
13 monitor that? That's the thing,
14 right. Because at that same day I
15 went to the shelter and knocked on
16 the door and they looked like they
17 saw a ghost. They're like, oh, no,
18 right, because they know what's
19 going on.

20 And so, I'm just asking
21 that along similar lines of what
22 Councilman Jones and Harrity said.
23 I mean, we cannot let them know
24 when you are coming out because

1 then things are totally different.
2 And when I spoke to these young
3 women who are parents, they're just
4 sitting in a park all day long
5 because there's nowhere else for
6 them to go. The food is horrible,
7 right. And so, they're sitting in
8 a park eating like crab platters,
9 right, because they're not allowed
10 to go back in.

11 So what are I guess the
12 protocols again for your shelters
13 for the food and again the level of
14 service that the participants are
15 getting or are getting throughout
16 the day to lift them out of that
17 situation?

18 MR. HOLLOMAN: Yeah,
19 absolutely right. There are some
20 monitor visits that the provider is
21 fully aware, but we can increase
22 and we are going to increase more
23 unannounced visits during those
24 meal times to make sure that we

1 have additional eyes on that and
2 those type of issues there.

3 MS. HILL: And if you
4 don't mind, I would love to get
5 information on which one you're
6 specifically talking about because
7 I want to be able to address that
8 as well, because we do have a
9 standard that we want people to --
10 everyone should be able to have a
11 decent meal, and crackers and tuna
12 or whatever was that it sounds like
13 you were describing does not sound
14 acceptable.

15 Philly Home Girard I
16 will say is divided into two
17 programs and I can speak
18 specifically to the OHS floors at
19 Philly Home at Girard. That comes
20 through our intake process. The
21 individuals that come there is
22 shelter-based system. The fifth
23 and sixth floors are DBHIDS-run
24 floors so they would be able to

1 describe a little bit more about
2 that process.

3 I do know it's low
4 barrier. And what we are looking
5 at, at that building is not
6 separating necessarily the services
7 offered by who runs the floor, but
8 being able to provide services to
9 anyone who comes in there. So
10 there's behavior health staff
11 that's in the building that comes
12 in and provides services. There's
13 medical opportunities. There's
14 Narcotics Anonymous that they're
15 trying to stand up. So all of
16 these are for the benefit of anyone
17 who comes in. However, the OHS-run
18 floors come through our intake
19 process.

20 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: So
21 how do you get to your intake
22 process is my question? Is it --
23 is it through your outreach
24 workers? If I'm experiencing

1 homelessness, can I go to that
2 facility and say, hey, I'm
3 experiencing homelessness? Can I
4 do intake on site? Like, what is
5 the intake process?

6 MS. HILL: So our intake
7 process for our floors are similar
8 to any of our shelters. They can
9 go to any of our intake sites.
10 They can indicate from an outreach
11 provider that they are willing to
12 come in. They will either bring
13 them the intake or make the phone
14 call directly to us.

15 We are piloting a
16 process with outreach that they
17 don't have to bring someone to
18 intake. If it's somebody that's
19 known, they can call our team.
20 We'll then work with them to get
21 them placement without having to
22 come to an intake site. So our
23 goal is the moment that someone's
24 ready to come in, that we are

1 placing them somewhere.

2 So for our floors, yes,
3 there is a process. But that
4 process is multi-faceted. You can
5 go to outreach. You can go to an
6 intake site. They can meet with
7 like mobile assessors. Just
8 depending on where they are, we
9 want to be able to try to get them
10 in. It may not be specific to that
11 site. It might be based on
12 availability of what we have at any
13 of our sites. But I don't want the
14 impression that they have to go to
15 one specific place to get to our
16 floors at Philly Home at Girard.

17 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: And
18 what's the total number of beds for
19 your floors at Philly Home at
20 Girard?

21 MS. HILL: It's 132.

22 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
23 you, Mr. President.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Thank you.

2 Majority Leader Gilmore.

3 Richardson.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Yes, thank you. Thank
6 you very much, Council President,
7 and thank you colleagues.

8 And thank you again to
9 the team. I want to submit the
10 balance of my specific detailed
11 questions for the record, only so
12 that we get clarity to understand
13 like if there's any underspend and
14 how to plan for next year within
15 our budget process.

16 I want to end on case
17 management and sort of how people
18 traverse the system because I think
19 that's sort of the most important
20 part that we need to continue to
21 understand. You all had stated
22 that case managers have the
23 following caseload. So 1 per 25
24 families or 1 per 35 participants.

1 You had also mentioned
2 that 80% of the case management
3 costs are covered by state and
4 federal grant funds, a total of
5 \$2.9 million from the state and
6 \$1.2 million from the federal
7 government. And then the
8 additional 20% of those costs are
9 covered by the General Fund, so a
10 large majority are grants revenue.

11 Do we anticipate any
12 reductions in case management funds
13 either from the state or the
14 federal government at this point?
15 And I think keywords are going to
16 be at this point. And how are we
17 preparing in case we see any
18 unanticipated reductions in those
19 funds from a General Fund
20 perspective in particular? And how
21 much does the City spend on case
22 management out of our General Fund
23 in total?

24 And then, is there a

1 national standard or best practice
2 for case management ratios for us
3 to understand the information that
4 you all shared relative to the
5 families and the participants? If
6 there is a standard or best
7 practice, what is it and what would
8 it cost us to reach that particular
9 level?

10 And then finally, what
11 are the qualifications -- this is
12 on my workforce development hat --
13 to be a case manager? What level
14 of training do they receive? How
15 often do these trainings take
16 place? And one of the things I
17 think we hear is around the process
18 delays from the case managers are
19 regularly cited as issues for
20 participants who are looking to get
21 into permanent housing. So how
22 often are you all evaluating those
23 policies and processes and
24 evaluating the case managers?

1 MS. HILL: Thank you.

2 So the best practice depends on the
3 vulnerability of the population,
4 but it can range anywhere from 1 to
5 15 to 1 to 25 as you mentioned,
6 just based on what the population
7 may need.

8 And with that, I will
9 say to qualify it just depends also
10 on the services. So there are
11 certified peer specialists that may
12 work at some sites, certified
13 recovery specialists. Some sites
14 use what are called support
15 specialists that come in and help
16 with some of the case management
17 needs for the individuals.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: So meaning, with the
20 numbers that you all provided, the
21 1 for 25 and the 1 for 35 and the
22 25 is for families, 35 for
23 participants, do you break that
24 down based on the particular

1 population? Do you understand what
2 I'm saying, based on your response?
3 How do you break that down?

4 MS. HILL: Are you
5 saying the ratio?

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Yes. So I asked about
8 any best practices around case
9 management ratios, and you said it
10 depends on the vulnerability of the
11 population. So what I'm saying is
12 are you all breaking down the
13 numbers that you provided even
14 further in groups, meaning mental
15 health, substance abuse? Do you
16 break it down even further and then
17 change the ratios or is this just
18 the overall number?

19 MS. HILL: Right now I
20 believe that's the overall number,
21 but we can look at what we're
22 provided from the different
23 entities to see if we have the
24 actual breakdown ratio based on the

1 actual site and the services that
2 are provided at that site.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Okay.

5 MS. HILL: And then I'm
6 sorry. Can you give me the next
7 question?

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: And then the
10 qualifications to be a case
11 manager, what level of training do
12 they receive and how often do the
13 trainings take place? And then
14 relative to process delays that we
15 hear about within the case
16 management system, how often are
17 you evaluating those policies and
18 the processes and also the case
19 managers?

20 MS. HILL: Thank you.
21 So it depends on -- I hate to keep
22 saying it depends, but it does
23 depend on the level of service. So
24 for example, if they are just

1 providing linkage -- and saying
2 just feels like it's minimizing
3 what they do because that is still
4 a lot of important work that
5 they're doing, but if they're
6 providing linkages between the
7 person's other services, that is a
8 different level of skill set then
9 someone who is actually providing
10 some of those services on site.

11 So with that -- so if
12 they are providing some of the
13 linkage services, then it may just
14 be some experience of anywhere from
15 no experience with supervision on
16 site, you know, entry level being
17 able to provide some of those
18 services all the way up to social
19 workers being able to provide the
20 services. And again, it just
21 depends on whether or not the site
22 is actually doing all the case
23 management themselves, including
24 some of the behavior health

1 services or if they're doing more
2 linkages of services.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Okay. And I'll put
5 the rest of the questions on the
6 record even around the
7 qualifications for the case
8 managers, because we want to
9 understand their process.

10 And then finally, I am
11 committed to -- and I told David
12 Holloman this I think last year --
13 visiting with the new family
14 shelter that we worked on together,
15 which is the reason why I started
16 on this journey, when the family
17 called my office with the children
18 and we had to put them up in a
19 hotel and it just went from there.
20 So I'm committed to visiting the
21 new shelter in the Northwest. But
22 I wanted to ask if we wanted to go
23 to any of the shelters at any time
24 unannounced, are we able to do

1 that?

2 MS. HILL: With some of
3 them, yes. Others it just may --
4 for example, we fund domestic
5 violence shelters and some of the
6 other ones. So it would just
7 depend on the nature of the
8 shelter, but we certainly can
9 provide you the list that you
10 should be able to come to
11 unannounced. And I welcome it and
12 I definitely want to know if you
13 see things that are concerning.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
15 RICHARDSON: Okay. That would be
16 great if we could get the list.
17 Okay. Have a great day. Thank
18 you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
20 JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you for
21 your testimony. Thank you for your
22 hard work in addressing this issue.
23 We know it's not an easy issue to
24 work on.

1 And with that being
2 said, Council will be at ease until
3 2:30 and we will wrap up the
4 afternoon with the Fire Department
5 and Licenses and Inspections.

6 (Council at ease.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Good afternoon, everyone.

9 (Good afternoon.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: Good afternoon, everyone.

12 (Good afternoon.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: We will continue the
15 Committee of the Whole.

16 Ms. Loughhead, will you
17 please call the next panel.

18 THE CLERK: We'll have
19 Jeffrey Thompson, Fire Commissioner
20 for Philadelphia Fire Department.
21 And then we'll also bring up
22 Bridget Greenwald, Commissioner for
23 Quality of Life, Department of L&I,
24 and Basil Merenda, Commissioner of

1 Inspection, Safety and Compliance.

2 (Witnesses approached

3 Witness table.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: And so, the way this is

6 going to work you all will give

7 your testimony, and then members of

8 Council will have a chance for the

9 rest of the afternoon to ask

10 questions of both departments.

11 Commissioner, please

12 state your name for the record and

13 please begin your testimony.

14 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

15 Good afternoon, Council President

16 Johnson and members of Council.

17 I'm Jeffrey Thompson, Fire

18 Commissioner. Joining me today are

19 several members of my executive

20 team. The Philadelphia Fire

21 Department continues to provide

22 comprehensive all-hazard risk

23 reduction and emergency response

24 while working to ensure the health

1 and safety of PFD members and
2 supporting the Mayor's goal of
3 building mutual trust and safety in
4 city neighborhoods.

5 The Fire Department's
6 goals for Fiscal Year 2026 include
7 graduating up to 32 firefighters
8 and paramedics from our technical
9 rescue school, which certifies
10 participants as hazmat technicians
11 and qualifies them to perform
12 specialized rescue operations. And
13 this is going to help us in our
14 current operations as well as to
15 prepare us for 2026.

16 Additionally, we are
17 planning on hiring and training and
18 onboarding 200 emergency medical
19 service providers. We're also
20 going to work with our partners to
21 make critical building repairs at
22 the fire academy that will help us
23 to get more cadets through the
24 academy.

1 We're going to continue
2 to conduct intensive recruitment
3 campaigns to attract a diverse
4 candidate pool for the upcoming
5 fire civil service exam. We're
6 going to institute an upskilling
7 program for PFD EMTs to become
8 paramedics. And finally, we will
9 strive to fill non-uniform
10 vacancies in the PFD's
11 administrative, fiscal and
12 compliance units. And it is my
13 honor and privilege to be here
14 today to answer any questions that
15 you may have.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

18 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

19 For the record, my name is Basil
20 Merenda. I am responsible for the
21 construction side of Mayor Parker's
22 historic reorganized and
23 reinvigorated L&I better known as
24 L&I's Inspection, Safety and

1 Compliance Division. Joining me is
2 my senior staff.

3 I'd like to thank
4 Council President Johnson and all
5 the Councilmembers for affording me
6 the opportunity to submit testimony
7 on behalf of L&I's ISC Division,
8 which formally went into effect on
9 March 5, 2024. I'm pleased to
10 report that the ISC's first year of
11 operation has been very productive
12 and transformative.

13 First, we made great
14 strides in getting a City
15 department that wholly is dedicated
16 to the oversight of citywide
17 construction projects properly
18 organized and up and running. I
19 can report once and for all that
20 the City has a department focused
21 exclusively on construction
22 development that can be more
23 accessible, responsive and
24 accountable to the City Council,

1 contractors, community groups,
2 labor organizations, neighbors and
3 on construction projects throughout
4 the city.

5 As the Mayor says, we
6 have a city department that you
7 could see, touch and feel. At the
8 same time from day one, we ensured
9 that L&I's reorganization on the
10 construction side did not interrupt
11 the essential day-to-day operations
12 of the department, from plans
13 review and inspections to
14 enforcement and customer services,
15 making sure that the trains ran on
16 time as the old saying goes.
17 Moreover, I'm proud to note that
18 during this time period ISC
19 addressed two major citywide
20 challenges in a professional,
21 effective, dignified manner,
22 earning the trust and respect of
23 the Administration, our fellow city
24 agencies and the entire city.

1 I just want to point out
2 two priorities, Council President.
3 And I think this is good for the
4 Council to know about our goals and
5 objectives for this first year.
6 Number one, recruitment and
7 retention. In October, we welcomed
8 a new class of 20 inspectors with
9 16 candidates on track to enter the
10 field this summer.

11 Just this past week, we
12 also filled five newly-designated
13 Audits and Investigation Unit
14 investigators, positions that were
15 funded in last year's budget. And
16 early in March, we were able to
17 bring back a highly experienced
18 inspector who had previously left
19 city service thanks to the recent
20 city service regulation change that
21 allowed the reinstatement of
22 employees in good standing within
23 five years.

24 We also improved

1 significantly our enforcement
2 initiatives. We have achieved
3 measurable improvements in
4 addressing problematic contractors,
5 these fly-by-nights, through the
6 Audits and Investigation Unit, the
7 Clean Sites Initiative, Saturday
8 patrols and the Complaints Units.
9 These efforts have a tangible
10 impact on neighborhoods across the
11 city, and underpinning it all is
12 making the department more
13 accessible, responsive and
14 accountable to City Council,
15 contractors, all of our
16 stakeholders.

