

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
JOINT COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC SAFETY
AND EDUCATION

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Monday, March 27, 2023
2:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR., CHAIR
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN JIM HARRITY
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA

RESOLUTIONS: 230089, 230090, 230091

1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
3 afternoon, everyone. This is the
4 Joint Committee on the Committees of
5 Public Safety and Education to review
6 Resolutions 230089, 230090 and
7 230091. And before we get started,
8 we have an important announcement
9 from Joshua Cohen.

10 THE CLERK: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman. I understand that
12 state law currently requires that the
13 following announcement be made at the
14 beginning of every remote public
15 hearing as follows: Due to the
16 current public health emergency, City
17 Council Committees are currently
18 meeting remotely. We are using
19 Microsoft Teams to make these remote
20 hearings possible.

21 Instructions for how the
22 public may view and offer public
23 testimony at public hearings of City
24 Council Committees are included in
25 the public hearing notices that are

1 published in the Daily News, Inquirer
2 and Legal Intelligencer prior to the
3 hearings and can also be found on
4 PHLCouncil.com.

5 Everyone who has been invited
6 to this meeting to testify should be
7 aware that the public hearing is
8 being recorded. Because the hearing
9 is being recorded, participants and
10 viewers have no reasonable
11 expectation of privacy. By
12 continuing to be in this meeting, you
13 are consenting to being recorded.

14 Additionally, prior to
15 Councilmember Jones recognizing
16 Members for questions or comments
17 they have for witnesses, I will note
18 for the record at this time that we
19 will use the chat feature available
20 in Microsoft Teams to allow
21 Members -- to allow -- that we will
22 use the chat feature available in
23 Microsoft Teams to allow Members to
24 signify that they wish to be
25 recognized. In order to comply with

1 the Sunshine Act, that chat feature
2 must be used for this purpose. Thank
3 you.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
5 Mr. Cohen. Can you please give an
6 opportunity to read the roll so we
7 can establish the roll. And will
8 Members say a few words so that your
9 image can be captured on video.

10 Thank you.

11 THE CLERK: First, the
12 Committee on Public Safety.
13 Councilmember Thomas.

14 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
15 afternoon, colleagues. Good
16 afternoon to the audience. I'm
17 present.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good
19 afternoon.

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember
21 Gauthier.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good
23 afternoon, Mr. Chair and colleagues.
24 Present.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good to

1 see you.

2 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Good

3 to see you.

4 THE CLERK: Councilmember

5 Brooks.

6 (No response.)

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember

8 Harrity.

9 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: I am

10 here, my friend. I am here.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember

13 Lozada.

14 (No response.)

15 THE CLERK: Vice-Chairman

16 Johnson.

17 (No response.)

18 THE CLERK: Chairman Jones.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: I am

20 present and a quorum has been

21 established --

22 THE CLERK: We need to also

23 have the Committee on Education.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Please

25 read the roll.

1 THE CLERK: So, Councilmember
2 Squilla.

3 (No response.)

4 THE CLERK: Councilmember
5 Gauthier.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:
7 Present.

8 THE CLERK: Councilmember
9 Phillips.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS: Good
11 morning, colleagues. Good morning.

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember
13 Lozada.

14 (No response.)

15 THE CLERK: Vice-Chair
16 Brooks.

17 (No response.)

18 THE CLERK: And, Chairman
19 Thomas.

20 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Again,
21 good afternoon. I'm present.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: A quorum
23 has been established and we are now
24 calling this hearing to order.

25 Mr. Cohen, will you please

1 read the title of the bill --
2 resolutions.

3 THE CLERK: Yes. 230089, a
4 resolution authorizing the Joint City
5 Council Committees on Public Safety
6 and Education to hold public hearings
7 to examine the status of capital
8 programs for infrastructure repair
9 and toxic hazard remediation in
10 Philadelphia public schools.

11 I would also like to note for
12 the record at this time that
13 Resolution Nos. 230090 and 230091 are
14 both being held and will not be
15 addressed by the Members today.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
17 Mr. Cohen.

18 Before we get started with
19 the first panel to testify, I'd like
20 to give an opportunity for my
21 Co-Chair of Education Isaiah Thomas
22 to say some words.

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
24 afternoon and thank you for your
25 leadership, Mr. Chair.

1 I just want to say thank you
2 to everybody as far as my colleagues
3 as well as the representation of the
4 School District for being here today.
5 This is an important conversation.
6 We've talked about it a number of
7 times as it relates to not just where
8 we are currently but the direction of
9 the City of Philadelphia.

10 So I'm happy to be here. I'm
11 looking forward to the discussion and
12 I'm hoping we can take some positive
13 steps as it relates to providing
14 every child in the City of
15 Philadelphia a quality education.

16 So thank you, colleagues.
17 And thank you, Mr. Chair.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 And to set this up, we have
21 been waiting with great anticipation
22 to get started with how we begin to
23 change the direction of public
24 education for our students. I had
25 the opportunity of sitting right next

1 to Superintendent Dr. Watlington when
2 the Governor gave his remarks about
3 the budget. And every time when we
4 heard about resources coming for
5 public education, we couldn't contain
6 ourselves and began to support the
7 Governor's vision. We think it's in
8 the right direction. Many people
9 think it could be a little more and
10 that it's a floor and not a ceiling.
11 And we hope that that is true.

12 We have separated some
13 resolutions coming up into the budget
14 to deal with public education. And
15 the first one, which we're going to
16 hear and have testimony on today,
17 deals with the capital side and the
18 money dedicated to change our
19 schools' physical plan, the
20 environment that they find themselves
21 in and the challenges not only for
22 students but teachers and staffers as
23 well. And so, to that end we're
24 looking and excited about your vision
25 on it and to share our vision with

1 you.

2 Are there any other members
3 of the Committee who would like to
4 say a few words?

5 (No response.)

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing
7 none, Mr. Cohen, will you read the
8 title of the resolution one more time
9 and to invite the first panel to
10 testify.

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Mr. Cohen?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are you
15 there, Mr. Cohen?

16 THE CLERK: I am sorry. I
17 was on mute. The resolution is to,
18 all right, examine the status of
19 capital programs for infrastructure
20 repair and toxic hazard remediation
21 in Philadelphia's public schools.

