

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, March 11, 2024
1:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK F. SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.

RESOLUTIONS: 240029, 240038, 240075, 240078
240079, 240129

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Members, please take their seats.

4 Good afternoon.

5 (Good afternoon.)

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Good afternoon, everyone.

8 (Good afternoon.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

10 It's good to see everyone today.

11 This is the public hearing and

12 public meeting of the Committee of

13 the Whole regarding Resolutions

14 240075, 240078, 240079, 240029,

15 240038 and 240129. I want to thank

16 everyone for being here today.

17 Mr. Christmas, will you

18 please call the roll to take

19 attendance.

20 THE CLERK: Councilman

21 Squilla.

22 (No response.)

23 THE CLERK: Council Lady

24 Gauthier.

25 (No response.)

1 THE CLERK: Councilman
2 Jones.
3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Present.
4 THE CLERK: Councilman
5 Young.
6 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Present.
7 THE CLERK: Councilman
8 Driscoll.
9 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL:
10 Present.
11 THE CLERK: Councilwoman
12 Lozada.
13 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
14 Present.
15 THE CLERK: Councilwoman
16 Bass.
17 (No response.)
18 THE CLERK: Councilman
19 Phillips.
20 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
21 Present.
22 THE CLERK: Councilman
23 O'Neill.
24 (No response.)
25 THE CLERK: Councilwoman

1 Gilmore Richardson.
2 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
3 RICHARDSON: Present.
4 THE CLERK: Councilman
5 Thomas.
6 (No response.)
7 THE CLERK: Councilman
8 Harrity.
9 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
10 Present.
11 THE CLERK: Council Lady
12 Ahmad.
13 (No response.)
14 THE CLERK: Council Lady
15 Landau.
16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
17 Present.
18 THE CLERK: Counsel Lady
19 Brooks.
20 (No response.)
21 THE CLERK: Councilman
22 O'Rourke.
23 (No response.)
24 THE CLERK: Council
25 President Johnson.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 Present.

3 THE CLERK: A quorum of
4 members are present, Councilman.
5 And Council Lady Gauthier is now
6 present.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

8 Thank you. A quorum of the hearing
9 is present and the hearing is now
10 called to order.

11 Mr. Christmas, will you
12 please read the titles of the
13 resolutions.

14 THE CLERK: Resolution
15 240075, appointing Paul Levy to the
16 Board of Directors of the Center
17 City District.

18 And Resolution 240078,
19 appointing Louis Tice to the Board
20 of Directors to the Old City
21 Special Services District.

22 And Resolution 240079,
23 appointing Elizabeth Woods to the
24 Board of Directors to the Old City
25 Special Services District.

1 And Resolution 240029,
2 confirming the appointment of Adam
3 Geer as the Chief Public Safety
4 Director.

5 And Resolution 240038,
6 confirming the appointment of Renee
7 Garcia, Esquire as the City
8 Solicitor.

9 And Resolution 240129,
10 re-appointing James Aros to the
11 position of Chief Assessment
12 Officer of the Office of Property
13 Assessment. This resolution is
14 being held at the request of the
15 Administration.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Thank you, Mr. Christmas.

18 Will you please call the
19 first witness to testify on
20 Resolution No. 240075.

21 THE CLERK: Mr. Paul Levy.
22 (Witness approached Witness
23 table.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
25 Good afternoon, Mr. Paul Levy. Can

1 you please state your name for the
2 record and please proceed with your
3 testimony.

4 MR. LEVY: I have extra
5 copies of it unless you have it.
6 Good afternoon. My name is Paul
7 Levy and I'm honored to be here
8 this morning. And, Council
9 President, congratulations. It's
10 my first time being in Council
11 since you've been Council
12 President. Good to see so many
13 people.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Thank you.

16 MR. LEVY: I would really
17 be honored to serve on the Board of
18 the Center City District. The CCD
19 was first authorized by City
20 Council in 1990 when the late Ron
21 Rubin was the founding Chair and he
22 incorporated or became the first
23 Business Improvement District in
24 the City of Philadelphia formed
25 under the Municipality Authorities

1 Act of 1945.

2 I was appointed in January
3 1991 to serve as the first
4 Executive Director of the CCD.
5 Since that time I've had the
6 pleasure of working closely with
7 members of this Council and five
8 different mayors as the CCD grew
9 from a clean and safe organization
10 to one that markets restaurants and
11 retail, established the Homeless
12 Outreach Partnership in partnership
13 with Project HOME, has carried out
14 more than \$150 million in
15 streetscape improvements and
16 created five new parks, including
17 Dilworth Park just outside the
18 doors of this building.

19 During this same period of
20 time, you have supported the
21 creation of more than a dozen other
22 Improvement Districts serving
23 diverse neighborhoods throughout
24 this City. After 33 years of
25 serving in a role as CEO of the

1 CCD, I was pleased to hand off the
2 leadership of the organization to
3 Prema Gupta, who was appointed by
4 the Board to serve as the new CEO
5 effective January 1, 2024. And if
6 you know Prema, she has extensive
7 experience in economic development
8 and public space management,
9 working for both the University
10 City District and for PIDC, and
11 then for three years at the CCD
12 starting just before the pandemic.

13 She has hit the ground
14 running as an excellent new leader
15 of the organization. The CCD Board
16 asked me if I would be willing to
17 consider serving in an advisor
18 role, and I would be pleased to do
19 so as a new Board member of the
20 Center City District. Thank you
21 very much for this opportunity.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
23 Thank you very much.

24 Before I turn it over to my
25 colleagues for questions, just from

1 your perspective, and I know that
2 this is an organization that is
3 very near and dear to your heart
4 and we watched you work to
5 revitalize Center City, in terms of
6 the future of Center City in your
7 role as serving as a Board member
8 of the Center City District, what's
9 your perspective in terms of the
10 obstacles and things that you
11 believe that could be beneficial
12 and thus revitalizing the health of
13 Center City, which you will
14 contribute as a member of the
15 Center City District?

16 MR. LEVY: That's an
17 excellent question. Having just
18 come back from the West Coast and
19 San Francisco, we're in much better
20 shape than a lot of cities. Let me
21 just start there. There are many
22 cities that are having a much
23 harder time recovering.

24 And I think we are
25 recovering as a city, one, because

1 of the much greater diversity of
2 our economy, health care and
3 education, hospitality, the
4 commercial office sector. Those
5 cities with the greatest difficulty
6 in recovery are heavily dependent
7 on information technology, which is
8 really what characterizes
9 San Francisco. So, one, the
10 diversity of our economy obviously
11 is a keystone point.

12 I think we also have --
13 this Council approved in 1997 a
14 10-year tax abatement for the
15 conversion of vacant office to
16 residential. Now, cities are
17 trying to figure out how to do
18 that. We converted more than 10
19 million square feet here in the
20 last 25 years to residential.

21 And I want to tell you a
22 really key point that we've learned
23 from a national study about
24 recovery of downtowns before I talk
25 about the rest of the City, is even

1 in the city of San Francisco, which
2 has the lowest recovery rate of the
3 26 largest cities, those people who
4 live within 2 to 3 miles of their
5 downtown office are back at 94
6 percent. Those who live 10 miles
7 away are back at 40 percent.

8 Our numbers here are about
9 95 percent for those people who
10 live close by and about 50 percent
11 for those who live 10 miles away.
12 So the live, work downtowns that we
13 have all been building has not only
14 made good use of vacant real estate
15 and converted that and animated
16 downtowns, it has increased the
17 return to work.

18 And why I think that is so
19 important as you all know is it's
20 not just office building jobs.
21 It's the janitor jobs. It's the
22 security jobs. It's the building
23 engineering jobs. It's the retail
24 jobs. It's the transit jobs that
25 come back. And so, my takeaway

1 first of all is that the recovery
2 will be better and is better here.

3 We're No. 5 in the nation
4 in terms of recovery. The cities
5 that recovered the most are cities
6 like Nashville, which are almost
7 entirely dependent on entertainment
8 and sports. Those are convention
9 center, those are important parts
10 of our economy, but they're mostly
11 low-wage jobs. So the diversity of
12 our economy has been really
13 helpful.

14 I know you are focused and
15 you'll focus today on public
16 safety. That is the number one
17 issue, but it's not necessarily
18 crime. It's the perception that
19 things are not safe. And when you
20 ask people what they're concerned
21 about, obviously dealing with the
22 mental ill or an aggressive,
23 addicted person are at the top of
24 the list, but people are also
25 concerned about the absence of

1 other people on the street, the
2 absence of visibility.

3 So the more we bring people
4 back as tourists, as visitors but
5 as workers, as students, the safer
6 people will feel. And so, clearly
7 at the CCD in the last two years we
8 doubled the number of public safety
9 people we've had on the street,
10 uniformed unarmed individuals.

11 Clearly, this
12 Administration I think has made a
13 really important statement about
14 clean, safe and green as a city-
15 wide priority. If we can't deal
16 with that, we're not going go back
17 to as a city. So I'm not sure if
18 that's fully responsive to what
19 you've asked. But as challenging
20 as it is here, having seen a
21 variety of other cities we are
22 ahead of a lot of ones. We ought
23 to be proud of what we've achieved
24 and we need to build on that in
25 every neighborhood in the City.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 And just one other question: Just
3 on some data I've been looking
4 over, in Center City we have
5 between 8 to 10 commercial
6 buildings that are either in
7 receivership or bankruptcy. Just
8 from your perspective, how do we
9 best utilize those spaces in the
10 future where it's obvious all of
11 the buildings can't be converted
12 into residential because the
13 footprint just doesn't allow it?

14 MR. LEVY: Right.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

16 But just being an expert in that,
17 particularly in the Center City
18 area, how best do you think we
19 should utilize that in the future,
20 those buildings?

21 MR. LEVY: Let's start with
22 the fact that -- and I don't want
23 to minimize the challenge if you're
24 the owner of that building or if
25 you're the City and looking to

1 collect taxes. There's a calamity
2 sitting there. All right. But the
3 newspapers and the media tend only
4 to report on the buildings in
5 trouble.

6 And the Class A office
7 space while challenged is doing
8 fairly well, so it's a whole
9 inventory of older buildings and
10 they obviously -- we took as I said
11 10 million of them out of
12 inventory, so there's a significant
13 more we're probably going to have
14 to convert. I think there are
15 areas that are near our
16 universities and research
17 institutions where life sciences is
18 going to be a major new user of
19 those.

20 So there is going to be
21 real estate that we don't have a
22 clear future use for, and I don't
23 particularly predict where it will
24 go. But if you look at the Class A
25 office space that's in much better

1 shape than the really older
2 buildings, and I think the
3 particular challenge which is
4 compounding this right now which is
5 short term, is interest rates are
6 incredibly high, and still coming
7 out of the pandemic, construction
8 costs, supply chain costs, so we
9 have a public storm.

10 And again, having lived
11 through -- we created the Center
12 City District in 1990 in a severe
13 downturn. Many of us lived through
14 2008 and 2010 at the bottom of the
15 cycle. It's about as depressing as
16 can be and three years later we
17 forget about it. I don't mean to
18 minimize that.

19 We're at a down-point.
20 There are serious problems, but I
21 think the reuse of these buildings
22 for residential, for hotel, for
23 life sciences and for the things we
24 haven't invented yet. One of the
25 things about being in the Bay area,

1 they're inventing industries I've
2 never heard about there. We need
3 to be focused on what those are. I
4 don't know yet. But I would be
5 less pessimistic than some of the
6 worst news I read, fully
7 recognizing if you own one of those
8 buildings, it's a very painful
9 time.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

11 And one last question: A recent
12 report showed that in Center City,
13 particularly in Rittenhouse Square
14 area, we've seen a significant
15 increase in residential growth and
16 development. What do you think
17 were the key contributors to
18 actually individuals moving
19 downtown in that particular area?

20 MR. LEVY: I'm not sure I
21 fully understand the question.
22 What's the --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

24 So there's been an increase of
25 individuals moving in the

1 Rittenhouse Square/Center City area
2 most recently. And so, from your
3 perspective what are the key
4 contributing factors even in the
5 midst of public safety that you put
6 out there for individuals still
7 moving downtown in that particular
8 area?

9 MR. LEVY: I think, look,
10 in every neighborhood in which we
11 have great quality amenities, great
12 parks or great schools, people will
13 want to live there. The advantage
14 of Center City and University City
15 is that's half of the jobs in the
16 City. And so, people want to live
17 near their work. They don't want
18 to commute that much, but they want
19 to live near amenities. So that's
20 true for all of the Center City and
21 the surrounding neighborhoods at
22 this point.

23 And clearly, I know we'll
24 be talking about this in terms of
25 job growth and tax reform. We need

1 to deal with the short-term issues.
2 But with a more competitive tax
3 structure we will have more robust
4 job growth city-wide as well. But
5 that's the driver of housing for
6 me, people with decent jobs.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

8 Thank you very much.

9 The Chair recognizes
10 Councilman Curtis Jones.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
12 you, Mr. President.

13 Mr. Levy, and I call you
14 Mr. Levy --

15 MR. LEVY: We know each
16 other too long for you to call me
17 that.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: I call
19 you Mr. Levy because you've earned
20 it. And thank you for your
21 service --

22 MR. LEVY: Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- to
24 our city. Thank you for your
25 commitment to want to do a second

1 tour of duty of being on the Board,
2 and I know that doesn't pay at all.
3 So thank you again.

4 MR. LEVY: My wife thinks
5 I'm crazy, if you want to know
6 that. Okay.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I'm
8 going to ask the hard question.

9 MR. LEVY: Sure.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Give us
11 your perspective on relocating the
12 Sixers Stadium to Market Street.
13 Where are you at on that?

14 MR. LEVY: Is that going to
15 affect your judgment on whether I
16 get appointed to the Board or not?

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm
18 going to ask the hard question.

19 MR. LEVY: Clearly that's
20 not my decision to make. That's
21 your decision to make. Let me
22 start there. We're all familiar
23 with what may be the challenges.
24 I'm trying to focus on both. Okay.
25 I think the opportunities are --

1 and I just came back from the city
2 of Sacramento. That's a city where
3 more than half the employment is in
4 state government and they're not
5 back and the city is empty except
6 the arena is a driver of lots of
7 downtown activity and more people
8 on the street.

9 And Market East is a
10 challenge street, right. So I'm
11 less interested in the Sixers Arena
12 alone. But if it's going to go
13 there, if you decide that it goes
14 there, it's the residential, it's
15 the retail, it's the hotels. It's
16 sites like 8th and Market that have
17 been vacant since 1977 or 13th and
18 Market that's vacant since '82,
19 that could be a driver.

20 I fully appreciate and
21 understand the huge concerns that
22 Chinatown has. And having just
23 come back from visiting
24 San Francisco, Chinatown was
25 threatened in the '70s and '80s by

1 the expansion of their financial
2 district. They imposed height
3 controls and historic preservation,
4 and they have probably the second
5 largest Chinatown in North America
6 because controls were put in place
7 to protect the place from the
8 encroachment of high density
9 commercial. So I see those as
10 potential tools.

11 Clearly, SEPTA's ridership
12 is back at 55 to 60 percent. I see
13 the advantage of putting an arena
14 on the top of the Regional Rail
15 System. It's a way of getting new
16 riders, but I fully appreciate the
17 concerns of surrounding
18 neighborhoods of traffic
19 congestion.

20 We are able to accommodate
21 25,000 to 30,000 people at the
22 Convention Center, at the Flower
23 Show, but they come throughout the
24 whole day. Games are peak arrival
25 and peak departure. So I wouldn't

1 put an arena downtown unless I had
2 a very strong public transit plan,
3 unless I had a really strong
4 transportation management plan.
5 It's not a one-and-done decision.
6 Either put it there or don't put it
7 there. If you put it there, you
8 need to think about the
9 redevelopment of the entire area.
10 You need to think about transit.
11 I would love to brand any
12 new building there as the gateway
13 to transit, not hide it. People
14 remember what the old Amtrak
15 station looked like in New York
16 City before the new one? This is
17 an opportunity to get a gateway to
18 transit. I think we could have a
19 gateway to Chinatown on Market
20 Street.
21 So I see the concerns. I
22 understand the disadvantages. I
23 see huge advantages. And again,
24 what I would want to contribute to
25 the thinking is don't just think

1 about yes or no on the arena. If
2 yes, what are all the other things
3 needed to do. And if no, what's
4 the plan for Market East which is
5 lagging.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
7 point. My only other question is
8 you were a part of a strategy for
9 nonviolent crimes alternatives to
10 incarceration called Community
11 Courts.

12 MR. LEVY: Right.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: And what
14 impact did that have on Center
15 City's quality of life and would
16 you recommend us to --

17 MR. LEVY: Yes, yes and
18 yes. Just to be clear for those
19 who were not here because it
20 operated for about 12 years, and it
21 was much more than Center City. It
22 served almost a third of the City
23 of Philadelphia. And what it was,
24 was an alternative to
25 incarceration. People who were

1 picked up for a whole range of
2 crimes could choose to plead not
3 guilty and go the traditional
4 system.

5 But the overwhelming number
6 of people who were dealing with
7 drug addiction, mental health
8 problems or just repeat offenders
9 could plead guilty but be sentenced
10 to alcohol treatment, get access to
11 job training, get access to mental
12 health services. We and many
13 organizations provided work sites
14 for temporary work. It got us out
15 of the either-or choice. It's not
16 criminal or social services. It's
17 how you blend those together.

18 And so, during the time it
19 operated we had a dramatic
20 reduction of quality-of-life
21 crimes. I would strongly urge the
22 reconsideration of putting it back
23 together. And let me just say at
24 the time we did it, Ellen Greenlee
25 was the public defender and Lynne

1 Abraham was the district attorney.

2 It took us three years to get the
3 two of them to agree. We had to go
4 to New York City and look what they
5 did.

6 So anyone who wants to take
7 this on needs to understand it's
8 not snap your finger. That's a lot
9 of coalition building, a lot of
10 overcoming of very different points
11 of view, but that's frankly one of
12 the things I would more than
13 prepare to work on because I
14 absolutely think we need to restore
15 it not only for Center City and as
16 I said, it was a third of the City,
17 it is exactly the tool of today.
18 Not pure criminal justice, not pure
19 social services, but the
20 integration of those with job
21 training and treating people in
22 trouble as full human beings, not
23 just punishment but services,
24 et cetera. So please do consider
25 bringing it back.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
2 you, Mr. President.

3 COUNCIL PRESENT JOHNSON:
4 Thank you very much.

5 The Chair recognizes in
6 attendance Councilmember Isaiah
7 Thomas and Councilwoman Nina Ahmad.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilmember Jeffrey Young.

10 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
11 you, Council President.

12 And good afternoon,
13 Mr. Levy. A follow-up question
14 regarding the commercial real
15 estate in Center City, the state of
16 the commercial of the real estate
17 here: So you mentioned our Class A
18 is doing wonderful in comparison to
19 some other cities, but it's more
20 our Class B and C properties that
21 are in distress.

22 So what are some things the
23 City can do to attract more I guess
24 property owners, business owners to
25 come to rehab those facilities into

1 a better commercial space, a better
2 use? And what are some of those --
3 you mentioned you were on the West
4 Coast and you may not know what
5 those uses are, but can you give us
6 some examples of industries you
7 think that we should be trying to
8 attract here to those Class B and C
9 office spaces?

10 MR. LEVY: Yeah. I don't
11 want to do that superficially, and
12 that would take a lot more time.
13 But we know, for example, that
14 older buildings so long as they are
15 near either Thomas Jefferson or
16 Drexel or a Penn which have heavy
17 research and medical capability
18 have life science potential. So
19 clearly understanding -- and those
20 are really a broad range of very
21 diverse jobs.

22 So, one, you need to think
23 geographically about the other
24 uses. Clearly the closer you are
25 to the Convention Center, the more

1 potential it is for hotel. The
2 10-year abatement for conversion is
3 in place. People always confuse
4 the changes that were legislated
5 downward for new construction.

6 The full 10-year abatement
7 is in place. Does that need to be
8 combined with some maybe other
9 additional state incentives or
10 federal ones given where interest
11 rates are? That would require more
12 study. It may be we need slightly
13 more powerful tools. Again, I
14 don't want to offer that as an
15 opinion without looking at the
16 numbers. But the more we can put
17 those jobs back, those buildings
18 back to use, it's more construction
19 jobs.

20 And again, I always like to
21 emphasize that any office building
22 is not just high wage and midlife
23 wage jobs. It's entry-level jobs,
24 it's janitorial jobs, it's security
25 jobs. So it's how we think about

1 this real estate not just from the
2 owner's point of view, and they
3 have serious challenges. It's
4 what's the economic development
5 potential. So again, I don't want
6 to be superficial. I think we need
7 to look almost
8 building-by-building.

9 I was just talking with Job
10 about the ensemble of buildings he
11 has in Old City. Those need to be
12 looked at uniquely in that setting
13 given the location of the
14 hospitality industry. But we need
15 the focus of our Commerce
16 Department and PIDC and this
17 Council to think strategically
18 about that.

19 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
20 you. A couple more questions. Can
21 you talk to us about the diversity
22 of the Board and executive
23 leadership at Center City District
24 and its staff excluding those that
25 are contracted workers?

1 MR. LEVY: I missed the
2 first part. I'm sorry.

3 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: I said
4 can you talk to us about I guess
5 the makeup, the Board's compilation
6 of CCD, the demographic of the
7 Board, the staff at CCD?

8 MR. LEVY: Okay.
9 Absolutely. Starting with the
10 Board, the Board is approximately a
11 third African American, a third
12 women and a third Caucasian men at
13 this point. That's sort of a
14 break-up of the Board. From a
15 staffing level, our sidewalk
16 cleaning program, all the cleaners
17 are represented by SEIU. That's
18 largely a minority workforce. Our
19 community service representatives
20 are our uniformed unarmed
21 individuals, also unionized
22 workforce are a very balance mix of
23 African American, Hispanic, Asian
24 and Caucasian workers.

25 Professional staff, I don't

1 have those numbers in my head, but
2 it has grown steadily more diverse.
3 And with my replacement as CEO with
4 Prema, we're doing a whole lot
5 better on that front now too.

6 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
7 you. So if it's helpful, if you're
8 able to provide us those numbers,
9 that would be --

10 MR. LEVY: Be glad to do
11 that. Yeah, absolutely. We have
12 those.

13 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: And
14 outside the street sweepers, I know
15 they are not Center City District
16 employees, per se. They're
17 contracted out. So can you provide
18 us the numbers that are actually
19 Center City District employees?

20 MR. LEVY: Absolutely.
21 Great. And just to be clear, our
22 sidewalk cleaning is an outsourced
23 function. The bike patrol is
24 outsourced. The community service
25 representatives are our direct

1 employees. Our homeless outreach
2 teams are our direct employees and
3 professionals, so I will give you
4 that breakdown.

5 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
6 you. And one more question: Can
7 you tell me, just give the Council
8 an overview just in your opinion on
9 how does Center City's improvement
10 impact our communities and our
11 neighborhoods that are beyond
12 Center City.