17 A shining example of
18 this effort is the system that we
19 have established working with
20 members and your respective Council
21 staff, on issues like construction
22 code violations, on safe
23 structures, substandard workmanship
24 and unpermitted activity. And

1 also, I want to note for the record
2 to highlight two particularly
3 notable accomplishments by our LSA
4 staff that rose to the occasion.

5 First, our Licenses and
6 Inspections plans examiners and
7 district inspectors distinguished
8 themselves with the record time it
9 took to review plans and inspect
10 building construction of the
11 Mayor's Riverview Wellness Center,
12 a key component of the Kensington
13 initiative. That center is now up
14 and running servicing folks.

15 Then on January 31st, on
16 display for the entire city to see,
17 our CSU inspectors did what they do
18 best, inspect unsafe and ID
19 properties. They stepped up, met
20 the horrifying task posed by the
21 Northeast plane crash, working all
22 weekend side-by-side with the
23 City's other first responders,
24 police, fire and the Office of

1 Emergency Management along with the
2 federal authorities.

3 So in conclusion, I
4 respectfully ask for the continued
5 support of the Council with your
6 partnership, our tireless work of
7 our ISC staff will ensure that we
8 can bring up a department that is
9 wholly focused on construction
10 projects large and small throughout
11 the city. Thank you, President.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you
14 very much. I just have a couple
15 brief questions.

16 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

17 GREENWALD: Do you want me to go?

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot
20 y'all two --

21 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

22 GREENWALD: Remember, two of us.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Y'all split the

1 department. Go ahead, Bridget.

2 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

3 GREENWALD: All right. I'll be
4 quick. Good afternoon, Council
5 President Johnson and members of
6 City Council. I'm Bridget Collins,
7 Greenwald, the Commissioner of the
8 Department of Licenses and
9 Inspections Quality of Life
10 Department. It is a pleasure to
11 appear before City Council today in
12 support of L&I's Fiscal Year '26
13 budget request.

14 As you have our written
15 testimony, which highlights the
16 many accomplishments and plans of
17 the department in front of you, I
18 will not belabor them. QOL has
19 taken on a proactive and
20 collaborative approach to education
21 and enforcement with many newly-
22 implemented programs. We
23 coordinate with the PPA and PPD on
24 our very successful PPL program, in

1 which we are out in the
2 neighborhoods every week stopping
3 illegal auto repairs.

4 We coordinate with
5 Commerce, community groups at every
6 District Council office on
7 commercial corridor business,
8 education and enforcement with our
9 B program. We work with CLIP,
10 Clean and Green, Sanitation and
11 Streets on the Clean and Green
12 Initiative. These are just a few
13 of the initiatives introduced since
14 the beginning of the change in
15 administration to improve the
16 quality of life in the city.

17 I would like to add one
18 thing that is not in the written
19 testimony, and that is about the
20 QOL team. QOL has many outstanding
21 employees that are super dedicated
22 and care about improving the
23 quality of life for the citizens of
24 Philadelphia. I would like to

1 acknowledge them publicly for their
2 commitment to public service. They
3 are out in every single
4 neighborhood every single day
5 providing education and
6 enforcement. They want to see this
7 city thrive.

8 I say it all the time.

9 I'm very proud to work in a place
10 where the employees show a genuine
11 sense of care and commitment to
12 their profession by following our
13 core mission of responsibly and
14 respectfully serving the community
15 of Philadelphia by providing
16 quality code, education and
17 enforcement services. The QOL team
18 is transparent. We're approachable
19 and we embrace positivity to make
20 the city the safest, cleanest and
21 greenest large city in the country
22 with economic opportunity for all.

23 We're on the energy bus
24 journey and it is paying off

1 immensely. Thank you for indulging
2 me. I'm happy to answer any
3 questions you may have.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. And
6 first, I want to thank Commissioner
7 Thompson and his team for
8 partnering with City Council as we
9 embark upon fire prevention
10 initiatives where we will be
11 distributing fire alarms throughout
12 the 10 Councilmanic Districts in
13 partnership with At-large members,
14 so we just want to thank you and
15 your team for being proactive and
16 collaborative as we focus on saving
17 lives here in the city of
18 Philadelphia.

19 Also, I want to thank
20 Bridget and Basil for your work as
21 you embark upon a new department
22 that has been restructured and
23 reorganized, put it that way, to
24 address quality-of-life issues as

1 well as making sure we're providing
2 a level of oversight of the
3 construction projects that are
4 taking place across the city of
5 Philadelphia. And thank you for
6 taking my calls at all times of the
7 day and/or evening and the timeless
8 response.

9 And also, Bridget, your
10 team worked with me and my staff
11 and the Philadelphia Police
12 Department and Philadelphia Parking
13 Authority to address illegal auto
14 mechanics in Southwest
15 Philadelphia. They were taking
16 over a particular shopping plaza
17 that held the tenants there hostage
18 to the reckless quality of life --
19 the reckless work that was being
20 done in terms of bringing down the
21 quality of life of the individuals
22 who were tenants inside that
23 particular shopping center in
24 Southwest Philadelphia, so I just

1 want to thank you very much.

2 And I want to thank you
3 also on behalf of the Southwest
4 Senior Center seniors who were also
5 held hostage in their senior center
6 based upon that work that was being
7 done. So I just want to
8 acknowledge that for the public.

9 And to our Philadelphia
10 firefighters, we thank all of you
11 for your hard work and your
12 dedication. It's not guaranteed
13 when you leave the house in the
14 morning that you will return. So I
15 want to ask that we give them a
16 round of applause --

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: Because the work that you
20 and your team do, the work that the
21 EMTs do definitely should be
22 supported. And also, a lot of
23 people, we only think about fires
24 when we think about our firemen and

1 EMT teams, but also around the
2 issue of gun violence, right. When
3 a person is shot down or murdered
4 in the streets or severely injured,
5 most people may or may not know,
6 separate from the EMT showing up
7 you see a fire truck as well.
8 Normally, that's when a person's
9 life is deceased so we do thank you
10 for being on the front line when it
11 comes to the issue of gun violence
12 as well.

13 Just had a couple
14 questions. Commissioner Thompson,
15 give me an overview on your
16 strategy for recruitment of
17 Philadelphia firefighters and EMTs.
18 And then also, we know that the
19 civil service exam is administered
20 every two years. Is there any way
21 that we can have it done more
22 frequently, maybe once a year so we
23 can address the need of recruitment
24 of more firefighters and EMTs?

1 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

2 Well, thank you for that question,
3 Council President. In terms of how
4 we recruit, first and foremost we
5 like to think of our employees, our
6 firefighters and EMTs, as our best
7 advocates for getting the word out
8 about the important work we do.

9 But more formally, what
10 we do is we have a dedicated
11 recruitment unit that canvases the
12 entire city. We try to target in
13 particular underrepresented
14 populations so that we can ensure
15 that our Fire Department represents
16 the City of Philadelphia as a
17 whole.

18 In addition to that, we
19 have a program at the Randolph
20 School, the Randolph Skill Center.
21 We have a program there. We also
22 have our Fire Explorers program,
23 all designed to introduce younger
24 folks to the profession of

1 professional firefighting and EMTs.
2 So in terms of the
3 testing cadence, it's traditionally
4 been two years. We have been
5 fortunate in the Fire Department.
6 We get thousands of applicants
7 every year. And with the length of
8 time that it takes to train a
9 firefighter, which is approximately
10 nine months, we can usually put 75
11 cadets through the academy per
12 time. So typically we can get
13 approximately 150 people off those
14 lists out of thousands of people.
15 And then we also have to consider
16 our internal HR staff. Processing
17 new cadets is a very timely effort.
18 So we have to ensure that in
19 addition to processing potential
20 new recruits, they can still manage
21 the day-to-day work that we have to
22 do, but we will take it under
23 advisement to see if it makes sense
24 to perhaps have the cadence of the

1 test more frequently.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: And last question before
4 I turn it over to my members, just
5 give an update regarding the Fire
6 Academy, the need for repairs
7 regarding the building and also
8 specifically what's necessary for
9 instructors to conduct live burns
10 required for cadet certification
11 and also the timeline and support
12 needed for the repairs?

13 I think one of my
14 colleagues was actually advocating,
15 I think the Chairman of Labor and
16 he'll probably do a deeper dive
17 which is Councilmember Jim Harrity,
18 but we're all in support of a new
19 academy being built, in support of
20 in the Northeast. But give us an
21 idea of the conditions and the
22 things that's needed because we
23 want to be advocates and partners
24 in making sure that you have what

1 you need to make sure we have the
2 best and brightest fire cadets
3 graduating and going out to do the
4 great work on behalf of the City of
5 Philadelphia.

6 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
7 Absolutely. So these careers all
8 began in 5200 Pennypack in the
9 great Northeast. And that academy
10 was built -- the construction
11 started 1978 with the first class
12 graduating in 1981 I believe. And
13 so, if you can imagine from 1981
14 until today the amount of times
15 that burn tower has been set on
16 fire. And so, it's been quite a
17 bit.

18 And with that, the heat,
19 the water that's thrown around it
20 has deteriorated that masonry
21 structure over time. And what
22 we've done over the years is
23 basically we've done a lot of
24 patchwork. There's spalling of

1 concrete. Some of the rebar is
2 bent and it becomes unsafe.

3 So every five years, the
4 NFPA requires that these burn
5 towers are inspected. We just had
6 an inspection in 2023. It's pretty
7 comprehensive and it talked about
8 all of the damage to the tower and
9 what needs to be done to repair it.
10 I have a very detailed list that I
11 can share with you if you need it.
12 And so, it has become so bad that
13 our current cadet cohort is being
14 trained in Bucks County because we
15 cannot use our burn tower. So --

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: You said you cannot use
18 your burn tower?

19 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

20 We cannot use our burn tower
21 currently because it is unsafe.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Now, explain to the wider
24 public and members of Council how

1 the burn tower is used in your
2 operations, the training that takes
3 place with the burn tower just for
4 the record?

5 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

6 Yep. So for the record, we do
7 structural firefighting. That
8 building is designed to simulate a
9 structure. It's a five-story
10 building. We can simulate opening
11 roofs and windows, all of the
12 tactics that we use to fight fires.
13 And without being able to utilize
14 that, we cannot adequately train
15 our firefighters. So it is a
16 fundamental part of the training of
17 a professional firefighter.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

19 JOHNSON: How long have you not
20 been using it?

21 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

22 I believe this is --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: How long has it been out

1 of operation?

2 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

3 So over the last several years
4 there have been more than one
5 occasion when we could not use it
6 to train our cadets. And what has
7 happened over the years is we would
8 make temporary repairs. And right
9 now it's in a state that even the
10 temporary repairs don't make sense,
11 so we literally had to farm out
12 that training.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: And who do you farm out
15 that training to, the cost?

16 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

17 I can get you the cost but we
18 are --

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

20 JOHNSON: Can you get that to me?

21 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

22 Pardon me?

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Can you get that to me,

1 the cost?

2 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

3 Absolutely.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

5 JOHNSON: And who does the training

6 as well? Who does the training?

7 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

8 So we are basically using the

9 facilities of the Bucks County Fire

10 Training Academy, but it's

11 Philadelphia Fire Department

12 employees that are conducting the

13 training. We are just using their

14 facilities. We are still doing the

15 training.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

17 JOHNSON: And they're charging us?

18 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

19 They do charge us.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: Quite sure. And so, when

22 I say the cost, if you could

23 provide to the Chair for members

24 the cost that we are paying Bucks

1 County to utilize their facility as
2 opposed to us investing in our own
3 facility. And I think that's just
4 a capital investment.

5 The Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Jim Harrity for a
7 point of information.

8 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: And
9 add in the tower.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
11 JOHNSON: Can you speak onto the
12 mic please?

13 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I'm
14 sorry, Council President.

15 I just want them to add
16 in the tower, the cost of fixing
17 that because we're paying Delco
18 apparent -- are we paying Delco to
19 train on the tower? That's all.

20 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
21 Council President Johnson, we are
22 paying Bucks County \$30,000 for the
23 use of their facility.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: And

1 how about Delco, are we paying them
2 anything for use of the tower?

3 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
4 Yes, if we train in Delco, we will
5 pay them as well.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
7 JOHNSON: So we're paying other
8 counties basically as opposed to
9 investing in our own.

10 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I'd
11 like to be put back into the queue.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
13 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes
14 Councilmember Majority Leader
15 Gilmore Richardson.

16 And is that annually
17 that we are paying?

18 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
19 That is per class.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
21 JOHNSON: How many classes per
22 year?

23 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
24 Because it's nine months per cadet

1 class, we're typically doing one
2 class per year.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: So it's pretty much once
5 a year you're paying the amount?

6 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
7 That is correct.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Okay. Majority Leader
10 Gilmore, Richardson.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Council
13 President, for the recognition.

14 The question was really
15 the clarification. Are we paying
16 Bucks County and Delaware County,
17 and then how much and then the
18 frequency? I just couldn't get
19 that straight. Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
21 Thank you for that question. It
22 depends on what facility we are
23 using. Currently we are using the
24 Bucks County facility and it's a

1 one-time cost of \$30,000 per class.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Thank you. Just two
4 other questions I'm going to ask
5 for L&I regarding how are we going
6 about monitoring and growing to
7 address -- we are focusing on a
8 proposal to build 30,000 units of
9 affordable housing. So half will
10 be the preservation of
11 infrastructure. And there's a
12 particular number that's going to
13 focus on building. And so, when
14 you begin wrapping up building, you
15 want to make sure that developers
16 are building in compliance, right.
17 And often times, you know, every
18 now and then I get a call about
19 somebody building in the middle of
20 the night because they didn't
21 properly get their permit. So just
22 give us an idea of L&I's role with
23 the Mayor's proposed H.O.M.E.
24 Initiative?

1 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

2 Yeah, Council President. It's a
3 two-part approach. First, of
4 course we have to do plans review
5 and then we have to inspect the
6 actual building. And we made with
7 the Riverview Wellness Center we
8 implemented some very good protocol
9 changes to plans review and that we
10 may be able to see if we can adapt
11 that to the new 30,000 projects
12 that the Mayor wants to build.

13 And then at the same
14 time we made our inspection staff
15 because we're kind of short
16 staffed, we made our inspection
17 staff available almost on a 24-hour
18 basis. Now, I don't think we have
19 to do that for the H.O.M.E.
20 program, but we are willing to
21 use -- I describe it as overtime
22 strategically to get that all
23 accomplished. So we can accomplish
24 that.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Is there a proposal to
3 increase your staff that also
4 aligns with this proposal to build
5 30,000 units, because I would think
6 you would need more manpower if
7 you're going to be doing all this
8 significant building in the 10
9 Councilmanic Districts in the city
10 of Philadelphia. So as part of
11 your request, a specific amount to
12 deal with that because you just
13 said I'm short-staffed and we got
14 folks working 24 hours, and if
15 we're going to do NPI on steroids,
16 if we're going to do Turn the Key
17 on steroids, I would think we would
18 need more manpower from L&I but
19 explain to me so we can all get
20 clarity and an understanding of
21 what that will look like.