22 The first witness panel is
23 Dr. Tony Watlington, Superintendent
24 of schools and Mr. Oz Hill, Acting
25 Chief Operating Officer.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
2 both and we look forward to your
3 testimony. I don't know if this is
4 your first -- no, this is not your
5 first time to testify, Doctor. So
6 state your name for the record and
7 please begin your testimony.

8 DR. WATLINGTON: Thank you.
9 Tony Watlington, Superintendent of
10 the School District of Philadelphia.
11 Thank you, Chair Jones, and thank
12 you, Chair Thomas, for the
13 opportunity to be here. Do you want
14 me to continue with my testimony,
15 sir?

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you
17 please.

18 DR. WATLINGTON: Absolutely.
19 I'm joined by Interim Chief
20 Operations Officer Oz Hill. Colonel
21 Hill stepped into this role when
22 Governor Shapiro appointed former
23 Chief Operations Officer Reggie
24 McNeil as one of his Cabinet
25 secretaries. He's doing a fine job

1 so far. He's committed to
2 transparency and attention to detail.
3 He's a military man and he brings
4 that skill set to this role and he's
5 in it presently.

6 Also, with us this afternoon,
7 Mr. Chair, is our Chief of Staff
8 Sarah Galbally and our Chief of
9 Communications and Customer Service
10 Alexandra Coppadge, and we have our
11 Director of Government Relations
12 who's driving the PowerPoint, so
13 we'll ask Ms. Laurel if she'll pull
14 that deck up and we'll jump right in.

15 As she pulls the
16 presentation, Mr. Chairman, I also
17 want to note for the record that we
18 have submitted a formal document that
19 outlines where we are with the
20 facilities maintenance and our
21 process that we have outlined to move
22 this work forward relative to capital
23 improvements and the long road that
24 we hope won't be too long to make
25 significant infrastructure

1 improvements because we understand
2 clearly that our students can't
3 continue to wait, and we've heard
4 that loud and clear. So I'm pleased
5 to provide this facilities planning
6 overview to Council's Education
7 Committee on Public Safety.

8 Next slide please. I want to
9 begin by just kind of giving you an
10 overview of what we will share with
11 you, Chair Thomas and members of
12 Council. We want to start by giving
13 you the historical context of this
14 issue. We've been very deliberate to
15 try to be very clear, cogent and
16 concise and provide the appropriate
17 attention to detail so that you have
18 a clear understanding of where we've
19 been, where we are currently and
20 where we need to go and equally
21 important, how we propose to get
22 there, at least the initial steps on
23 how we propose to get there.

24 After the historical context,
25 we will provide the state of our

1 current infrastructure. I'm going to
2 share with you an overview of the
3 Parsons Report, where an external
4 consultant was hired by the School
5 District in 2017. We're going to
6 give you the summary findings from
7 that report and how it influences
8 where we are right now.

9 We'll detail the cost to
10 improve District facilities. We'll
11 speak to the deferred maintenance
12 cost and District facility
13 investments that have been made to
14 date. Then we will provide an
15 overview of what the future
16 facilities' needs are.

17 We'll also share what's
18 happening here in the School
19 District. We'll continue over the
20 next five years. We'll update
21 Council on our asbestos management as
22 well as assessments and recordkeeping
23 and other environmental issues that
24 are relevant that Council should be
25 updated on.

1 And then we're going to
2 conclude with some next steps --
3 before we take questions or comments,
4 we'll conclude with some next steps
5 about what will happen over the next
6 30 days, specifically to moving us
7 down the road to making facility
8 improvements in the School District
9 of Philadelphia.

10 Next slide. We want to begin
11 by providing background and
12 historical context to the problem.
13 In order to address our significant
14 infrastructure and facilities
15 problems, we want to make sure that
16 we are very clear about how we see
17 them.

18 As you know, members of
19 Council or may not know, the School
20 District is composed of more than 300
21 buildings. The average of our
22 buildings are 73 years old. Some are
23 as old as 120 years old. And more
24 than 200 were built prior to 1978.
25 Most of the buildings were

1 constructed using lead-based paint
2 and many contained asbestos. And you
3 may well recall that asbestos was
4 commonly included as building
5 material before we fully understood
6 the widespread implications of
7 asbestos years ago.

8 Next slide. So in the next
9 slide we're going to talk a bit about
10 the state of our infrastructure, so
11 I'll go specifically to the 2017
12 Parsons Facility Conditions
13 Assessment report. An external
14 consultant surveyed, did an
15 assessment of 308 buildings total in
16 the School District and we summarized
17 the findings from that study here.

18 The consultant gave every
19 building a facility condition index
20 score. The number ended up being
21 32.14 percent. Colonel Hill will
22 talk a little bit later about what
23 that specifically means. And for
24 now, we'll just note that these are
25 facilities that the consultant

1 recommended should be actively
2 replacing systems within those
3 buildings.

4 The deferred building
5 maintenance cost was tagged at \$4.5
6 billion. The study also -- one of
7 the conclusions of the study is that
8 we had and continue to have 85
9 buildings in the District that
10 required not minimal, not modest, but
11 major renovation given their age and
12 condition. And the report noted that
13 21 of the facilities should be
14 recommended -- or should be
15 considered, not recommended, should
16 be considered for closing or
17 replacement.

18 Next slide. So how much does
19 it actually cost in the School
20 District based on the study that was
21 done in 2017 with subsequent updates
22 that were provided in some areas in
23 order to ensure that we have safe,
24 healthy and welcoming learning
25 environments across the District.

1 The reason I'm using the term
2 safe, healthy and welcoming
3 environments is because our Board of
4 Education has a guardrail -- you're
5 familiar with the Board's goals and
6 guardrails -- there's a guardrail
7 related to this area. So the cost in
8 2017 to move our facilities forward
9 such that they are safe, healthy and
10 welcoming learning environments
11 across the District was tagged at
12 \$7.789 billion. I do want to note
13 that this was a 2017 number.
14 Fast-forward six years and we know
15 that number is likely higher now
16 given inflation and other cost
17 increases. But I do want to give you
18 that hard number that was
19 specifically referenced in the
20 report.