13 MR. LEVY: Sure. If we
14 start with the fact that 42 percent
15 of all jobs in the City are
16 downtown, another 10 or 11 percent
17 are in University City, they are at
18 the center of our transit system.
19 25 percent of the working residents
20 of each of your Districts work in
21 Center City. And the interesting
22 mix of jobs in Center City is they
23 are one-third that require a
24 college degree, one-third require
25 an Associate's degree and one-third

1 require only a high school diploma.

2 So we have going back to
3 what I said before between office,
4 health care, education, hospitality
5 and retail an incredibly
6 diversified economy creating very,
7 very diverse jobs. So we're
8 incredibly fortunate to have a
9 hub-and-spokes transit system that
10 feeds this. And when we have this
11 many jobs here connected by
12 transit, it I think gives us the
13 most accessible jobs in the region
14 in many ways. Is that responsive
15 to your question?

16 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Yes.

17 Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

20 You're welcome.

21 First, I want to also
22 acknowledge Councilwoman Kendra
23 Brooks who's in attendance and also
24 Councilman Mark Squilla.

25 The Chair recognizes

1 Councilman Isaiah Thomas.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
3 afternoon, everybody. Thank you,
4 Council President.

5 Good afternoon, sir.

6 MR. LEVY: Good afternoon.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Couple
8 quick questions for you. You
9 talked a little bit about sale of
10 buildings and real estate values of
11 buildings. If we do not do
12 anything and continue on the same
13 trajectory that we're on, can you
14 give us an estimate, an
15 approximate, how much revenue in
16 City dollars will be lost based on
17 the value of those buildings going
18 down because those other spaces
19 aren't filled?

20 MR. LEVY: Yeah. No,
21 that's a great question. I can
22 tell you exactly within the
23 boundaries of the CCD we have lost
24 about 15 percent of the assessed
25 value since 2020 in office

1 buildings, but that was offset by a
2 5 percent increase in residential
3 apartment buildings, so that
4 diversification is really key.

5 And again, from the CCD's
6 point of view an apartment building
7 is paying like an office building.
8 Because the City is so much more
9 dependent on the wage tax, that to
10 me is the most vulnerable location,
11 I think most vulnerable source. I
12 think you know that the City
13 refunded 90 million in wage tax
14 revenue to suburban residents in
15 2021.

16 They refunded 85 million in
17 2022 and 45 million last year when
18 the City mandated you had to be
19 directed to work from home in order
20 to get a rebate. But the City is
21 collecting much less wage tax from
22 suburban residents who used to work
23 downtown.

24 Think about the accounting
25 firms, the law firms, the

1 engineering firms who have offices
2 in the suburbs. All right. I live
3 in the suburbs -- not me, I live in
4 Center City. But if I lived in the
5 suburbs and I could go to my
6 suburban office, the City no longer
7 withholds wage tax for me. So I
8 think we've lost about 40 to 50
9 million in suburban residents who
10 are choosing not to come downtown
11 right now because they can work in
12 a suburban office.

13 Again, I believe we need to
14 look particularly at this moment at
15 our overall tax structure. I mean,
16 I have long felt that we don't fund
17 ourselves in quite the right way.
18 But I think we're incredibly
19 vulnerable now on the wage tax
20 because those numbers -- which are
21 national by the way. People who
22 live 10 miles away are back at half
23 the rate of people who live 3 miles
24 away, if you add on top of that
25 work from home and get a 2.5

1 percent raise because you're not
2 paying the City wage tax.

3 So we have a vulnerability
4 on real estate in downtown. If we
5 continue to lose residents from any
6 neighborhoods, the biggest tax base
7 is really the residential tax base,
8 which we need to be careful about.
9 So I don't want to be doom and
10 gloom here. We formed the District
11 in 1990 when people were incredibly
12 pessimistic. We lived through 2008
13 and '10. We are on a similar
14 crisis now and we need to be
15 strategic.

16 The questions you're asking
17 are exactly the right ones, where
18 are our points of vulnerability but
19 what are the investments we as a
20 City need to make as we did with
21 the Convention Center, as we did
22 with sports teams, as we did with
23 the 10-year abatement, as we did
24 with office buildings. We can lead
25 the recovery here, but the status

1 quo will not be our way out of
2 this.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm as
4 optimistic as you are and --

5 MR. LEVY: Great.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: -- I
7 know that a lot of my colleagues in
8 this legislative branch of
9 government are optimistic as well.

10 One of the things that
11 we've done over the last couple of
12 years is gradually reduce the BIRT
13 and the wage tax. And if you can
14 talk to us a little bit about
15 decisions that this legislative
16 body has made --

17 MR. LEVY: Sure.

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: -- and
19 the impact that you think it has on
20 the recovery of our economy right
21 now --

22 MR. LEVY: Right.

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: -- as
24 well as that optimistic perspective
25 that we're both talking about as it

1 relates to the future.

2 MR. LEVY: Sure. Let me
3 start with a non-optimistic
4 perspective. In this morning's
5 Inquirer in the Business section
6 was a major technology firm which
7 signed a lease in the suburbs
8 because all their workers were out
9 there and they were excluded from
10 the wage tax. All right. That's
11 the negative side.

12 We have lots of advantages
13 of living and working in the City,
14 living in its neighborhoods,
15 et cetera. I think the key issue,
16 we need the wage tax, we need BIRT,
17 we need real estate to support the
18 services in this government.
19 Absolutely the case, and you can't
20 slash things and cut people's
21 services.

22 But we are among the
23 slowest growth cities in jobs,
24 right, we grew less than 1 percent
25 the couple of years. There are

1 other cities growing at 2, 3, 4
2 percent a year. We need more
3 robust job growth. And if I'm a
4 business person making a decision
5 about where to locate my business,
6 I don't want to know this year's
7 numbers. I'm going to look around
8 for the length of my lease, 10 or
9 15 years.

10 So if Council sends a
11 signal that we have a plan over 5
12 and 10 years for a gradual
13 reduction in taxes, that is
14 predictable. That's not every year
15 what's going to happen, but you
16 develop a five-year plan and say
17 this is what we're going to
18 support, predictability gives
19 assurance. You need to create a
20 schedule that you can afford, that
21 we can afford.

22 But taxing a declining base
23 of jobs and residences, which is
24 what we did in the '70s and '80s,
25 is a formula for failure, right.

1 So I think we need to be strategic
2 about tax reform. We need to meet
3 current needs, but we need to say
4 that we want to send signals for
5 all types of businesses, small
6 business, minority businesses,
7 large businesses, that we want you
8 here and we have a plan, not
9 necessarily tomorrow, but next
10 year, the year after, it's going to
11 get more competitive. That's a
12 general question, I know. But I'll
13 be more than glad to talk about
14 that in more detail.

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
16 you. Last question, I'm going back
17 to the building. So I'm wondering
18 there's been dialogue about the
19 City purchasing some of the bigger
20 buildings as the value has gone
21 down to avoid bankruptcy. Based on
22 your expert opinion, is that a good
23 philosophy for us to try to
24 essentially brainstorm or does it
25 create a slippery slope of

1 unanticipated problems that will
2 possibly put us --

3 MR. LEVY: I want to give a
4 lot of thought to that. My quick
5 reaction is if you don't have a use
6 for it -- what will you do as a
7 City with a vacant building if the
8 private market couldn't do
9 something? You figured how to use
10 the former Inquirer building,
11 right. I mean, there are buildings
12 that could have other uses.

13 But I think that
14 requires -- let me not give you --
15 that requires a very careful
16 analysis. I think again if you're
17 the owner of a building and you've
18 been foreclosed on and you're
19 taking a beating, right, that's an
20 awful situation. But if you're the
21 buyer of that building at one-third
22 of what it was before, you have the
23 opportunity to bring in tenants at
24 a lower rate. It's very painful.
25 I mean, I don't want to wish this

1 on anyone.

2 The private market can be
3 very entrepreneurial with low-cost
4 buildings, so I wouldn't
5 automatically assume that the
6 government needs to step in and buy
7 out buildings unless you have a
8 strategic plan for them.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
10 you, sir.

11 Thank you, Council
12 President.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
14 Thank you.

15 The Chair recognizes
16 Councilmember Rue Landau.

17 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I had
18 a question.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 The Chair recognizes Councilwoman
21 Jamie Gauthier.

22 Excuse me, Audio Visual,
23 she is on the screen. Did you
24 touch your button?

25 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT:

1 (Inaudible).

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Okay. The Chair now recognizes
4 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
5 Richardson.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

7 Well, wait. I did -- wait, did you
8 not mean to --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

10 No, not at all. You on there.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

12 RICHARDSON: Yeah.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 But she was here before you, so you
15 here.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Oh,
17 he recognized me and called me
18 first so I --

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: It's okay.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

22 Councilwoman Katherine Gilmore
23 Richardson.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

25 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Council

1 President. I will --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 I'm not being smart.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

5 RICHARDSON: -- acquiesce to
6 Councilwoman Gauthier if you don't
7 mind.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

9 Councilwoman Jamie Gauthier.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

11 (Inaudible). Thank you, Council
12 President.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 You're welcome.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: How
16 are you doing, Mr. Levy?

17 MR. LEVY: Good to see you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

19 Since we're on this topic, the tax
20 structure, I just wanted to ask you
21 a question. I understand the
22 argument for reducing the City's
23 reliance on the wage tax, but in
24 your opinion as we continue to
25 reduce the wage tax and the BIRT

1 tax, what do we replace that
2 revenue with in near term and how
3 do we replace it in a way that's
4 more than speculative, I guess
5 independent on businesses that
6 might come if they catch our
7 signal?

8 MR. LEVY: That's a great
9 question. And let me be very
10 clear, having spent the last 33
11 years running an assessment
12 district, we can't deliver services
13 unless we have tax revenue. So I
14 fully appreciate and identify with
15 that question. You can't wish away
16 taxes and then pretend services
17 will come. I want to be clear
18 about that.

19 We are very unique among
20 American cities in being as
21 dependent on the wage tax as we
22 are.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

24 Okay.

25 MR. LEVY: Most cities

1 frankly rely more on the real
2 estate tax. And it's not that they
3 charge more in real estate tax.
4 They have a more robust job base.
5 So my big picture is that because
6 we relied so much on wage and
7 business taxes, we have driven down
8 demand for businesses to be here
9 and lowered the real estate tax
10 base of the City, which obviously
11 supports the school as well as City
12 government.

13 So I am not saying raise
14 real estate taxes. That's why I
15 think it's got to be strategic. If
16 you have a more competitive tax
17 structure -- and by the way, our
18 real estate taxes are cheaper than
19 in the suburbs, right.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
21 Okay.

22 MR. LEVY: But our cost of
23 doing business between wage and
24 BIRT and several other taxes are
25 much higher, so we give ourselves a

1 competitive disadvantage to support
2 very needed services. So to me
3 it's long-term when you drive down
4 the dependence on wage and BIRT.
5 You increase the tax base of the
6 City without actually raising
7 taxes. I have had that experience.

8 The CCD has never raised
9 its rates in 33 years. But we
10 started with a \$6.5 million budget
11 in 1991. We have a \$31 million
12 budget this year, because of the
13 diversification, the growth in
14 demand, the more people who want to
15 live and work, hotels and
16 investments that you've made.

17 So again, it's not snap
18 your fingers and solve the problem.
19 It's have a strategic plan.
20 There's only one city that's
21 reliant on the wage tax other than
22 Philadelphia and that's Detroit,
23 and Detroit doesn't have a very
24 strong job base either. So I think
25 again we need those revenues today,

1 but we need to diversify and expand
2 other revenue sources.

3 And I think the real estate
4 tax, not raising my real estate
5 taxes as a resident of yours but
6 having more businesses want to be
7 here, generating more demand for
8 commercial and industrial real
9 estate, I think, is the long-term
10 strategy.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

12 Thank you.

13 MR. LEVY: Okay.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 The Chair now recognizes
16 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
17 Richardson.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
19 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Council
20 President. And thank you,
21 colleagues.

22 And thank you so much,
23 Mr. Levy, for your service with
24 City Center District --

25 MR. LEVY: Thank you.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: -- and for all the
3 work you do. I certainly enjoy
4 hearing some of the concerts at
5 lunchtime in --

6 MR. LEVY: Oh, thank you.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

8 RICHARDSON: -- my office. And
9 also --

10 MR. LEVY: Okay. I thought
11 you were going to complain about
12 how loud the music was so we're
13 okay. Good.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: No, I'm not going to
16 complain today. And all of the
17 Center City SIPs programs that I
18 think have been very popular as
19 well as Restaurant Week and all the
20 things that you all do in Center
21 City District.

22 MR. LEVY: Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

24 RICHARDSON: I wanted to go back to
25 one thing you talked about relative

1 to the slow rate of job growth in
2 the City of Philadelphia. If you
3 could talk about specifically in
4 your area in Center City the type
5 of jobs that have grown. Even if
6 it's been slow, have they been
7 low-wage positions? Are they
8 middle-market jobs? Are they
9 high-end? What's the trend there?

10 MR. LEVY: Look, I think we
11 all went through the awful
12 experience of 2020 and 2021. We
13 are back at a higher level of jobs
14 in 2024 than we had in 2019. And
15 the good news is we went way down
16 and we came back up again, so let's
17 say we're in recovery. But if you
18 drew that line, there are many
19 cities where that line goes much
20 faster upwards, so that's my bigger
21 picture.

22 I think we've been
23 fortunate until this particular
24 period in which we've grown all of
25 the above, which is when you grow

1 high-wage office jobs, you also as
2 I said drive support jobs within
3 those buildings. You drive jobs
4 for the transit workers, for the
5 janitors, the security guards, the
6 building engineers. You drive
7 retail demand. Those tend to be
8 lower-level jobs obviously. The
9 hospitality industry, that's been a
10 great investment this City has
11 made, the Convention Center and
12 tourism marketing. And those are
13 very diverse jobs.

14 So again, I go back to
15 those numbers. In the downtown,
16 it's one-third, one-third,
17 one-third. One-third requires a
18 college degree. One-third requires
19 an Associate's degree. One-third
20 requires only a high school
21 diploma. We've done well in all
22 those, but we've not done fast
23 enough growth in all of those
24 areas.

25 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: Okay. So we've done
2 well but the speed is what's
3 lagging, right, the speed of --

4 MR. LEVY: Exactly. I
5 mean, the diversity of jobs we've
6 done well at. And we have lots of
7 good programs to engage people and
8 train people for those. It's the
9 rate of growth, it's the speed of
10 growth, which we need to do much
11 better about if we're going to
12 solve poverty in this City.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Okay. Great. And
15 then my last question since some of
16 my colleagues already addressed
17 some of the other questions I had,
18 it's relative to the contracts that
19 you all have with Center City
20 District, recognizing that your
21 budget has grown sizably over the
22 years, even since I've been here.
23 If you could talk about some of
24 the -- or not some, but the
25 percentage of contracts that you

1 have with minority vendors, with
2 women business owners and also
3 disadvantaged business owners?

4 MR. LEVY: Let me do what I
5 promised Councilman -- the other
6 Councilmember. I'll get you those
7 numbers specifically because
8 they're not in my head, but I want
9 to give you an accurate count. But
10 we have a very strong commitment on
11 the construction side, on the
12 service side for making sure that
13 our contracts are diverse. But let
14 me give you -- I promise to follow
15 up with detailed numbers.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
17 RICHARDSON: Okay. And even
18 specifically for particularly the
19 contracts that are in and around
20 City Hall for folks that are
21 working here. I'm interested in
22 all of them, but obviously the
23 folks that are working on the
24 quadplex in some regard.

25 MR. LEVY: Absolutely, I

1 will be glad to do that. Yes,
2 absolutely.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

4 RICHARDSON: Thanks.

5 Thank you, Mr. President.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Thank you very much.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilman Mark Squilla.

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

12 Thank you, Mr. Levy.
13 Appreciate your work and ideas. On
14 the front of the vacancies, as we
15 see our Market East, even Chestnut
16 Street and Walnut Street, we have a
17 lot of vacancies. Years ago Center
18 City District had a plan with some
19 art installment and things like
20 that, working with South Street and
21 some other folks on how to
22 incentivize storefronts, how it
23 looks, how to encourage more people
24 to rent, but also there are certain
25 landlords and people who are

1 comfortable leaving these places
2 vacant.

3 What are some incentive
4 things that we as a City can do?
5 And I know New York had vacant
6 property fees and fines and
7 increasing over time. What are
8 things that we could do to
9 encourage people to rent these and
10 maybe if it's not at the top rent
11 that they want or other ways to
12 really fill in these vacancies or
13 let the people know we don't want
14 to have these vacancies for long
15 periods of time?

16 MR. LEVY: Yeah. I mean,
17 let's start with the simple thing,
18 that -- and it's something we've
19 tried to do and I think we need to
20 do in each neighborhood, which is
21 don't just put up brown paper and
22 block the window, right. You need
23 to animate the window even short-
24 term. I don't know if we need
25 ordinances or just all the outreach

1 by the Improvement Districts maybe.
2 A little bit of graphic design
3 services could be donated so that
4 we could get these things to look
5 better.

6 And I want to be clear, I
7 was just in as I said San Francisco
8 and I was just in Sacramento. This
9 is a problem across the country.
10 It's not just unique here. I think
11 rather -- I mean, I think what we
12 probably can do is a number of --
13 there's a lot of people in the real
14 estate brokerage community. I
15 think a couple of simple public
16 forums for some of the commercial
17 corridors about who's in the
18 market, what are rents, you know.
19 If you're still holding on to
20 whatever that number was, I want
21 \$40 a square foot when the markets
22 \$12, nobody likes -- it's like you
23 don't want to lose value in your
24 building, but as a strategy I think
25 we need some good information

1 coming to owners about where the
2 market is, who the tenants are in
3 the market. We're not going to
4 mandate people rent to somebody,
5 but giving them good information.
6 And we're more than glad to help
7 with that in that process as well.

8 Just to put in the minds of
9 those owners, here are some of the
10 options that you have. Now,
11 they're clearly types of businesses
12 that you and I would be glad to
13 prohibit from happening in a lot of
14 these areas, and that's another
15 tool. But I think we need to give
16 people information. We don't have
17 that many incentives for retail,
18 but we may need to look at that in
19 some neighborhoods as well.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: How
21 about as far as certain landlords
22 that own a lot of properties that
23 have no interest in that? Is there
24 any option that we have?

25 MR. LEVY: I mean, clearly

1 making sure that they're current on
2 their permits, on their regulations
3 and their taxes is the leverage
4 that you do have. And we all get
5 frustrated, and some of them are
6 truly in trouble and I don't want
7 to beat up on them because it's a
8 difficult time. But some owners
9 are less than responsible owners.
10 And I think in City government you
11 have some of that information that
12 becomes leverage.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah.
14 You don't want to throw the baby
15 out with the bath water and --

16 MR. LEVY: Right, exactly.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: -- you
18 know, hurt the people who you
19 really want to try to help, but in
20 the other --

21 MR. LEVY: You don't want
22 to create an environment where a
23 business says I'm not coming to
24 Philadelphia because they just beat
25 the hell out of me, right.

1 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right.

2 MR. LEVY: On the other
3 hand, there are people who are
4 irresponsible with properties.
5 I've seen it for years.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And I
7 think we need to wrap our heads
8 around it and come up with some --
9 whether it's working with Commerce.
10 I know we have Storefront
11 Improvement programs. I know we
12 have other programs, and maybe it
13 could be for a vacant property
14 program. Maybe we work through
15 Commerce to get a grant out to
16 people who are interested and we
17 can help market that.

18 MR. LEVY: Absolutely.
19 This is the time to be creative.
20 One of the people who I worked with
21 out in -- I was on a ULI Technical
22 Assistance Panel with the former
23 Mayor of Pittsburgh Tom Murphy.
24 And Tom, those who remember him
25 basically said, look, when we took

1 over with declining steel mills we
2 said, let's take 10 percent of our
3 operating budget and instead of
4 spending on operations, spend it on
5 strategic investments for the
6 future. We're at that moment.

7 This is a crisis moment for
8 this and all cities. We need to
9 reimagine our commercial corridors.
10 We need to imagine many business
11 areas. We need good intelligence,
12 but we need some strategic
13 investments here in industries that
14 will grow. That's not easy, but
15 we're a new Administration
16 committed to that. I think that's
17 the strategy now. It's not
18 necessarily to be punitive. It's
19 to be strategic about how we grow
20 this economy again.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And
22 last but not least, and I know we
23 can have meetings and discuss it,
24 but 2026 is coming soon and we're
25 not going to wait for new

1 developments and things like that
2 to happen. As we market our City
3 and look to encourage folks or
4 people who live here to enjoy all
5 the activities that are going to be
6 coming throughout the City of
7 Philadelphia, but also visitors,
8 you know, putting a plan together
9 for East Market, our Center City
10 areas, and even our neighborhoods,
11 we need to start thinking about
12 that. It's only a year away.

13 So --

14 MR. LEVY: You know that's
15 music to my -- I just invite you
16 all to go to 6th and Market today
17 and walk west of City Hall and
18 imagine you're a visitor from out
19 of town, right. What are we
20 offering, what are we showing or
21 pick any area which we know is a
22 major tourist destination that's
23 near commercial businesses in your
24 Districts. What's that walk? How
25 do we improve that walk? We can't

1 solve the market, but we can
2 clearly improve the cues, whether
3 it's landscaping, the good signage
4 in windows. It's not the huge
5 expensive stuff, but it's seeing
6 not through our own eyes but
7 through the eyes of somebody who's
8 not from here, what signals are we
9 sending them.

10 These are easily done
11 things. And obviously, you know
12 I'm very focused on how we can do
13 that on Market East, but I'm trying
14 to help the folks down in Headhouse
15 how do we do that and on South
16 Street as well. Absolutely.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank
18 you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 Thank you.

21 The Chair now recognizes
22 Councilmember Nina Ahmad.

23 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Thank
24 you, Council President.

25 Good afternoon.

1 MR. LEVY: Good afternoon.

2 Nice to meet you too.

3 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Nice
4 to see you in this setting. I had
5 a quick question. You mentioned
6 some tools like tax abatements.
7 What about TIFs and can they be
8 used effectively in this --

9 MR. LEVY: I'm sorry?

10 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Tax
11 incremental financing.

12 MR. LEVY: Yes. Yes,
13 absolutely.

14 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And
15 also, the value that is given ahead
16 from the future tax utilization,
17 can some of it be earmarked to do
18 public investment, public
19 infrastructure rather than just to
20 the developer?

21 MR. LEVY: Exactly. That's
22 music to my ears, that idea.
23 Because I think we've tended to use
24 TIFs as a tool to assist individual
25 development and that is an

1 important use. Most cities create
2 districts where they make public
3 area improvements, whether it's
4 streetscape, landscaping, lighting.
5 I am very interested in the work
6 we're looking at for the next phase
7 of the Rail Park and what I call a
8 pay-as-you-go district, in which
9 we're developing revenue to
10 maintain the park, potentially
11 developing revenue to support
12 affordable housing. We needed a
13 tool for individual development,
14 but there are cities that have done
15 a much better job at spreading the
16 benefits through TIFs.