22 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

23 Our gameplan going forward is to
24 first make prudent use of the

1 vacancies that we have. I believe
2 we may have about 20 or so
3 vacancies. So our plan is once
4 this class gets through, we want to
5 start a new class in October for
6 maybe 10, 12, and then another
7 class after that. And then of
8 course we could pull back, reassess
9 and see where we are and see if we
10 need additional inspectors.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Okay. So you are going
13 to be hiring additional inspectors
14 though soon?

15 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

16 Yes.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: That's part of your
19 budget request?

20 COMMISSIONER MERENDA: I
21 believe -- we want to work through
22 our vacancies first, Council
23 President.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: All right. So you don't
2 have any requests for additional
3 inspectors right now?

4 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
5 No.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

7 JOHNSON: All right. So I'm just
8 trying to understand. That's all.
9 I would just think if we're about
10 to embark upon borrowing \$1 billion
11 to build 30,000 units of
12 housing/the preservation of units,
13 which means you're going to have
14 developers who are going to be
15 participating aggressively
16 developing these homes because the
17 Mayor stated that she wants to get
18 these 30,000 units done by the end
19 of her first term. And her first
20 term is 2027, which means soon as
21 we -- if we pass this bill and we
22 support this proposal, that means
23 starting this summer and going into
24 the fall to meet that 2027 end of

1 her first term deadline. To
2 realistically build or preserve
3 30,000 units, then we got to hit
4 the ground running.

5 And that means a lot of
6 work is going to come out of your
7 purview and a lot of heavy lifting
8 is going to be under your team just
9 to make sure people are building in
10 compliance, so we don't have
11 another 2030 Market Street incident
12 happening because everyone's
13 aggressively trying to build so
14 fast to reach this goal.

15 And so, I would just
16 hope that you and your team would
17 think about -- and I don't know how
18 it works on the Administration
19 side, but revisit the request
20 because I would just think that
21 because we're going to undertake
22 such a huge historical undertaking,
23 that an agency such as L&I that
24 deals with compliance of making

1 sure developers are doing what
2 they're supposed to do so no one
3 gets hurt, structures are safe
4 parties, 30,000 units are falling
5 apart as a result of us rushing to
6 reach that deadline, that you will
7 be coming to Council requesting
8 additional staff.

9 But if the reasoning is
10 because you have vacancies now,
11 what's your strategy to ramp up
12 hiring folks so you can have a team
13 and be able to tackle this 30,000
14 units of affordable housing?

15 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
16 Like we did with our first class
17 that's currently in training, I
18 call it a full court press. We
19 reached out to contractor
20 associations to see if any of their
21 members, maybe older members that
22 want to kind of move on to put the
23 tools down as they say. We also
24 reached out to labor unions, the

1 trade unions. And also, we're
2 reaching out to the vo-tech
3 programs throughout the city to try
4 to introduce young people to
5 construction trades and introduce
6 them to what L&I is all about and
7 what we do.

8 And we have this
9 investigator position that is a
10 real good entry-level position for
11 young folks that are interested in
12 construction trades. And once they
13 get into L&I, they can develop some
14 skills and then eventually take the
15 test for an inspector position.
16 And then of course the overall
17 outreach is also to include an
18 effort to try to attract back to
19 L&I, some L&I inspectors who left
20 who went to the private sector, who
21 left because of a variety of
22 reasons.

23 And there's a new L&I
24 out there. There's a new culture.

1 So we want to try to bring these
2 folks back like we did with that
3 one really experienced inspector
4 Mark, so that's our what I call
5 full-court strategy to try to bring
6 back folks to L&I and fill those
7 vacant positions. And I want to
8 thank you for raising the issue
9 about the need for more inspectors,
10 that hopefully if the program gets
11 goes off and is really effective,
12 then we may have to come back and
13 ask for additional inspectors. But
14 for now we're good where we stand.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Understood. Thank you,
17 Commissioner. Give me an idea,
18 we're talking about demolitions of
19 vacant properties. It takes about
20 an average of 123 days to demolish
21 an imminently dangerous property.
22 How can that timeline be shortened
23 or is that a legal requirement that
24 the time frame from 123 days is the

1 actual time that it takes to
2 demolish the imminently dangerous
3 property?

4 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

5 Yeah, that is a problem, Council
6 President. And in my opinion as an
7 attorney, my opinion is that due
8 process considerations, which we
9 have to recognize and we have to
10 respect, puts additional time
11 delays on all that, in addition to
12 the fact that we don't have limited
13 resources.

14 But what our folks at
15 CSU would like to do, and CSU as
16 you know is focused on inspectors
17 that inspect unsafe and ID
18 properties and they administer the
19 City's demolition program. And we
20 want to try to focus maybe two
21 inspectors on dealing with
22 straightforward demolition type of
23 projects and inspections, and then
24 that would free up the rest of our

1 staff to focus on re-inspections
2 and try to get cases into court to
3 get us the order to demolish these
4 properties much quicker and on a
5 much expedited basis. But we are
6 up against due process, legal
7 proceedings that in my opinion
8 delay the process.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Thank you. Let's talk
11 about, Bridget, the Quality of Life
12 Unit. They originally set a goal
13 of resolving vacant open structure
14 and violations within 10 days and
15 it got extended to 30 days. Tell
16 me why we couldn't stick with the
17 10 days as opposed to 30.

18 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

19 GREENWALD: It's actually the same
20 thing that Basil just talked about,
21 the due process point. So we could
22 get to a vacant open property and
23 have it sealed in 10 days. But to
24 get the notice out and all that, we

1 realize that it's going to take us
2 30. We can actually get to it in
3 10, but to give all those notices
4 it's 30. So we figured we just
5 shot high with 10 and we put it
6 more realistically at 30.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Okay. And last, before I
9 turn it over to my colleagues, give
10 me an idea about the Business
11 Education and Enforcement program,
12 but also we have a law on the
13 books, I introduced legislation
14 some time ago to ban the selling of
15 toy guns, right unless they're like
16 a super bright orange, green,
17 yellow, but nothing that looks
18 similar to an actual real gun. I'm
19 just having an interest in working
20 with L&I, Philadelphia Police
21 Department to begin looking at
22 those stores that aren't really
23 following the law in terms of
24 selling these prototype toy guns.

1 And for me, it's a way
2 to -- some of these stores are
3 basically predators in the
4 neighborhood, to be quite frank
5 with you, preying on impoverished
6 neighborhoods, selling to the young
7 people in the neighborhood guns,
8 toy guns that look like real guns.
9 We had an incident that did took
10 place in Point Breeze where a
11 person had a toy gun and wound up
12 being shot, right.

13 And so, we'll have a
14 sidebar conversation in the future
15 about how we can collaborate and at
16 least just show up and show folks
17 that if you are selling them, it's
18 against the law that you can't be
19 selling them. But tell me about
20 the Business Education and
21 Enforcement program.

22 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
23 GREENWALD: Sure. We call it The
24 BEE for short, Business Education

1 and Enforcement. But what we did
2 is when we came in, we went to each
3 District Councilmember's office,
4 yourself included, and we said,
5 what are your pain points, where
6 are your pain points in your
7 District. And all 10 District
8 Councilmembers gave us their first
9 biggest corridor issue.

10 So we were on Frankford
11 Avenue. We are on Wyoming Avenue.
12 We're going to Rising Sun Avenue in
13 a couple weeks. Ogontz Avenue,
14 we've been everywhere, 52nd Street,
15 all throughout the city. And what
16 we've done is we've partnered with
17 the District Council office, we've
18 partnered with Commerce's MBAT team
19 and we've partnered with community
20 development corporations and just
21 regular community activists that
22 wanted to come out with us.

23 We do an education
24 piece. First, we walk out, we give

1 everyone a flyer. It's actually a
2 pamphlet. It's in every language
3 imaginable. We work with the
4 business owners. We talk to them.
5 We have Commerce there to actually
6 say, hey, here's some good things
7 that you can do, you could get the
8 facade grant, you can get all these
9 different things, we'll work with
10 you. Hey, you didn't know you were
11 supposed to be licensed here?
12 Well, you were, but you know what,
13 now you know and we're going to let
14 you get in the process.

15 We go back three to four
16 weeks later and that's when we
17 start the enforcement piece. If
18 someone's trying to do what they're
19 supposed to be doing, we work with
20 them. We work with them to come --
21 our thing is come into compliance,
22 right. We don't want to chase
23 businesses out of the city that are
24 doing good that just don't know,

1 right. So that's what we do.

2 So it's been super

3 successful. We're on our 18th one

4 coming up, which I believe is next

5 week I think. Then what we're

6 doing is after we do the first

7 piece, we do the enforcement, then

8 we go back out, you know what I

9 mean. We'll do a re-inspection.

10 And then some of those businesses

11 that just are not going to come

12 into compliance, then we take the

13 next step, whether that's a cease

14 or that's going to court or

15 whatever it is. But it's been very

16 successful to date.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: Great. Thank you very

19 much.

20 Just want to acknowledge

21 the presence of the Chair of

22 Licenses and Inspections Chairman

23 Mike Driscoll. Thank you for

24 joining us.

1 Chair recognizes

2 Councilmember Jim Harrity.

3 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

4 Thank you, Council President.

5 Just want to say thank
6 you all for coming out. The Fire
7 Department, I'm a grandson of a
8 firefighter. As a matter of fact,
9 a disabled firefighter. He was
10 tossed from a truck en route to a
11 job and he had to retire from the
12 fire department, but ended up
13 having a pretty good life at Boeing
14 for their fire department as an
15 injury office guy. So I have a lot
16 of respect for you guys.

17 Also curious, I put \$10
18 million on my first thing for
19 bonuses for first responders and
20 hard-to-fill positions with the
21 example of building inspectors. I
22 know the police have gotten theirs
23 worked out. Do you guys see any of
24 that bonus money first off for

1 recruitment?

2 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

3 GREENWALD: Was that for building
4 inspectors or Fire did you say?

5 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I
6 put it in and the actual language
7 said first responders with police,
8 paramedics especially and L&I
9 inspectors and the other was hard-
10 to-fill positions. But there was
11 10 million put into that, right,
12 when I first got here, maybe my
13 first budget cycle I believe or
14 second budget cycle. It was right
15 before when Mayor Parker was going
16 to take charge, yeah, take office.
17 So just curious if you guys ended
18 up with it. I know the police did
19 work out theirs because I didn't
20 think of the retention, so they had
21 to work out a retention thing.

22 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
23 Councilmember, we did not follow up
24 on that.

1 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

2 Maybe that's something that we
3 might have to look into again
4 trying to get some of these people,
5 especially the paramedics and hard-
6 to-fill positions. The bonus may
7 help. I know a lot of different
8 cities are doing that. They were
9 taking our police. That's why I
10 put it in in the first place.

11 And then my stuff's just
12 mostly for Fire. I'm going to skip
13 some of my numbers things. I'll
14 submit them. But are your staff
15 paramedics -- oh, no, I'm sorry.
16 Are there any areas of the city
17 that has no ALS or Advanced Life
18 Support medic units, and why? How
19 many days have you run out of
20 available ALS medic units in the
21 past year? How many units were
22 downgraded from ALS to BLS in the
23 past year? And that'll do it for
24 right now.

1 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
2 Councilmember Harrity, great
3 questions. I'm going to have my
4 Deputy Commissioner for EMS respond
5 to those questions.

6 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
7 Thank you, Commissioner.

8 MR. McCALL: Good
9 afternoon. My name is Martin
10 McCall, Deputy Commissioner for
11 Emergency Medical Services, and
12 thank you for those questions. We
13 have no area in the city of
14 Philadelphia that's not without an
15 ALS medic unit located within it.
16 All of our ALS medic units, we have
17 a staffing structure from which our
18 medic units, we want to keep them
19 at the highest level possible ALS.
20 And if that level cannot be
21 achieved, we have additional levels
22 in which we can go to such as an
23 intermediate level as well as
24 finally the basic level.

1 We do everything we can
2 within the available members in
3 which we have to keep our units
4 that are ALS, ALS. The number of
5 units that we have that downgraded
6 varies depending on the time of the
7 year and what happens and what
8 staffing we have available. But
9 again, we don't really track how
10 many we keep, how many are ALS and
11 how many are BLS. But we do
12 everything we can to keep all of
13 our units at the highest level we
14 can keep them.

15 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: But
16 you're telling me that there are no
17 areas of the city of Philadelphia
18 that don't have an Advanced Life
19 Support medic unit?

20 MR. McCALL: Every
21 zone -- and we divide the city into
22 six zones, right -- have ALS medic
23 units located within those zones.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: So

1 that would be six ALS medic units
2 is what we have?

3 MR. McCALL: No, sir.

4 We have 53 ALS medic units in the
5 city and they're divided up into
6 six zones.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

8 Okay. 53 in six zones.

9 MR. McCALL: And there's
10 24 hours, and we have 10 Basic Life
11 Support units in the city and they
12 are divided up amongst the zones.
13 So there's not a zone that does not
14 have an ALS medic unit located
15 within it.

16 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:

17 Well, that's good to hear.

18 Okay. Council
19 President, I know I heard the clock
20 and I want to be respectful of my
21 colleagues so I'll submit any other
22 questions I have in writing.

23 Thank you, Chief.

24 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

1 You're welcome.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Thank you. Councilmember
4 O'Rourke.

5 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

6 Thank you, Mr. President.

7 Commissioner Collins

8 Greenwald, blessings to you. Good
9 to see you.

10 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

11 GREENWALD: Thank you.

12 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: At
13 our March 18th Housing Committee
14 hearing, you said that in order to
15 get a proactive inspection program
16 up and running that could inspect
17 all of our rental units, the
18 department would need to hire 110
19 people with the budget increase of
20 around \$6.2 million plus vehicle
21 and space costs. The President's
22 already named this on the
23 development of the new unit side,
24 but the Administration is

1 committing \$800 million, \$1 billion
2 to the H.O.M.E. Initiative, and we
3 have a roughly \$61 million Housing
4 Trust Fund. As a point of
5 information, I actually believe
6 that L&I is the second highest
7 revenue earning department in the
8 Administration.

9 It's clear that we need
10 these inspectors all around,
11 especially on the proactive side.
12 It's also clear that we actually
13 have the money. So why are we not
14 making this modest \$6.2 million
15 investment in protecting our
16 housing stock, which by the way
17 could also create 110 good union
18 jobs for Philadelphians?