21 Next slide. Now, let's look
22 at how that \$7.789 billion broke
23 down. The Parsons group recommended
24 these costs by building systems. So
25 we take that \$7.789 billion: \$4.5

1 billion is related to deferred
2 maintenance costs. That's no
3 different than your house and my
4 house and your car and my car. If
5 you don't keep the maintenance up,
6 you got to do more work to it down
7 the road, \$4.5 billion.

8 There's \$2.4 billion related
9 to failing systems, systems that are
10 beyond their service life in the
11 building. And then finally \$430
12 million to address environmental
13 hazards, risks and other safety
14 deficiencies. This document we
15 submitted, so you should have copies
16 of this for the record.

17 I also want to note that we
18 have a formal narrative report that
19 accompanies this. This PowerPoint
20 presentation just gives you the
21 high-level overview, but I encourage
22 every member of Council to read the
23 detailed Facilities Plan document
24 that we submitted for the record.

25 Next slide please. I want to

1 walk you through what has happened in
2 the School District of Philadelphia
3 over the past 10 years relative to
4 facility improvements. Past 10
5 years, let's take just a moment to
6 walk through that. Over the past 10
7 years, and I appreciate you giving me
8 time to really dig in and study this
9 data since my arrival here as your
10 new Superintendent.

11 The District invested \$1.72
12 billion in the following: 4 new
13 schools, facilities were built. 10
14 new school additions were completed.
15 There were 46 new classroom
16 modernization projects that were
17 completed. I can tell you that I've
18 been all over the District. I've
19 been in about 75 or so visits and
20 I've seen some of these modernized
21 classrooms, and it's been quite
22 interesting that in some of the
23 modernized classrooms there are
24 state-of-the-art classrooms that
25 exist in nonstate-of-the-art

1 buildings. So if we can get to the
2 point where we can get the whole
3 school to look like a state-of-the-
4 art facility and to function as such,
5 that would certainly be the gold
6 standard.

7 The District completed lead
8 paint assessments in 194 facilities
9 and certified 169 lead-safe schools.
10 Consistent with one of the Board of
11 Education's guardrails, the District
12 added 1700 state-of-the-art hydration
13 stations in every school. I think
14 we're shy of completing that process
15 about 300 or so hydration stations.
16 But they are available, and some are
17 available in every school.

18 The District installed
19 humidity sensors to monitor and
20 prevent mold accumulation in 31
21 stores that were targeted for that
22 service. And there's been other
23 deferred maintenance system upgrades
24 and energy efficiency or other
25 structural improvements in site-

1 improvement initiatives, and we're
2 happy to detail those by school for
3 Council.

4 Next slide. I want to take
5 just a moment to speak to future
6 facility needs in the School
7 District. The next slide. Our
8 current capital improvement plan in
9 the District over the next five years
10 allocates \$2.489 billion for the
11 period January '23 through June '28
12 as follows: \$602 million allocated
13 for new construction. As you know,
14 Cassidy, AMY 5, we've got three
15 schools in the planning phase.

16 \$440 million was allocated
17 for major renovations across the
18 District. A small piece compared to
19 the overall number I showed with you
20 earlier, but at least the District
21 will be making some progress towards
22 that number. 358 million for HVAC
23 improvements. \$265 million for
24 exterior renovations.

25 \$246 million for energy

1 performance improvements. \$211
2 million for electrical work. \$154
3 million for new additions. \$114
4 million slated for site improvements.
5 \$68 million for controls. And \$41
6 million-plus allocated for minor
7 renovations.

8 That takes us to the next
9 slide. What are the outstanding
10 annual costs to operate and maintain
11 the facilities. I'm going to pause
12 here and I'm going to ask Colonel
13 Hill if he will walk you through this
14 piece and the other pieces of
15 information we want to share at a
16 high level. And then I'll come back
17 at the very end and speak to what
18 does this really mean and where do we
19 go from here, and we'll engage right
20 after he finishes his part of the
21 presentation.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
23 Doctor.

24 State your name for the
25 record please and begin your

1 testimony.

2 MR. HILL: Yes, sir. Oz
3 Hill, Chief Operating Officer, School
4 District of Philadelphia. The slide
5 that you see in front of you now
6 highlights the annual costs on an
7 ongoing basis to maintain our
8 facilities. From the Facilities
9 Department, it's \$17.3 million just
10 to maintain on an annual basis. The
11 Environmental Department requires 7.4
12 million, and the Maintenance
13 Department requires 7.2 million. And
14 that's a figure or those figures are
15 ongoing every single fiscal year.

16 Next slide please. Next
17 slide. It's good to be with you
18 today. As you've heard from the
19 Superintendent within the confines of
20 our funding, we've made regular
21 investments to improve our
22 facilities. But the need remains
23 significant, especially as it relates
24 to environmental conditions.

25 We rely almost entirely on

1 the City and state for funding. And
2 to that end, we're most grateful for
3 the support from the Mayor, the
4 City's Education Committee, each of
5 the City Councilmembers, Governor
6 Shapiro and his Administration,
7 external stakeholders and the
8 philanthropy of the private sector.

9 Next slide please. I'd like
10 to begin by looking deeper at our
11 asbestos management. This is
12 critically important what I'm about
13 to share right now. There's no
14 simple fix to get rid of all
15 asbestos. In fact, the U.S.
16 Environmental Protection Agency, the
17 EPA, says it's often better to manage
18 it in place and maintain it in good
19 condition instead of removing it.

20 There are 295 buildings in
21 the District's asbestos management
22 program that require three-year
23 inspections and six-month
24 surveillance under the Asbestos
25 Hazard Emergency Response Act or

1 AHERA, the federal law that governs
2 all U.S. schools in how they manage
3 asbestos. In the past, due to
4 understaffing and resource
5 constraints, the District has
6 struggled to keep pace with the
7 inspections and the massive volume of
8 issues that we confront, to that end,
9 in the past due to these records
10 being challenging but most critically
11 important because they form the basis
12 of our subsequent inspections.

13 Next slide please. The
14 District is contracting with the
15 DeLuca Advisory Services to provide
16 oversight and spearhead process
17 improvements within the AHERA program
18 and across other environmental
19 programs. That includes underground
20 and above-ground tanks, chemical
21 management and lead programs. This
22 contract is \$9 million for three
23 years. They have helped the District
24 bring on and manage Tetra Tech as
25 consultants to manage our AHERA

1 inspections related to recordkeeping
2 and data.