17 Now, there are cities that
18 have abused it too. They've gone
19 way too far and they've committed
20 way too much money so it's a middle
21 ground. But in the absent -- if
22 you're as old as I am, you remember
23 redevelopment money from the
24 federal government. That's
25 disappeared.

1 Most cities have created
2 tax increment financing districts
3 to stimulate broader developments
4 that the broad community benefits.
5 I think that's exactly the right
6 direction to go. I think there's
7 an opportunity to do that. If
8 you're going to put an arena on
9 Market East, I think a TIF district
10 is the way to address Chinatown
11 issues, it's a way to address other
12 issues.

13 I mean, any other major
14 project, how do you capture that
15 increment and get immediate
16 benefits. Again, it can be abused.
17 They can be overreached, but
18 finding the middle ground. I'd
19 love to talk to you more about it.

20 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So do
21 you see your BID, PIDC, the City
22 sort of creating a transparent
23 system where we can actually see
24 where the part that's set for the
25 public investment is going? Is

1 Chicago one of those cities that
2 have done it --

3 MR. LEVY: Well, Chicago is
4 a city that I think made very
5 creative use and then probably went
6 off the deep end --

7 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Too
8 much, yeah.

9 MR. LEVY: -- a little bit,
10 right. I mean, but I admire -- if
11 you go to State Street in Chicago
12 which was essentially their
13 Chestnut or Market Street, they
14 completely redid the street with
15 tax increment financing and
16 maintained it for a really long
17 period of time and addressed many
18 of the issues that we have today on
19 East Market or East Chestnut. They
20 used them very successfully in
21 neighborhoods across the city. And
22 then after Mayor Daley was there
23 forever, it just got out of
24 control as --

25 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Out of

1 control.

2 MR. LEVY: -- I think is
3 the criticism. In California, they
4 completely shut down TIFs because
5 they felt they went too far, but
6 there are many cities -- so my
7 suggestion is to bring people in
8 from the cities that made great
9 strategic investments as well as
10 people who made mistakes and kind
11 of learned from the best and the
12 worst and figure out how we use
13 this as a tool.

14 We need new redevelopment
15 tools for all of our neighborhoods
16 as well as the downtown. That's
17 one that's within our reach, it's
18 state law, but we need to use it
19 well. And because the City's
20 Budget Director is not sitting
21 here, we're not taking his money,
22 it's public money. It's the same
23 issue, it's how you make strategic
24 investments and meet current needs
25 as well.

1 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And a
2 follow-up in terms of TIFs could be
3 used for foreclosed buildings, all
4 of those things. But could we also
5 envision a fund set aside for this
6 space where we are feeling so much
7 of this foreclosure pressure, which
8 is sort of invested in by all
9 entities, particularly our
10 philanthropic and our nonprofits,
11 which are the corporate nonprofits.
12 We do not have pilots really.

13 So is there a way we can
14 envision creating that to offset
15 some of the paying debt that can
16 occur with these financing
17 structures?

18 MR. LEVY: Again, I don't
19 want to overpromise what they can
20 do. But we need to look at this as
21 a tool to generate jobs, to
22 generate public area improvements,
23 to generate maintenance of areas.
24 You don't want to just treat it as
25 the City operating budget; here's

1 an entity that's short on money,
2 let's get them TIF revenue. There
3 needs to be a reason, job
4 generation, animation, et cetera.
5 But I think it's really worth it
6 and again with the new
7 Administration strategically to
8 look at this as a tool and learn
9 from other cities.

10 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Thank
11 you.

12 MR. LEVY: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
14 Thank you.

15 The Chair now recognizes
16 Rue Landau.

17 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: No.
18 Not that I don't want to say thank
19 you for all of your work --

20 MR. LEVY: Thank you.
21 Okay.

22 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: --
23 but we're having a malfunction.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
25 Some spirit somewhere wants you to

1 participate. But thank you, Nina.

2 That's it at the moment.

3 Are there any other witnesses to
4 testify on Resolution No. 240075?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Mr. Job Itzkowitz.

8 MR. LEVY: Thank you very
9 much. I appreciate it.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

11 Thank you very much, Mr. Levy.

12 (Witness approached Witness
13 table.)

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 Job, how are you doing today. Just
16 state your name for the record and
17 I have you testifying on Resolution
18 Nos. 240078 and 240079.

19 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Good
20 morning, Council President Johnson
21 and all members of Council. My
22 name is Job Itzkowitz and I'm the
23 Executive Director of the Old City
24 Special Services District. I'm
25 here to testify in support of

1 Resolution No.s 240078 and 240079,
2 appointing Louis Joe Tice and
3 Elizabeth Lizzie Woods respectfully
4 to the Board of the Old City
5 Special Services District.

6 Joe Tice works in Old City
7 as a practice manager at Accelalpha
8 and he is also a long-term resident
9 of the neighborhood. He has served
10 for several years on Old City
11 District's Economic Development
12 Committee and Clean and Safe
13 Committee. At its May 17, 2023
14 meeting, the Old City District
15 Board of Directors unanimously
16 voted to support the nomination of
17 Mr. Tice.

18 Lizzie Woods is the Senior
19 Vice-president of Strategic
20 Planning and Real Estate
21 Development at the Delaware River
22 Waterfront Corporation. Ms. Woods
23 has served for several years on the
24 Old City Economic Development
25 Committee. As one of our nearest

1 organizational neighbors, DRWC has
2 played an important role in the
3 growth and appeal of Old City, most
4 notably with the currently under-
5 construction I-95 Park CAP.

6 DRWC has been an Old City
7 District strategic partner
8 participating in our Vision2026
9 framework and related studies and
10 plans. At its July 19, 2023
11 meeting, the Old City District
12 Board of Directors unanimously
13 voted to support the nomination of
14 Ms. Woods. This concludes my
15 testimony and I'm happy to answer
16 any questions you may have.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Thank you.

19 Any other questions or
20 comments from members of the
21 Committee?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Okay. I'll take one small question
25 on behalf of Rue Landau regarding

1 streeteries.

2 (Laughter.)

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 Regarding streeteries, you had led
5 the movement during the pandemic to
6 help revitalize our neighborhood
7 corridors, particularly in Old City
8 around the concept of streeteries
9 and there's a renewed interest in
10 this body led by Councilwoman Rue
11 Landau to look at the process on
12 how we streamline streeteries in
13 the City of Philadelphia to make it
14 more vibrant to do business here in
15 our city.

16 Can you just briefly give
17 us an update and your perspective
18 on that particular process and the
19 benefits of streeteries through our
20 economy?

21 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Sure.

22 Thanks, Council President. And
23 thanks to Councilmember Landau. I
24 haven't drafted my testimony yet
25 for that hearing, but I intend to

1 be back right here at this table.
2 We actually founded the
3 Philadelphia BID Alliance in March
4 of 2020, anticipating that we were
5 going to have to have restaurants
6 open at some point and there would
7 have to be a way to serve customers
8 without them being inside the
9 rooms, inside the dining areas.

10 And we looked at four solutions.

11 One was allow tables and
12 chairs outside. We live in a city.
13 Just let someone set out café
14 tables and seats right in front of
15 their business because the
16 (inaudible) at the adjoining
17 business, and then also in the
18 street.

19 And Old City in fact was
20 the first neighborhood that had a
21 street closure on Second Street
22 between Market and Chestnut to
23 allow for all of the restaurants to
24 come out every weekend, largely
25 with the generosity of the Parkway

1 Corporation. We had to shut down
2 one of their lots every weekend for
3 an entire year.

4 And those allowed our
5 restaurants to survive. Our
6 restaurants would not have survived
7 throughout that year and into 2021
8 without those streeteries. But
9 what we learned was that people
10 loved them, right. Residents loved
11 them. The businesses obviously
12 loved them.

13 We also had
14 recommendations -- so the BID
15 Alliance put out a 2023 policy
16 agenda that spoke to this a bit,
17 had some recommendations. It's at
18 philabidalliance.org. I'm happy to
19 share it in advance of that
20 hearing.

21 But one of the ways to make
22 it I think is to pre-approve some
23 designs. There are a lot of
24 national companies that manufacture
25 them. There's no reason they have

1 to be national. Shift Design can
2 build streeteries. DIGSAU in
3 Philadelphia can approve
4 streeteries. And while I had hoped
5 that would come out in the
6 regulations, it is possible to put
7 it in the legislation that says,
8 here's three things, here's the
9 craft crash standard that you need,
10 here's the width you can have,
11 here's the depth you can have
12 depending on the width of the
13 parking lane. And I think it's
14 just something that makes living in
15 the City great, but clearly there's
16 been a problem with the process
17 where no one has returned back to
18 building streeteries. So we had
19 maybe a dozen in Old City. I don't
20 think we have any right now.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

22 Thank you very much.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilwoman Katherine Gilmore
25 Richardson.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you so much,
3 Council President.

4 And thank you, Job, for
5 your testimony. I just had a very
6 quick question, something that I
7 actually saw on social media this
8 morning. And I hope that this
9 particular business is in your
10 service territory. How do you all
11 work to support businesses who have
12 impacted by vandalism?

13 I saw something on social
14 media Cray Taste being vandalized.
15 And so, I just wanted to put that
16 on the record to ensure that they
17 are receiving appropriate services
18 and assistance from --

19 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Great.
20 Thanks. I'll check for that. I
21 haven't seen that yet. We do a few
22 things. Our street cleaning crew,
23 our ambassadors are able to do
24 basic graffiti removal with
25 property owner permission. If we

1 can't get that permission, we'll
2 call it into CLIP and CLIP is
3 really -- everyone here knows how
4 great CLIP is and how quickly they
5 can come out to remove that.

6 We've had a couple of
7 issues with broken windows.
8 Sometimes if someone has limited
9 mental capacity and it's not --

10 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

11 RICHARDSON: That's what it was.

12 MR. ITZKOWITZ: We
13 actually -- I'm not sure if any
14 other neighborhoods have this. We
15 have a daily foot patrol officer,
16 Officer Al Macchione. He works the
17 District Monday through Friday
18 10:00 to 6:00. And so, he'll come
19 in and review tape. We have
20 cameras in our office, so sometimes
21 I'll find someone. If it's the
22 same individual, he knows who that
23 person is.

24 And then when that happens,
25 if their insurance isn't covering

1 it, we'll refer them to the
2 Storefront Improvement Program
3 because there's no reason that that
4 program can't be used to support
5 some of the expenses related to
6 some of the damage that may have
7 been caused.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: Okay. Well, thank you
10 so much for the follow-up, but I
11 just wanted to mention that because
12 they are an important minority
13 business in Old City, and I think
14 they've been doing a wonderful job.
15 So thank you very much.

16 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Thank you.

19 Are there any other
20 questions or comments from members
21 of the Committee?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Hearing none, are there any other
25 witnesses to testify on Resolution

1 Nos. 240078 and 240079.

2 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Can I

3 just -- oh, it is working now.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

6 The Chair recognizes Councilmember

7 Rue Landau.

8 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Just

9 quickly, could you tell us the

10 parameters of your district

11 geographically?

12 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Sure. We

13 get this question all the time

14 because the Old City Commercial

15 District is not the same size as

16 Old City. So the district's

17 boundaries are Front Street to the

18 east, 6th Street to the west,

19 Florist Street to the north.

20 Florist Street is the street that

21 runs right at the foot of the south

22 side of Ben Franklin Bridge.

23 The south side is Walnut

24 Street, both sides, so Penn Mutual

25 Towers and the building that's

1 along there. And Dock Street to 1
2 Dock Street and the Marriott Old
3 City.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
5 Thank you very much.

6 Any other questions or
7 comments from members of the
8 Committee?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 Hearing none, thank you very much,
12 Job, for your testimony.

13 MR. ITZKOWITZ: Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Mr. Christmas, will you please call
16 the first witness to testify on
17 Resolution No. 240029.

18 THE CLERK: Renee Garcia,
19 Acting City Solicitor.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Sorry. It's Adam Geer first. I'm
22 sorry.

23 (Witness approached Witness
24 table.)

25 THE CLERK: My fault.

1 MR. GEER: (Inaudible).

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Can you approach with coffee? If
4 you want to. If Members think
5 that's appropriate, it's up to you,
6 sir.

7 How are you doing today,
8 Adam?

9 MR. GEER: Good afternoon.
10 How are you, Council President?

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Good afternoon. Just state your
13 name for the record and please
14 begin your testimony.

15 MR. GEER: Adam Geer,
16 Acting Chief Public Safety
17 Director. Good afternoon, Council
18 President, members of the Committee
19 of the Whole. I am Adam Geer, the
20 Acting Chief Public Safety
21 Director. I'm absolutely honored
22 and humble to sit before each of
23 you today and testify in the
24 people's house in Philadelphia, the
25 greatest city in the world.

1 I'd like to start by
2 thanking Mayor Cherelle Parker for
3 this nomination. Words cannot
4 express how grateful I am to the
5 Mayor for this tremendous
6 opportunity to lend myself and my
7 life's work to her vision and this
8 mission.

9 I'd also like to thank this
10 legislative body for creating the
11 Chief Public Safety Director
12 position. It is my firm belief the
13 City will greatly benefit from an
14 office whose sole mission is to
15 coordinate resources which are
16 often siloed. This includes
17 bringing together departments
18 ranging from Police, L&I, Streets,
19 Clean and Green to Parks & Rec,
20 Free Library and even Procurement.

21 Breaking down silos also
22 means bringing in community
23 partners and state and federal
24 agencies. Under my leadership, we
25 will do anything and everything to

1 align all of these things and more
2 in the name of public safety.

3 Now, if I may indulge you,
4 I'd like to tell you a little bit
5 about myself and how I ended up in
6 this seat. My mother was born in
7 Kingston, Jamaica and moved to
8 Baltimore when she was 16. Like
9 many Jamaican mothers, my only
10 acceptable career options were med
11 school and law school. I had
12 momma's extra special study hall at
13 home. And I remember her telling
14 me that I would thank her one day
15 as I sat under that table lamp
16 doing her extra homework. Thank
17 you, Mom.

18 It was my mother's example
19 as a nonprofit leader and her
20 tireless and selfless dedication to
21 individuals and families with
22 developmental disabilities that has
23 had its greatest influence on my
24 character. My father was the first
25 person in his family to go to

1 school, attending Duke University.
2 My grandfather was a janitor at
3 Duke, and he would walk the halls
4 of the school and tell people that
5 his son would one day go to the
6 institution.

7 Our last name Geer derived
8 from Geer slave owners. It's
9 memorialized today by a street name
10 in the only cemetery in the area
11 where slaves and my ancestors had
12 bestowed to them to bury their dead
13 with dignity, all existing near my
14 father's campus.

15 After graduating from
16 college myself at New York
17 University and taking my mother up
18 on Career Option No. 2, I left the
19 Big Apple for the City of Brotherly
20 Love to attend Temple Law School in
21 2004. My girlfriend at the time
22 who is now my wife and a lawyer in
23 the City's prestigious Law
24 Department joined me shortly after
25 to attend Penn Law. And I want to

1 be very clear here. I went to the
2 better law school.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. GEER: TU. To make a
5 long story short, we fell head over
6 heels for Philadelphia, the
7 diversity, the people, the
8 realness, the food, the sports.
9 supports. We and now our two
10 daughters are proud Philadelphians.
11 I started my legal career as an
12 Assistant District Attorney for
13 this City in 2007 and served with
14 distinction under four different
15 District Attorneys.

16 I held various leadership
17 positions during my tenure and
18 ended my career there as a Homicide
19 Prosecutor as well as the Office's
20 Director of Diversity, Equity and
21 Inclusion. I believe that my
22 reputation as a prosecutor amongst
23 my peers, the Defense bar, the
24 courts, the police, victims,
25 witnesses and defendants is one of

1 fairness, toughness and skill and
2 always in the search for truth and
3 justice.

4 Perhaps though, my proudest
5 achievement at the DAO came outside
6 of trial work. For years and
7 years, victims of intimate partner
8 violence who were subpoenaed to
9 court had to sit in the same
10 seating area within arm's reach of
11 their alleged beaters, abusers
12 waiting for their cases to be
13 heard.

14 It was often intimidation
15 or worse, and many victims would
16 leave court before their cases were
17 called. There was talk for years
18 and years about dealing with this
19 untenable situation. I convened
20 the Courts, the Defender's
21 Association and Domestic Violence
22 Prevention organizations to create
23 a separate and secure waiting area
24 for victims of these crimes, filled
25 with outreach resources and

1 personnel.

2 I left the DA's Office in
3 April of 2021 to accept the
4 position of Deputy Inspector for
5 Public Safety for this City. In
6 that role, I began my work of
7 engaging and coordinating public
8 safety stakeholders to accomplish
9 tangible results.

10 One of my accomplishments
11 was working with the state
12 officials. Shout-out to Majority
13 Leader McClinton and her team,
14 local officials, community leaders,
15 the PPD, the Police Foundation,
16 academics, the State police, the
17 Municipality Police Education
18 Training Commission and the FOP to
19 successfully change a state law
20 that required our Philadelphia
21 police recruits to take a reading
22 comprehensive test that had a
23 disparate impact and failure rates
24 for candidates of color.

25 I was told that it would be

1 impossible to get the law changed
2 at the state level in the partisan
3 House and Senate, but we got it
4 done. I'm now finishing this work
5 in my new role, leading a team of
6 academic leaders and experts from
7 the Community College of
8 Philadelphia, Philadelphia School
9 District, UPenn and Temple along
10 with the PPD to create a fair
11 reading test for our police
12 recruits that will result in a more
13 diverse police force that mirrors
14 the communities they will serve.
15 And that is an example of how I
16 will lead in this office. Working
17 with whoever it takes and not
18 accepting that this can't be done,
19 to get results and fight for the
20 public safety of all
21 Philadelphians.

22 I know everyone is waiting
23 for our 100-day Public Safety Plan
24 that Commissioner Bethel and his
25 team are drafting along with

1 Managing Director Thiel and you
2 will have to wait for the Mayor's
3 Budget Address and the 100-day
4 Report for the full details, but
5 let me assure you that it will be a
6 holistic, smart, targeted and
7 comprehensive plan emphasizing
8 prevention, intervention and
9 enforcement.

10 We will focus on gun
11 violence interruption, community
12 violence interruption, increase in
13 co-responder units and quality-of-
14 life crimes like retail theft,
15 illegal dumping and illegal ATVs.
16 We can and we will do all of these
17 things.

18 We can deal with our
19 children's trauma and give them
20 meaningful things to do after
21 school and real economic
22 opportunities and career paths. We
23 can keep them safe physically,
24 mentally and emotionally. This is
25 the work that we must do and I'm

1 excited to work with each and every
2 one of you.

3 I can feel this energy and
4 the tides are turning. Indeed I'm
5 looking forward to working with all
6 of Philadelphia in our various
7 institutions, industries and
8 communities from North to South,
9 East to West, Northwest to
10 Northeast, Center City to
11 Southwest, so that we may move as
12 one city with a purpose and make
13 this the safest, cleanest, greenest
14 city in the nation with economic
15 opportunity for all. The weight of
16 this position and its
17 responsibilities are not lost on
18 me, especially in the wake of these
19 recent senseless and tragic
20 shootings.

21 I will tell you what I told
22 the Mayor the first time she
23 interviewed me. I believe that my
24 experience in my life both
25 personally and professionally has

1 prepared me for this moment to be
2 sitting in front of you offering my
3 service. Thank you. I welcome any
4 questions you may have.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

6 Thank you very much for your
7 testimony.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilman Curtis Jones.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: I was
11 inspired by your comments and your
12 testimony, and I share your
13 optimism that we, even though it
14 does not seem like it, are on the
15 precipice of turning the corner on
16 some of this. And here's why:
17 Because I remember when people like
18 Katherine Gilmore Richardson, Jamie
19 Gauthier, you, Mr. President, felt
20 in the last Administration gun
21 violence and public safety had not
22 risen to a priority level. I truly
23 believe that it really has today,
24 unfortunate because of what we're
25 going through. But the good news

1 is that we recognize it's a
2 problem.

3 So when we created your
4 position, what we had realized when
5 we went to other cities was that
6 there was no you, which was the
7 straw that stirred the drink to
8 make the silos blend so that people
9 work together. I think it might
10 have been West Chester -- no, it
11 was Chester, was it?

12 (Yes.)

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: And
14 other municipalities where
15 everybody got along. They didn't
16 agree on every little thing, but
17 they had a commitment from the Rec
18 Department to every -- to work
19 together. And they said, we're
20 going to not point at each other
21 but point at the problem.

22 So when we were crafting
23 that legislation, we had you in
24 mind. So welcome to the party.

25 MR. GEER: Thank you.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: My
2 questions are we are working as we
3 speak to take our Blueprint for a
4 Better Philadelphia, Safer
5 Philadelphia and break it down by
6 department and give that to the
7 departments to say when they step
8 before us for their budget, where
9 are you at this level, where at you
10 at that level.

11 One of the things that we
12 charge you, and there was a section
13 and we pointed to you and you'll
14 get the letter, even when the
15 mishap happened at Macy's where the
16 young man was shoplifting and wind
17 up killing the guard, there was
18 something that came out of that,
19 that through the cameras, through
20 SEPTA, through the Philadelphia
21 PPD, they worked together. They
22 actually worked together to
23 apprehend that individual. We need
24 to do more of that.

25 And so, give us a sense of

1 how CJAB or other places your
2 stirring of the drink will occur.

3 MR. GEER: Thank you,
4 Councilmember. Absolutely, and I
5 believe in the strength of this
6 position. I believe in its
7 mandate. I believe that it will
8 have a very real effect on public
9 safety and improve public safety.
10 We are already seeing results of
11 that. Aside from the work that
12 I've been doing, we've been working
13 outside of the convening that we've
14 been doing, and we've been
15 convening.

16 Just the position itself,
17 someone reached out to me from a
18 law enforcement partner that was
19 not necessarily fully in the mix,
20 we brought them into the mix. And
21 as a result of that, there's
22 technology sharing. There's been
23 regular meetings that have
24 occurred, and these are meaningful
25 technologies by the way that have

1 and will have a direct impact, I
2 think, on the safety of some of our
3 communities, right.

4 So not only is it just the
5 fact that there is a focal point
6 and for people to say, hey, if I
7 have to bring up this issue or if
8 I've got this idea or there are
9 these people convening, it's here,
10 it's this very visible office.
11 It's also that we have the Mayor's
12 mandate, the direct Mayor's
13 backing, right, that power that she
14 brings which flows from her
15 directly to me and outward.