19 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
20 GREENWALD: Thank you. At the
21 hearing that we had in March, if
22 you recall I said that we were
23 actually working with Pew and we
24 were working with some best

1 practices on what we should do.
2 That number I threw out was a quick
3 and dirty number if you just divide
4 really simple math. Do I think we
5 need 110 inspectors? I don't know
6 for sure. I actually don't think
7 we do. I'm going to be honest, but
8 that's just my best guess.

9 So what I would like to
10 do is finish with that research
11 which should be done in the next
12 few months, and then actually come
13 with a really solid plan on how we
14 could do proactive rental licenses.
15 I don't think it's just a matter of
16 adding inspectors. I think there's
17 incentive programs for landlords
18 that are actually following all the
19 rules that we can offer. I think
20 there's something we should be
21 doing for new rental inspections --
22 new rental licenses.

23 I think the virtual
24 inspection program that we talked

1 about is going to kick off in June.
2 So I think all those factors coming
3 in are going to lead us to a very
4 comprehensive plan. But I'm just
5 not ready to put on paper exactly
6 what it is right this second.

7 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: It
8 sounds like those I think would be
9 great things in terms of creating a
10 comprehensive well-rounded plan,
11 but on the matter of inspectors it
12 would help if you could explain
13 this to me a little better for my
14 colleagues. As far as I
15 understand, the H.O.M.E. Plan is a
16 massive investment intent on
17 building -- because if you said you
18 don't even think we need 110, so
19 that would mean we might need less
20 so perhaps it could be cheaper.

21 But the H.O.M.E. Plan is
22 a massive investment intent on
23 building and preserving our housing
24 stock. Meanwhile we only inspect

1 roughly at this current stage 7% of
2 that particular housing stock that
3 we're trying to preserve. Why are
4 we not investing the same level of
5 resources and attention into a
6 proactive inspection system to
7 prevent homes from falling into
8 disrepair in light of the tight
9 timeline that Madam Mayor has
10 bravely set for herself, only
11 making more relevant the necessity
12 of a swift ramp-up? This seems to
13 be a moment where an ounce of
14 prevention actually is worth a
15 pound of cure.

16 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

17 GREENWALD: Okay. To answer that
18 question again, I think it'd be
19 very premature for me to go on the
20 record and say I needed 110
21 inspectors. I can't give a
22 different answer than that. I
23 mean, I can work with your group to
24 see what we need. I can work with

1 Pew and do the research and I can
2 work on see what best practices
3 would be, but actually that's where
4 we're at right now.

5 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

6 Okay. Did I hear the bell? I got
7 time?

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: (Gestured).

10 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

11 Thank you. Bless you.

12 Okay. Thank you for
13 joining us, Commissioner Thompson.
14 We all appreciate the work that you
15 and your firefighters do each and
16 every day. First, how many
17 paramedics do you have currently
18 and how many are you budgeted for?

19 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

20 Again, I'm going to bring the
21 Deputy Commissioner for EMS to
22 answer that question.

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

24 Thank you, sir.

1 MR. McCALL: So again,
2 my name is Martin McCall, Deputy
3 Commissioner for Emergency Medical
4 Services.

5 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:
6 Bless you, sir.

7 MR. McCALL: We
8 currently have roughly 212
9 paramedics enrolled in the Fire
10 Department, on staff at the Fire
11 Department.

12 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: As
13 you mentioned, the goal of hiring
14 200 EMS providers this year is
15 aggressive. How realistic is this
16 goal and what barriers will have to
17 be overcome to meet it?

18 MR. McCALL: Well, we
19 have a very robust program in place
20 now to bring on as many people as
21 we possibly can. We currently have
22 a list of EMTs that we are hiring
23 off of. We are scheduled to have
24 an EMT class start on the 12th with

1 73 people. We look to start
2 another class shortly after that of
3 EMTs and help get to that goal of
4 200.

5 In June we look to hire
6 a class of paramedics. We're
7 looking at about 10 paramedics
8 coming on board right now for that
9 class. We've opened the paramedic
10 list again. We've asked our
11 partners at OHR to open that list
12 for us again, which they did, they
13 helped us out and did that, to help
14 us capture any individuals that may
15 need some work due to the Crozer
16 closing and to bring those folks on
17 board. So that is currently open
18 to create another list for
19 paramedics.

20 And we want to bring
21 those folks on board as soon as we
22 can. And then we look to do
23 another class in the fall and then
24 another class hopefully by the

1 beginning of the next year. So
2 we're aggressively looking to bring
3 people on board to reach that
4 number and to get to at least 200.
5 If we can bring on more, we will.

6 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

7 Thank you very much.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Thank you. Also,
10 Commissioner, I just want to
11 acknowledge and got a chance to
12 work with some of your members, but
13 I've worked probably more with
14 Daniel McCarty more than others.
15 And so, I just want to acknowledge
16 you for your hard work and
17 dedication along with your team,
18 but thank you specifically in terms
19 of the outreach and support you
20 have been giving us and also the
21 Local 22 and most importantly the
22 Valiants. I learned about the
23 Valiants as a young man fresh out
24 of college working with a gentleman

1 named Harold James and Sheriff John
2 Green and also Commissioner Ayers
3 at that time early on. And so, the
4 Valiants have played a very
5 critical role in producing African
6 American firefighters in the City
7 of Philadelphia but also do a lot
8 of work with Local 22 as well. So
9 just want to thank y'all for your
10 hard work and dedication and
11 acknowledge that.

12 The Chair recognizes
13 Councilmember bass.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

15 Thank you, Mr. President. I wasn't
16 expecting to be up so soon.

17 Good afternoon. How's
18 everybody doing? I want to start
19 by just saying thank you to the
20 Philadelphia Fire Department for
21 all of your hard work. And I want
22 to especially shout out my two
23 neighbors who live across the
24 street who are firefighters, and

1 that's Bruce Canada and Larry
2 Carroll who are just great
3 neighbors, great citizens here in
4 the city of Philadelphia, great
5 civically-engaged, civically-minded
6 and fantastic firefighters.

7 So I did want to just
8 shout them out as well as for all
9 of those who are working throughout
10 the 8th Council District and the
11 various station locations through
12 Chestnut Hill, Mt. Airy,
13 Germantown, Nicetown Tioga, parts
14 of Olney, parts of Logan, parts of
15 West Oak Lane, parts of Feltonville
16 and parts of North Philly. You all
17 have a very difficult job and I
18 just want to just really say a big
19 thank you to all of you for your
20 public service.

21 L&I, so we have frequent
22 conversations, Basil, of course,
23 Bridget, you know it's always a
24 pleasure to see you guys. But I

1 want to start with a frequent
2 conversation that we have around
3 due process. Because I feel like
4 sometimes we give due process and
5 we give these really bad players an
6 opportunity to get it right when
7 they didn't start out right in the
8 first place.

9 And I want to say,
10 Commissioner Merenda, you recall we
11 went out to a location in the West
12 Oak Lane part of my District on
13 Ogontz Avenue. And this particular
14 business, which was a smoke shop,
15 had no license to operate, no
16 certificate of occupancy. They had
17 done construction without permits.
18 They had illegal signage. They did
19 the sale of tobacco without a
20 license. They had the sale of
21 loosies, loose cigarettes. They
22 had tobacco sales on the same block
23 as a school and church. They had a
24 lack of heat and air circulation.

1 There were exposed radiator pipes,
2 loose and exposed wires, drug
3 paraphernalia, on and on. And you
4 remember that one, I'm sure.

5 But there's so many of
6 these locations and it's so
7 frustrating because people really
8 want something to be done. These
9 are a nuisance in our community.
10 And I know you get it. So I guess
11 I'm just wondering how do we figure
12 out a way so that one person's due
13 process doesn't impede on the
14 rights of the community in which
15 they're operating and disturbing,
16 to be quite honest?

17 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
18 Well, Councilmember, if the
19 activity involves actual
20 construction we can go out there
21 and put a stop work order if
22 they're not complying with the
23 code. If they're going beyond the
24 scope of their permits, we could do

1 that immediately. We don't have to
2 go to court to do something along
3 those lines.

4 However, if it's already
5 built, if it's operating, then
6 that's where Bridget's folks take
7 over.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

9 Right.

10 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

11 GREENWALD: I can jump in on this
12 one too. Yeah, so to Basil's
13 point, new construction he can put
14 a stop work order up. We can go
15 out inspect if it's violations. We
16 issue usually an intent to cease
17 and then we'll issue a cease,
18 right.

19 Usually, when we issue a
20 cease I'm going to say a majority
21 of the time people will appeal and
22 they'll try to get -- this is where
23 your due process question is coming
24 in, right. So if someone's

1 appealing, there's certain things
2 you can't appeal. But there are a
3 lot of things you can and they
4 appeal these violations. And while
5 they're appealing, there's a stay
6 of the enforcement. And that's
7 where the frustration comes in for
8 all of us.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes,
10 yes. So what can -- I'm just
11 thinking that we need to think
12 about it differently. We need to
13 have some sort of out-of-the-box
14 way of approaching some of these
15 matters. Because people look at
16 us, people are angry at us, that a
17 business like this one as an
18 example is still open and
19 operating. They came in with no
20 license with -- they did everything
21 wrong. They flagged their nose at
22 the City of Philadelphia and
23 they're still operating. They
24 probably don't even have a tax

1 account so that we're collecting
2 tax revenue or that they're paying
3 taxes like they're supposed to.

4 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

5 GREENWALD: So to these instances
6 to your point, we're starting to
7 change language. We're working
8 with the Law Department on how -- I
9 said there's a stay of enforcement
10 now. We have this language called,
11 like certified language. It's
12 legal language. But anyway we're
13 going to start putting them on our
14 violations and it's going to stop
15 some of those stays of enforcement
16 under certain appeals. So I think
17 that's going to help a lot.

18 So we're working through
19 the -- we have the language now.
20 We're just working on how do we get
21 it onto our NOV's and how do we get
22 that through the system where we
23 don't put it for every single
24 thing. But these more egregious

1 types of violations, they'll go out
2 in that way. So I think that's
3 going to be helpful.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

5 Okay.

6 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

7 Councilmember, internally what
8 we've done is also establish what
9 we call a Court District Unit that
10 is to address the backlog in cases,
11 because we saw a lot of our
12 inspectors get frustrated along
13 with the constituents. They write
14 a case and then it kind of
15 languishes. So we put together a
16 court district that would focus on
17 re-inspecting these units, getting
18 together the evidence, getting
19 together testimony, getting
20 together prepping witnesses so that
21 they're ready to go to court so
22 that there is no delay as far as
23 getting the cases ready. So it'll
24 help on the margin. It's not going

1 to it's not a panacea. It'll help
2 on the margin and it'll get those
3 cases ready to go into court when
4 they're ready.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

6 Well, listen, I know you all have a
7 really tough job and so I really
8 want to thank you as well for all
9 the work you do. I know that
10 you're trying. I think we're all
11 just really frustrated. I remember
12 there was a previous commissioner a
13 couple of administrations ago who
14 said, oh, L&I did a survey and 70%
15 of the city is happy with us. And
16 I said to her on the record, I
17 said, well, I must have the entire
18 other 30% living in the 8th Council
19 District because nobody's happy
20 with L&I.

21 But I know that you all
22 are working really hard and I know
23 it's a tough job. But it's just we
24 need more tools. We need more

1 tools. And I don't think
2 necessarily for whatever money we
3 put into the budget, I don't think
4 that that's going to get us the
5 tools. It'll get us bodies. But
6 if the bodies are going out and
7 we're getting the same result, then
8 we just need the tools I think.

9 So thank you,
10 Mr. President.

11 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
12 Councilmember, we do have our hands
13 full, Bridget and I. When I was
14 appointed Commissioner, folks would
15 come up to me and congratulate me.
16 And I would say to them, well, if
17 you're religious, say a prayer for
18 us because we'll need it.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:
20 Well, listen, like I said I know
21 how hard you all work and I
22 appreciate that we kind of beat
23 y'all up a little bit. But y'all
24 are still here and smiling and we

1 appreciate the work you do. Thank
2 you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: You say you got your
5 hands full, but one of the members
6 is trying to give you some money to
7 try to help you out. But y'all
8 saying we cool.

9 So with that being said,
10 the Chair recognizes Chairman Mike
11 Driscoll, L&I Committee.

12 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
13 Well, thank you, Mr. President.

14 Let me begin by
15 complimenting the Commissioner,
16 Fire Commissioner and both our
17 Commissioners of L&I. On January
18 31st when the plane went down in
19 the Roosevelt Mall your agencies
20 stepped right in.

21 Commissioner, you know
22 your men and women instead of
23 running away from things, you're
24 running into the danger. And I

1 can't tell you on a national level
2 it was recognized. And if I can
3 ask my colleagues to once again
4 acknowledge both these agencies for
5 stepping up during the --

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: So
8 I know both Commissioners of L&I.
9 I was very involved with the Task
10 Force report as you know, and it
11 was a pleasure working on that with
12 you folks. Basil, let me start
13 with you. Do you think it's
14 working?

15 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
16 Absolutely, Councilmember. Bridget
17 and I have kind of collaborated on
18 dividing up what should come under
19 my purview, what should come under
20 her purview. We're doing it like
21 seamlessly. And my opinion we're
22 operating as separate departments.
23 So operationally, we're ready to
24 operate a separate department. In

1 my case, focus exclusively on
2 construction, small and large
3 construction projects citywide.
4 And Bridget's, of course her group
5 is focused on enforcement of
6 business operations and things of
7 that nature. So we're rearing to
8 go.

9 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

10 That's good to hear. And I know,
11 Commissioner Greenwald, you and I
12 walked Frankford Avenue. And I
13 guess our Majority Leader will be
14 asking you questions with regard to
15 specific businesses in
16 collaboration with your department
17 to make sure we're not only just
18 going in and symbolically closing
19 them for an hour and then as soon
20 as the sun goes down, they're back
21 open. So I really want to make
22 sure that Katherine Gilmore
23 Richardson's legislation we pay a
24 lot of attention to that because I

1 think it's going to work.

2 I'm just very frustrated

3 with the Airbnb process on how

4 they're getting their licenses.

5 And, Commissioner, I'm working with

6 Tom McDade. We intend to introduce

7 legislation soon to close those

8 loopholes, because specifically one

9 property in my District got an

10 over-the-counter license.