3 This is a \$24 million
4 contract over three years with Tetra
5 Tech, and it will likely be amended
6 due to additional sampling and data
7 support as it continues. This is
8 also the first inspection cycle using
9 a technology platform called
10 Donesafe, which is a five-year
11 \$175,000 contract. This platform has
12 assisted with the beginning process
13 of modernizing the School District's
14 data, but it's requiring significant
15 internal support and customization.

16 Next slide. Understanding
17 the inspection process, we'd like to
18 focus on the fact that three-year
19 inspections take at a minimum several
20 days at each building. One large
21 school can have more than 3,000
22 materials that require assessment and
23 documentation. Access to these areas
24 is often difficult to reach such as
25 in boiler rooms and above ceiling

1 tiles.

2 Tetra Tech inspectors check
3 each of these asbestos-containing
4 materials for changes in condition or
5 damage. Each is documented. Any
6 areas of concern are assessed and a
7 recommended scope is created for each
8 damaged area. Not all areas require
9 immediate repairs depending on the
10 location and the type of damage.

11 The abatement work is
12 sometimes addressed by the District's
13 inhouse licensed Asbestos Response
14 Team, affectionately known as the
15 A-Team. Other times it is done by an
16 outside licensed contractor.
17 Additionally, the City is notified of
18 any necessary asbestos abatement work
19 and the City is able to inspect the
20 abatement process. Before any
21 three-year reinspection report is
22 generated by Tetra Tech, it must
23 undergo a management planner review.
24 This process alone can take over a
25 month due to limitations in staffing

1 and software.

2 A three-year inspection
3 report includes information regarding
4 the asbestos materials in each room
5 of a building, their condition as
6 well as information regarding
7 materials that were recently sampled.

8 The District is working on hiring
9 additional management planners and
10 other staff positions to assist with
11 the management of the large data sets
12 and generated in the AHERA program.

13 Slide please. Like people,
14 buildings change with age and require
15 repair and upkeep. Our buildings
16 face deterioration from age,
17 construction, weather events and
18 other factors. This is why we must
19 examine the condition of asbestos
20 regularly so we can detect any
21 changes or damages that need to be
22 addressed. With Tetra Tech, our
23 inspections are happening on a more
24 regular cadence.

25 It was during these

1 three-year inspections that damaged
2 asbestos was observed and determined
3 to require immediate attention in
4 Building 21 and Simon Gratz Mastery
5 Charter. Our inspection system is
6 improving. In fact, when the
7 District was able to identify that
8 its previous recordkeeping and
9 processes left gaps, that is a sign
10 of the fact that the process is
11 improved, attributable to the
12 addition of Tetra Tech and the DeLuca
13 Advisory Services.

14 To date, we have conducted
15 230 three-year inspections and 6 in
16 progress and 59 remaining at some of
17 our oldest and largest facilities.
18 In the coming weeks and months, we
19 expect more damage and asbestos to be
20 identified. This is not an
21 indication of a program failure.
22 That means the system is working to
23 protect the health and safety through
24 the identification and management of
25 environmental concerns.

1 We conduct repeat inspections
2 and surveillance because conditions
3 continue to change. This allows us
4 to identify and manage the damage.
5 When the current three-year cycle is
6 completed, we'll begin again. We
7 also are proposing to hire an
8 executive director and other key
9 staff for the Office of Environmental
10 Management Services to augment and to
11 support the new processes.

12 Slide. We're also making
13 progress in addressing our lead in
14 our buildings. Lead exposure can
15 come through paint or water and we
16 are addressing both. We have
17 completed lead paint assessments in
18 194 facilities and certified 169
19 lead-safe schools with a particular
20 focus on the facilities that serve
21 our youngest students, who are at the
22 greatest risk of lead poisoning
23 caused by ingesting paint chips or
24 breathing lead dust.

25 We have also installed as the

1 Superintendent shared with you more
2 than 1700 hydration stations in
3 schools across the City to provide
4 chilled filtered drinking water.
5 Each installation in and of itself is
6 a significant project, as the
7 stations require electric, plumbing
8 and sometimes environmental work as
9 the units are attached to walls and
10 floors.

11 While we have been awarded a
12 significant grant from the EPA for
13 this work, we still need to address
14 the asbestos and lead paint around
15 these stations. That is the
16 challenge of funding and sourcing
17 union and supplemental labor for
18 plumbing and other trades work. We
19 have partnered with Terraphase, which
20 has expertise addressing lead in
21 water at schools for the hydration
22 station work under the grant. I'll
23 turn it back over to the
24 Superintendent.

25 DR. WATLINGTON: Thank you,

1 Colonel.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES:

3 Dr. Watlington, can I implore you to
4 take a pause and see if any of our
5 Members have questions at this
6 junction because this is a lot to
7 unpack, a lot to digest and our
8 retention at this point might need to
9 kind of get some questions out.

10 And I want to note for the
11 record Member Phillips and Member
12 Squilla are in attendance.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And also
14 Councilman Johnson, Mr. Chair.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
16 Johnson, glad to have you on board.

17 Are there any --

18 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: And
19 Councilmember Lozada, Chairman.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
21 Lozada, thank you for being a part
22 of.

23 Are there any questions from
24 Members because this is a lot to
25 digest and I wanted to give us a

1 pause? There was a lot of good
2 information given, but we might want
3 to kind of unpack some of it now.

4 What is the pleasure of the group?

5 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes,
6 sir, Mr. Chairman.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
8 Johnson.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Well,
10 first of all I want to thank -- it's
11 Mr. Oz; is that correct?

12 MR. HILL: Yes, sir, at your
13 service.

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
15 you for your presentation as well as
16 Dr. Tony Watlington as well for being
17 here today and obviously, this is a
18 critical issue that we're addressing
19 here in the City of Philadelphia. A
20 few things that stuck out. One, you
21 said that the discovery of the
22 asbestos and the lead in the various
23 buildings show that your process is
24 actually working; is that correct?

25 MR. HILL: Yes, sir.

1 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

2 Can you just give me an idea because
3 obviously this is a matter for me and
4 I think for all of my colleagues I'm
5 speaking for as well, it's a matter
6 of urgency, right, around this
7 particular process of getting these
8 children in schools that are
9 asbestos- and lead-free and trying to
10 remediate this process as soon as
11 possible.