16 So I'm incredibly thrilled
17 about the opportunities to bring
18 people in and to organize and to
19 coordinate so that we can get
20 ourselves out of our silos and
21 understand. And, you know, I am a
22 believer now. The Mayor keeps
23 saying this One Philly. We are One
24 Philly. We have to bring everyone
25 in. That's what I feel right now

1 genuinely about the City and where
2 we're at, is that we can all pitch
3 in on this mission. So I look
4 forward to that. And joining CJAB,
5 I think we have a meeting later.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: We in
7 this body sometimes plant seeds and
8 it takes so long for the trees to
9 grow and get the fruit from, but we
10 show our patience session after
11 session. One of those things is
12 the crime lab that we worked with
13 the state, put up some City dollars
14 and we want to see that -- we know
15 justice will not occur unless you
16 can process ballistics, unless you
17 can determine if this gun is the
18 same gun that was used in several
19 crimes.

20 So working with our state
21 partners, do you have a strategy
22 for that to make sure that they
23 bring home the bacon that meets
24 with us and works together with us?
25 So it's not just the departments in

1 the City but at the federal and
2 state level, do you have a strategy
3 for that as well?

4 MR. GEER: Absolutely. I
5 think organizations like CJAB that
6 you point out are great.
7 Fortunately because of my career
8 here in Philadelphia and the fact
9 that we have some amazing leaders
10 who come from Philadelphia who go
11 to state office, we have some
12 amazing state relationships. The
13 Senate Majority Leader, again I'll
14 mention that and so many others.

15 So we will be intentional
16 about that. We'll also be
17 intentional by the way about
18 reaching out to our federal
19 partners. In just the two months
20 that I've been here, we have formed
21 a pretty good relationship with the
22 White House Office of Gun Violence
23 Prevention. I think that that's
24 going to lead to some support, and
25 I'll leave it at that. But I think

1 that's going to lead to some
2 support.

3 So we're going to be
4 intentional about reaching out to
5 all of our partners to assist us in
6 how we need them to be present for
7 us.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Finally,
9 Mr. President, if we could
10 recommend to our state partners
11 that he be placed on the
12 Pennsylvania Crime and Delinquency
13 Board. That's about \$83 million
14 annually that comes from the feds
15 to the state that could be useful
16 with his insight as to what
17 departments might be able to
18 utilize those dollars.

19 Thank you, Mr. President.

20 MR. GEER: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 You're welcome.

23 The Chair recognizes
24 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
25 Richardson.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you so much,
3 Council President.

4 And thank you, Mr. Geer,
5 for the opportunity to have a
6 meeting with you and get to know
7 more about your background and your
8 experience. And I just wanted to
9 get a few questions on the record
10 so that we have this information on
11 the record because this is the very
12 first time Council is being charged
13 with approving this position as the
14 Chief Public Safety Director.

15 And so, you talked about in
16 your testimony as you served as an
17 ADA in the District Attorney's
18 Office and how you became a Deputy
19 Inspector General, I think, for
20 Criminal Justice. If you could
21 just -- or for Public Safety. My
22 apologies. If you could just speak
23 to us about the qualifications of
24 the position, which states that the
25 Chief Public Safety Director must

1 have five years of senior
2 leadership experience in a law
3 enforcement agency, legal entity or
4 other public safety position.
5 Please explain your work experience
6 and how your background meets these
7 qualifications.

8 MR. GEER: Thank you,
9 Councilmember. And I appreciated
10 the opportunity to meet with you as
11 well and talk about many of these
12 important issues that we're facing.
13 I believe that the Charter was
14 changed to three years. I just
15 want to make sure we're on the same
16 page there. But three years of
17 relevant law enforcement -- I'm
18 sorry, leadership experience within
19 a law enforcement agency.

20 Clearly in the DA's Office
21 I held several leadership
22 positions, including Assistant
23 Chief of Municipal Court. I was
24 Assistant of South Division when
25 they were broken into divisions.

1 And I was also a senior prosecutor
2 in homicide and then the Officers'
3 Director of Diversity, Equity and
4 Inclusion. I'm not sure if we sent
5 around my resumé, but that would I
6 think alone add up to over three
7 years if we're doing the math.

8 And then I would consider
9 absolutely my tenure as a Deputy
10 Inspector General to be a senior
11 law enforcement official or an
12 official in a law enforcement
13 agency. That was work that I did
14 for over two years. So that I
15 think speaking directly to the
16 Charter and requirements would
17 account for that time period.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
19 RICHARDSON: Okay. That would be
20 great. Thank you. Also, you
21 talked about sort of the
22 coordinating resources in City
23 government. And Councilmember
24 Jones spoke to this very well about
25 the silos and stirring that pot to

1 ensure that everyone is working
2 together.

3 As part of this position,
4 you will be tasked with the
5 following functions: Coordinating
6 the deployment of resources within
7 the Department of Police, Fire,
8 Prisons, Parks & Rec, Emergency
9 Management and other relevant
10 agencies, providing operational
11 guidance in consultation on the
12 budgets of the safety-related
13 departments and agencies, preparing
14 reports regarding public safety
15 measures, planning an
16 implementation of security for City
17 facilities and all security
18 services contracts and establishing
19 and maintaining cooperative
20 relationships with civic and
21 business organizations, violence
22 prevention agencies, schools,
23 courts and others.

24 And so, if you could just
25 talk about your background and your

1 experience as it relates to the
2 real work that you would have to do
3 around coordinating the public
4 safety resources, providing that
5 operational guidance but also the
6 budgeting guidance you just spoke
7 to relative to the Mayor's upcoming
8 and forthcoming budget address,
9 research and reporting, managing
10 contracts and facilities and
11 establishing and maintaining
12 partnerships?

13 MR. GEER: So we'll be
14 coordinating with each of those
15 agencies, just like by the way we
16 will be coordinating with some of
17 the ones that aren't stated there.
18 Procurement, I would use again as
19 an example, Parks & Rec, right.
20 The true power of this position
21 comes in its ability and its reach
22 really to coordinate with these
23 City agencies and then beyond,
24 coordinating with the community,
25 stakeholders and beyond.

1 So I think my reputation on
2 delivering on difficult items that
3 require interagency and
4 intercommunity cooperation is
5 there. That's -- for whatever
6 reason I believe that I have a
7 talent, a skill for bringing people
8 together and having them work
9 together to get stuff done, to
10 really get stuff done, right, and
11 not just talk about it. So I think
12 my coordinating function by the
13 force of me and my office, we're
14 going to be on point. We're going
15 to be doing what we have to do.

16 Now, with respect to the
17 specifics of let's say contracts,
18 security contracts, that and the --
19 we'll continue to coordinate with
20 the Department of Public Property.
21 They currently are charged with
22 that mission. We will be
23 coordinating with them and
24 understanding if they have any
25 challenges. Whether there's

1 budgetary issues, again the good
2 news is that we have some really
3 great budget people in the Mayor's
4 Office. Rob and Bob is what we
5 call them.

6 And I personally will have
7 an employee who will be dedicated
8 specifically to the Office of
9 Public Safety and their budget who
10 I can tell you from working with
11 her is also extremely talented. So
12 we will put --

13 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

14 RICHARDSON: Pardon me and to your
15 point, I apologize for the
16 interruption, are you speaking
17 about a budget analyst type
18 position that would be under your
19 purview or within your department?

20 MR. GEER: Correct,
21 correct.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Okay.

24 MR. GEER: So I believe
25 we're going to put together a team

1 that people are going to be very --
2 I've got some of my team members
3 here today, they're going to be in
4 awe in the work that we're going to
5 do. I'm excited.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: Okay. That'll be
8 great. Also, if you can just
9 explain which of the five areas
10 will be your priority in your new
11 role?

12 MR. GEER: Which of the
13 five -- I'm sorry. Which,
14 Councilmember?

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Which of the five
17 areas that we talked about will be
18 more so your priority in your role?

19 MR. GEER: Are you talking
20 about police, fire, those kinds of
21 things?

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

23 RICHARDSON: Meaning coordinating
24 public safety resources, providing
25 operational guidance and budgeting,

1 research and reporting, managing
2 contracts, establishing and
3 maintaining partnerships.

4 MR. GEER: We're going to
5 look at all those things. Clearly
6 I think my coordinating function is
7 going to be key here, helping
8 identify for the City agencies what
9 their public safety mission is and
10 tease that out and get people
11 moving in the right direction.
12 That clearly is the majority, the
13 spirit I believe, of the Charter.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
15 RICHARDSON: Okay. Great. And
16 then you talked about this already
17 relative to your work.
18 Specifically you talked about
19 working with Commissioner Bethel
20 and you talked about Managing
21 Director Thiel as well. If you can
22 just explain how you intend to work
23 with the Managing Director, our
24 Police Chief, our Fire Chief,
25 Emergency Management Director, all

1 of our sort of public safety leads
2 to create a city-wide-all-of-
3 government approach to public
4 safety?

5 MR. GEER: Under the
6 Mayor's leadership, we've been
7 meeting regularly, those partners
8 that you just stated. We
9 fortunately have an extremely good
10 working relationship, particularly
11 with the Commissioner. The
12 Commissioner and I work very
13 closely. Our communication is open
14 and frequent.

15 We understand what's at
16 stake here. We are aligned in the
17 Mayor's vision and we are on the
18 same page, so we will continue to
19 move as one and work together in
20 the interest of the people of
21 Philadelphia.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
23 RICHARDSON: Okay. Great. And I
24 apologize for the delay with my
25 phone. I was trying to pull up

1 here the Resolution No. 230115-A,
2 wherein it states in Article 3,
3 Chapter 3 under Qualifications.
4 This is 3-307, that the Chief
5 Public Safety Director shall have
6 five years of senior leadership
7 experience in a law enforcement
8 agency, legal entity or other
9 public safety position. That is
10 from the amended bill. I just
11 wanted to say that for the record.

12 MR. GEER: Thank you very
13 much, Councilmember.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: Thank you.
16 Furthermore, if you could just talk
17 about how you intend to engage with
18 City Councilmembers directly, the
19 community and also youth.

20 MR. GEER: Great question.
21 For City Council, and I think in
22 each of our meetings I've expressed
23 this, I'd love to have a direct
24 relationship. If you do not have
25 my cell phone, please ask me after

1 this hearing. I will give you my
2 cell phone.

3 I intend to be completely
4 plugged into City Council and
5 completely available to City
6 Council. And you can hold me to
7 account for that if you find that
8 not to be the case. You are
9 incredible partners. We cannot do
10 the work that we're going to do in
11 the Mayor's Office without your
12 work. And frankly in my tour of
13 meeting with many of you, we
14 learned some things and we got some
15 good ideas to take back. So that
16 is the relationship that I intend
17 to foster with each and every one
18 of you.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: And then if you could
21 speak to the community and youth --

22 MR. GEER: Thank you very
23 much for that. I knew that I
24 was --

25 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

1 RICHARDSON: Yeah.

2 MR. GEER: Community's
3 going to be huge. I would say if
4 we looked up my calendar right now,
5 probably 75 percent of my meetings
6 are with community groups. And I'm
7 just throwing that out there, but
8 I'm meeting with community groups,
9 anyone and everyone will have a
10 meeting with me. I'm trying --
11 sometimes we might disagree with
12 some of these -- their positions,
13 but we're having these
14 conversations in the same way that
15 I've illustrated in my prior career
16 with certain organizations that
17 we've met. I'll take a meeting
18 with anyone. I'll meet with them,
19 and we'll see if we can work
20 together. At least we're now
21 communicating, right. And I know
22 you and you know me.

23 I also think we have to
24 be -- and it also by the way will
25 be an important piece of our public

1 safety plan largely, is bringing
2 community groups and you will be
3 hearing more about that. And I'm
4 quite excited for that opportunity.
5 But that will be an important part
6 of our strategy.

7 With respect to the youth,
8 we have to engage them or thinking
9 about ways to engage them in a very
10 meaningful way. And I'm not just
11 talking about like -- I'm talking
12 about what are the youth saying,
13 what are their needs, really
14 hearing from them. Whether that's
15 like regular meetings, whether
16 that's a committee, we haven't
17 gotten there yet.

18 But in order to understand
19 our challenges, and I was just
20 speaking to a community leader this
21 morning about the disconnect
22 between the youth and what's sort
23 of going on in their mind and why
24 they're doing some of the things
25 they're doing. There is very

1 clearly a disconnect and we need to
2 somehow tap into that and
3 understand it if we're going to be
4 serious about our work.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

6 RICHARDSON: And in particular too,
7 I think it's sort of the youth
8 who -- and I'll give you an
9 example. We have the summer jobs
10 program, right, and we advertise to
11 a ton of young people. We want
12 everyone to have a summer work
13 experience.

14 Now, it's not typically the
15 young people who are signing up to
16 be a part of this experience that
17 we're trying to get to. It's those
18 who do not sign up, those who are
19 living and operating in the
20 shadows. That's the youth we need
21 to get to and that's the group that
22 I'm talking about in particular.
23 Okay. And I just wanted to put
24 that on the record.

25 You talked about having a

1 budget analyst. But what other
2 resources do you anticipate you
3 will need to effectively carry out
4 your responsibilities in your role,
5 and what will the staffing look
6 like in particular just for your
7 role? And I'm asking this in
8 advance of budget so I better
9 understand what we can anticipate
10 relative to your needs.

11 MR. GEER: Thank you,
12 Councilmember. We have recently
13 added a First Deputy Evangelia
14 Manos who's in this room who --

15 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

16 RICHARDSON: Pardon me. A First
17 Deputy?

18 MR. GEER: A First Deputy.
19 Her name is Evangelia Manos. She's
20 back there, and I couldn't be
21 prouder to have her on my team. I
22 think her reputation is one of
23 absolute excellence. Her addition
24 has been very meaningful to me
25 quite frankly. We will be adding

1 other pieces.

2 Some of our strategic
3 plan -- and I don't want to get
4 ahead of the Mayor's Budget
5 Address, but some of the pieces
6 that I want to put together to put
7 our stamp, however you want to call
8 it, what I think is really going to
9 pitch in our battles here in terms
10 of public safety, they are in mine.

11 They do -- I'm just going
12 to let the cat out of the bag.
13 They're community-oriented, right.
14 We have our community violence
15 interruption model. I think we
16 really need to lean into that. I
17 think we need to be intentional. I
18 think that deserves its own
19 position, someone who would be
20 tasked frankly with bringing
21 together a community violence
22 intervention organizations and
23 having them in an intentional way
24 go out and helping the public
25 safety mission, right.

1 So I don't want to get
2 ahead of myself, but we will have
3 an office -- by the way, the
4 current criminal justice public
5 safety cluster portfolio, that is
6 going to become the Office of
7 Public Safety and all those
8 resources are -- we avail ourselves
9 to those resources, which are
10 plenty.

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
12 RICHARDSON: Sure. And I guess
13 that's what I'm seeking to
14 understand. And I'm certainly not
15 trying to get ahead of the Mayor's
16 process relative to the budget
17 address that is forthcoming. But
18 I'm just seeking to understand in
19 our ask to approve this position
20 what are we to expect and
21 anticipate since we know that this
22 position is what's been added to
23 the Charter, but what more should
24 we anticipate relative to your
25 specific needs outside of what will

1 be happening sort of around you in
2 the organizational structure? That
3 is my question because that becomes
4 important to the work that we have
5 to undertake in this body as a part
6 of our budget process.

7 And so, what I will ask is
8 if you could submit to Council
9 President for dissemination to all
10 Members your organizational chart
11 and/or structure when it's
12 available and the positions that
13 will report directly to you and
14 some of the positions that may have
15 dotted line reporting to you and
16 how much all of that will be.

17 MR. GEER: Thank you.
18 Absolutely.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
20 RICHARDSON: Thank you very much.

21 MR. GEER: Absolutely.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
23 RICHARDSON: Thank you, Council
24 President.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

1 Thank you very much. Can we have
2 that information prior to the
3 official budget presentation, which
4 I think we're starting next week,
5 which is Monday. So that will be
6 helpful for members as we evaluate
7 the budget process.

8 I just had a quick
9 question. Part of your testimony
10 you talked about coordinating
11 resources in the City departments,
12 including the Police but also the
13 Procurement Department. So can you
14 elaborate on how you plan to use
15 the Procurement Department to
16 achieve public safety goals?

17 MR. GEER: Thank you,
18 Council President. I believe
19 firmly that every agency, City
20 government can at its core
21 somewhere, right, have public
22 safety. I really, really, really,
23 honestly believe that. And in
24 doing my work, I can give a quick
25 example if I can.

1 We had to align Procurement
2 to get a contract done for our
3 prime time clean up pilot program
4 that's going to be rolling out in
5 the next month or two where we will
6 be the first nation to publicly
7 fund crime scene cleanup. Well, we
8 need to get a contract for a
9 private vendor to accomplish that.
10 Eventually it's going to turn by
11 the way into a workforce
12 development, which we're really
13 excited about.

14 But Procurement has a lot
15 of contracts that they have to get
16 through. I want to be at a place
17 where Procurement will just take
18 instead of me calling them up and
19 saying we need this contract and
20 having the Mayor have that work,
21 that is already common practice for
22 them if it's a public
23 safety-related contract, that it is
24 just the normal course of business
25 that those kinds of contracts are

1 prioritized.

2 So when I bring up
3 Procurement, I love using that
4 example. It's just an example of
5 how we can tease out the public
6 safety goals in each of our
7 agencies and have a more efficient
8 process.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

10 And then also, in regards to the
11 reading exam for the police cadets
12 that you also referenced in your
13 testimony, what's the status?

14 MR. GEER: I'm sorry. I
15 missed the first part of that.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

17 The reading exam --

18 MR. GEER: Yes.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

20 -- that you worked on regarding
21 those individuals who will be
22 becoming police cadets, what's the
23 status of that policy?

24 MR. GEER: Thank you,
25 Council President. I had to miss

1 the meeting today, but Dr. Guy from
2 CCP I put him in charge of today's
3 meeting and he's just absolutely
4 100 percent fantastic. So we're
5 having meetings, regular meetings
6 and we're trying to get to a point
7 where we will have a recommendation
8 to the police department as to what
9 that test will be. It is in motion
10 and our partners there, I'm not
11 sure if I mentioned it, Temple,
12 Penn, CCP and the Police
13 Department.

14 So we're actively working
15 to get that test out as quickly as
16 possible so that we can continue to
17 improve our recruitment at the
18 police department.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 And my last brief question before I
21 turn it over to my members. I know
22 when this position was created I
23 kind of envisioned a scenario where
24 every Monday the District Attorney,
25 the Police Commissioner, folks from

1 Dr. Watlington's team, someone from
2 Behavioral Health, someone from
3 Parks & Rec and other key various
4 agencies, right, would be meeting
5 in a room and have a dashboard on
6 how they're going about achieving
7 here in the City of Philadelphia
8 with some measurable goals, but
9 most importantly the coordination
10 including DHS, other City agencies
11 all in one room every single week
12 and just evaluating how we move the
13 needle, right, to address public
14 safety, and we also know that
15 poverty is the underlying factor of
16 why we see Black and Brown
17 neighbors suffering from crime and
18 violence.

19 Give me your perspective of
20 how you envision leading in this
21 particular position of public
22 safety as we move the City of
23 Philadelphia forward.

24 MR. GEER: I think that
25 that's spot-on. There are built-in

1 organizations like the CJAB that
2 attempt to do this and they bring
3 in broader stakeholders. But as it
4 relates to City government and
5 those agencies that you just named
6 off, that sounds about right to me.

7 We will get to a place
8 where we're being very intentional
9 about our meetings with
10 stakeholders and City agencies
11 because that is, as you say, what
12 this position is really all about.
13 We have been doing that based upon
14 issues.

15 So there are certain -- for
16 example, Kensington Initiative, we
17 are meeting with organizations --
18 I'm sorry, with City agency leaders
19 and implementers currently in that
20 model. So we're doing it around
21 issues now, and I think it would
22 make a lot of sense to at some
23 point stand up as you say a regular
24 meeting where we're just touching
25 base on a whole host of issues and

1 not just issue-based. So I take
2 that. I think that's a great
3 point.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
5 Is your team a part of the strategy
6 with the Kensington Caucus when
7 they meet with the District
8 Attorney? I guess it's weekly or
9 biweekly.

10 MR. GEER: I've been
11 invited to those meetings.
12 Unfortunately I could not make the
13 last one because that horrific
14 shooting was last Friday. And so,
15 I have been invited and I intend to
16 go.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Okay. Thank you very much.

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilmember Anthony Phillips.

21 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Thank
22 you, Council President.

23 So, Adam, as you know the
24 City of Philadelphia has
25 experienced this surge of violence

1 and it's impacting where our
2 children work, play and also where
3 we work and play and our children
4 live and play, excuse me. One of
5 the things that we're really
6 concerned about with the Public
7 Safety Director is that we
8 understand what the role is
9 supposed to be in terms of
10 employing resources, making sure
11 every department has a resource for
12 public safety.

13 But the question that I had
14 in particular was what particular
15 resources, can you give more
16 examples of how your plan or vision
17 around the library and being a
18 public safety space and the rec
19 centers and just other avenues for
20 every department in the City of
21 Philadelphia focus on public
22 safety, how are you going to bring
23 that out to be able to coordinate
24 the efforts for safety-oriented,
25 you know, for City agencies to be

1 more safety-oriented? Excuse me.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. GEER: Thank you,
4 Councilmember. I have not gotten
5 approval to do this yet from the
6 Mayor. But my plan is to ask her
7 to ask all the agencies to identify
8 their public safety mission. I
9 will help them do that, but I would
10 like each agency to on paper
11 identify their public safety
12 mission and that would go to
13 Procurement and they would have to
14 think about what their safety
15 mission is. And again, I will help
16 them do that.

17 So to answer your question
18 in terms of just trying to pull out
19 the public safety -- and by the
20 way, another point here I would
21 make is it was just this terrible
22 shooting that occurred, right,
23 these pair of shootings. I
24 haven't, you know, I've only been
25 in here for two -- I'm working

1 towards this, right, working to get
2 this up. But there might be that
3 Parks & Rec, that libraries have to
4 pivot their programming, have to
5 have some plan in place to saturate
6 an area with resources or to have
7 programming after an incident like
8 this. These are things that I'm
9 thinking about.

10 So maybe they need to stand
11 something up where it's getting
12 kids off the street into meaningful
13 activities right after an event,
14 what does that protocol look like.
15 So we are thinking about all of
16 those things and how to be
17 intentional there.

18 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Yeah.
19 So that actually leads me into
20 another question that I want to
21 pose. You're right, right, these
22 are moments where we can be
23 thinking about how our rec centers
24 can be plugged into public safety.
25 The question I have is do you see

1 yourself based off what you said
2 there are levels of you have to
3 work with all of these departments
4 in the City and sometimes they take
5 time, extraordinary amount of time
6 to get themselves together to do
7 what they need to do.

8 How do you plan to increase
9 efficiency and effectiveness,
10 meaning that they're utilizing
11 their time wisely and being
12 transformative with the work so
13 that we can cut through red tape
14 and bureaucracy that often hold us
15 back from doing public safety work,
16 like the work you're going to be
17 doing for public safety?

18 MR. GEER: So in my last
19 role as Deputy Inspector General, I
20 tried to do a lot of the work that
21 I'm doing now. But no offense to
22 the Inspector General, but I didn't
23 have the authority of the Mayor
24 telling these agencies to do X, Y
25 and Z, right, with the specific

1 mandate of the Mayor.