11 Now, this is a building

12 in the middle of a block into

13 Taconey and they're now legal to

14 have an Airbnb for 25 people

15 regularly throughout the week. It's

16 insane. There's not enough

17 parking. The people were -- it's

18 becoming one big party zone. And I

19 know that that's not what the

20 program was intended for. So

21 Mr. McDade is working with Maura in

22 my office and we'll have that

23 legislation introduced hopefully

24 soon and close that loophole

1 because it's a problem, I'm sure
2 not just in the 6th Councilmanic
3 District but throughout the city of
4 Philadelphia. And I am nervous
5 that we're not going to be able to
6 fix the entire problem going into
7 2026 where I think we have a lot of
8 tourism that will benefit from this
9 program. But I think we have to be
10 mindful with the police department
11 and with your agency that there's
12 bad actors out there and we have to
13 address that. So I don't know if
14 you want to comment, Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
16 GREENWALD: Yeah, we look forward
17 to that. I've been working with
18 Tom McDade. He's been filling me
19 in on what you were doing. So we
20 look forward to that legislation.
21 Because as you know, we can only
22 enforce what's legislated, right.
23 So once we close that loophole, I
24 think we'll have a little bit more

1 enforcement power.

2 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

3 Good. And then, Basil, with regard
4 to your department I know
5 Councilmember O'Rourke alluded to
6 it. Your agency is one of the
7 unique ones that can actually be
8 revenue-generating. And so, the
9 sooner we get more inspectors on
10 the street the sooner we're going
11 to be able to kind of self-generate
12 so that you have the resources you
13 need.

14 Is there anything while
15 you have us here today that we can
16 be doing? I know you're working
17 with the Administration. But is
18 there any emergency relief that you
19 need from this legislative body or
20 do you think you have it under
21 control?

22 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

23 We have things under control,
24 Councilmember. One thing that we

1 could use is just identify for us
2 areas where you have trouble
3 construction going on so that we
4 can get our Saturday patrols out
5 there to your particular
6 neighborhoods or areas in your
7 District we could address and
8 situations that -- especially now
9 in the summer months where
10 projects, construction sites are
11 really messy and not maintained.
12 And we can get our clean sites
13 initiative of folks out there to
14 issue violations and things of that
15 nature. Just keep the lines of
16 communication open. That's the
17 best thing we can do.

18 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
19 Okay. And I'll leave this round
20 with I just want to compliment
21 Steve Gallagher and his team
22 because he provides a crucial role
23 when an emergency happens, and
24 those men and women in your

1 department are amazing. And Steve
2 in particular, I've called him late
3 at night, weekends and he's always
4 answers all the time. And I just
5 can't say enough nice things about
6 your team.

7 COMMISSIONER MERENDA: I
8 refer to our CSU as L&I's version
9 of the Marine Corps. They do an
10 outstanding job. They go into
11 really hairy situations, really
12 drastic situations. And in fact,
13 Steve is here with us today.
14 Steve, want to stand up?

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
17 Well, thank you, Commissioner.

18 Thank you, Leader.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Thank you so much,
21 Chairman Driscoll. Please continue
22 if you have additional questions,
23 Mr. Chair.

24 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:

1 (Inaudible).

2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

3 RICHARDSON: You're good. Okay.

4 Excellent. Thank you very much.

5 The Chair now recognizes
6 Councilmember Brooks.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

8 Thank you, Madam Chair.

9 I have the least amount
10 for the Fire Department so I'm
11 going to start with them. Thank
12 you guys for coming out. And I
13 have to say that my son is a
14 firefighter, Officer McCoy. My
15 question is about the Fire
16 Department was able to open three
17 companies thanks to a three-year
18 federal grant and paid the wages
19 for 72 firefighters for three
20 years. And will the department be
21 able to retain those firefighters
22 and keep Ladders 1, 6 and 11 open
23 when that grant funding runs out?

24 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

1 Thank you for that question. Yes,
2 we were able to reopen the last of
3 three fire companies that were
4 closed on the other recession of
5 2009. Engine 6, Ladder 1 and
6 Ladder 11 due primarily to a SAFER
7 grant that we received. And as you
8 stated, that SAFER grant the
9 performance period is for three
10 years, after which we would rely on
11 the General Fund to operate those
12 companies.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So
14 is the money -- do we know that
15 that's coming? Is it in the cycle
16 that those stations would be able
17 to stay open when the money phases
18 completely out? Is it a plan for
19 that?

20 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
21 Yes, we most certainly hope so.
22 That grant goes until 2027, so we
23 are most certainly hoping that that
24 will be supported.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

2 Thank you so much for that.

3 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

4 Absolutely.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

6 And for L&I -- sorry, I'm fumbling
7 papers here. I'm going to start
8 with questions around someone
9 mentioned this earlier. In 2023
10 the Joint Task Force on L&I
11 recommended letting the department
12 keep more of the revenue it
13 generates, so L&I can use that
14 money to fund its own operation.
15 What has happened since then? Has
16 that happened?

17 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

18 No.

19 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

20 GREENWALD: No.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

22 Okay. My next question is last
23 year the Controller's audit of L&I
24 found that your department collects

1 about 3% of the cost of demolition
2 of unsafe buildings from building
3 owners that left the taxpayers on
4 the hook for at least \$58 million
5 in unrecovered demolition costs
6 over five years. The Controller
7 said L&I should devote more
8 resources to collecting those costs
9 from people responsible for unsafe
10 buildings. Have you had the
11 opportunity to do that? And is L&I
12 recovering a higher share of
13 demolition costs from property
14 owners?

15 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

16 GREENWALD: So I know that our
17 fiscal unit has looked into working
18 with third-party contractors to
19 generate some of that revenue and
20 get that money back. And also, if
21 someone does not pay, there's a
22 lien put on their property. So
23 when they go to sell, that lien
24 comes to fruition when they go to

1 sell. So there's the third party
2 and then the lien that gets put on
3 your property if you don't pay.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So
5 just the property, just the
6 property that's vacant? I mean, we
7 live in the city. We're doing a
8 lot better with a lot of vacant
9 blighted property in certain
10 neighborhoods, and they're still
11 not selling and also sometimes not
12 paying their taxes. So I'm trying
13 to figure out how we can pull that
14 full circle.

15 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
16 GREENWALD: It could only go to an
17 owner of a property, right. So
18 you'd have to lien the owner of the
19 property. So that's what it is,
20 whether it be vacant, if there's an
21 owner or if it's just an owner that
22 their property was demolished and
23 they live somewhere else or
24 whatever it is. But that's where

1 the lien goes against that

2 property.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: I
4 heard the bell. Can I get one more
5 on the record?

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: (Gestured).

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS: So
9 the Philadelphia fire code requires
10 dampers to be inspected every four
11 to six years depending on the type
12 of building. Dampers are important
13 passive safety features that
14 prevent smoke and fire from
15 spreading throughout buildings via
16 ducts. Do you know what percentage
17 of building dampers are being
18 inspected in compliance with this
19 timeline? And are you taking steps
20 to improve the frequency of the
21 dampers inspections?

22 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

23 GREENWALD: Could you ask that
24 again? Dampers?

1 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

2 Dampers. It's an L&I question.

3 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

4 GREENWALD: Okay. Could you ask it
5 again? I'm sorry.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

7 Okay. So the question is do you
8 know which percentage of building
9 dampers are inspected in compliance
10 with the timeline, which is the
11 four- to six-year period; is that
12 actually happening?

13 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

14 GREENWALD: I believe it is, but I
15 do not know the exact information
16 but I can get that to you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

18 Okay. Can you provide that
19 information?

20 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

21 GREENWALD: Sure. Absolutely.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

23 And if it's being done, what's the
24 frequency?

1 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

2 GREENWALD: Mm-hmm.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: Thank you,

7 Councilmember Brooks.

8 The Chair now recognizes

9 Councilmember Young and then

10 Councilmember Lozada.

11 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:

12 Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 And good afternoon. My

14 questions are for L&I, let me pull

15 them up here, and they are in

16 regards to the inspectors. I do

17 know that for a quality-of-life

18 inspector and a code and building

19 inspector, I mean there -- could

20 you tell us what, if any, are the

21 differences in the salary range for

22 those inspectors?

23 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

24 GREENWALD: The difference in the

1 what? I didn't hear --

2 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: So an
3 inspector that will go out to
4 inspect a business versus a code
5 enforcement or a building inspector
6 essentially?

7 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

8 GREENWALD: So a building inspector
9 would come from the trades, right,
10 have a history, background in one
11 of the trades and would inspect for
12 building permits, construction
13 permits, so electrical, plumbing,
14 whatever that may be. A code
15 enforcement inspector, which all
16 work on the quality-of-life side,
17 they would inspect for business
18 compliance. So ?? Title 9 stuff,
19 licensing, zoning, the fire code
20 and the property maintenance code.

21 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Yeah.
22 Is there a difference in the
23 salary --

24 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

1 The construction inspectors have to
2 have five certifications under
3 state law.

4 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: And
5 then the code inspectors have to
6 have nine or something like that,
7 right. So the building --

8 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
9 GREENWALD: The code inspectors
10 have to have some, yeah. Did you
11 ask what's the difference in their
12 salary?

13 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Yeah,
14 what's the difference?

15 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
16 GREENWALD: There was a difference
17 in their salary until very
18 recently. Now, their salaries are
19 the same.

20 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
21 you for that. So now, the salaries
22 are the same. How are you
23 incentivizing folks to become those
24 construction official inspectors

1 when you have to do more work
2 essentially by doing all these
3 different certifications, more
4 certifications than you would being
5 the other type of inspector?

6 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

7 GREENWALD: I don't think they do
8 more work. I think they do
9 different work. I would differ on
10 that. Both sides need
11 certifications, the construction
12 side and the code enforcement side.
13 They both need different types of
14 certifications. One needs
15 construction code, one needs fire
16 code, one needs property
17 maintenance, one needs zoning. So
18 they don't do more work. They do
19 different types of work.

20 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: I say
21 that to say they do different types
22 of work, yes. But one has to do
23 get nine certifications and the
24 others have to get five or six.

1 And so, when you have to get more
2 certifications, I'm just assuming
3 that more certifications means a
4 higher difficulty of work rather --

5 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

6 GREENWALD: That isn't necessarily
7 true in the way -- I mean, you
8 could talk to OHR about how they
9 figure out the pay structure, but
10 that is not necessarily true that
11 the more certifications you need
12 the harder your work is or any type
13 of thing like that. So I think
14 that's really an OHR question, but
15 there's all kinds of difficult --
16 there's all kinds of things you
17 base a pay evaluation on there.
18 The safety position you're in, the
19 degree of knowledge you need, what
20 kind of hazardous material you're
21 going to come in touch with. There
22 are multitude of things that
23 determine who gets paid and how
24 they get paid and it's not just

1 based on certifications.

2 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

3 Our challenge on the construction
4 side is to compete with the private
5 sector. We have our construction
6 inspectors that are code compliant,
7 all kinds of code certifications,
8 and they're being plucked, so to
9 speak, by third-party inspection
10 agencies and that's who we're
11 competing against and we have to
12 try to meet them on salary. And
13 that's a big challenge,
14 Councilmember.

15 We have to try to meet
16 them on -- but what we're trying to
17 do is, at least for the time being
18 before we can address that, is make
19 the culture at L&I on the
20 construction side a lot better for
21 our inspectors so that they can
22 stay, put in a few years and have
23 that really good benefit package
24 that is not being offered on the

1 outside. So that's the challenge
2 that our construction side is up
3 against.

4 I agree we do need to
5 increase the salary range. But in
6 the meantime we have to make our
7 operations, our culture here at L&I
8 a lot more conducive.

9 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: I
10 think that goes to my point, what
11 I'm trying to make is that the
12 construction side folks have the
13 opportunities to go make a whole
14 lot more money in the counties
15 doing a similar job. And so, when
16 we see that happening and we know
17 that I guess the code officials and
18 the construction side folks here,
19 what are we doing to incentivize
20 our building officials to stay here
21 in Philadelphia when on the code
22 side it's the same salary. And
23 they say you know what, I'm getting
24 the same salary as this person, but

1 the county recognizes that it's
2 more technical position and they're
3 going to pay me as such?

4 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

5 Yeah, make the job much better for
6 inspectors that they want to come
7 to work, that they want to build
8 some a career here at L&I and get
9 that year or so in, a couple of
10 years in so that they can have
11 those benefits. And our challenge
12 is again to make the culture better
13 at L&I.

14 And what I've tried to
15 do is implement what I call
16 quarterly meetings. And we went
17 through three rounds, and we could
18 actually go out with my senior
19 staff to all the Districts and meet
20 with the inspectors and hear their
21 issues and their concerns. And
22 they're very blunt with us and we
23 in turn try to go back and address
24 some of their issues so that we can

1 keep them in the fold, so to speak.

2 And be that as it may,

3 we have experienced some inspectors

4 that went out and the grass is

5 greener on the other side but until

6 they get there. And now, they're

7 trying to reach back out and want

8 to come back to L&I as we did this

9 past March with bringing a really

10 experienced inspector back into the

11 fold. So hope springs eternal.

12 We're out there trying to make sure

13 that we can do our part. In the

14 meantime, again we have to address

15 the salary issue.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

17 RICHARDSON: Okay. Thank you.

18 Thank you very much, Councilmember

19 Young.

20 The Chair now recognizes

21 Councilmember Lozada.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

23 Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 My first question is

1 just for clarification. I
2 wanted -- Deputy Commissioner
3 mentioned that there are 212
4 enrolled paramedics. How many of
5 them are actually working in the
6 field and working on emergency
7 response? I think it was Deputy
8 Commissioner McCall.

9 MR. McCALL: Thank you
10 for the question. Right now it's
11 hard to say how many are working.
12 We have members get injured. They
13 go off sick. They utilize their
14 paid time off, that nature. So it
15 varies from shift-to-shift day-to-
16 day how many are actually working.
17 But we have that many on the rolls
18 that we solicit that are either on
19 shift that day or we solicit to
20 work overtime that are off shift to
21 cover those spots that are out.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
23 You don't have a number of those
24 who are actually active and

1 working?

2 MR. McCALL: The number
3 of people that we have like --

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
5 Who are actually working. So of
6 the 212 that are enrolled, how many
7 are actually available to work?

8 MR. McCALL: 30% are --
9 we calculate a replacement factor
10 of 30%. So we expect roughly about
11 30% of those to not be available to
12 us, right. So that's roughly 62
13 people, 64, somewhere around there
14 that we anticipate will not be
15 available across all four platoons,
16 64 people.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
18 Thank you for that information. In
19 my conversations in preparing for
20 2026, I heard something that was a
21 little concerning and I just want
22 some clarification. Pa State Act
23 121 refers to workers' compensation
24 for first responders dealing with

1 PTSD and goes into effect in
2 October of 2025. PFD and PPD
3 members who established this
4 diagnosis with a licensed
5 psychiatric can take up to two
6 years paid off. What will the
7 department do in preparation for
8 the upcoming large events the city
9 is hosting, many members will take
10 this as a benefit to heal from work
11 trauma. Is your department
12 prepared for the staffing
13 requirements?