12 So I want to go from the
13 30,000-foot view. Give me the
14 ballpark number budget-wise,
15 manpower-wise that it would take for
16 us to address this issue on a
17 school-by-school basis, right, just
18 to give us and the public an idea of
19 what we're dealing with.

20 And then also,
21 Dr. Watlington, we know that we do
22 have a budget process that's coming
23 up soon. And just for the record,
24 where you already have a plan, a
25 preliminary plan for the public as to

1 what's going to be the School
2 District's plan in terms of
3 addressing this issue across the
4 board, and then also what are the
5 obstacles that impede us from doing
6 this in a very expedient manner?

7 MR. HILL: Sir, thank you
8 very much for your question. I would
9 rely on the quantitative data that
10 has been provided to the District by
11 Parsons in the 2017 report
12 highlighting that this report was
13 done in 2017 and does not reflect the
14 inflation that has transpired since
15 that time.

16 In the 2017 report by
17 Parsons, it identifies that another
18 430 million is required to address
19 health hazards, risks and life-safety
20 deficiencies in our schools. Every
21 year the delta of that funding needs
22 to grow by \$200 million based on
23 inflation. And again, challenges
24 exist with the certified labor force
25 as well as our internal staffing to

1 actually be able to perform this
2 work.

3 And so, one of the
4 priorities, and I don't want to get
5 out in front of my boss or else I
6 will be looking for a job, one of the
7 priorities that the boss has
8 established for us is with the new
9 budget, to look at funding to support
10 contract services to offset our
11 staffing shortfalls.

12 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And,
13 Dr. Watlington.

14 DR. WATLINGTON: Yes.
15 Councilmember, relative to your
16 question about a plan going forward,
17 A, I'm in the process of making
18 budget priorities, budget
19 recommendations to the Board of
20 Education with safety being number
21 one in the budget proposals that I
22 will bring forth in this budget
23 cycle. And I look at safety in three
24 big buckets, one, there's a --
25 because safety is our number one

1 priority in the School District,
2 we've got to be safe in order to make
3 sure that kids can learn to
4 accomplish the goals and guardrails.

5 So the first big bucket of
6 safety that there will be priorities
7 in the budget relate to student
8 physical safety, safe paths, safety
9 zones, et cetera and some things we
10 want to do in schools this year. The
11 second big bucket of safety relates
12 to social and emotional,
13 psychological safety. Won't spend a
14 lot of time on that today because
15 that's not the purpose of this
16 hearing.

17 The third big bucket is
18 environmental safety, and that is the
19 purpose of this hearing. So,
20 Councilmember Johnson, I can tell you
21 that we will be moving -- pending
22 funding availability if we don't get
23 more funding, we're going to
24 re-allocate funding in the District,
25 but we will bring in an additional

1 executive director to have better
2 oversight of the work we're doing.
3 We're going to hold ourselves
4 completely accountable to doing good
5 work, detailed work and to the extent
6 that we have the resources to do it.

7 And we're also going to be
8 bringing some additional contracted
9 services so that we can be
10 expeditious in detecting problems,
11 fixing them, mitigating them and
12 moving forward. Now, we won't be
13 able to fix everything. We know
14 that. Over the longer term though,
15 we do really need to have a really
16 detailed 10-, 20-year plan about how
17 we get off doing two things:

18 First, improving the
19 facilities across the board so no
20 matter where you live in
21 Philadelphia, what zip code you live
22 in, you have an opportunity to go to
23 a safe, healthy 21st century school.
24 And two, we're going to have to make
25 some hard decisions over time about

1 how we utilize the space in our
2 buildings.

3 So the other thing that I
4 will be bringing forward, and it's
5 outlined in the written document that
6 you have, and I'll speak to it in
7 just a few minutes, hence, the
8 project team that we are putting
9 together as we speak that will
10 involve not just the School District
11 of Philadelphia staff but some
12 external people in our community that
13 will be at the table with us. And
14 we're pulling a group together within
15 the next three to four weeks. We
16 will have that team complete. And
17 I'll look forward to sharing more
18 about that once we get a little bit
19 further into the presentation. I'll
20 come right back to that.

21 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.
22 Thank you. And one last part, I'm
23 going to wrap up on this, Mr. Chair,
24 if this is okay.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's

1 fine.

2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Will
3 part of your strategy have a moonshot
4 project? Meaning, have we considered
5 actually demolishing certain
6 buildings and rebuilding from the
7 ground up high-quality schools for
8 our youth, because obviously you're
9 just here, so a lot of this isn't on
10 your shoulders -- it is on your
11 shoulders because you signed up for
12 the job, so welcome to Philadelphia.
13 That's just how this process works.

14 However, if we be upfront
15 about this process, a lot of us on
16 this call have been leaders 10, 15,
17 20 years in some aspects doing this
18 work. This didn't just happen on
19 your watch. This is something that's
20 been going on for a period of time.
21 And obviously, if the report is from
22 2017, then there you go, right.

23 But as we move forward from a
24 partnership standpoint, right, that
25 is a concern that I've heard from

1 stakeholders or interest from
2 stakeholders on how do we tear down
3 buildings, build them up brand new
4 for the long haul so we're not here
5 at the same place 10 or 20 years with
6 older, even older buildings, and
7 obviously we can't tear down all the
8 buildings here in the City of
9 Philadelphia. But nevertheless, is
10 that part of your strategy?

11 I have had conversation with
12 the Appropriations Chairman Jordan
13 Harris around this very same issue
14 with funding our facilities project.
15 I was told that he's been in contact
16 with you and your team regarding how
17 do y'all partner with the state to
18 bring down -- what is it, Councilman
19 Jones, what \$12 billion they have --

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: More like
21 13 billion.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: 13
23 billion in the surplus to actually be
24 supportive of these efforts. So
25 that's my last comment. I want to

1 get some feedback from you on
2 moonshot projects that include
3 tearing down buildings and rebuilding
4 them and your strategy on bringing
5 down those that -- or even federal
6 dollars as well.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
8 Member Johnson.
9 Doctor.