2 The difference is that I
3 think we've all seen the Mayor is
4 absolutely, truly committed to a
5 vision of public safety. She has
6 given her cabinet, by knowing
7 certain terms, specific mandates to
8 accomplish her goals and her vision
9 and her mission.

10 So the difference is when
11 I'm calling up Parks & Rec, Library
12 asking for meetings and stuff,
13 again it's coming straight down
14 from the Mayor to them, and I'm
15 getting these meetings by the way.
16 We're having these meetings.
17 They're listening to what we have
18 to say and doing what we're asking
19 them to do. So it's going to take
20 time, right.

21 Allow me some time to
22 really dig into how this is going
23 to look from a systemic operational
24 thing. We're getting there, but
25 that is what this is all about.

1 And frankly, I think I'm the person
2 who's going to execute on it.

3 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

4 Thanks. That's a good question --
5 I mean, one of the things that I
6 think is just as important is just
7 finding ways to -- you have a
8 vision, it's aligned with the
9 Mayor's vision, but then to be able
10 to quickly put your vision -- make
11 sure it's effective and efficient
12 for the City, get the approval
13 necessary that you needed to do it,
14 all of that is going to be really
15 important for us to quickly move
16 things along, because otherwise
17 we're going to be more stagnant if
18 there is a whole process that's
19 actually more bureaucratic than
20 anything, that doesn't allow us to
21 get things done quickly and
22 efficiently for the City of
23 Philadelphia.

24 So I want to encourage you
25 to think more, if you can, reflect

1 on it when you get back to us when
2 you get more time to think more
3 about how you're going to increase
4 that efficiency. But I do want to
5 ask this question, which I think is
6 really important, you did -- I
7 loved that Councilmember Gilmore
8 Richardson mentioned this.

9 Our City Councilmembers as
10 you said are willing to work with
11 you. We want to bring you into the
12 neighborhoods, into the
13 communities. That's really
14 important. But I also want to see
15 if -- we're going to have events.
16 We're going to have tons of events.
17 We're going to want you to be there
18 as District Councilmembers.

19 But I wanted to also ask
20 you, if you so happen to put
21 together events and programs in
22 neighborhoods, right, which I would
23 love for you to actually work with
24 your (inaudible), how do you plan
25 to make sure that our offices are

1 really connected and coordinated
2 with you in those efforts?

3 MR. GEER: We have been I
4 think very intentional,
5 Councilmember, about our contact
6 with the Councilmembers if we're
7 going to be going out to those
8 events. I agree with you very much
9 that we want to have -- one of
10 those things on the org chart
11 you'll see is a Director of
12 Community Engagement Partnerships,
13 so that person -- and that's
14 outside of the Mayor's Community
15 Engagement Team.

16 We're going to be very,
17 very, very intentional about that
18 work. That person clearly will be
19 tasked city-wide and their team
20 with making sure that these
21 connections are there and
22 meaningful and that there's a flow
23 back and forth, right, and that
24 they truly are plugged into those
25 things. That's going to be that

1 person's job, and then it'll filter
2 up to me and my leadership. So I
3 hope that answers your question,
4 but we're going to be intentional
5 about that.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: It
7 does. And my last question focuses
8 on one of the biggest obstacles
9 that we face in providing more
10 community policing is the lack of
11 human power. And so, the entire
12 recruitment of onboarding process
13 of police recruitment entails at
14 least 10 steps, right. And it
15 takes about three to four months to
16 complete before the appointment
17 letter to the police academy.

18 Only about 10 percent of
19 those who start the onboarding
20 process become police officers. So
21 how do you plan on assisting the
22 police department with streamlining
23 this entire process so we can get
24 people into work in the police
25 department?

1 MR. GEER: Thank you for
2 that question. The police
3 department is really dedicating a
4 lot of resources to this very
5 issue. It is something that I
6 looked at starting as a Deputy
7 Inspector General. It is something
8 that since becoming Acting Chief
9 Public Safety Director I've had
10 meetings with the Police Department
11 on this, how are we capturing our
12 applicants.

13 Because you're right, there
14 was a period of time where someone
15 would apply, like go into the web
16 portal, apply. It would be
17 something like six months, they
18 would get an email saying show up
19 this weekend for your training and
20 we were losing a lot of people who
21 clearly needed employment, like
22 accepting jobs for them. They've
23 moved on with their careers,
24 whatever the case is.

25 They've gotten that down to

1 about 30 days under the good work
2 of the police department. I've
3 been in those meetings where I'm
4 understanding how they're doing
5 that. And they're going to
6 continue to make improvements I
7 believe thereby implementing
8 technologies that will assist them
9 basically in capturing those
10 applicants who do sign up.

11 That will look like by the
12 way a text message system, for
13 example, where if you do put it in
14 the application portal, you're
15 getting regular texts and regular
16 communication as to the process so
17 that you're not falling out of the
18 process. So I'll continue to have
19 those meetings as I'm doing. I
20 will continue to support them in
21 any way possible, including
22 standing up this police reading
23 test, which we think will increase
24 the number of applicants, and
25 importantly Black and Brown

1 applicants in the City of
2 Philadelphia.

3 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Thank
4 you. And just one more thing. I
5 misspoke earlier when I said it was
6 my final question. Can we count on
7 your office and you to be
8 transparent with providing a report
9 maybe 6 months in, 12 months in
10 that we can provide to our
11 neighbors in our Districts about
12 how this role is working, what's
13 happening, what's changing?

14 What I also hope from the
15 report, it's not just how many
16 community events that you've
17 attended. That doesn't change
18 lives. It's just you're part of a
19 space. Hopefully, you can report
20 more about what the departments
21 are doing to change.

22 If you can do that
23 transparency, that would help us
24 tell other neighbors that this
25 position is working that City

1 Council helped put together, and we
2 would like to show that this is
3 efficient and effective as
4 possible.

5 MR. GEER: Thank you. We
6 certainly want to report on our
7 successes. And things that we can
8 do better, absolutely, we will have
9 transparency there.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Thank
11 you.

12 MR. GEER: Thank you.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
14 Thank you very much.

15 The Chair recognizes
16 Councilwoman Jamie Gauthier.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
18 Thank you, Council President.

19 Good afternoon, Director
20 Geer.

21 MR. GEER: Good afternoon.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I
23 appreciated your testimony. Thank
24 you so much. I have a Caribbean
25 momma too so I definitely could

1 relate to you, and I agree the path
2 is like you're going to be a doctor
3 or a lawyer. So when I became an
4 urban planner, there was much
5 confusion. Like I still think
6 people don't even understand what
7 that means.

8 I was very excited when our
9 former Council President came up
10 with this position and when we
11 voted on this last session. And I
12 think it's the correct approach to
13 public safety in the City. In
14 2020, I put forward and got
15 unanimous support from my Council
16 colleagues around the Mayor
17 declaring a city-wide emergency on
18 the issue of gun violence.

19 And the reason why I put
20 that forward in the first place is
21 because very early on in 2020 it
22 didn't take me long to recognize
23 that not only were the communities
24 that I represent in West and
25 Southwest Philadelphia really

1 struggling with COVID, but we were
2 seeing levels of gun violence, the
3 likes of which we haven't seen in
4 decades.

5 And I would go to these
6 scenes and I would talk to people.
7 And I never saw anything beyond the
8 police response. And it was also
9 apparent to me that residents had
10 no idea of what the City was doing
11 to help them, right. We had this
12 Roadmap. Nobody knew what that
13 was. Nobody knew how that was
14 supposed to work in concert with
15 policing to make us safer. But at
16 the same time, I saw how we were
17 responding to COVID, right.

18 We were bringing all City
19 agencies together, we were
20 mobilizing, right. When the
21 schools shut down, we had Parks &
22 Recreation switch to delivering
23 food to people who needed it every
24 single day. We set up stations at
25 the rec centers where students

1 could do their work.

2 The Mayor used sort of his
3 platform to fundraise, right. The
4 Roberts family gave us millions of
5 dollars so that every student could
6 have a laptop, and you also saw the
7 Mayor on the T.V. every day or
8 Dr. Farley or the Managing Director
9 talking about the stats and the
10 cases and what we were doing to
11 bring them down. That's how you
12 respond to an emergency. And it
13 was very confusing to me why we
14 weren't doing the same thing as it
15 related to gun violence because I
16 saw what we had the capacity to do
17 when we prioritize something.

18 And so, I was very much in
19 support of this position moving
20 forward, and I appreciated a lot of
21 your answers around how you would
22 get agencies to see their role
23 differently, right, and as change
24 agents as it relates to public
25 safety, because there's no way we

1 should be in the midst of a gun
2 violence crisis that involves teens
3 but I have rec centers closed or
4 I'm fighting for pools to get open
5 or I'm fighting to get L&I to shut
6 down properties that have turned
7 into a hub for gun violence. When
8 every agency realizes that, you
9 don't have those types of problems,
10 so I appreciate this role.

11 But what I wanted to ask
12 you was about accountability, to
13 talk more about accountability.
14 You're going to be charged in your
15 position with bringing together
16 people who have differing levels
17 experience than you, differing
18 levels of seniority than you.
19 People who have the very important
20 job of being in law enforcement and
21 may see themselves as the experts
22 on public safety, how would you go
23 about accountability and how would
24 you go about keeping all of these
25 important people focused on this

1 sort of unified goal, particularly
2 if people don't see themselves
3 necessarily as being answerable to
4 you? I would love to hear more
5 about that.

6 MR. GEER: Absolutely.

7 Thank you, Councilmember, for that.
8 So because of my prior career as an
9 Assistant District Attorney and
10 frankly the work that I was doing
11 in the Inspector General's Office,
12 I was able to forge meaningful
13 relationships, if we're talking
14 about the police department, with
15 many of the police leadership, if
16 not all, so Deputy Commissioner
17 level.

18 And also by the way,
19 because of the trial work I've
20 done, sort of my context from
21 rank-and-file police officers on up
22 through the system were many and
23 meaningful. Also, because of my
24 work, the courts. I have a
25 tremendous amount of respect for

1 the courts and the leadership. We
2 all know each other and I think
3 they know what my reputation is.

4 And I'm hoping that there
5 are some people who would ask
6 questions of the courts, from the
7 police department, from rank-
8 and-file on up from these public
9 safety partner agencies about Adam
10 Geer and my reputation in the
11 courtroom and how I operate and
12 what I do and what I mean and who I
13 am and my character. Because I
14 think it's that which allows me to
15 in those rooms move seamlessly and
16 have the respect of my peers. And
17 I think most people who encounter
18 me for any bit of time understand
19 that I'm serious business, right.
20 I am who I am. And so, I don't
21 imagine that will be a problem at
22 all.

23 In fact, I'm not sure that
24 we'll get there because I do think
25 of myself as a leader. And often

1 in these spaces, that is what
2 happens. I become the leader that
3 I am. So if there needs to be any
4 kind of accountability check, I'm
5 here for it. But leaders tend to
6 only have to reserve that in
7 instances where it's really needed,
8 and I think we're going to have a
9 good-working relationship with
10 those partners and we'll be leading
11 together to accomplish the Mayor's
12 vision.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

14 Okay. I guess I'll end on asking
15 beyond sort of the good
16 relationships that you have
17 created, do you feel that you have
18 the authority necessary to demand
19 accountability at times when people
20 aren't going to like you and that
21 good will might not matter as much?

22 MR. GEER: Absolutely, 100
23 percent. This is serious business
24 here. Public safety and people's
25 lives are at stake. It demands no

1 less than my full whatever it is
2 that I have to do in order to
3 accomplish these goals for the
4 citizens of Philadelphia. We're
5 going to do what we have to do.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

7 Thank you.

8 MR. GEER: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

10 Thank you, Council President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 Thank you.

13 Chair recognizes
14 Councilmember Nina Ahmad.

15 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Thank
16 you, President.

17 Good afternoon.

18 MR. GEER: Good afternoon.

19 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: It's
20 good to see you again.

21 MR. GEER: You as well.

22 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: I have
23 to echo what my colleague just said
24 about the coordination and then the
25 accountability, right. And in

1 spite, you know, it can't be a
2 personality-driven position. It's
3 going to be existing forever. So
4 what are the measures of
5 structuring the office so there's a
6 tracking ability added on like a
7 dashboard or something where the
8 public can see what they voted for?
9 So I wanted to know if you had a
10 thought on that. I have a couple
11 of subquestions, but maybe I'll let
12 you answer that first.

13 MR. GEER: No, not
14 specifically we haven't gotten to
15 the point where we're eliminating a
16 dashboard. We have gotten to the
17 point where the Office of Public
18 Safety -- and again, we're just
19 creating this, right. We're just
20 going to put in these pieces that I
21 think will make a difference.
22 We're still hiring out and building
23 and building this thing out. But
24 absolutely, there has to be some
25 type of metric.

1 By the way, some of these
2 positions which you'll see on the
3 org chart speak directly to this,
4 right. And there is a specific
5 position that you will see when I
6 circulate the org chart dedicated
7 to exactly what you're saying,
8 right. So we want to put that
9 right inhouse so that we are
10 understanding the work that we're
11 doing. It's very important.

12 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Thank
13 you. Then I have a second
14 question: The Delaware Valley
15 Intelligence Center, what is the
16 coordination there and are you
17 going to be able to use hotspot
18 mobilization within the City?

19 MR. GEER: We have a very
20 good relationship. Many senior
21 members of my team also have been
22 working for the DVIC for many years
23 in their leadership. I am
24 currently working with them on a
25 number of brand new initiatives

1 that I think will benefit the City
2 of Philadelphia, in particular a
3 revamping surrounding some tip
4 hotline stuff so that we can really
5 utilize that and update that
6 frankly.

7 So the relationship we have
8 with DVIC in terms of their CCT --
9 CCTV stuff, all of that, they're a
10 partner and they're an incredibly
11 important partner to our work.

12 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And my
13 last question is about the violence
14 interrupters that you mentioned.
15 Are you going to be using mental
16 health resources to buttress those
17 positions or just on-the-ground
18 resources for engaging with our
19 young people?

20 MR. GEER: That is very
21 important work that needs to be
22 done frankly. We do have our CIRT
23 teams, our Crisis Intervention
24 Response Teams which we spoke
25 about. There are likely certain

1 things that we can think about in
2 terms of those organizations going
3 out and doing work and making sure
4 that they're understanding those
5 challenges and maybe there's some
6 specific training that they would
7 require, but we do understand the
8 need to have that as a part of the
9 model somewhere, right. Yeah,
10 that's important.

11 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: And
12 most specifically CBT, cognitive
13 behavioral therapy to be engaged in
14 these spaces is going to be
15 critical for us to really tamp down
16 the cortisol, the violence that
17 erupts as a result of our cortisol.
18 So I'm really looking forward to
19 that piece of your work.

20 So thank you again and very
21 impressive background and I am an
22 immigrant like your parents, and
23 it's so coincidentally I have a
24 daughter in medical school and a
25 daughter in law school, just

1 saying.

2 MR. GEER: Sounds about
3 right. Thank you, Councilmember.

4 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Tell
5 your mom.

6 MR. GEER: I think she's
7 watching.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
9 Thank you very much.

10 The Chair recognizes
11 Councilmember Rue Landau.

12 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank
13 you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Hopefully it's real this time.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Yes.
17 Thank you, Council President.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
19 You're welcome.

20 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank
21 you, Mr. Geer. Thank you so much
22 for being here.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Absolutely.

25 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: A

1 couple of things. First of all, I
2 just want to recognize my colleague
3 Councilmember Gauthier's comments
4 that she made about gun violence
5 plaguing our city and being an
6 emergency that we've all watched
7 and being shocked at how quickly
8 the City could respond to a COVID
9 crisis and not respond to violence
10 in the same way. So I am so glad
11 that we are in the right direction.

12 I think there's no doubt
13 that we in Council feel the same
14 way, that we're all paddling in the
15 same direction now and I think the
16 City is definitely going to be in a
17 better place. I had a few
18 questions and mine started with
19 exactly what Councilmember Gilmore
20 Richardson was asking about.

21 I'm very curious about the
22 structure of your department and I
23 think we're learning pieces now.
24 It's a little confusing that
25 there's been some hirings and

1 you've talked about a top team, but
2 we really don't understand what it
3 looks like and it's hard to see how
4 you are set up for success unless
5 we fully understand the structure.

6 I appreciate that an org
7 chart is coming, but can you speak
8 a little bit more to even how many
9 reports you think you'll have, how
10 many employees you'll have and
11 we'll start there and then the next
12 one.

13 MR. GEER: Absolutely. So
14 a lot of this is not -- so there's
15 an engine in a vehicle right now.
16 That engine was the criminal
17 justice public safety cluster. So
18 there was a pre-existing number of
19 agencies within the Managing
20 Director's Office tasked with
21 public safety-related things within
22 this cluster, including Office of
23 Violence Prevention, Office of
24 Criminal Justice, Office of
25 Re-entry Partnerships, Town Watch

1 Integrated Services, Office of the
2 Victim Advocate.

3 There was also an executive
4 leadership within that cluster,
5 some of them again who are here
6 today in terms of policy, people,
7 data. All of that is within the
8 Office of Public Safety or will be
9 when you see it on the org chart.
10 So it is somewhat of like a
11 rebranding.

12 We will think about things
13 differently. We will re prioritize
14 in line with the Mayor's vision,
15 but that pre-existing org chart is
16 largely there. What I'm now adding
17 is like a lot of dotted lines to
18 everything, right, because as we've
19 talked about this job is about
20 reaching out to the other agencies
21 and bringing them in and getting
22 them out of -- so there's dotted
23 lines everywhere. You won't see
24 them in the org chart because
25 that's just a given in our minds

1 and in our work.

2 And then we're going to be
3 adding a few of these other central
4 pieces, specifically tasked with
5 some of the things that align with
6 the Mayor's vision and the work
7 that we need to do.

8 For example, when the
9 Councilmember just said how are we
10 understanding the metrics, are
11 things working, all kinds of
12 things. We're going to have a
13 person for that. Our community
14 violence interruption model, which
15 I think is going to be awesome and
16 successful, especially in a city
17 like Philadelphia by the way where
18 our community violence interruption
19 groups are also so amazing, right.
20 A person dedicated -- you're going
21 to see that. That's an addition.

22 So we've taken what's
23 already under the engine of the
24 thing. We're going to tweak that
25 up. We're going to put some new

1 oil in it and all that kind of
2 stuff, and then we're going to add
3 a few other turbo kind of things,
4 and that's what it will look like.
5 I'm not sure if that answers your
6 question.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:
8 That's very helpful. The second
9 question, which you've told me part
10 of the answer to now, is how your
11 work aligns with or coordinates
12 with the Managing Director's work
13 at this point who did oversee much
14 of this?

15 MR. GEER: Many of the
16 important parts of the Managing
17 Director's Office like DBHIDS,
18 right, Office of Homeless Services,
19 Office of Domestic Violence,
20 there's incredible crossover with
21 the Office of Public Safety. The
22 way that we've been operating is as
23 one with respect to the work that
24 those agencies are doing and those
25 joint agencies.

1 So many of the meetings
2 we're having, for example, around
3 the Kensington initiative, and I'm
4 saying those leaders are in the
5 room, they're on our team with
6 respect to these issues. So we
7 have a great relationship. We're
8 on the same floor. We kind of are
9 one, me and the Managing Director's
10 Office, but we have these specific
11 carve-outs and things that can go
12 down to policies and certain
13 offices that work together just
14 under what would be my portfolio.

15 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Okay.
16 I know we don't want to see any
17 redundancy in the work, so having a
18 clear line is certainly helpful,
19 especially for us when we want to
20 know --

21 MR. GEER: It is. There is
22 a very clear line, Councilmember.
23 In fact, me and the Managing
24 Director we are very good at
25 offboarding and making sure that

1 he's got what he's got and I've got
2 what I've got and those are our
3 universes.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: The
5 second thing is how are -- are we
6 using the experiences of other
7 cities to help inform our work here
8 in Philadelphia?

9 MR. GEER: We are looking
10 at other cities. I'm looking at
11 other cities. We have a policy
12 person, Joshu Harris. He loves
13 looking at other cities and
14 bringing back -- we are always
15 having conversations about what
16 other cities are doing, including
17 as an example most recently
18 Community Court in Manhattan,
19 right. That would be one example.

20 Obviously we're looking at
21 open drug market-related policies
22 in other cities that are doing
23 things, so we clearly want to look
24 for the best example and do that.

25 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU:

1 Great. And my third thing I think
2 is more of a comment going back to
3 Council President Johnson's
4 comment, at least I recall I think
5 even back in the Street
6 Administration we had these
7 neighborhood more like collective
8 groups, it wasn't a PDAC, but it
9 would have representatives from the
10 police, SEPTA, the schools, some
11 community leaders -- it was not a
12 PDAC so it wasn't organized by the
13 police -- that would meet and
14 actually talk about what's going
15 on, how are we keeping our students
16 safe and whatever. And I think
17 Council President Johnson said we
18 are looking for somebody who can
19 bring together the entities at the
20 top. And I certainly think you
21 have the personality to do that,
22 but we also want to make sure that
23 we're mimicking that top level down
24 in the hardest-hit communities
25 throughout the City and I think

1 it's a great model that could look
2 at community-specific issues.

3 MR. GEER: Absolutely.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank
5 you.

6 MR. GEER: Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Thank you very much.

9 The Chair recognizes
10 Councilmember Lozada.

11 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thank
12 you, Council President.

13 And thank you, Mr. Geer,
14 for your testimony and your
15 willingness to meet with me and at
16 this point with some community
17 residents as well. I think I want
18 to follow up on the question that
19 one of my colleagues asked about.
20 There's not just a gun violence
21 crisis in the City, right, in
22 Districts like mine. There's also
23 a health crisis, and there's been a
24 health crisis in the District for a
25 really long time.

1 There was a point in time
2 in the District when there were
3 many people who felt like we as a
4 city should be doing things a
5 different way, right. In my
6 opinion, right, I'm going to say in
7 my opinion instead of us as a
8 government addressing the situation
9 and responding to the needs of what
10 was happening in the 7th Council
11 District, we chose to bring those
12 people who were making a lot of
13 noise into our workforce. And it
14 created to me a much more difficult
15 situation to be able to respond to
16 because instead of doing what we
17 needed to do, we wanted to kind of
18 shut them out.

19 And so, my question to you
20 is some of them are still here in
21 the system, in our workforce. Some
22 of them are a part of families that
23 are families to people who have
24 been in our workforce for many,
25 many years. How are you going to

1 respond to the individuals who are
2 currently working in the spaces
3 that we will need action in and
4 really difficult action, right?

5 We're going to have to make
6 some really difficult decisions
7 over the course of the next year or
8 so in order to really improve or
9 restore quality of life in the
10 Kensington community. How are you
11 going to navigate those individuals
12 who will push back on some of the
13 things that the Mayor and yourself
14 are describing you will need to do
15 in order to restore quality of life
16 in Districts like mine?