14 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
15 Thank you for that question. We
16 most certainly are thinking quite a
17 bit about 2026. And in fact, one
18 of the things that we are doing is
19 we're working in our contract
20 negotiations with Local 22. We
21 want to change some language to
22 ensure that all of our members are
23 available to us. Right now
24 sometimes we have limited ability

1 to -- we have the ability to recall
2 workers when we need them for large
3 scale fires, for instance right
4 now.

5 We want to incorporate
6 language that we can make sure that
7 we can recall our members to
8 support our operations to support
9 the city during those times. So
10 that's one of the big things that
11 we are doing.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
13 You talked about upscaling your
14 EMTs to paramedics. Why does it
15 take so long for folks to become
16 paramedics if we need them so
17 badly?

18 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
19 There are a couple things with
20 that. There continues to be a
21 nationwide shortage of hiring
22 paramedics. The pay for paramedic
23 across the region has equalized.
24 There was a time when the City of

1 Philadelphia was a higher-paying
2 place to work. So hiring
3 paramedics still is a challenge for
4 us. It takes four months, I
5 believe, once we recruit
6 paramedics. Paramedics come to the
7 Fire Department with that
8 certification already trained, so
9 it takes four months to -- their
10 academy is much shorter than that
11 of a firefighter. And so, once we
12 bring them on board trying to --
13 I'm sorry. Can you rephrase your
14 question?

15 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: If
16 we need paramedics so badly, why is
17 it taking us so long to recruit
18 them from, what is it, an EMT and
19 then they become paramedics? So
20 why is it taking so long? What is
21 the challenge that you're
22 experiencing?

23 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
24 Okay. Again, it's the demand for

1 paramedics nationwide continues to
2 be a challenge. Philadelphia,
3 typically the workload is pretty
4 excessive so people choose to work
5 other places. As Deputy
6 Commissioner McCall spoke about
7 earlier, we have reopened our
8 application period to try to
9 capture more people. Whereas when
10 we give a test for firefighter, for
11 instance, we will get thousands of
12 applicants. For paramedic, we may
13 get a far few number of paramedics
14 to solicit to come on board. They
15 know the challenges of working in
16 the system.

17 So when the upskilling
18 program that we are going to do is
19 going to allow us to take our EMTs
20 and train them to a higher level,
21 to paramedic. That does a few
22 things. We can internally promote
23 which gives EMTs more
24 opportunities, opportunities at

1 better pay and it helps us to
2 retain the medics that we have. So
3 it's really a challenge just
4 throughout the entire country to
5 attract and maintain paramedics.

6 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:
7 Council Prez, point of information.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: Chair recognizes
10 Councilmember Young.

11 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
12 you. Can you tell us when that
13 program will get up and running,
14 the program that trains the EMTs to
15 become paramedics? Because I know,
16 like you said, there's a shortage
17 of paramedics. But is there the
18 same shortage of folks applying to
19 become EMTs for the city as well?
20 Because if you can hire internally,
21 you can always keep that pipeline
22 going. So can you tell us when
23 that program will be up and
24 running?

1 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

2 So we are asking for FY26 funding
3 to get that program up and running.
4 We are prepared to do it. It's
5 easier for us to hire EMTs than it
6 is for paramedics. So we are
7 continuing -- as Deputy
8 Commissioner McCall mentioned, our
9 goal is to hire 200 EMS providers,
10 and a big part of that will be
11 EMTs. And we just think this
12 program, this upskilling program is
13 really going to help us because it
14 will again provide a pathway for
15 advancement. It will provide a
16 higher level of service for the
17 citizens of Philadelphia. So we
18 believe it's a win-win.

19 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Have
20 you identified the pipeline of EMTs
21 ready to become or looking to
22 become paramedics? So if we fund
23 it, right, I want to make sure that
24 we fund it if it's in the FY26

1 budget, that it's good to go. So
2 next year, because I believe we
3 heard this last budget cycle, we
4 need the money so we can fund it,
5 so we can fund it this year. So I
6 don't want to come to FY27 and say,
7 oh, we need the money so we can
8 start the program again next year.

9 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

10 So we do have an RFP out that is
11 going to help us identify and
12 recruit so we are working on
13 opening and maintaining a pipeline.

14 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
15 you, Mr. President. Thank you,
16 Quetcy.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: Thank you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: No
20 worries. In one of the past budget
21 cycles, I asked questions around
22 Directive 58 having talked to
23 several firefighters and some of
24 their experiences and then having

1 questioned some of the past
2 leadership around Directive 58, can
3 you tell me if Directive 58 has
4 actually been updated? Has it been
5 disseminated appropriately? Has
6 there been training? Have you
7 responded to the backlog of
8 incidents that were there in the
9 past and have there been new
10 incidents since?

11 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
12 So we continue to adapt to a
13 changing Fire Department and we
14 still have our challenges. But
15 more specifically, yes, we did
16 update Directive 58 in 2024 and we
17 were able to ensure that there was
18 information that had to be updated.
19 So we did that in 2024. It was
20 disseminated. So whenever we come
21 up with a new directive, we issue
22 it throughout the entire department
23 via a general memorandum with an
24 electronic copy, and it goes to

1 every member of the department's
2 email address. And it's also
3 published on our website on our
4 documentation unit.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: So
6 the telephone number that was on
7 Directive 58 used to go to a number
8 that wasn't responded to. Have we
9 updated that number to someone
10 being able to actually speak to
11 someone?

12 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
13 Yes, that was one of the big
14 things. We knew that some of that
15 information was outdated so it is
16 updated.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Do
18 you have a backlog and have there
19 been no incidents?

20 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
21 Pardon me?

22 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
23 Did you guys respond to the backlog
24 of complaints and have there been

1 new incidents since you updated
2 that policy?

3 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

4 So we take every single complaint
5 in the Fire Department very
6 seriously. And our internal HR
7 department, our EEO folks, they do
8 a pretty good job of thoroughly
9 investigating and dealing
10 appropriately with those things.
11 So if those issues become
12 disciplinary, we refer those to our
13 Special Investigations Officer who
14 will take appropriate action. In
15 terms of how many new complaints we
16 may or may not have, I don't have
17 an answer for you but I can get
18 that for you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

20 Okay. Thank you. And then --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Thank you, Member Lozada.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

24 Council (inaudible).

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Brief.

3 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

4 Okay. This is my last question.

5 My last question. I know that you
6 guys have the Explorers --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Go ahead, Member Lozada.

9 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Am
10 I okay to go?

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

12 JOHNSON: Go ahead.

13 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

14 Okay. I know you guys have the
15 Explorers program. Is there a
16 pathway to be able to continue to
17 encourage young people that
18 complete the Explorers program,
19 become young adults to actually be
20 a part of the pipeline to become
21 firefighters?

22 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

23 So we are very proud of that
24 program because it gives us the

1 opportunity to let young folks know
2 about a career in public service.
3 And I have to get this information
4 for you definitively, but I believe
5 fire explorers get additional
6 points when they take the civil
7 service exam to be a firefighter.
8 So I think that is one of the ways
9 that we help them to go from being
10 an explorer to a firefighter.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

14 JOHNSON: Thank you. And will we
15 also be partnering with WDAS, Power
16 99, using social influences like
17 Wallo267 to get the word out and
18 maybe also focusing on another
19 generation of young people that may
20 be interested in becoming a
21 firefighter; is that part of the
22 strategy recruitment-wise as well?

23 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

24 To be honest, we haven't used those

1 avenues. But, Council President,
2 those are great ideas --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: Or recommendation, let me
5 say that. I recommend maybe that's
6 a different way to try to help get
7 the word out.

8 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

9 That's something that we most
10 certainly can use. Thank you for
11 that suggestion.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

13 JOHNSON: And the pay as well also
14 is a good draw for individuals who
15 might want to be involved. So
16 that's good.

17 Councilmember

18 Dr. Anthony Phillips. Then
19 Councilmember Rue Landau. Then
20 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier -- you
21 were up here on my behalf. I stand
22 corrected.

23 Councilmember Majority

24 Leader Gilmore Richardson. Then

1 Councilmember Dr. Phillips because
2 you were standing in on my behalf.
3 Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Prez.

6 Thank you very much, Council
7 President.

8 And thank you all so
9 very, very much for this
10 opportunity. And I wanted to echo
11 the sentiments of our Chair of
12 Licenses and Inspections and we
13 offer our gratitude and
14 appreciation for the members of the
15 Philadelphia Fire Department
16 regarding all of your work with the
17 airplane incident in the 6th
18 Council District. I thought you
19 all did a stellar job under the
20 most extraordinary of circumstance
21 and really wanted to thank you for
22 that work.

23 And I also wanted to
24 continue to express my deepest

1 gratitude to Engine 19 over in the
2 4th Council District and also the
3 Fire Detector Installation Unit
4 officers. We had a fire next door
5 to my home two years ago. But I'll
6 never forget it and I'll bring it
7 up every budget season going
8 forward. And I appreciate the
9 rapid response of Engine 19 and of
10 the entire Philadelphia Fire
11 Department.

12 I wanted to also get on
13 the record thanks to each of you on
14 the executive team. I had an
15 opportunity to see former
16 Commissioner Ayers this weekend, so
17 that was a wonderful, wonderful
18 surprise and opportunity. And
19 lastly, I'm just going through all
20 the thank yous that my team sent
21 today. I wanted to also thank
22 Chief Bomer for all of his help and
23 support with our office and helping
24 us with all the protocol matters

1 throughout city government.

2 Finally, for Licenses
3 and Inspections we have Lisa Adams,
4 Diane Lucidi, Danita Smith in
5 Intergovernmental Affairs. My team
6 says they are always a great
7 resource to get information on L&I
8 services, cases and any extra
9 attention to emergency and complex
10 cases.

11 Of course, Commissioner
12 Greenwald, we appreciate you and
13 Renee, who has just been stellar
14 with responding to a number of drug
15 paraphernalia store complaints.
16 Commissioner Merenda, we appreciate
17 you for responding always to the
18 constituent cases we even receive
19 in the evening, particularly around
20 compliance. And of course,
21 Jennifer, Jennifer Jantra, former
22 City Council family member, so I
23 wanted to get all that on the
24 record.

1 Really quickly for Fire,
2 I heard this earlier from another
3 colleague, how many medic units do
4 you all have for each tour? I
5 didn't catch that.

6 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
7 We have 63 medic units.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
9 RICHARDSON: Okay.

10 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
11 Throughout the city.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
13 RICHARDSON: Okay. 63 throughout
14 the city?

15 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
16 Yes.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
18 RICHARDSON: And that's for each
19 tour?

20 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
21 Yes.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
23 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then is
24 there ever a circumstance where you

1 all run out of medic units?

2 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

3 Unfortunately, there is the
4 occasion when we reach zero medic
5 units. There are a lot of factors
6 that contribute to that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then what
9 would they be in, like which tours
10 do they typically happen? I think
11 I heard somebody asking about this.
12 It may have been Councilman Harritty
13 earlier.

14 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

15 Yeah, typically during some of our
16 day hours. And what happens
17 increasingly is the demand for EMS
18 services continue to rise, and we
19 have a finite amount of resources
20 at this point that we are
21 continuing to try to adjust to deal
22 with, but there are some things
23 that are happening outside of our
24 control.

1 For instance, hospitals,
2 emergency rooms are increasingly
3 being inundated with patients and
4 we find there are times when we
5 can't transfer care to the ER
6 because the emergency room does not
7 have beds. And what that creates
8 is what we call wall time because
9 our medics have to stay with the
10 patient, and they literally will
11 stay in a waiting area. And so,
12 that medic unit is no longer
13 available and that is happening
14 more increasingly, and that's a
15 contributing factor to having zero
16 medic units.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: So I think for this --
19 and I would ask you to get this
20 information to Council President
21 for dissemination to all members of
22 Council. I'm very concerned about
23 this because we need to have a plan
24 to address this issue, particularly

1 with what's going on in Delaware
2 County with the closure of the
3 Crozer Health System. We are going
4 to be inundated in Philadelphia
5 with additional transfers to our
6 medical facilities and it's really
7 going to be a situation of, you
8 know, it's outside of our control.

9 And I'll tell you that
10 my husband was born and raised in
11 the city of Chester and he comes
12 from one of the biggest families in
13 Chester, grandparents together had
14 22 children, and they each had a
15 bunch of children so it's a huge
16 family. And everyone in Chester is
17 talking about this issue.

18 Someone was shot a week
19 or two ago and was unable to
20 receive urgent medical care and
21 passed away, whereas if they were
22 able to get to a trauma facility
23 very quickly the outcome could have
24 been different. And so, we're

1 going to see an influx of cases
2 because of what's going on with the
3 collar counties and at Crozer
4 Health. And so, I think we have to
5 have a plan because we already know
6 that it's a challenge for us here,
7 and it will only increase because
8 of what's happening. And I heard
9 the bell and I'm going to honor the
10 clock, but I ask that we get a
11 written response to that and a plan
12 for how we are going to address
13 that issue so we know how to
14 respond within our budget
15 negotiations.

16 And I just need to put
17 this on the record, Council
18 President. Two cases in
19 Councilmember Jones' District.
20 Then one in Councilmember Squilla's
21 District. Basil, it would be the
22 600 block of Jackson Street. You
23 know the particular property that
24 I'm referring to. We got to have

1 an update on that because the house
2 looks like it's falling down.

3 I do want to thank your
4 staff for going out to the house in
5 the 1500 block of North 61st
6 Street, the senior that I met at
7 Sharon Baptist Church on Monday
8 morning regarding the house that's
9 falling down next door to her.
10 Your team did get back to us today,
11 but they are saying that the house
12 looks like it's going to fall down
13 at any moment, the inspector from
14 L&I said that. I know it's in the
15 hands of the courts. I'm concerned
16 for the senior, she's elderly. So
17 I have to put that on the record.
18 We will follow up again.

19 And then finally, I have
20 a question on flea markets. We
21 have two flea markets, pop-up shops
22 in Wynnefield that three neighbors
23 stopped me about. One in the 2400
24 block of North 52nd Street. They

1 have the pop-up shop information
2 out. Three neighbors stopped me
3 about this one particular property.

4 And then we have one
5 property in the 5300 block of
6 Wynnefield Avenue that one
7 committee person asks about every
8 single meeting that they have a
9 continuous flea market on that
10 block. What are the rules around
11 the flea market situation? Please
12 let us know so we can get back to
13 those constituents in Wynnefield.
14 Okay?

15 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

16 Mm-hmm.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

18 RICHARDSON: All right. Thank you
19 very much.

20 And thank you, Council
21 President.

22 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

23 Councilmember, just have your staff
24 person contact me, you have my

1 contact, and we could follow up on
2 those problematic properties. No
3 problem.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: Yes. And I just want
6 to -- for the record your team did
7 follow up on the North 61st Street
8 property today because we just got
9 that on Monday. But when the
10 inspector went out, he said the
11 house looks like it's going to fall
12 down at any moment, but it's in the
13 hands of the courts. And it's a
14 situation where we know it's going
15 to fall down, it's already in the
16 courts, how do we respond.