10 DR. WATLINGTON: Yes, I'll
11 say two things. First, I'll just
12 call our attention to do this across
13 the City what you just referenced,
14 Councilmember Johnson, cost us to the
15 tune of \$7.7 billion in 2017 dollars,
16 so that number is likely higher.

17 Second, to answer your point,
18 your question very directly, yes, it
19 will be on the table and it is
20 something we'll be talking about.
21 The buildings that should be
22 demolished and simply replaced, that
23 is absolutely something that will be
24 on the table. Here's the key: Tony
25 Watlington and five people won't just

1 sit down in a conference room with
2 the door closed at 440 and make those
3 decisions. We're going to outline a
4 process going forward by which we
5 will engage our elected officials,
6 community and other stakeholders and
7 we'll make sure we'll have
8 representatives at the table as we
9 sit down and make those hard
10 decisions or propose those very hard
11 decisions.

12 And I want to be really
13 clear, there will be some hard
14 decisions that have to be made here
15 in the School District, but we won't
16 be sitting here 6, 7, 10 years from
17 now having the same conversation. I
18 can assure you of that.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank
20 you very much.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
23 Doctor.

24 One thing before I recognize
25 Member Gauthier. When you talk about

1 21 schools that you're recommending
2 to close, those are hard, tough
3 decisions and I don't want to know
4 about them now. But probably during
5 the budget we might request a map of
6 where those buildings are located
7 because that is -- I remember when we
8 closed similarly like 20 buildings
9 before, the City was asundered with
10 questions about where, why, how come.
11 And so, that is a difficult
12 conversation we have to be prepared
13 to ask.

14 Member Gauthier.

15 DR. WATLINGTON:

16 Mr. Chairman, may I just please just
17 for the record.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: Sure,
19 Doctor.

20 DR. WATLINGTON: The 21
21 schools was a Parsons recommendation.
22 And, two, I'm not saying that's a
23 Superintendent recommendation. That
24 was a finding from the Parsons
25 report. Secondly, we're talking

1 about replacement schools, not
2 closure. And I want to be really
3 clear that we'll continue to work
4 under the leadership of the Board of
5 Education. So I don't want to get
6 ahead of that process. I just want
7 to be as transparent as possible
8 about where we are, what it cost and
9 those kinds of things.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
11 for that distinction.

12 Member Gauthier.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
14 you, Mr. Chair.

15 Good afternoon,
16 Dr. Watlington. Thank you so much
17 for being here today and for taking
18 the time to really dig into this
19 assessment. If I understood the
20 information that you all presented
21 correctly, the price tag, the total
22 price tag for improvements to our
23 facilities is around \$8 billion and
24 we have a plan over the next five
25 years to get us through \$2 billion of

1 those improvements.

2 And so, that puts us 11 years
3 out from when the Facilities Plan,
4 when this assessment was done and a
5 quarter of the way through, if I'm
6 understanding it correctly, the
7 improvements that need to happen.

8 And I know that this is a
9 longstanding problem and it's not
10 just your problem.

11 But my questions about that
12 are what does it mean for us five
13 years from now to only be a quarter
14 of the way through what we need to
15 do? And do you have thoughts on what
16 we need to be doing as a city to
17 reach that larger figure and to get
18 more of the work done quicker?

19 Five years out, us having 25
20 percent of the work done, what does
21 that mean in terms of what gets done
22 and what still needs to be done and
23 how should we be approaching this as
24 a city and as a state?

25 DR. WATLINGTON: Well, I

1 think one way to look at that, if I'm
2 going to go out and buy a car, my
3 budget will in part determine what
4 kind of car I can buy.

5 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Yes.

6 DR. WATLINGTON: If I have
7 enough money, I'll buy the Cadillac.
8 If I don't have enough to get the
9 Cadillac, I'll get a Lincoln. If I
10 can't get that, I may just get a good
11 Chevy or that -- that just pops in my
12 mind initially.

13 I think that when we pull a
14 team together over the next 30 days,
15 that will be one of the key questions
16 that's right there in front of us. I
17 promise you I can't fully answer that
18 question other than to say that we're
19 going to make the case to ask for the
20 Cadillac, the most resources in a
21 historically underfunded district
22 with the understanding that we may
23 not get all of it, but we are not
24 going to be gun-shy about asking for
25 what we need.

1 Again, the number is \$7.789
2 billion in 2017 numbers, which will
3 be higher. We don't want to guess
4 what that number will be adjusted for
5 inflation, but we do know that it
6 will be north of \$7.789 billion. And
7 we're going to make the case to our
8 legislators both at the state and the
9 City level, that we intend to be
10 really good stewards. We want to
11 keep telling the story about what is
12 happening in the District.

13 I think that when folks see
14 that there is some work occurring in
15 the District and people are not just
16 sitting on their hands, it might make
17 people a little bit more comfortable
18 perhaps thinking about more resources
19 relative to the need. That's my long
20 way of answering your question, and I
21 hope I've done a decent job at it.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: No,
23 you have. And I wanted to put that
24 on the table because it was very
25 striking to me, that comparison

1 between what we were planning for in
2 the next five years and what we
3 really need, right. And beyond the
4 fact that our children deserve the
5 Cadillac, the reason why people don't
6 keep buying broke-down Chevys is
7 because you got to buy a lot of them,
8 right. You have to keep replacing
9 them and that's not a wise
10 investment.

11 And so, please let Council
12 know how we can be a part of a more
13 ambitious ask so that we get what we
14 truly need instead of just a pittance
15 that's not really going to move the
16 needle in terms of what the
17 facilities in our City really need.

18 And then my second question
19 to you is how does this plan or this
20 assessment rather consider the
21 District's facilities that are more
22 nontraditional learning facilities
23 like your pools, right, like the
24 Sayre pool? Does this assessment
25 include those facilities, some of

1 which are closed off to young people
2 during a time when young people
3 sorely need safe places to be? And
4 at what priority do those facilities
5 fall within the scope of your
6 planning?

7 DR. WATLINGTON: I can tell
8 you that we're in discussion with the
9 City relative to a Memorandum of
10 Understanding to bring the Sayre pool
11 back online. That's an action item
12 that will be taken to our Board of
13 Education in May.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: (Gestured
15 thumbs up).

16 DR. WATLINGTON: In terms of
17 the bigger footprint of pools in the
18 City, Colonel Hill, can you say a
19 word about whether any of that's
20 reflected in that number of \$7.789
21 billion?