17 MR. GEER: The short
18 answer, and I guess this gets back
19 to the accountability question,
20 we're not going to have time for
21 that kind of obstructionist
22 behavior. Certainly I can tell you
23 this, the Mayor absolutely 100
24 percent is not going to have any
25 time for that stuff.

1 We have important work that
2 needs to be done. And if it is
3 identified -- without knowing any
4 specifics, Councilmember, if it's
5 identified that there is a
6 situation like this, then we will
7 deal with the situation so that we
8 can get the work done and
9 accomplish the Mayor's vision and
10 mission, period.

11 So without knowing
12 specifics of particular cases and
13 if we can have an offline
14 conversation with anyone or whoever
15 wants to speak to me, we can have
16 that conversation and see if we can
17 resolve those issues.

18 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: You
19 participated in one of our
20 community meetings recently and I
21 appreciate that, right. I'm
22 grateful for you being present. I
23 think there's going to be a need
24 for more of that. As I mentioned,
25 there were folks in the

1 Administration that made themselves
2 or sold themselves to community
3 residents as being their connection
4 or them being the connection to
5 City government. That created a
6 huge distrust, rightfully so.

7 And so, in positions like
8 yours it's going to be extremely
9 important for you, the
10 decision-maker, to be at those
11 community meetings. We have a lot
12 of work to do in cleaning up what
13 we have caused in that community,
14 but we also have a lot of work in
15 building up trust before that
16 community buys into anything that
17 we're going to do.

18 I think it's also really
19 important to note that we need to
20 identify who truly lives there when
21 the noise is happening and the
22 pushback is coming, right. The
23 folks who live there, who lay their
24 heads to rest, who have businesses
25 there are the people that we need

1 to be listening to.

2 We've heard all the
3 comments over the course of the
4 last few weeks as it relates to
5 harm conduction and to some of the
6 providers that are there. DBHIDS
7 has \$1.7 billion, and a lot of that
8 money go into programs in the 7th
9 Councilmanic District.

10 What is your plan or how
11 are you going to respond to those
12 individuals who fail to understand
13 that we're not getting rid of harm
14 reduction or that we don't support
15 harm reduction, but that it is
16 necessary for us to change how we
17 do the work of harm reduction in
18 the 7th Council District?

19 MR. GEER: I mean, we are
20 going to be changing the work that
21 we do. I think it's our role as
22 City government to deal with
23 problems that are difficult, that
24 affect public health, that affect
25 crime, that effect some of the

1 things we're seeing in your
2 District. That is our job. That's
3 what we're here to do, is solve
4 problems and sometimes make
5 difficult decisions, and sometimes
6 people aren't going to agree with
7 those decisions. What we're not
8 going to do is do nothing. We're
9 going to do something.

10 I will rely on yourself,
11 Councilmember, other people that
12 represent that District, the
13 community groups in that District,
14 the people who live there frankly
15 to have input into what they want
16 to see and how they want to see
17 these policies sort of meted out.
18 We think we have a pretty good
19 idea, right.

20 We want to be compassionate
21 and we want to get people into
22 treatment, we also want to have a
23 Kensington at K&A where children,
24 community, family members can
25 traverse up and down in a vibrant

1 business corridor with vibrant
2 happenings and music and food
3 without being in an open drug air
4 market and experiencing the trauma
5 related to just seeing it, which is
6 what's happening today.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
8 think what we also need to
9 recognize is a lot of those
10 programs are being funded by us.
11 And so, I'm going to look for the
12 support of the Administration as we
13 go through the budget process for
14 support when we call for the
15 reallocation of funds for different
16 programs that do some of this work,
17 right.

18 We don't do a good job at
19 oversight. And just because we are
20 the ones funding them or they are
21 friends of our friends who are
22 running those programs, we tend to
23 not want to do anything. And so, I
24 think it's important for you as the
25 conductor of the orchestra, which

1 is what we were calling your
2 position during one of our public
3 hearings, to understand that we are
4 going to hold you accountable,
5 right.

6 You're the person we're
7 going to hold accountable for the
8 work that does or doesn't get done
9 in Districts like mine, right,
10 because the folks who call
11 Kensington home deserve that,
12 right. That means that we're going
13 to have to not fund certain
14 programs and/or reallocate dollars
15 to programs that are doing what
16 they are supposed to be doing.

17 MR. GEER: Understood.
18 Understood, Councilmember.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 Thank you, Councilmember Lozada.

21 Councilmember Jim Harrity.
22 I just want to double check for the
23 record.

24 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Thank
25 you, Council President.

1 Adam, thank you again.

2 I've been at a few meetings already
3 in the community, me and Quetcy and
4 a couple other people from the
5 Kensington Caucus. It's not like
6 years ago, no. Years ago we didn't
7 have the alternative programs that
8 we have now. People just went to
9 jail.

10 How do you see the courts
11 playing a role with you in the
12 public safety thing and how do you
13 see the DA's Office working with
14 this? Because in reality to do
15 what we are trying to do with
16 getting more people into long-term
17 recovery, that is going to take
18 some of them being charged in order
19 to get them into the alternative
20 programs.

21 How do you plan on
22 navigating between the courts and
23 the District Attorney's Office
24 together, you know, getting them to
25 work together in order to be able

1 to use these programs that we have?
2 I mean, we have the AMP program.
3 We also have the mental health
4 alternative programs, all good
5 tools. But the tool won't work if
6 you don't have the toolbox and the
7 guide with a wrench making the
8 adjustments.

9 MR. GEER: Absolutely.
10 Thank you for your question,
11 Councilmember. You all frankly
12 have been leading. I think the
13 Kensington Caucus was pulled
14 together, that meeting that I'm
15 excited to get to. That's part of
16 this, bringing people around the
17 table together and communicating.

18 So having the DA present,
19 having you all present, having the
20 court present, having us present.
21 We'll be very meaningful for
22 understanding where everyone stands
23 and what people are going to do and
24 what people are not going to do.

25 There is a lot that we will

1 be able to do around trying to get
2 people into treatment and
3 connecting them to services that do
4 not engage the DA's Office. So all
5 of this sort of pretrial stuff that
6 we are going to be implementing and
7 maybe thinking about differently,
8 but certainly that's going to be
9 available to us.

10 I have had communications,
11 regular communications with the
12 DA's Office. I probably at this
13 point almost have regular
14 communications with the courts.
15 I've met with the courts and the
16 court leadership, the
17 administrative judges who are going
18 to be touching some of these issues
19 in a meaningful way.

20 But to answer your
21 question, we need all of them. We
22 need to be communicating. We need
23 to clearly understand as I said
24 what people are going to do and
25 what they can do, right, to support

1 so that we can pivot and fill in
2 any holes that we can fill in to
3 bring real progress and to really
4 make a dent in some of these
5 issues. But we're going to talk to
6 these partners, period. And that
7 includes the DA's Office, we have
8 to.

9 The citizens of
10 Philadelphia deserves City
11 government that communicates,
12 right. They deserve us to be
13 talking. We are all adults. We
14 are not going to agree 100 percent
15 of the time, but it's our
16 responsibility to have those
17 conversations and see where we
18 stand.

19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Great.
20 All right. One other question:
21 Are you planning -- I know you're
22 going to work with all of the
23 departments within the City,
24 including Parks & Rec because I
25 believe that is a great tool for us

1 to try to reach some of these kids.

2 The problem is programming,
3 lack of and lack of awareness even
4 more importantly, because in
5 Kensington in Councilwoman Lozada's
6 District, we have a lot problems
7 that are being offered that the
8 kids really don't know about. How
9 do we do better with getting it out
10 there that we have these programs
11 and how do you see these programs
12 working as a public safety thing,
13 because bottom line mentorship and
14 having them around people who care
15 about them and don't want to see
16 them do bad things because the
17 problem is their mentors right now
18 are the guys who are doing bad
19 things?

20 And speaking from
21 experiences as a kid growing up in
22 Southwest Philadelphia, we had five
23 Catholic Schools out there with
24 five football teams. Now, we have
25 about two Catholic schools left

1 with one football team. The
2 availability of programs, we
3 complain about the kids running
4 ragged, it's mostly because they
5 don't have anything to do. How do
6 we combat that and how do we make
7 that part of the public safety
8 initiative?

9 MR. GEER: Huge, huge part
10 of it, huge part of it. And we
11 have to really put our money where
12 our mouth is I think there. And
13 maybe I'm going above my pay grade
14 here. But I have a close personal
15 friend who was in Parks & Rec.
16 They've since left the City.

17 And when Commissioner
18 Slawson was appointed, he had very
19 glowing things to say about the
20 Commissioner. The day after her
21 appointment I emailed her and the
22 engagement was more or less
23 paraphrasing, very excited to know
24 you, we're going to be working
25 together closely and it's one of

1 excitement about potential. That
2 is a partner that I'm going to
3 value dearly, right.

4 Procurement is going to be
5 probably lower than Parks & Rec.
6 I'm just being honest. That's
7 going to be really a great
8 stakeholder for us, and I think
9 there's a lot of work and creative
10 things that we can do that.

11 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Yeah.
12 I mean, listen, we've made some
13 strides. I've visited different
14 Councilpeople's Districts and some
15 of their rec centers. And it's
16 amazing how the stuff varies per
17 area. While we need the rec
18 centers for the sports and the
19 activities, part of it, the bottom
20 line is that a lot of kids nowadays
21 aren't into sports.

22 I've got a 300-pound
23 14-year-old at home that wants
24 nothing to do with sports. But if
25 you give him a computer, he can do

1 whatever you want him to do. How
2 do you see our rec centers being
3 re-envisioned to include more of
4 these kinds of things, maybe
5 computer labs, recording studios,
6 e-games.

7 Kids now can get
8 scholarships to a Division 1 school
9 to play video games, and they can
10 make a lot of money at it. And I
11 think we have to thinking outside
12 the box and trying to figure out
13 what's working in different rec
14 centers that we can mimic in other
15 rec centers?

16 MR. GEER: I think that
17 that's right. And that's where
18 bringing in the youth and being
19 honest, hones about approaching
20 them, and honest about listening to
21 them and honest about what's going
22 to pull them into those rec centers
23 and into those activities, that's
24 where that's really going to
25 matter.

1 And I think we're poised in
2 terms of our leadership to think of
3 ways to get to that so that our
4 programming is successful as it can
5 be in attracting these young
6 people. Because it's critically
7 important, right, like I get it.
8 I've seen some of the programming
9 at my kids' rec center and it's
10 appropriate for them.

11 But I can see some other
12 individuals who we really want to
13 bring in not being at all a dang
14 interested in what's going on at
15 the rec center. So having those
16 moments where we're really trying
17 to figure out things, whether it's
18 music, art, things that are really
19 going to get to them.

20 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Yeah,
21 exactly. We need to figure
22 out what the kids want. I had
23 visited Memphis Street Academy,
24 which is a charter school in
25 Kensington, the other day and

1 actually sat down with six or eight
2 of the 8th grade students and had a
3 really deep conversation. It was
4 very enlightening.

5 And these kids live in the
6 7th Councilmanic District for the
7 most part most of them, probably
8 about 90 percent. And what they
9 see and what they're thinking is --
10 I didn't realize an 8th grade
11 student could be that intelligent
12 about how they're thinking about
13 things.

14 And, you know, they brought
15 up the food insecurities to me,
16 they brought up the violence. They
17 brought up how come we can't get
18 these people into rehab. They see
19 them on a daily basis and they walk
20 by and, you know, we've had the
21 conversation about the trauma that
22 they're facing.

23 So thinking maybe we need
24 to talk to these kids a little more
25 and find out what they think of how

1 we can actually change
2 Philadelphia. I think we would all
3 be surprised at some of the ideas
4 they come up with.

5 MR. GEER: Agreed. Agreed,
6 Councilmember.

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Thank
8 you, Council President.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
10 Thank you very much.

11 I see Jeffrey Jay Young.
12 Are you --

13 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: (Nodding
14 head).

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 Okay. The Chair recognizes Jeffrey
17 Jay Young.

18 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
19 you, Council President.

20 Good afternoon, Mr. Geer.
21 How are you doing today?

22 MR. GEER: Good afternoon.

23 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Just
24 quick questions about your
25 strategies, right. So how do you

1 target those underrepresented
2 groups during the Procurement
3 process when it comes to
4 contracting with your particular
5 office?

6 MR. GEER: Again, we want
7 to be extremely intentional -- I
8 know I keep using this word, but
9 it's the one that makes sense --
10 about the organizations that are
11 getting City contracts and the work
12 that they're doing and making sure
13 that it's the good work that we
14 need in this time, okay, period.

15 So we are on this org chart
16 going to identify a position where
17 that position will be tasked with
18 this, right, be tasked with
19 understanding the grants that are
20 coming out and having fair measures
21 for these organizations. And also
22 by the way, being fair in terms of
23 the support that we might be able
24 to lend as a City to make sure they
25 will succeed.

1 And again, I had a meeting
2 this morning with a community
3 leader about this, expressing your
4 same sentiments about there's some
5 organizations out there that are
6 doing some great work, how can we
7 make sure that they get on your
8 radar. So it's something that I'm
9 actively thinking about.

10 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: And what
11 role will you play in developing
12 the overall public safety policy
13 and strategy implementation? Will
14 you play a big role or any role in
15 deciding what policies that the
16 City's Administration is going to
17 push forward, for example, like GVI
18 or some other types of public
19 safety policies?

20 MR. GEER: Yes. So
21 specifically, GVI falls within our
22 portfolio. We are seeing some
23 really great success with that
24 program that was launched in 2020.
25 We just received some great news,

1 that we received the federal grant,
2 about \$615,000. That will allow us
3 to expand GVI to start
4 incorporating juveniles, which in
5 the wake of the last week or two is
6 extremely, extremely good news so
7 those policies, specifically GVI
8 and things that are inhouse
9 directly related to me and my team.

10 As it relates to broader
11 public safety policies, absolutely,
12 I see that as my job to make
13 recommendations to the Mayor to
14 bring to her things that are
15 working in other cities that we can
16 do here and then implement them.

17 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
18 you. You segued into the youth for
19 me. So what role do you see DHS
20 playing in the overall public
21 safety scheme of our city?

22 MR. GEER: Very important.
23 We have just set up our first
24 meeting with DHS and the
25 Commissioner there to coordinate.

1 That is going to be -- that's a
2 meeting that frankly they've been
3 having over the last several years.
4 We're discussing specifically youth
5 as it relates to the approaching
6 summer and warmer months.

7 So we are going to be tied
8 to them in trying to see how we can
9 support the work that they're going
10 to be doing and likewise, but that
11 is an important agency for sure.

12 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
13 you, Mr. President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Thank you very much.

16 Are there any other
17 questions from members of the
18 Committee?

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilman Curtis Jones. For the
21 record, the light was not on. I
22 see it now, sir. Go ahead.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's
24 all right. One of the things
25 hopefully within your org chart,

1 you will have data crunchers
2 because if it ain't measured, it
3 ain't managed. And one of the
4 things that is illusive to us is to
5 be able to say a pound of
6 prevention equaled a pound of cure.

7 And so, being able to
8 crunch data to see whether it's the
9 57 Block strategy, whether that
10 investment actually reduces crime
11 in the area, whether it is the use
12 of credible messengers and those
13 types of organizations within a
14 geographic area that we can
15 correlate reduction in shootings,
16 reduction in arrests. Those kinds
17 of things that are very subtle but
18 very important to this body because
19 we have to fund them.

20 I asked the City Controller
21 how much does crime cost, like from
22 the time somebody pulls the trigger
23 to the time they're apprehended,
24 the car that they rode to jail in,
25 the jail that they went in, the

1 food that was fed to them, the
2 evaluations that were given, the
3 DA, the Defender, how much from the
4 point of crime to the disposition
5 of the case does it cost and why is
6 that important when you then say to
7 me or when someone suggests to us,
8 if we invest this amount of money
9 this is how much we can save, then
10 it makes mathematic sense.

11 So measuring what's going
12 on working hopefully with the
13 Controller's office and others to
14 actually measure what we're doing I
15 think is a critical step in
16 managing what's going on.
17 Hopefully, you're included that in
18 your structure.

19 MR. GEER: Thank you,
20 Councilmember. It's in there.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is that
22 it?

23 MR. GEER: It is in there.
24 We -- you said everything. You
25 said everything, Councilmember.

1 That's exactly why we think it's
2 that important. Exactly what you
3 just said, we have to have that
4 data or else what are we doing.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: And one
6 other thing. When the District
7 Attorney who has a really good data
8 crunching group, the Controller has
9 a really good data crunching group,
10 I think the Defender has a really
11 good data crunching group, the
12 Inquirer and Daily News have a
13 really good data crunching group.
14 They don't always sync. And we
15 need to know whose data we should
16 go by. So that's why it's
17 important as well.

18 Thank you, Mr. President.

19 MR. GEER: Thank you. I
20 only smiled, Councilmember, because
21 I agree with you completely and
22 we've had conversations about this.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
25 Thank you very much.

1 Any other questions or
2 comments from members of the
3 Committee?

4 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:
5 Mr. President, I have one more
6 question.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young.

9 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
10 you. Mr. Geer, what role do you
11 see your office playing in
12 scenarios where there are victims
13 or co-victims of crime who do not
14 feel like they received justice,
15 right. There are a lot of people
16 out here that feel that certain
17 crimes are not being punished at a
18 level that they think they should
19 be, and they are continually to be
20 traumatized by being a victim of
21 that crime.

22 So what role do you see
23 your office playing helping to
24 support those victims and
25 co-victims of crime who feel like

1 the system, the justice system, has
2 not been working for them?

3 MR. GEER: Thank you for
4 that. Thank you for that very,
5 very important question. We have
6 in my portfolio the Office of
7 Victim Advocate, which is going to
8 do and does a lot of this work. I
9 think you are absolutely correct,
10 that there needs to be dedication
11 to that. That is part of my plan
12 of really leaning into the
13 community violence interruption
14 programming that we have in the
15 City. Because as you point out, a
16 lot of times those great community
17 groups get in there right before or
18 sometimes unfortunately right after
19 a horrible incident and their work
20 of communicating to the people who
21 are affected steers those people
22 specifically and their communities
23 and their families and a loved one
24 away from the decision of
25 retaliation frankly. That is why

1 it works and it does work. And
2 we're starting to see I think at
3 the national level and certainly
4 we're going to find out here how
5 powerful that is, where when you're
6 dealing with trauma when you are
7 availing or when you have resources
8 for people who are dealing with
9 that and trying to make the
10 decision of do I get justice for
11 myself, am I even going to get
12 justice, I did not get justice.
13 When you're dealing with that in
14 the way that I think you think
15 needs to happen which is the way
16 that I think needs to happen as
17 well, you are allowing those people
18 a chance to make a different
19 decision, which I think will result
20 in lower shootings or homicides, et
21 cetera. I hope that answers your
22 question.

23 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Yes.

24 Thank you.

25 Thank you, Mr. President.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 Thank you very much.

3 And just last question, and

4 I think Councilman Curtis Jones

5 played a role in putting this

6 legislation together with former

7 Council President Clarke and I know

8 I'm a co-sponsor on it. But just

9 to refresh my memory, the salary

10 for this position is what? Do you

11 remember off the top of your head?

12 MR. GEER: \$265,000.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 265. Okay. I just wanted to ask

15 that for the record because when it

16 was a Charter change, the public

17 would come to us and say, how we

18 come up with this number and so

19 forth. But I only say that from

20 the perspective of the reason why

21 we've been in this for an hour and

22 34 minutes and we actually started

23 on time, it's just to impress upon

24 you how critically important this

25 position is.

1 And I think that's why a
2 lot of Members took time out of
3 their schedule not even just being
4 here from a hearing standpoint, but
5 this is the number one issue that
6 we're addressing here in the City
7 of Philadelphia. But we do want to
8 thank you for stepping up to the
9 plate and stepping in this space to
10 be the number one public safety
11 leader here in the City of
12 Philadelphia.

13 And we know the vision that
14 our Mayor is focusing on and we're
15 going to work collaboratively as
16 you get through this process to
17 make sure we move the City of
18 Philadelphia forward to make sure
19 our young people are safe, to make
20 sure our seniors are safe.

21 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay
22 Young took the words out of my
23 mouth in making sure that we're
24 advocating and fighting for victims
25 and co-victims of gun violence. So

1 we thank you for stepping up the
2 plate when it comes to being a
3 public servant around this
4 particular issue.

5 I know you and I have an
6 event coming up, so you'll be in
7 South Philadelphia with the Young
8 Chances Foundation where we will be
9 addressing the issues regarding
10 public safety and gun violence in
11 my own community. And so, I just
12 want to state that for the record,
13 that you have been on the ground
14 prior to today out and about in the
15 community touching base with people
16 at least listening. And I think
17 that's a testament to your
18 character and how you want to
19 collaborate and bring people to the
20 table.

21 So if there aren't any
22 other questions or comments -- the
23 Chair recognizes Councilmember
24 Quetcy Lozada.

25 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: This

1 is the last question. I promise.
2 I didn't hear you mention at all in
3 your testimony how you would or how
4 do you intend to use or work with
5 the Office of Youth Engagement, the
6 Youth Commission. Each one of our
7 Districts has a young person that
8 represents us that lives in our
9 District, right, and can speak to
10 what is happening there.

11 What is the role of the
12 Youth Commission and the Office of
13 Youth Engagement going to play in
14 the work that you all are going to
15 be doing?

16 MR. GEER: I would love to
17 find out more specifically the work
18 that they're doing frankly.
19 Specifically why are they
20 convening, I don't have that
21 information currently. But we do
22 want to access as I've said the
23 youth in a meaningful way. That
24 seems like a built-in way to get
25 out of your Councilmanic Districts

1 what we might need, especially if
2 that's your recommendation. So
3 certainly, we want to look at that.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
5 think it's important because,
6 right, we talk a lot about what
7 we're supposed to be doing and
8 young people or what young people
9 want to see or what young people
10 are involved in, and often times
11 they are the people that are
12 missing from the conversation.

13 And so, instead of talking
14 at them we should be intentionally
15 inviting them to the table to hear
16 from them directly, right. The
17 Mayor just held a meeting on Friday
18 and we heard from young people.
19 And it was amazing to me how they
20 ran off how much they could pay for
21 guns, right, where they could pick
22 up a gun, how quickly -- it was
23 very comfortable for him to say I
24 can walk out this door and order
25 any kind of weapon that I'm

1 interested in, right, for something
2 as cheap as \$200.

3 And so, I think that we
4 really need to be more intentional
5 when we're talking about public
6 safety. Be more intentional about
7 including them in the conversation
8 and have them help us really
9 address and make our city a safer
10 place.

11 MR. GEER: Yes, I was in
12 that meeting, Councilmember, and it
13 had the same effect on me. Just
14 absolutely, absolutely eye-opening
15 every time you talk to a young
16 person, especially a young person
17 who is in the midst and in the wake
18 of that kind of trauma. It will
19 make you -- it will increase your
20 resolve. It will really increase
21 your resolve. And almost as
22 importantly, you are understanding
23 what exactly you might have to do
24 that specifically caters to the
25 issues, right, that they're facing.