17 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

18 We'll monitor it. We'll follow.
19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

21 RICHARDSON: Okay. Thanks.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

23 JOHNSON: Thank you. Councilmember
24 Dr. Anthony Phillips. Then

1 Councilmember Rue Landau. Then
2 wrapping us up will be
3 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier.

4 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

5 Thank you, Council President.

6 I just want to quickly
7 thank you, Commissioner, for all
8 your work. Commissioner, you and
9 your work at the Fire Department
10 has been remarkable so continue to
11 keep up the good work. And also,
12 to the entire L&I team, thank you
13 for responding to our staff and on
14 many issues.

15 Really quickly I just
16 want to get my questions in.
17 Commissioner, can you provide data
18 on the number of severity of
19 residential fires in Philadelphia
20 over the past 6 to 12 months? Have
21 you identified certain trends that
22 are causing fire incidents? Also,
23 how is the Fire Department team
24 working with Licenses and

1 Inspections to ensure properties,
2 especially rentals, meet fire
3 safety codes?

4 And then lastly for L&I,
5 Bentley Manor, an only Odin
6 property site in the 9th District
7 received multiple safety violations
8 prior to its rental license renewal
9 in November 2024. Can L&I explain
10 why the license was renewed despite
11 these unresolved safety concerns?
12 And also provide an update on the
13 current status of these violations
14 and any actions taken to address
15 them.

16 And then also lastly,
17 the question I have for you is can
18 you elaborate, L&I, on the
19 interagency coordination between
20 L&I, the Police Department and
21 Health Department when nuisance
22 businesses are flagged? And when
23 nuisance businesses pose a threat
24 to the community safety such as

1 illegal sales, persistent
2 sanitation or loitering, what is
3 the chain of action and who takes
4 the lead? Commissioner of Fire
5 first.

6 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
7 Absolutely. Thank you for that
8 question. So as my predecessor
9 would say that Philadelphia has a
10 fire problem and that continues to
11 be the case for the most part. We
12 still have -- the severity of fires
13 still persist in the city and we
14 have a very robust Fire Marshal's
15 office that investigates every
16 single fire that we have. And what
17 that does is it helps to inform our
18 fire prevention strategy and how we
19 can better reduce the incidence of
20 fire in the city. So that is one
21 of the things that we're doing.

22 I'm very proud to say
23 that in this city as a whole we
24 have very good working

1 relationships with all other city
2 agencies and we work very well with
3 L&I to ensure that the fire code
4 reflects the best practices so that
5 we can reduce the incidence of
6 fire. So I hope those two things
7 answered your questions.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

9 Yes, relatively. And then L&I,
10 what's the most common violations
11 L&I is seeing on the nuisance
12 business law? Those are my
13 questions. Most common violations
14 you see?

15 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

16 GREENWALD: The most common
17 violations seen where? I'm sorry.
18 I missed that.

19 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

20 Under the nuisance business law,
21 what is the most common violations
22 that you see?

23 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

24 GREENWALD: We get a number of

1 complaints on nuisance businesses.
2 Some of them are exterior -- a lot
3 of them are exterior work so the
4 windows that are covered up. We
5 get the flaggy things that are out
6 front. We get unkempt properties.
7 That's a lot of our things. We get
8 things that are against zoning,
9 things that are pop-up, like you
10 alluded to the smoke shops and
11 things like that. That's another
12 biggie that is on our radar as far
13 as businesses.

14 As far as your question
15 with coordination with the Health
16 Department, so we coordinate with
17 the Police Department, the Health
18 Department and the L&I QOL. We go
19 out every single month with them on
20 proactive inspections on a list of
21 properties that are like illegal
22 smoke shops, things of that nature,
23 drug paraphernalia shops.

24 We also coordinate

1 nightly on the weekends. So
2 starting usually like Wednesday
3 night through Sunday night and on
4 the weekends our Nuisance Property
5 Unit is out there investigating all
6 kinds of different nuisance
7 properties, whether they're
8 businesses or actual properties,
9 and that's in conjunction with the
10 Police Department and a lot of
11 times other state partners.

12 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

13 The Odin property.

14 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

15 GREENWALD: Oh, and the Odin
16 property thing I'm going to have to
17 get back to you on that because
18 there's several different Odin
19 property things we did. We did a
20 joint inspection of a bunch of
21 them, and a lot of things came into
22 compliance. So I want to just make
23 sure which one you're talking
24 about, and I'll work with Basil's

1 group to see exactly what happened
2 with those. If you could get me
3 that info on exactly which ones
4 you're talking about, that would be
5 great and I'll do work with Basil's
6 group.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
8 Just for the record, there's one in
9 West Oak Lane Bentley Manor.

10 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
11 GREENWALD: What was it?

12 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
13 Bentley Manor.

14 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
15 GREENWALD: Bentley Manor.

16 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
17 Yep, in West Oak Lane.

18 COMMISSIONER COLLINS
19 GREENWALD: Okay.

20 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
21 Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
23 JOHNSON: Thank you, Councilmember
24 Dr. Anthony Phillips.

1 Councilmember Rue

2 Landau.

3 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

4 Thank you. Thank you all for being
5 here. I'm going to try to be quick
6 because we're coming to the end of
7 the day, but I also do want to
8 thank you all so much for your
9 service and everything you've done
10 for Philadelphia.

11 I have a question. I
12 want to start with rental licenses.
13 What percentage of rental licenses
14 that are issued by L&I are for
15 properties owned by LLCs? Same
16 question, what percentage of rental
17 licenses that are issued by L&I
18 have the property owner listed as
19 the managing agent? And what
20 percentage of rental licenses that
21 are issued by L&I have a managing
22 agent whose listed address is a
23 business with a commercial activity
24 license?

1 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
2 Councilmember, all great questions.
3 We have the statistics. We have
4 the data. But I don't have it one
5 me.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
7 Can you get that to me?

8 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
9 Sure. Absolutely.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
11 Thank you so much.

12 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
13 If you could just send me an email
14 with your questions listing them.

15 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
16 Absolutely. And then I wanted to
17 ask about the roll-out of WebUI
18 taking over for eCLIPSE, called
19 WebUI.

20 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
21 Yes.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
23 Before the full roll-out of the new
24 WebUI, does L&I plan on doing any

1 type of user training or
2 stakeholder engagement to ensure
3 that the new features are meeting
4 community needs effectively?

5 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

6 Yes, we plan to continue -- we
7 already have a lot of outreach and
8 a lot of webinars and things of
9 that nature. And I see absolutely
10 no problem with us doing the same
11 thing for the WebUI roll-out. And
12 I think we're planning in November
13 some time to have that operational.
14 So in the meantime I'll make sure
15 that we're going to have a set
16 schedule set up for public outreach
17 to explain that whole process and
18 we'll keep you in the loop also.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

20 Great. To be clear though even
21 with the public outreach I want to
22 make sure that the users who are
23 going to use it get to give you
24 some input before it's finalized to

1 make sure it's --

2 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

3 That's a very good point, yep. Let
4 me follow up on that. Yep, sure.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: We
6 want to make sure we're creating
7 the tool that people need.

8 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
9 That need and that know how to use.
10 And maybe they have some
11 suggestions also.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
13 Yes. I have more L&I questions,
14 but with the risk that I'm not
15 getting called again I want to go
16 and switch over to the Fire
17 Department real quick.

18 Last year I asked about
19 renovations and accommodations for
20 women and people who identify as
21 women firefighters, such as
22 separate bathrooms and bunk rooms
23 for overnight shifts, dispensers
24 for feminine hygiene products and

1 hoods to accommodate hair that have
2 been put up and protect the back of
3 the neck. There's also an increase
4 in Class 200 budget item which will
5 be used to upgrade EMS medic units
6 and other technologies. What's the
7 update on all of that? Is any of
8 the funding being used for these
9 upgrades? And are there any
10 occurring renovations to
11 accommodate female firefighters in
12 terms of receptacles and protective
13 hoods?

14 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:
15 Thank you for that question. As
16 you know, our infrastructure is
17 pretty old and we are in a
18 continuous state of upgrade and
19 repair and we are working with our
20 partners at DPP. And whenever we
21 are doing significant renovations,
22 we are ensuring that we have
23 facilities that are suitable for
24 both males and females. So that's

1 an ongoing thing.

2 We have 63 stations
3 throughout the city. It is going
4 to take some time. In this budget
5 we are looking to have lactation
6 pods. So we're trying to address
7 that issue. So we recognize those
8 issues and we also know that it's
9 going to take time and money quite
10 frankly to get a lot of those
11 things accomplished. But we are
12 working, we are making progress
13 towards those things.

14 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

15 Thank you. Remember that it's a
16 great conversation because there's
17 a direct connection between these
18 modifications and recruitment.
19 Let's get that done.

20 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

21 Absolutely.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

23 Thank you so much.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: Thank you.

2 Chair recognizes

3 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier. Then

4 Councilmember Nicolas O'Rourke and

5 then Councilmember Quetcy Lozada,

6 whose time was stolen by

7 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

9 Thank you, Council President.

10 I wanted to start by

11 thanking all of you for being here

12 and for the work that you do every

13 day that's so critical to the

14 health and safety of our residents

15 and our neighborhoods. And I know

16 that many times when we're

17 communicating with you we're

18 imparting the frustrations of our

19 constituents, but I also want you

20 to know that we really do

21 appreciate you in your

22 responsiveness and everything that

23 you do for our office.

24 My questions are for

1 L&I. One topic that our office
2 consistently struggles with is when
3 building violations are inside of a
4 property. In these situations, we
5 can present all sorts of examples
6 and paper trails, but L&I still
7 won't write a violation or enforce
8 unless an inspector can get into
9 the interior of the building. This
10 comes up with structural issues and
11 vacant buildings but also with code
12 violations and occupied buildings
13 that are engaged in uses they
14 aren't zoned for.

15 This is a very easy way
16 also for a building owner who knows
17 that they are in the wrong to get
18 around the city. They just don't
19 let them in, right. So why is this
20 the policy? And what can we do as
21 Council to help L&I get around this
22 hurdle?

23 And then my next
24 question, my last question is what

1 operational or legislative
2 changes -- oh, wait a second. Hold
3 on. My last question is about --
4 I'm sorry. What operational and
5 legislative changes would be needed
6 for L&I to partner with groups like
7 PHDC or other City contractors to
8 perform essential emergency repairs
9 on privately-owned properties while
10 court cases are still pending?

11 So could L&I perform
12 basic repairs, secure doors or
13 remove immediate hazards and then
14 bill the property owner later? And
15 what resources or changes to state
16 law would be necessary to recoup
17 these repair costs more
18 effectively?

19 And I'm asking this
20 because I feel like we have gotten
21 better at moving cases to court,
22 right. We've fought hard to make
23 sure that the Law Department has
24 the resources that they need. But

1 even though we're moving the cases
2 to court, we're waiting for
3 hearings, and in the meantime we're
4 still dealing with dangerous
5 conditions and situations. So I
6 want to know while we are moving
7 forward judicially what can we do
8 in the meantime to make sure that
9 our residents are healthy -- or
10 safe I mean? And I know that was a
11 lot so I can repeat any element of
12 those questions if need be.

13 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

14 GREENWALD: I think I got the one
15 part and Basil is going to do the
16 first question. So as for the
17 repair program, as we've stated
18 before we do partner with PHDC. So
19 PHDC does have the mechanism to
20 actually repair things. The
21 Department of Licenses and
22 Inspections does not. L&I is
23 not -- we're not trades people.
24 We're not project managers. We're

1 not construction project managers
2 where we would do something like
3 that. We do however go in, we
4 clean and seal properties. We do
5 those types of things to make a
6 property safe.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 I'm not asking for you to take on
9 the repairs yourself. What I am
10 saying is while we have a situation
11 where we're working with L&I to
12 cite folks who have violations.
13 Many times we are moving these
14 cases forward, but then we're
15 stuck. And so, it's not that I'm
16 asking you to take on PHDC's role.
17 What I'm asking you is what can you
18 do in partnership with PHDC to make
19 sure that these issues are resolved
20 and that residents aren't just
21 sitting there having to deal with
22 these continued --

23 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

24 GREENWALD: Yeah. So we do partner

1 with PHDC on the rental programs
2 and things like that, those
3 assistance. I thought you were
4 saying could we fix them, so I
5 apologize. I misunderstood that.
6 Yeah, so PHDC has the mechanism to
7 do that. And I think at the last
8 hearing we were talking about how
9 we coordinate with their rental
10 repair program.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
12 Okay. I don't really believe that
13 we're, you know, certainly we have
14 the mechanisms in place. It's not
15 my understanding that we're
16 operating in that way, right. And
17 so, I would love -- and I know we
18 have the law in place through
19 Councilmember Jones' efforts.

20 I would love if we could
21 truly put together a program where
22 we could remedy some of these
23 issues and we're not just waiting
24 for property owners to address

1 violations or waiting for the
2 courts.

3 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

4 GREENWALD: Okay.

5 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

6 Councilmember, our focus of course
7 on the construction side is ongoing
8 construction. And access to an
9 interior of a building, you have
10 privacy issues and we may need to
11 get an administrative warrant,
12 things of that nature.

13 But what we decided to
14 do once we have complaints about
15 ongoing construction and access to
16 an interior, we'll monitor that and
17 we'll put it on our be aware bolo
18 list that our district inspectors
19 can take. When they're doing their
20 regular routines, they can take a
21 ride by to see if there's access,
22 if they're actually some sort of
23 construction going on at the time
24 so that they can catch them in the

1 act. So we're aware of that issue
2 and we're trying to, you know,
3 we're struggling with.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

5 That's great. I understand that's
6 how we're functioning now. That is
7 not good enough for the amount of
8 issues that we're seeing and the
9 amount of times that we're hearing
10 we cannot access a property, right.
11 It's not good enough to say we're
12 just going to drive by and try to
13 see them outside. So what
14 creatively can we do to have a
15 solution that is more effective at
16 getting inside properties that we
17 know have violations and are
18 endangering our residents?

19 COMMISSIONER MERENDA: I
20 think it's -- we need to sit down
21 with the Law Department and figure
22 this all out and decide what
23 direction they can give us and what
24 proof they need in order to go into

1 court and get that administrative
2 warrant as quickly as possible in
3 an expedited manner. So that's
4 what I would want to follow up
5 with. And we'll try to do that
6 going forward.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Okay. Great. I would love to work
9 with both of you on both of these
10 issues and on solutions to these
11 issues over the next budget year.
12 Thank you so much.