22 MR. HILL: Yes, sir. The
23 pools were not included in the
24 Parsons Assessment that was completed
25 in 2017. However, last August,

1 August of '22, we conducted an
2 assessment of all of the pools.
3 Fortunately, at that time we looked
4 at what it would take to repair the
5 pools and maintain them. We did not
6 look at the environmental costs
7 associated with it.

8 Thanks to DeLuca, the DeLuca
9 Advisory, what they have done is
10 included the pools in their
11 assessment strategy for environmental
12 conditions. So that was a
13 long-winded way of saying the 2017
14 did not provide the pool for the
15 pools in its quantified data. Going
16 forward, we have identified that
17 there is an environmental component
18 to the restoration and repair of our
19 pools, and we are looking at them in
20 our environmental data as we're going
21 forward.

22 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
23 And I thank you, Dr. Watlington and
24 your team, for your partnership
25 around Sayre and this Council,

1 especially Majority Leader Jones for
2 your support as well. And I'm
3 hopeful that as we're thinking big
4 about what our kids need, that we do
5 not take a narrow view of where
6 learning happens and that we also
7 include the comprehensive ways that
8 kids need to be healthy and safe and
9 that those pools make their way into
10 what it is that we're fighting for.
11 Thank you so much.

12 DR. WATLINGTON: And,
13 Mr. Chairman, if I may just say very
14 quickly, you'll recall in our Board
15 of Education's Goals and Guardrails,
16 Guardrail 2 calls for well-rounded
17 education with co-curricular
18 opportunities. And so, although
19 pools are not reflected in that
20 \$7.789 billion, that number from
21 2017, please know that we hear you
22 loud and clear the interest among
23 some in the City.

24 You know, we know according
25 to the Center for Disease Control,

1 cities being Atlanta, African
2 Americans die six times greater death
3 rates due to drownings. I don't talk
4 about it a lot. My own brother was
5 one of those people. So I think
6 that's really an important priority.
7 The fact that it's not reflected in
8 the \$7.789 billion does not mean that
9 we're not trying to move heaven and
10 earth to find ways to be supportive
11 to the extent we can.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
13 you, Dr. Watlington. And thank you
14 for sharing such a personal testimony
15 of why this is important to you. I
16 really appreciate it.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
18 Gauthier, I want to applaud you on
19 your advocacy for Sayre pool. And I
20 learned so much in it as to the
21 benefits other than just
22 recreational. We have a school in my
23 District, Rhodes, which is one of the
24 deep-diving pools that for a couple
25 hundred thousand dollars needs to be

1 brought back online.

2 The benefit, the
3 nontraditional career path with that
4 is that there's an association that's
5 teaching young people how to become
6 divers, a whole industry
7 nontraditionally that we just don't
8 always find ourselves associated
9 with. So I want to thank you for
10 fighting for one pool, which is
11 replicating in other areas of the
12 City. So thank you for that.

13 DR. WATLINGTON: And,
14 Mr. Chairman, if I can just also say
15 it's really important that Council
16 and the public know that there are a
17 lot of things that are happening to
18 try to provide those well-rounded
19 co-curricular opportunities. For
20 example, we're pursuing an MOU with
21 the City also to move the Shepard
22 Recreation Center temporarily to
23 Daroff, which I believe is in your
24 District --

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes, it

1 is.

2 DR. WATLINGTON: -- as a
3 space for our young people. And so,
4 we want to do a better job of telling
5 our story so that people won't think
6 that everybody in the District is
7 just asleep at the wheel. We are
8 working hard, but we also want to
9 make the case -- and when we're wrong
10 and we miss something, we're going to
11 be transparent and say that. But we
12 also want to make the case that we're
13 trying our best to be good stewards
14 of the resources as well.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
16 for that. A couple of quick
17 questions, if I could. So if we were
18 to separate the routine maintenance
19 out and we are pending waiting for
20 your concurrence in probably
21 addition, subtraction on the 21
22 schools that are recommended by the
23 report to be considered to be closed,
24 we're talking about a \$7 billion
25 price tag. A couple of questions

1 with that. When you do routine
2 testing that happens during the
3 course of the year, correct?

4 MR. HILL: That is correct,
5 sir.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Do you
7 have seasonal times where you try to
8 do remediation of what you find? And
9 would it be better during the summer
10 when the schools are closed
11 cost-effectively and obviously not
12 interrupting classroom activities; is
13 that something you plan for?

14 MR. HILL: Absolutely, sir.
15 Our remediation efforts are ongoing
16 throughout the year. And we have our
17 A-Team as I mentioned previously that
18 primarily does its work along with
19 our contractors during the hours that
20 students are not in school. So
21 generally speaking or routinely, our
22 A-Team and contractors are working
23 until 11 o'clock or midnight while
24 students are not in school.

25 Additionally, during each of

1 our seasonal breaks, spring as well
2 as the holiday break, we see that as
3 an intensive work period for our
4 environmental team as well as our
5 capital programs team, to also
6 include the fact that even on
7 District holidays our contractors in
8 capital programs continue to work and
9 are held accountable for their
10 project schedules.

11 In the summer, we have a
12 summer workplan where we peak all of
13 our resources. During that time
14 frame, we also block out periods for
15 employee vacations or employee leaves
16 because we are in an intensive work
17 period. That work period is
18 reconciled with the scheduling for
19 our extended summer programming to
20 ensure that our students have access
21 to the facilities that are required
22 to support them through the summer
23 period and that we get the work done
24 in the facilities that have been
25 prioritized for work during that

1 period.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
3 so much.

4 Are there any other questions
5 or should we let them continue with
6 their presentation?

7 COUNCILMAN HARRITY:
8 Councilman, Chairman, I had a
9 question.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
11 Harrity.

12 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: Sorry.
13 It won't take long. It's a short
14 question.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Take as
16 long as you need.

17 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: The \$7
18 billion, that's what we need to
19 complete everything, correct?

20 DR. WATLINGTON: According to
21 2017.

22 COUNCILMAN HARRITY: '17,
23 right, except for inflation. So you
24 figure maybe 8.5, right, in case of
25 inflation or something like that. Do

1 you have a plan in place if we can
2 get the Governor and the Senate and
3 the House to agree and say if we're
4 going to give you this money over the
5 next so many years, is there a plan
6 in place that we can get started asap
7 if they were to do that?