1 So I think that we are taking that
2 point very, very, very strongly to
3 engage our youth in the process.

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I
5 appreciate that. He ran off those
6 prices and the names of those guns
7 like he was ordering from a menu.
8 And so, that was really disturbing
9 to me. It actually made me even
10 more concerned than I already was.

11 MR. GEER: Agreed.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Thank you very much, Councilmember.
14 Are there any other
15 questions or comments from members
16 of the Committee?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
19 Hearing none, is there anyone else
20 here to testify on Resolution
21 240029?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Hearing none, we want to thank you
25 very much, Adam Geer, for taking

1 time out of schedule today and
2 providing your testimony.

3 MR. GEER: It's my
4 pleasure. Thank you,
5 Councilmembers. Thank you,
6 Council.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 You're welcome.

9 We're going to take a
10 10-minute break to let people go to
11 their bathrooms. Go ahead --
12 before the Chair recognizes
13 Councilmember Thomas.

14 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
15 you, Council President.

16 I have to tend to other
17 Council business, so I just want to
18 be recorded as voting aye on all
19 bills and resolutions presented
20 before the Committee today. Thank
21 you, Council President.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
23 Leave is granted.

24 10-minute recess, that is.
25 (Brief recess.)

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 This hearing we're now calling to
3 order. Members, please take your
4 seats.

5 Mr. Christmas, will you
6 please call the first witness to
7 testify on Resolution No. 240038.

8 THE CLERK: The witness is
9 Renee Garcia, Esquire, Acting City
10 Solicitor.

11 (Witness approached Witness
12 table.)

13 MS. GARCIA: Do we have
14 enough --

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 Good afternoon.

17 MS. GARCIA: Good
18 afternoon, Council President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 How are you today?

21 MS. GARCIA: I'm doing all
22 right. Thanks for your patience.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Absolutely, absolutely. Just state
25 your name for the record and then

1 will you please begin your
2 testimony.

3 MS. GARCIA: Sure. Renee
4 Garcia, G-a-r-c-i-a. Thank you.
5 Good afternoon, Council President
6 Johnson and esteemed Councilmembers
7 of the Committee of the Whole. I
8 am Renee Garcia. I have served as
9 Acting City Solicitor for the City
10 of Philadelphia since January.

11 Prior to my appointment, I
12 supervised the Law Department's
13 Litigation Group as the Chair. I'm
14 grateful to Mayor Parker for asking
15 me to serve as Solicitor and I
16 appreciate your consideration of my
17 appointment.

18 The mission of the Law
19 Department is to serve the
20 residents of Philadelphia by
21 providing legal counsel of the
22 highest quality to all City
23 officials, employees, departments,
24 agencies, boards and commissions.
25 With the expertise and leadership

1 we have on our team, we are
2 excellently situated to aid Mayor
3 Parker and this legislative body in
4 making Philadelphia safer, cleaner
5 and greener with economic
6 opportunity for all because this
7 vision is already central to what
8 we do.

9 With my time before City
10 Council today, I'm going to tell
11 you a little bit about myself and
12 provide a snapshot of the work that
13 we do at the Law Department.
14 Formerly a resident of Council
15 President's District -- sorry,
16 Council President. I left for
17 Councilmember Bass' District in
18 Mt. Airy, where I live with my two
19 daughters and my husband who
20 practices dermatology in
21 Roxborough.

22 We are an interfaith
23 multi-ethnic family and are members
24 of Germantown Jewish Center. My
25 older daughter who's 9 years old is

1 my sensitive and creative sole,
2 who's currently into designing
3 clothing and generally follows the
4 rules while my younger daughter
5 who's 6 is hyper-competitive,
6 playing soccer with 9 to 11 years
7 old this winter and does not take
8 no for an answer. It's kind of
9 like my personality split in the
10 most exaggerated way.

11 Their parents are split
12 between Kansas City, Florida and
13 Long Island where I grew up in a
14 small hamlet of 4,000 people.
15 Although from different
16 backgrounds, both sides of my
17 family valued hard work and service
18 to others. My relatives are
19 painters, carpenters, cooks, police
20 officers, volunteer EMTs, volunteer
21 firefighters, County clerks,
22 medical works, Sunday School
23 teacher, Scout troop leader and my
24 grandfather was the town building
25 inspector. They include veterans

1 of the Navy, Air Force and Army.

2 My mother's family had a
3 long history in that little hamlet.

4 My dad's family, however,
5 immigrated from Mexico and
6 Catalonia Spain. They came by
7 boat and airplane in the 1950s. My
8 grandparents came to this country
9 to escape General Franco's brutal
10 dictatorship. He starved the
11 people of Catalonia, dismantled
12 their government institutions,
13 restricted all freedom of the
14 press, imprisoned political
15 opponents and did not allow them to
16 speak their own language. The rule
17 of law met nothing for persecution
18 for the Catalonia people.

19 I pursued a Liberty Arts
20 education at Barnard College and
21 later became the first lawyer on
22 either side of my family after
23 attending Harvard Law School.
24 Nobody was particularly surprised
25 that I went to law school given how

1 worked up I got when I perceived
2 injustice as a child.

3 I knew I could serve with a
4 law degree in this country where
5 the laws are not always fair, but
6 the arc of justice -- the arc bends
7 toward justice. In the last 20
8 years I've worked at local
9 nonprofits, global nonprofits, law
10 firms and in the corporate sector.
11 Throughout my career I have always
12 carried a pro bono practice,
13 serving as PNC Bank's Pro Bono
14 Chair and participating in DEI
15 efforts, but constantly felt a tug
16 towards full-time service.

17 At a time when I was trying
18 to figure that out, City Solicitor
19 Diana Cortes offered me the Chair
20 of Litigation position and there
21 was no looking back. And now here
22 I am three years later as the
23 proposed Solicitor and I cannot
24 think of more important work.

25 I've been to battle

1 alongside some of you, University
2 City Townhomes, gaming, gun cases,
3 tobacco cases, asbestos in the
4 schools, driving equality and the
5 police transparency bill. These
6 are tough cases and you've seen how
7 the Law Department is there to
8 fight alongside you for our
9 residents.

10 With over 365 attorneys and
11 professional staff, our department
12 comes to work every day with a true
13 sense of purpose, to collaborate
14 with Council and our City clients
15 to protect the residents and to
16 build a more equitable and
17 prosperous future for the City of
18 Philadelphia. Whether it's
19 removing a child or an adult from a
20 dangerous situation, filing an
21 emergency petition to demolish a
22 hazardous building, defending a
23 City employee who did their job
24 according to law or keeping our
25 residents' personal data protected,

1 the Law Department keeps our city
2 safe.

3 Our corporate team allows
4 the City to contract with essential
5 service providers and shape our
6 built environment through
7 infrastructure programs, real
8 estate leases and grants, and of
9 course we can't do any of this
10 without money. Our Torts team
11 protect our City's coffers while
12 our Property Assessment and Tax
13 Unit ensures that residents and
14 businesses are contributing their
15 fair share.

16 Our Affirmative and Special
17 Litigation Unit sues bad actors
18 that inflict nuisance and danger on
19 our residents. And we've recovered
20 hundreds of millions of dollars in
21 damages to support our community.
22 And finally, the Law Department
23 ensures good governance for our
24 work, providing everyday counsel to
25 client departments and elected

1 officials, ensuring transparency
2 through the Right to Know law,
3 enforcing environmental
4 regulations, drafting and defending
5 legislation, representing our
6 Boards and Commissions and so much
7 more.

8 Our attorneys and staff
9 ensure that the City is operating
10 legally and transparently. In
11 short, we do it all. As I wrap up,
12 I will briefly address my plans for
13 the Law Department as we continue
14 to support this very ambitious
15 Council and Mayor.

16 First and foremost, the Law
17 Department will focus our strategy
18 prioritizing the issues and
19 outcomes that are the most
20 important for our clients,
21 including you. I'm undergoing an
22 assessment of our work with the
23 goal of breaking down silos and
24 creating synergy among, for
25 example, the units working on

1 public safety. The more we know
2 about your goals the better we can
3 realign our work.

4 Second, we will move past
5 the status quo to propose
6 innovation that moves the City
7 forward. The Consumer Protection
8 bill is a recent example of that
9 innovative legal solution that our
10 team can develop in coordination
11 with Council.

12 And lastly, we will
13 continue to do our work through a
14 lens of equity. The rules of
15 professional responsibility for
16 lawyers in rendering advice, a
17 lawyer may refer not only to the
18 law but other considerations such
19 as moral, economic, social and
20 political factors that may be
21 relevant to the client's situation.

22 Although the entire legal
23 industry talks about DEI, in no
24 other position are those principles
25 more important than for the

1 municipal lawyer who helps to write
2 and enforce the law. I have had
3 the privilege of representing both
4 City Council and the Administration
5 in my role as Chair of litigation
6 and now as the prospective City
7 Solicitor.

8 As City Solicitor, I will
9 remain steadfast in my commitment
10 to upholding the attorney-client
11 privilege while providing high
12 quality representation to all of
13 our clients in the interest of the
14 City. Thank you for welcoming me
15 today and I look forward to
16 collaborating with you as we all
17 work to serve the City of
18 Philadelphia. And I'm happy to
19 answer any questions you may have.
20 Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Thank you. First question: Under
23 your leadership, please explain
24 what will be the Law Department's
25 policy for settling or litigating

1 cases against the City. And just
2 for an example, recently
3 Councilmember Isaiah Thomas
4 introduced the Exonerated Justice
5 Legislative package on behalf of
6 Philadelphians who were convicted
7 of crimes and later exonerated.
8 Currently Pennsylvania does not
9 provide compensation for exonerees.

10 And so, does the Law
11 Department have a process for
12 reviewing these cases to make sure
13 individuals are properly
14 compensated? What is the average
15 amount of time between a claim made
16 by an exoneree and the resolution
17 of their claim, and what are the
18 Law Department's internal goals and
19 metrics for the resolution of
20 claims made by the exonerees? And
21 this is all in the context of the
22 Law Department's policy for
23 settling or litigating cases
24 against the City.

25 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,

1 Council President. We have several
2 dozen of these. We call them
3 overturned conviction matters.
4 Overtime conviction I think that's
5 what you're getting at. And just
6 to be clear, we find out when
7 they're coming when you all find
8 out when they're coming. So they
9 come to -- we see in the newspaper
10 or we get a presuit letter from the
11 plaintiff's counsel. And these
12 cases are very difficult cases
13 because it's something that
14 happened often 30 or 40 years ago,
15 so you can imagine huge volumes of
16 documents, right. And often times
17 there's a conviction and there's
18 multiple appellate levels, right.
19 So they're very complex.

20 Often times a number of the
21 actors that were around 30 or 40
22 years ago are deceased. So it
23 takes us quite a bit of time to
24 work through what actually
25 happened, even to get all of the

1 documents together. But we do work
2 these cases up very, very
3 thoroughly. And I'm very proud of
4 the work that we've done on these
5 because there certainly were issues
6 in the past, right. But every case
7 really needs that very personal
8 touch. And so, it is not going to
9 be a matter of us turning around.

10 One of your questions is
11 how quickly can the claim go out.
12 It's not going to be overnight,
13 right. And so, we do work these
14 up. We have settled them and we
15 settle on -- sometimes the numbers
16 are a little uneven and that's
17 because we settle them on a per
18 year basis.

19 So how many years were they
20 incarcerated. We settle them on a
21 per year basis. We have settled a
22 number of them. We do have others
23 that may go to trial, but we have
24 settled them far below the verdicts
25 that have come around the country

1 of those who have gone to trial,
2 because our lawyers are very, very
3 thorough and really no rock remains
4 unturned. So we can ensure that
5 those who are compensated are
6 compensated appropriately.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

8 In terms of the Law Department,
9 what have you done to train police
10 leadership to prevent or have you
11 thought about engaging in working
12 with the police department to train
13 police leadership to prevent
14 wrongful convictions?

15 Have you performed any sort
16 of analysis to determine what gaps
17 in training, supervision or
18 discipline causes wrongful
19 convictions?

20 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. Thank
21 you for that question. Like I
22 said, a lot of this happened 30 and
23 40 years ago, so enormous amount of
24 change has already happened, but
25 the Law Department does have an

1 after-action policy. I always say
2 it's never about one case. It's
3 always about systemic issues. And
4 so, when we do see a case, whether
5 it's involving a conviction or
6 really anywhere in our litigation
7 portfolio, we do write up what
8 happened in the case, what systemic
9 issues that we see and that goes to
10 the client and we work with the
11 client to fix the systemic issues.
12 So certainly, over the years when
13 we see anything arising in
14 litigation with police, there is
15 that constant feedback loop.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 When you say systemic issues, is
18 there one department or unit that's
19 more prone to claims than others
20 just based upon your experience?

21 MS. GARCIA: It can really
22 happen anywhere. The police,
23 they're a big client of ours,
24 right, there's a lot of them. But
25 it could happen in the torts

1 context --

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Let me back up then. Not so much
4 where it could happen, I'm just
5 talking about in terms of data on
6 the books. I'm sure in your
7 office, right, there should be
8 files of, okay, we got wrongful
9 conviction suits based upon
10 Philadelphia police officers,
11 right, and it's broken down by
12 category.

13 MS. GARCIA: Sure.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 This may be Strike Force Unit.
16 This may be Drug Task Force Unit.
17 This may be Robbery and Homicide
18 Unit, right, where these types of
19 wrongful convictions come up. Do
20 you have any data to show overall
21 big picture-wise when it comes to
22 the department these particular
23 areas we've seen more wrongful
24 convictions claims than other
25 areas?

1 MS. GARCIA: We see the
2 most cases needing remedial work in
3 the excessive force, not in the
4 overturned conviction because so
5 many changes have been made over
6 the last three or four decades.
7 The interviews aren't the same as
8 they used to be. They're videoed.
9 There are more people in the room.
10 They have protections already in
11 place. So those issues that came
12 up 30, 40 years ago in these cases
13 we're not seeing those again.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Okay. In 2022, a jury convicted
16 former Philadelphia Homicide
17 Detective Philip Nordo for his
18 actions during homicide
19 investigations, which included the
20 sexual abuse of witnesses and
21 informants. What is the Law
22 Department doing to compensate his
23 victims and the individuals who
24 have had their convictions
25 overturned because of his

1 misconduct? And that was just
2 basically 2022, which is roughly
3 two years ago. So that's more
4 recent.

5 MS. GARCIA: Yes.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 So give us an update on how we're
8 addressing that.

9 MS. GARCIA: We have a
10 number of cases in litigation right
11 now. We have settled one matter
12 and we're proceeding through
13 litigation.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Okay. At this time, I'm going to
16 recognize Councilwoman Jamie
17 Gauthier.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
19 Thank you, Council President.

20 Good afternoon, Solicitor
21 Garcia. I don't have questions. I
22 only have praise. I am so thrilled
23 by you being nominated for this
24 position, my whole team as well.
25 And it's because of what I saw you

1 do with respect to the University
2 City Townhomes case.

3 And just by way of
4 background for those of us who
5 weren't here or for people
6 watching, a couple of years ago I
7 put in place a zoning overlay that
8 covered the University City
9 Townhomes as well as other expiring
10 affordability properties.

11 In response to that, the
12 owner of the property, IBID, sued
13 me as an individual, sued me as a
14 Councilperson and sued the City of
15 Philadelphia. And with you as the
16 Chair of Litigation, we fought that
17 in Federal Court for I think over a
18 year or around a year. We fought
19 that very well, and we did it so
20 well that the owner winded up
21 settling with us in that
22 settlement, including a \$3.5
23 million Tenant Fund for the 70
24 families involved and it included
25 the City of Philadelphia receiving

1 20 percent of that very high value
2 site at 40th and Market that we
3 will use to build 70 new units of
4 affordable housing, ensuring that
5 there's still affordability in
6 University City.

7 And there were many things
8 that struck me about what you did
9 in that case. First, that was the
10 scariest thing that had ever
11 happened to me professionally, to
12 have these folks sue me personally
13 for the value that they felt that
14 they were losing and you were able,
15 you know, and your team was able to
16 comfort me. You had the charges
17 against or the suit against me as
18 an individual and a Councilperson
19 dismissed, so we were only dealing
20 with the suit against the City,
21 which was amazing and a huge
22 comfort to me.

23 You fought that case
24 expertly. We were up against --
25 our team of public servants, our

1 team that was dominated by women of
2 color was up against this
3 high-powered law firm which may or
4 may not have been represented in
5 this room today earlier, and
6 against a team of mostly men who
7 did not look like us. And you guys
8 just did an amazing job and I was
9 so proud to be represented by you.
10 I was so, so proud.

11 And then I know that your
12 primary job is to represent the
13 City of Philadelphia and sometimes
14 that can demand taking a
15 conservative approach, but you also
16 had a heart for the people in my
17 District and the people who were in
18 the midst of this affordability
19 crisis, and I appreciated that and
20 it has always shown through, right,
21 as we were going through this case
22 together.

23 And even after we
24 negotiated the settlement, you kept
25 your eye on implementation. All of

1 those -- I think maybe there are
2 two families or so that haven't
3 received their \$50,000 to find new
4 housing, and we just talked the
5 other day about how we will
6 construct new affordable housing on
7 the site.

8 So you carried it all the
9 way through with such grace and
10 such skill and such fearness. So
11 there is no doubt in my mind that
12 as our Solicitor you will continue
13 to both carry the best interest of
14 the City of Philadelphia and the
15 best interest of our people, the
16 people that we're representing.
17 And I'm just really pleased and I'm
18 proud to know you, so thank you.

19 MS. GARCIA: I thank you,
20 Councilmember. It is a privilege
21 to continue working on that matter
22 and just illustrates how my team,
23 they could be making so much
24 elsewhere and they are here for
25 that, to fight on these issues.

1 And we are not afraid to litigate.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

3 Yeah.

4 MS. GARCIA: And we had
5 some tough times in that case
6 but --

7 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

8 Yeah.

9 MS. GARCIA: -- it did come
10 out and I'm happy to say over \$3
11 million has gone out to the
12 residents of the Townhomes and now
13 we're looking, like you said, to
14 build affordable housing. And I'll
15 never let that go, right. I will
16 hold that with me forever for my
17 entire career, so thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

19 Thank you.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

21 Thank you very much.

22 The Chair recognizes
23 Councilmember Jamie Gaut -- excuse
24 me, Katherine Gilmore Richardson.
25 You're in my brain.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you,
3 Mr. Chairman.

4 I wanted to also offer my
5 sincere gratitude and thanks to
6 you, Renee Garcia, for your work.
7 I've had the opportunity and
8 pleasure to work with you while you
9 were working in the Law Department
10 helping us with the legislation
11 that I offered to ensure that we
12 have public comment prior to any
13 FOP contract is settled.

14 And so, that was a really
15 long and arduous process. It was a
16 very, very difficult case. It was
17 a difficult set of circumstances
18 and you and your team and the
19 entire Law Department team were
20 just stellar. And so, I also want
21 to say thank you for your work and
22 for everything that you did on
23 behalf of my office to help us face
24 that moment.

25 I also wanted to ask about

1 an issue that you know is
2 exceedingly important to me and a
3 part of your team that we in this
4 Council body have supported
5 relative to our budget process,
6 and that would be the Nuisance
7 Business Task Force.

8 We added additional
9 dollars. I know Councilmember
10 Gauthier worked on this issue as
11 well to ensure that we could have
12 more attorneys in the Nuisance
13 Business Task Force, so I wanted to
14 ask you specifically about that
15 work in the Law Department.

16 And finally, I offer kudos
17 to the entire Lej Team and everyone
18 that we've worked with that has
19 helped us to craft some of our
20 legislation. I see Lou Rosman back
21 there and I have to mention
22 Reynelle. I don't see her, but
23 everyone on the Lej Team I really
24 appreciate all of you and the work
25 that you all have done. And if I

1 did miss someone, charge it to my
2 head and not my heart, but I am
3 appreciative.

4 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,
5 Councilmember, for the comments.
6 Act 111 litigation is another
7 example of the team coming together
8 and Lewis Rosman, Joe Altman, Cara
9 Leheny, Craig Gottlieb all worked
10 very hard to win on appeal.

11 We've very thankful to
12 Council for giving us funding last
13 year for our Code Unit. We were
14 able to hire four new attorneys and
15 three new staff members. The Code
16 Unit filed 2500 cases last year for
17 code violations. 600 of those were
18 filed in the Court of Common Pleas.
19 And part of those are building
20 safety, and a lot are public
21 nuisance. And we are working
22 exceedingly hard. And I'm proud to
23 say that we have been enforcing the
24 short-dumping ordinance.

25 I know that that has been a

1 tremendous collaboration between
2 our City stakeholders and we are
3 working on gambling, Councilmember,
4 and we continue to work in the
5 tobacco space and the drug
6 paraphernalia space. We are
7 also --

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

9 RICHARDSON: I apologize for the
10 interruption, but you hit the nail
11 on the head. It's drug
12 paraphernalia.

13 MS. GARCIA: I know.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

15 RICHARDSON: We are inundated with
16 these stores in our communities,
17 and so many people are reaching out
18 to our office saying we've reported
19 these stores, you all have done
20 inspections and nothing has come of
21 this. And I know some of this is
22 on the L&I side. And when we get
23 there, we will get there with L&I
24 during the budget process regarding
25 these drug paraphernalia stores.

1 But we really need
2 enforcement for these drug
3 paraphernalia stores. We need them
4 to be taken to court when
5 appropriate after we filed all the
6 process that we need to do on the
7 City end. But we are being
8 inundated in our communities by
9 these stores.

10 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. I
11 completely agree and I look forward
12 to seeing when L&I has split how we
13 can really beef up that public
14 nuisance side. As you know, the
15 Law Department is intricately
16 involved in all of that, and we
17 will be there for the clients to
18 help build that out.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

20 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Thank you. And I also want to add
23 to that menu of nuisance
24 businesses. We have AutoZones in
25 different Districts where they

1 actually rent tools for people to
2 illegally fix cars in front of
3 their establishments which totally
4 brings down the quality of life of
5 the neighborhoods to the point
6 where I know in the southwest part
7 of my District, a day care center
8 and the whole plaza is pretty much
9 being held hostage.

10 And I know we've been
11 working with the Law Department to
12 look at some ramifications for this
13 particular business and also
14 working in partnership with the
15 12th Police District as a
16 quality-of-life issue. And so,
17 we'll follow up regarding that
18 particular issue with you and your
19 team because it's definitely a
20 nuisance business that's not a
21 stop-and-go, but it's a business
22 that's bringing down the quality of
23 life just based upon how they go
24 about doing their service.

25 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,

1 Council President.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 At this time I'd like to
4 acknowledge Councilwoman Quetcy
5 Lozada.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thank
7 you, Council President.

8 Just kind of staying along
9 the lines of the nuisance
10 businesses, I know that we worked
11 together and I appreciate the work
12 that you all did to help me craft
13 the Business Curfew bill.
14 Originally we were trying to do
15 that across the District. The goal
16 is not to stop business from being
17 conducted in the District in the
18 City, right. We promoting that the
19 City's open for business.