13 Thank you, Council
14 President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

16 JOHNSON: Thank you. Councilmember
17 Rue -- okay. Councilmember Lozada.

18 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

19 Two questions. One for --

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

21 JOHNSON: And then, Nic, you want
22 to wrap up?

23 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

24 (Gestured).

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

2 JOHNSON: Okay. Nicolas O'Rourke
3 will wrap us up. Go ahead.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

5 One for L&I. We have seen that.
6 L&I has started to go out. Thank
7 you for the education campaign that
8 you all have partnered with us on
9 doing as it relates to some of the
10 businesses in the neighborhood. I
11 think that as a result of those
12 education walks we found that many
13 people were not in compliance, not
14 because they couldn't be but
15 because they thought that they just
16 didn't have to be because they were
17 just allowed to do whatever they
18 wanted to do for a really long
19 period of time.

20 But most recently we
21 started to do enforcement in
22 collaboration with the Police
23 Department and the Health
24 Department. Some of the food

1 trucks are being impacted. One
2 initiative as recently as
3 yesterday, some of these food
4 trucks were confiscated. They are
5 of course angry and upset. I'm
6 receiving information that it was
7 because vehicles were not
8 registered. Licenses were not --
9 food serve licenses were not
10 updated. Electrical hookups were
11 illegal. Can you share with me
12 what that looks like? What was the
13 initiative that took place
14 yesterday? How many vehicles were
15 confiscated and was there an
16 education campaign prior to you all
17 going out?

18 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

19 GREENWALD: So I have to get you
20 that information. We were working
21 on that yesterday. It came to us
22 and there was some kind of
23 discrepancy on what was happening.
24 The vendors thought they were being

1 closed for violating their curfew
2 law. So there were a whole bunch
3 of different issues that were going
4 on there. So I actually might have
5 it now on my phone, but I don't
6 know because I don't have my phone
7 sitting here with me, but I can get
8 you that information.

9 There were several
10 vending trucks that were involved
11 in that, but there was nothing that
12 was confiscated due to anything
13 like -- that was just out of the
14 ordinary. It was just they didn't
15 have their food serve licenses and
16 there were a couple other things.
17 One wasn't registered. But let me
18 get you all that information
19 because we were working on that
20 yesterday and today.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
22 Okay. If you could share that,
23 that would be great. And then as a
24 follow-up to my medics question to

1 Deputy Commissioner McCall, my
2 staff gave me information that
3 there are currently 64 medics who
4 are not available for work. That
5 would account for -- that would
6 leave you with about 126 medics to
7 respond to services. When you take
8 into consideration that people are
9 out sick, on vacation or in
10 trainings, wouldn't that leave you
11 in the negative? And how are you
12 responding to that? And does that
13 pose a challenge for services,
14 especially in districts like mine
15 where we depend so much on EMT and
16 paramedics?

17 MR. McCALL: Thank you
18 for the question. I want to repeat
19 it back, if you don't mind, so I
20 understand clearly what you're
21 asking me is that we're looking at
22 64 people across four platoons that
23 we anticipate being out of our
24 quota at any given time and you're

1 asking if that puts us in the
2 negative. And that leaves us with
3 roughly about 15 people per platoon
4 off, which roughly gives us about
5 if there's 53 people on -- excuse
6 me, 53 people on, 15 people off,
7 that would not put us in the
8 negative. We would be in overtime.
9 And then we would request for
10 overtime. We would canvass ?? the
11 other members that were available
12 and off and we make great efforts
13 to reach out to them. We make
14 phone calls. We send text
15 messaging through our Everbridge
16 program to see if anyone's
17 available to work. And then we
18 hire those ahead of time to work.
19 And what we can't hire, what we
20 can't bring on as far as paramedics
21 go, that's when we then look to
22 downgrade that unit to an ILS unit
23 or a BLS unit, and we make efforts
24 to hire those folks for overtime to

1 come into those positions.

2 Overall, we do
3 understand that we need to bring
4 additional people on board. Our
5 men and women out there,
6 firefighters, EMTs, firefighter
7 EMTs, EMTs, advanced EMTs,
8 paramedics work really hard all the
9 time and we want to ensure that we
10 have a good relief factor for them
11 so that when they do take off,
12 we're not so dependent on that
13 overtime to get to relieve our
14 staffing.

15 So we want that relief
16 factor in place and we have that
17 built into the 200 that we are
18 looking to hire to help us out with
19 that space, so we understand that
20 we're kind of right there to say
21 that we're in a negative. Right
22 now I think we're plus one in the
23 numbers. But I think that if
24 someone calls off sick, someone

1 takes a vacation day, then we're in
2 the overtime and then we're asking
3 folks to work extra and that might
4 be a little tough for them, and we
5 recognize that.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

7 Are there medics that are either in
8 leadership or in positions that can
9 be held by just laypeople or other
10 straight firefighters that could
11 cover that space? And if so, does
12 that occur as well?

13 MR. McCALL: In our
14 responding ambulances? In our
15 ambulances?

16 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

17 Mm-hmm.

18 MR. McCALL: We do do
19 that when our medics aren't
20 available. And we canvass them
21 through a phone call and through
22 text messaging through our
23 Everbridge system to work. If they
24 decline to work, then we reach over

1 to our advanced EMTs, our EMTs or
2 FSEs and our firefighter EMTs to
3 then fill those roles.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

5 Thank you.

6 MR. McCALL: No worries.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

9 And wrapping us up is
10 Councilmember Nic O'Rourke.

11 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

12 Thank you, Mr. President.

13 This may have already
14 been asked, but let me make sure I
15 get it on the record on my end.
16 Are your staff paramedics, those
17 not working on the street in
18 budgeted staff positions? And I'm
19 sorry if this was already asked
20 already.

21 MR. McCALL: No worries.

22 Thank you for that question. Our
23 paramedics that are not in field
24 operational positions that are off

1 of the street are in staffed or in
2 budgeted or mostly budgeted
3 positions. We do have some people
4 detailed to positions that require
5 that level of knowledge to perform
6 that work. So we have them in
7 those positions until we do a
8 justification or a proof of concept
9 for that position, at which time we
10 will then put in that justification
11 for that paramedic to be budgeted
12 in that position that's staffed.

13 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

14 Okay. Thank you. The other
15 question I do have and then I'll
16 get off, the Whole Blood program
17 would allow certain medic units to
18 carry blood to supply the trauma
19 victims on the street before they
20 go to the hospital to help save
21 lives, especially shooting and
22 stabbing patients. Why is this
23 program being delayed?

24 MR. McCALL: Thank you

1 for that question. Great question.
2 We understand that the whole blood
3 is a lifesaving medicine that we
4 can bring to the city of
5 Philadelphia and we have the
6 program together. We've had a work
7 group that's been working on that
8 since 2023 and I understand that
9 we're ready to go with that program
10 as soon as we are able to address
11 our zero medic unit problem and our
12 medic unit on the wall problem.
13 And we've implemented some policy
14 programs and we've looked at our
15 medic unit availability to try to
16 address that problem. So once that
17 is addressed and we have medic
18 units available to bring that whole
19 blood to the citizens of
20 Philadelphia, we will definitely
21 then implement that program.

22 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE: So
23 you're lacking units to be able to
24 do it, medic units to be able to do

1 it?

2 MR. McCALL: No, I think
3 we have the medic units to do it.
4 It's just they're delayed, right.
5 And working through that delay,
6 trying to reduce that delay so that
7 those units can respond to those
8 calls, yes, they are traumatic
9 calls but they're also, you know,
10 anything that makes a person
11 hemodynamically unstable or is
12 bleeding, right, so it could be a
13 GI situation, it could be a young
14 child who had his or her tonsils
15 removed and have a bleeding
16 concern, so that whole blood does
17 impact that level of care
18 incredibly. So we want to have
19 that available and be able to
20 respond to that. But we also want
21 to ensure that our units are not
22 being delayed for reasons out of
23 our control so that that can get
24 there, and we want to address that

1 issue first.

2 COUNCILMAN O'ROURKE:

3 Thank you very much.

4 Thank you,

5 Mr. President.

6 MR. McCALL: No worries.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: Thank you.

9 And the last question,
10 Councilmember Rue Landau.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

12 Just one and my apologies if this
13 was already asked. But I wanted to
14 ask about cease operations orders.
15 How many rental properties has L&I
16 issued cease operations orders for
17 in the past year?

18 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

19 GREENWALD: I do not have that
20 information with me, but I can get
21 you that.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

23 Will you also tell me what
24 percentage of rental properties

1 that were issued these cease
2 operations orders had a previous
3 history of unresolved code
4 violations?

5 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

6 GREENWALD: So same answer.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

8 There's been a couple of instances.
9 The Daily Pennsylvanian just
10 reported on one in University City,
11 and of course we always talk about
12 Brith Sholom as places where
13 landlords are using at least the
14 fear of cease operations or
15 potentially the actuality of cease
16 operations to try to get around the
17 eviction process and get all of
18 their tenants to leave at once.
19 I've seen this many times over the
20 years.

21 L&I often will figure
22 out what's happening, catch up and
23 stop this practice. But I am
24 curious whether or not you are

1 watching this trend, ensuring that
2 it doesn't happen and have
3 safeguards in place to make sure
4 landlords aren't circumventing
5 their responsibilities or the
6 eviction process in order to just
7 let their place fall into disrepair
8 and say, well, that's it, got to
9 cease operations?

10 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

11 GREENWALD: I think when we get
12 into this more proactive rental
13 inspection thing, we're going to
14 catch a lot of those things. Like
15 I said, we're not there yet. But I
16 think once we do we're going to
17 start to identify more of those bad
18 actors, as you call them -- perhaps
19 we all call them, and then stop
20 that practice from happening.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

22 Okay. Thank you so much. Thank
23 you all.

24 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

1 GREENWALD: Thank you.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

3 JOHNSON: Thank you very much. I
4 want to thank all of you for your
5 presenta --

6 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
7 Council President, can you indulge
8 me for one minute?

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

10 JOHNSON: Commissioner.

11 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
12 I'm thrilled to hear that L&I has
13 been so responsive to the Council.
14 I would submit that that's proof
15 positive that the split has worked
16 out.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: Oh, yeah, absolutely.
19 But first and foremost even
20 separate from the split, I know my
21 members work very, very hard and
22 are very, very thorough in terms of
23 when they're getting behind a
24 particular initiative.

1 So to the gentleman from
2 this body who chairs Licenses and
3 Inspections, Councilmember Mike
4 Driscoll, I believe in his
5 leadership. I believe in the work
6 that the two of you have done in
7 terms of from a collaboration
8 standpoint and I also acknowledge
9 the work that the Mayor has done as
10 a new leader coming in and saying,
11 wait a minute, I want to separate
12 the two in terms of how we approach
13 things to make sure we're
14 addressing all the issues
15 comprehensively.

16 So continue to keep up
17 the good work. But most
18 importantly, thank you for having
19 the response, both of you. Any
20 time I call I get a response.
21 That's half the battle --

22 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:
23 Absolutely.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: -- right. Half the
2 battle is showing up, right. And
3 so, we'll continue to keep working
4 together.

5 The Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
8 Council President, I'm just looking
9 at this really quickly and I have
10 one question for Deputy
11 Commissioner because now he has me
12 confused.

13 He said they were a plus
14 one, but they're negative in
15 staffing. And he said you guys
16 call folks and offer them overtime.
17 Isn't it cheaper to just hire
18 medics as opposed to paying folks
19 overtime?

20 MR. McCALL: We are
21 hiring medics. We have currently a
22 list of 40. And on that list we've
23 had 10 people that have made it
24 through our process ready to start

1 the academy, and that start will be
2 in June, those 10 paramedics we
3 will be onboarding.

4 We actually just opened
5 up the list again to help capture
6 some of the people that were at
7 Crozer that are now without jobs so
8 we can then bring them on board.
9 So we opened that list and that
10 list closes on -- it was just
11 extended to the 18th. So it was
12 the 13th closure. Now, it's the
13 18th of this month, in which that
14 opportunity will close so we can
15 capture those folks. So we are
16 hiring paramedics and we're going
17 to continue to hire paramedics.
18 We're going to get as many
19 paramedics as we possibly can. We
20 understand that that's strenuous
21 work and having that relief helps
22 us out a great deal.

23 What happens though is
24 that people, you know, we can't

1 anticipate when people will
2 determine they're not feeling well
3 for the day, that they need to take
4 a holiday or vacation day or time
5 off or something along those lines.
6 And our relief factor suffers
7 because of it. So then we have to
8 go to overtime for that.

9 And that's any position.
10 It could be a firefighter EMT. It
11 could be an EMT -- or FSC, excuse
12 me. It could be an FSE advanced
13 and it could be a paramedic. When
14 it's a last minute something or
15 even something projected, we
16 understand that we get into a
17 relief and that's where we have a
18 little gap and we're looking to
19 fill that. For us a relief factor
20 for our paramedics across all four
21 platoons would be 64 additional
22 individuals.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

24 JOHNSON: Thank you very much.

1 Thank you for your testimony.

2 Thank you for your presentations.

3 And if anyone would do additional
4 follow-up as well, we will follow
5 up with you individually.

6 With that being said --
7 you're dismissed.

8 COMMISSIONER COLLINS

9 GREENWALD: Thank you.

10 COMMISSIONER THOMPSON:

11 Thank you very much.

12 COMMISSIONER MERENDA:

13 Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: With this being said, the
16 Chair recognizes Majority Leader
17 Gilmore Richardson for a motion of
18 the public hearing and meeting on
19 the bills and resolution before the
20 Committee today stand in recess
21 until Monday, May 5, 2025 at
22 10:00 a.m. in Room 400.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: So moved,

1 Mr. Chairman.

2 (Duly seconded.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

4 JOHNSON: It has been moved and
5 properly seconded that the public
6 hearing and meeting on the bills
7 and resolutions before the
8 Committee today stand in recess
9 until Monday, May 5, 2025 at
10 10:00 a.m.

11 All those in favor will
12 signify by saying aye.

13 (Aye.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

15 JOHNSON: Those opposed?

16 (No response.)

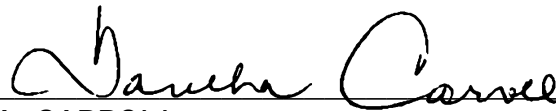
17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

18 JOHNSON: The ayes have it and the
19 motion carries. This Committee
20 will stand in recess until Monday
21 at 10:00 a.m. 2025 in City Hall.
22 Thank you.

23 (Committee of the Whole
24 concluded at 4:35 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, hereby certify that the proceedings
and evidence noted are contained fully and
accurately in the stenographic notes taken by
me in the foregoing matter, and that this is
a correct transcript of the same.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Taneha Carroll", is written over a horizontal line.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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