20 And so, I know that bills
21 like the Curfew bill can raise some
22 questions. I have had multiple
23 commercial corridors now reach out
24 to say, hey, why can't you extend
25 that bill, why can't we have a

1 business curfew in our commercial
2 corridor. And I know that you
3 responded to me and to the office,
4 but I'd like to put it on the
5 record.

6 So if you could just share
7 with us why is that challenging and
8 why did the Law Department
9 recommend that we just did it in
10 the targeted area as opposed to
11 District-wide?

12 MS. GARCIA: Thank you for
13 that question. I personally was
14 not involved in the initial review
15 of that bill, but what we try to do
16 overall constantly is a risk
17 assessment. So I've said to many
18 of you as we met, I'm trying to get
19 you the best bill possible that can
20 be passed with legal muster that
21 always is meeting your goal, but is
22 surgical enough not to bring
23 immediate litigation.

24 So when we're discussing
25 underprivileged, I'm constantly

1 thinking about implementation risk,
2 legal risk, reputational risk. I
3 don't want to convey privileged
4 information in public here, but I'd
5 be happy to follow up and see if
6 that can be expanded.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Okay.

8 MS. GARCIA: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: And
10 then my follow-up question is I
11 know that you represent the
12 Administration, you represent us in
13 Council. How do you intend to
14 balance or how would you navigate
15 when our ideologies are different?

16 MS. GARCIA: I hear a lot
17 of mmms around the room.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
19 That was my next question.

20 MS. GARCIA: Do we have a
21 second or a third in the room? The
22 way the Charter is constructed, the
23 Solicitor's office provides the
24 legal opinion of the City, whether
25 a bill is legal or not legal,

1 whether there's a preemption issue,
2 a constitutional issue, whatever
3 the issue may be. So when you ask
4 me whether something is legal and
5 the Mayor asks me whether something
6 is legal or a court asks if
7 something is legal, my advice is
8 the same. It's legal or it's not
9 legal, right. It's not a policy
10 question, right. So that everybody
11 in the City who worked for the
12 City, who does business with the
13 City and the court knows it is the
14 solicitor's opinion that will be
15 represented in court should
16 something go to litigation.

17 And the way I manage the
18 relationships is under privilege,
19 right. You will talk to me or my
20 people obviously, and that will be
21 a confidential conversation. I
22 will not let the Mayor's Office, I
23 will not let your colleagues know
24 who I am meeting with or that we
25 are meeting, and the same on the

1 Mayor's side, right. That
2 confidentiality is very, very
3 important. But I also believe that
4 it is the right structure to have
5 one legal voice in this City, and
6 you all have -- not all of you.
7 Many of you have lawyers in your
8 offices, which is really, really
9 helpful. Some of you are lawyers,
10 right.

11 But when you have a bill
12 that's crafted, when you want the
13 City's opinion, how is the
14 Solicitor going to give advice to
15 anybody who asks for it, then you
16 come to me so that we have one
17 legal voice in this City. There
18 may be times -- it's very, very
19 rare when the law is so unclear
20 that there is a conflict, but it
21 happens very, very rarely.

22 So again, when you're
23 coming to me, I want to give you
24 the advice that you need to make
25 the best bill so I'm going to think

1 about legal risk, I'm going to
2 think about implementation risk,
3 fiscal risk, operational risk so we
4 can have the best product.

5 And I think many of you
6 worked with Lewis Rosman's group at
7 those early stages. I have many
8 lawyers that you can talk with at
9 those early stages so we can get to
10 the best bill. But like I said, at
11 the end of the day I'm giving you
12 an opinion, I'm giving the Mayor an
13 opinion and it's the same opinion
14 on whether it's legal or not legal.

15 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Thank
16 you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Yeah. I just want to follow up.
19 See, this is why it's great work
20 with a great team of Councilmembers
21 because you don't have to ask all
22 the questions because we're all on
23 the same page and that happens a
24 couple of times a day.

25 But, yes, it's always been

1 our concern to be quite frank, and
2 this is nothing that we didn't have
3 a conversation about during the
4 interview process, just making sure
5 that there's equal representation,
6 right, irregardless of the policy
7 position of the Administration,
8 because sometimes it's going to be
9 adverse. We're not going to be on
10 the same page. And there lies the
11 conflict, right, whenever we get to
12 that point.

13 Based upon policy, I think
14 probably the last similar type of
15 issue was safe injection sites.
16 The Administration had a very
17 specific way how they wanted to
18 address it. Some members of
19 Council had a totally opposite way
20 of how they wanted to address it.

21 And then it was kind of
22 like we just weren't on the same
23 page in terms of how it was being
24 addressed. And just to be frank,
25 on our end it was like, well,

1 where's our legal representation
2 regarding this particular issue.
3 At least that's what was expressed
4 to me based upon how my members
5 felt at that particular time,
6 making sure that we're being
7 represented even though we don't
8 agree with the Administration, and
9 people wanted different types of
10 information, provided it to them.

11 And at that time, folks
12 didn't feel like they were actually
13 being equally represented. And
14 this is not the first that we've
15 dealt with this type of issue. In
16 the past we even explored the
17 possibility of having our own
18 solicitor and legal representation
19 on the Council side.

20 And so, I just want to
21 reiterate and you talked about
22 being sensitive to that type of
23 approach, but it is a real concern
24 that we've had in the past that
25 we're real sensitive to as we move

1 forward, knowing that we would like
2 equal representation on the Council
3 side similar to what's taking place
4 on the executive side with the
5 Administration.

6 MS. GARCIA: I understand
7 that the safe injection site in
8 particular, which is one of those
9 unique circumstances, was an
10 instance where Council was provided
11 with conflict counsel. But I do
12 understand the sensitivity. If it
13 does come up or if you don't feel
14 like you're getting the attention
15 you need, please talk to me. I am
16 accountable for my department. So
17 if you need resources, if you need
18 other folks, please let's have a
19 conversation about it.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Okay. Thank you.

22 Councilman Curtis Jones.

23 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank
24 you, Mr. President.

25 I want to join the chorus

1 of people giving you and your team
2 accolades because whether it was
3 ghost guns, whether it was lost and
4 stolen guns. Whether it was
5 flavored tobacco, whether it was
6 now gambling, you have represented
7 our legislative interests to the
8 best of your ability.

9 And something that Jamie
10 Gauthier said that I echo, you're
11 not afraid to legislate and go up
12 against folk that don't necessarily
13 have Philadelphia's best interest
14 at heart. When they go up there,
15 they represent Philly's interest
16 and that isn't always echoed by the
17 rest of the Commonwealth.

18 So thank you for being
19 fierce, formidable and
20 knowledgeable about where you
21 should advise us when we should
22 step up and continue or whether we
23 should be patient, which I rarely
24 am, about a matter. So with that
25 in mind, how are we doing on the

1 whole gambling machine. If you're
2 not allowed to talk about it
3 outside of court, just give me the
4 hi sign and I'll move on.

5 MS. GARCIA: Your
6 colleagues are shaking their head
7 over there.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Oh,
9 okay. So we won't go there. But
10 where are we on lost and stolen?

11 MS. GARCIA: Yes. Thank
12 you for asking and thank you,
13 Councilmember. You said to me a
14 few times, sometimes we're going to
15 lose but we got to play the long
16 game, right. And lost and stolen
17 is one of those cases that was
18 started many years ago by these
19 brilliant lawyers who planned out
20 the long game. This is a very
21 purposeful suit. That is sitting
22 in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.
23 We do not think it will be heard
24 until our Crawford matter is heard,
25 and that's our preemption case.

1 And I'm going to make it
2 very simple. But that is the case
3 where you we say this preemption is
4 unconstitutional. We cannot
5 protect our people, right, not in
6 the way it's written, not in the
7 way it's interpreted. So we are
8 hoping for a favorable decision on
9 that. That was argued in
10 September. And then lost and
11 stolen is right behind that. So
12 that is sitting there waiting, and
13 again a really good example of
14 playing the long game and how the
15 Law Department is part of public
16 safety, everybody thinks about the
17 DA and the Defenders. But there's
18 so much that the Law Department can
19 do, from this legislation, from
20 code, from child welfare, from
21 privacy angle, right. And thank
22 you for being bold in legislating
23 because that really lets us push
24 all of us forward on the civil
25 side.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: So let
2 my colleagues know it's when you
3 start getting personal judgment
4 that you're going to appreciate
5 this department because people
6 pierce the government veil and sue
7 you personally for your
8 interventions, your decisions. And
9 it's right around then that you're
10 happy you got a lawyer like the
11 lawyers in the City Solicitor's
12 Office. So thank you for that.

13 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,
14 Councilmember.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES:
16 Mr. President.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Thank you very much.

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilmember Rue Landau.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank
22 you. Thank you so much. Solicitor
23 Garcia, super happy to have you
24 here. I'm going to add my voice to
25 the chorus of people who love our

1 Law Department, I think I spoke to
2 your group in 2017 or so and came
3 with a list of over 25 attorneys I
4 had already worked with in your
5 department and it has expanded
6 since then. So I am well aware of
7 the great things that you do.

8 Along with all of the cases
9 that my colleagues have already
10 talked about, I want to thank you
11 so much and your whole team for
12 consistently going to bat for the
13 LGBTQ community since we've had to
14 fight life partnership in Devlin
15 until our most recent issues as
16 well.

17 Certainly, everybody has
18 been as tactical and creative in
19 making good law and then are trying
20 to preserve good law as possible.
21 And because of that, we've been at
22 the forefront of protecting civil
23 rights and adding protections here
24 in Philadelphia, so thank you for
25 that.

1 I wanted to ask about -- I
2 love that you're breaking down
3 silos internally. And I wanted to
4 ask about communication within the
5 Law Department and then outside of
6 the Law Department in the
7 departments -- this is a
8 forward-looking question about
9 review of lawsuits in the City of
10 Philadelphia, making sure that
11 we're actually watching. If we
12 keep getting sued from a certain
13 department or because of a certain
14 defect in our sidewalks or streets
15 or something, that we're paying
16 attention to that so we can fix it,
17 come up with some remedial measures
18 and stop it. I fear that there
19 hasn't been the communication that
20 we needed other than case, case,
21 case to try to put an end to some
22 of this.

23 MS. GARCIA: Yes. Thank
24 you for that question. That leads
25 into the after-action plan that I

1 talked about and being in the
2 corporate sector, coming in and
3 thinking about a compliance
4 function for our Law Department.
5 It is never about a case. It is
6 never about a deal. It is always
7 about the bigger picture.

8 I see myself as a risk
9 mitigator, right. Yes, I'm a
10 lawyer. But overall I mitigate
11 risk for the City, right, and I
12 protect our indemnities when I do
13 that and I protect all of you when
14 I do that. So when we see
15 patterns, our lawyers job is and
16 they know it's their job to elevate
17 that.

18 So perhaps it's a
19 particular community where we're
20 seeing tons of sidewalks and
21 potholes and tree limbs creating
22 issues, yes, that has escalated up
23 to the Streets Department or
24 whichever department it is. There
25 is always that feedback loop.

1 Now, what I'm trying to do
2 with my department right now is
3 look at safer, cleaner, greener
4 economic opportunity, education and
5 try to figure out what are we
6 working on for City Council, for
7 the Mayor's Office, for all of our
8 clients, and that may lead to task
9 groups or working groups within the
10 Law Department. But there are also
11 plenty of working groups with the
12 Administration as well.

13 But just to reiterate, our
14 lawyers know that it is their job
15 to escalate. If you're just
16 sitting there toiling away and not
17 looking at the big picture, then
18 you're not doing your job. You're
19 not being in service of the City of
20 Philadelphia.

21 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank
22 you. And the last question is I am
23 very happy about the New Consumer
24 Protection law. Thank you. The
25 City needs it, and it's going to be

1 an incredible tool. What resources
2 does the Law Department need in
3 order to make it successful?

4 MS. GARCIA: Yeah. And
5 I'll talk about this a little bit
6 if I have the time in my budget
7 address. But when you have bills
8 like this and the bills around the
9 Office of Worker Protection, there
10 really is an investigative element
11 that I want to build up. So to
12 have investigators and an attorney,
13 paralegal staff is really what
14 we're looking for.

15 We will be utilizing the
16 Community Legal Services and other
17 partners to get referrals about the
18 issues, the systemic issues. MV
19 Realty is a perfect example, right,
20 these predatory folks that are in
21 and around the space of housing.
22 But it would be really helpful if
23 we had both the attorney and staff
24 but also investigators so that they
25 can go out and get the data and the

1 details on something that's
2 happening over and over and over
3 again. Thank you for that
4 question.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Thank
6 you so much.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Thank you very much.

9 And the Chair recognizes
10 Councilmember Nina Ahmad.

11 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Thank
12 you, President.

13 I'm new even though I've
14 been a Deputy Mayor before. I just
15 want to follow up on what Council
16 President was making a point of,
17 the conflict when representing the
18 executive branch and the
19 legislative branch. How do you
20 resolve that? I don't know what
21 exactly happened with that. How
22 you do you address that?

23 MS. GARCIA: Safe injection
24 sites was a very unique issue in
25 that really Council was on the

1 right side of the law, but the
2 Mayor and the Administration wanted
3 to submit an amicus brief to
4 federal action that was challenging
5 that law, so that was really like
6 there were two sides of the law.
7 It's very unusual.

8 Usually the law is what the
9 law is, right, and that's
10 interpreted by the Solicitor's
11 Office. You might not like the
12 law. I didn't write the law. You
13 all write the law, but I'm not
14 getting into policy disputes. It
15 really is this is what the law
16 says, this is what the case law
17 says, here is how the City would
18 interpret that, and it's really you
19 and the Mayor talking about policy
20 and how we can -- if there's
21 daylight there within the
22 parameters of the law on any
23 specific subject.

24 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: So
25 would you be then advising

1 executive branch based on that
2 purview to not do something?

3 MS. GARCIA: If you pass a
4 bill and you say, Renee, is this
5 legal? And I say, yes. The
6 Administration says, Renee, is this
7 legal? I'm going to say yes. I
8 don't turn around and then say no,
9 right.

10 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: My
11 second question is your
12 relationship with the DA's Office
13 around immigration. You know, we
14 have a lot of undocumented folks
15 here and how they get charged if
16 they are involved in something is
17 very critical to their immigration
18 status.

19 I don't know what your rule
20 is there or do you have any at all
21 or what is your oversight over our
22 communities who live in immigrant
23 communities in Philadelphia?

24 MS. GARCIA: I have not
25 worked with the DA specifically on

1 immigrant issues, but there is a
2 working group around immigrant
3 issues. So we've been very focused
4 on the Welcoming Center and getting
5 together contracts when we have
6 large influxes of migrants from
7 Texas, and we're also involved on
8 the litigation side, so we will
9 sign amicus briefs in support of
10 the Administration's policy and
11 primarily these are taking place in
12 Texas. But I have not been
13 involved on the criminal side.

14 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD: Thank
15 you. Thank you, President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Thank you very much.

18 I had a couple of
19 shout-outs I wanted to say in the
20 spirit of my colleague Councilman
21 Curtis Jones. It's a Lydia Furst
22 that's a part of your Law
23 Department. I introduced a bill
24 before it was a popular thing to do
25 to ban ghost gun parts in the City

1 of Philadelphia, and she
2 successfully tried that case on
3 behalf of the City of Philadelphia
4 and legislation I introduced, and
5 Josh Shapiro in the spirit of the
6 legislation began to move forward
7 on the state level, so I do want to
8 thank you and your team for that
9 work from a public safety
10 standpoint.

11 And I also just from a
12 point of information just wanted to
13 give you another example of where
14 the Administration may be one place
15 and we may be another place and how
16 it turns out with the Solicitor's
17 Office legally. There was a time
18 when Michael Nutter was the Mayor
19 and he wanted to shut down
20 libraries, and that was his policy,
21 right.

22 And it was a young lady
23 who's a part of the Administration
24 now named Sophie Bryant who
25 actually litigated and took the

1 case and made sure that Council's
2 wishes of not shutting down
3 libraries for the sake of our
4 budget process, our well wishes
5 were actually moved on and the
6 judge ruled in Council's favor.

7 And so, that's like another
8 example of where policy-wise we may
9 not be on the same page with the
10 Administration and then we look
11 into our lawyer which is the City
12 Solicitor to help us navigate and
13 make sure our voices are heard.
14 And so, hopefully as we move
15 forward -- naturally those types of
16 things will happen, but we also
17 work in the spirit of one City, one
18 Philadelphia, so hopefully that
19 won't happen.

20 But we are an independent
21 body at the end of the day and
22 sometimes those things happen. But
23 for the most part we'll be rowing I
24 would think in the same direction
25 in terms of moving the City of

1 Philadelphia forward to a safer,
2 cleaner, greener city with economic
3 opportunity for all.

4 I just want to thank you
5 for taking time out of your
6 schedule, Ms. Garcia. I look very
7 forward to working with you.

8 I just want to take a
9 moment to acknowledge the last
10 member of City Council who has
11 comments which is Councilmember
12 Anthony Phillips.

13 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: It's
14 been quite the eventful day. And
15 thank you so much, Renee Garcia,
16 for staying with us.

17 Just a quick question, one
18 question only: So Philadelphia has
19 struggled for decades for tax
20 delinquency. Since the suspension
21 of tax sales, property tax
22 delinquency has been on the rise,
23 increasing 2 percent to 8 percent
24 every year since 2019 or around \$5
25 million to \$10 million a year.

1 Today 60 percent is owned
2 by investors -- is owed by
3 investors or landlords according to
4 the City's 2023 Tax Delinquency
5 Report. We are in the midst of a
6 housing crisis and numerous
7 properties throughout all Council
8 Districts. It contains blighted
9 and vacant properties.

10 How does your office plan
11 to deal with all of the current
12 vacant properties throughout the
13 City? Furthermore, once these
14 delinquent properties are
15 identified, what is your commitment
16 to getting those properties into
17 court and properly sold to decrease
18 the blight in vacant properties
19 throughout the City?

20 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,
21 Councilmember. I completely agree
22 with you that something needs to be
23 done about these blighted
24 properties. The Law Department has
25 about 3,000 properties that are

1 ready to go to tax sale. Tax sales
2 are not being scheduled, and I
3 believe you will be hearing from
4 the Mayor either in her budget
5 address or some time in the future
6 about her plan.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Thank
8 you, Council President. Thank you,
9 Ms. Garcia.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 Thank you very much.

12 Are there any other
13 questions or comments from members
14 of the Committee?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Are there any other witnesses to
18 testify on Resolution No. 240038?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 I want to also give a shout-out to
22 Lewis Rosman over there I see.

23 This concludes the --
24 before I say this concludes, thank
25 you very much, Ms. Garcia, for your

1 testimony. Thank you for stepping
2 up as a public servant to fulfill
3 this role to help move the City of
4 Philadelphia forward, so thank you
5 very much.

6 MS. GARCIA: Thank you,
7 Council President. And thank you,
8 Councilmembers.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
10 This concludes the hearing for
11 Resolutions 240075, 240078, 240079,
12 240029 and 240038. And we will now
13 go into the public meeting.

14 There being no further
15 questions for members of the
16 Committee and no other witnesses on
17 the list to testify, I will ask if
18 there is anyone else present in the
19 hearing who wishes to offer
20 testimony on Resolutions 240075,
21 240078, 240079, 240029 and 240038?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Hearing none, I want to thank all
25 the witnesses for their

1 participation today. We definitely
2 value your opinion.

3 Mr. Christmas, as we go
4 into our public meeting, can you
5 please call the roll to take
6 attendance.

7 THE CLERK: Councilman
8 Squilla.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Here.

10 THE CLERK: Council Lady
11 Gauthier.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
13 Present.

14 THE CLERK: Councilman
15 Jones.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Here.

17 THE CLERK: Councilman
18 Young.

19 (No response.)

20 THE CLERK: Councilman
21 Driscoll.

22 COUNCILMAN DRISCOLL: Here.

23 THE CLERK: Council Lady
24 Lozada.

25 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: Here.

1 THE CLERK: Council Lady
2 Bass.
3 (No response.)
4 THE CLERK: Councilman
5 Phillips.
6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Here.
7 THE CLERK: Councilman
8 O'Neill.
9 (No response.)
10 THE CLERK: Council Lady
11 Gilmore Richardson.
12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE
13 RICHARDSON: Present.
14 THE CLERK: Councilman
15 Thomas.
16 (No response.)
17 THE CLERK: Councilman
18 Harrity.
19 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Here.
20 THE CLERK: Council Lady
21 Ahmad.
22 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
23 Present.
24 THE CLERK: Council Lady
25 Landau.

1 COUNCILWOMAN LANDAU: Here.

2 THE CLERK: Council Lady

3 Brooks.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROOKS:

5 Present.

6 THE CLERK: Councilman

7 O'Rourke.

8 (No response.)

9 THE CLERK: Council

10 President Johnson.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

12 Present. Thank you, Mr. Christmas.

13 The Chair recognizes

14 Councilwoman Kathy Gilmore

15 Richardson on a motion on

16 Resolutions 240075, 240078, 240079,

17 240029 and 240038.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

19 RICHARDSON: Thank you,

20 Mr. Chairman.

21 I move that Resolutions

22 240075, 240078, 240079, 240029 and

23 240038 be reported from this

24 Committee with a favorable

25 recommendation and that the rules

1 of Council be suspended as to
2 permit consideration of these
3 resolutions at our next session of
4 Council.

5 (Duly seconded.)

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE

7 RICHARDSON: The Chair notes for
8 the record that Councilman Squilla
9 seconds the motion.

10 It has been moved and
11 properly seconded that Resolutions
12 240075, 240078, 240079, 240029 and
13 240038 be reported from this
14 Committee with a favorable
15 recommendation and that the rules
16 of Council be suspended to permit
17 consideration of these resolutions
18 at our next session of Council.

19 All those in favor will
20 signify by saying aye.

21 (Aye.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

23 Those opposed?

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

1 The ayes have it. And Resolutions
2 240075, 240078, 240079, 240029 and
3 240038 will be reported from this
4 Committee with a favorable
5 recommendation with the suspension
6 of the rules to permit
7 consideration of these resolutions
8 at our next session of Council.

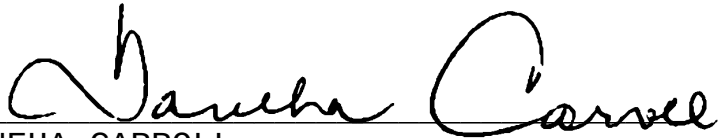
9 This concludes the business
10 before the Committee of the Whole
11 for today, and I want to personally
12 thank all of our Members for being
13 here today as well as being on
14 time. Thank you very much
15 everyone.

16 (Committee of the Whole
17 concluded at 4:44 p.m.)

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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 black ink, reading "Taneha Carroll". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Taneha" and the last name "Carroll" clearly distinguishable.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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