8 DR. WATLINGTON: On the next
9 slide, I want to talk about what we
10 will do over the next 30 days so that
11 if legislators and the Commonwealth
12 of Pennsylvania give us the money, we
13 can be shovel-ready to move in the
14 near term to do just that.

15 Chair Jones, with your
16 permission if I can show the next
17 couple of slides, I think that might
18 speak to Councilmember Harrity's
19 question.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Please
21 proceed.

22 DR. WATLINGTON: All right.
23 If we can pull the slide deck back up
24 please and go to Slide No. -- next
25 slide. All right. So we'll talk

1 about next steps. We have begun the
2 process of launching a facilities
3 project team. Why do we want a
4 project team? To get at what
5 Councilmember Harrity just said, we
6 don't want five or six or seven
7 people at 440 to go in a room, close
8 the door and come out and say, hey,
9 this is it. We know it's really
10 important that we work with our City,
11 our community, our legislators.

12 So we have begun the process
13 of staffing up a facilities project
14 team. And within the next 30 days,
15 the membership of that team will be
16 complete. It will be representative
17 of various stakeholders in the City
18 and it will have a clear charge. The
19 project team will include internal
20 and external stakeholders and we will
21 identify the investments needed to
22 significantly improve academic
23 achievement relative to the
24 forthcoming plan, to really drive
25 hard on two of the goals, the

1 guardrails that the Board of
2 Education quite appropriately has
3 already set for us.

4 Guardrail 1, every school
5 will be a safe, welcoming and healthy
6 place where our students, staff and
7 community want to be and learn each
8 day. This means that our schools
9 will be environmentally safe and
10 clean and spaces with inclusive
11 climates that provide students with
12 access to robust, social, emotional
13 and mental health supports.

14 And Guardrail 2, every
15 student will have a well-rounded
16 education with co-curricular
17 opportunities, including arts and
18 athletics integrated into the school
19 experience. So we intend to staff up
20 this project team over the next 30
21 days, we will have the membership
22 finalized before April 30th. If we
23 can get it done sooner, we will.

24 And then we'll pull that team
25 together and we will begin to dig

1 deeper into what we just shared with
2 you today. We'll do a deeper dive
3 into the numbers. We'll look at the
4 subrecommendations, including the
5 facility index scores for every
6 school in the District, and we'll
7 have a process working with that team
8 of people inclusive of City
9 individuals, other people to include,
10 likely some of our University
11 partners, people who have expertise
12 in other areas that are relevant to
13 this work.

14 We want to make sure that we
15 have adequate community
16 recommendation as a part of this
17 project team and we want people
18 internal to the District who are
19 working on their academic strategy so
20 that we can improve 3rd grade reading
21 performance, improve math
22 performance, get our kids ready to go
23 into the building trades, get our
24 kids ready to go into two- and
25 four-year colleges and universities

1 and to the world of work, the
2 military and the like.

3 We're going to put all that
4 team together within the next 30
5 days, and then we're going to move
6 right down the road to the next set
7 of decisions that we'll need to make.
8 But before we get to the what, we
9 need to dig into more of the details
10 in the report, A. B, we need to
11 price out what the \$7.789 billion
12 price tag would be in 2023 dollars so
13 we know exactly what to advocate for.
14 And then C, we'll have to make
15 decisions about whether we'll get the
16 Cadillac, Lincoln or the Chevy. But
17 our aspiration is going to be to
18 always go after the Cadillac. We're
19 going to make the case. Our kids
20 deserve it. And that will be the
21 last slide, Mr. Chairman. And we're
22 happy to take any other questions you
23 may have.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
25 Harrity, did that answer your

1 question?

2 (No response.)

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: I would
6 imagine it does.

7 Are there any other questions
8 from Members for this panel?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing
11 none, thank you for your testimony.
12 Hopefully, you will stick around as
13 we go through the other panels. We
14 should be able to do that quickly and
15 there might be some follow-up
16 questions.

17 One last question: On this
18 ambitious amount of work to be done,
19 where is there an opportunity for CTE
20 schools like Randolph to participate
21 in some of the actual assistant work
22 that can be done? In light of, what
23 is that, Rule 185 I think it is,
24 where they have to spend some of this
25 time in practicum and mentorships,

1 will this be an opportunity to set up
2 a program with a carpenter class,
3 with a plumbing class, with a
4 sheetrocking and painting class to
5 actually be in the work that is being
6 generated by the schools?

7 DR. WATLINGTON: I think that
8 makes a lot of sense, Councilmember
9 Jones. We'll write that down as a
10 homework assignment and think about
11 how it can be a learning opportunity
12 for students and adults, quite
13 frankly. We'll take that as a
14 homework assignment and get back to
15 you.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES:
17 School-to-paycheck pipeline. Thank
18 you so very much.

19 DR. WATLINGTON: Yes, sir.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: I like
21 your analogies. And I always want to
22 have my cards facedown, so people can
23 see what I'm using. I butchered
24 that, but that's from you.

25 All right. Mr. Cohen, can

1 you --

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Quick
3 question, Mr. Chair. Quick question.
4 I'm sorry.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: No, don't
6 be. You're all right.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: First of
8 all, I want to say thank you for all
9 the information and for the dialogue
10 today. It's very much appreciated.
11 Clearly, we still have a lot of work
12 to do so this is a good step in the
13 right direction.

14 Just real quick, and I know
15 that this is something that I spoke
16 to some folks on the District side
17 about. But, Mr. Superintendent, just
18 if you can, brief thoughts on the
19 idea of creating a school building
20 authority. We talked briefly about
21 looking at what we do with the Energy
22 Authority and other authorities as it
23 relates to partnering with the City
24 to have a specific focus.

25 I know that you are very much

1 focused on academic achievement. You
2 talked about that since probably
3 before you even stepped foot in
4 Philadelphia, and you've been
5 consistent on that message. So I'm
6 wondering what are your thoughts on
7 creating a School Building Authority
8 that would work in collaboration with
9 the District and the City and the
10 state with the focus on executing a
11 plan around facilities, which I think
12 can put you and your team in a
13 position where you can maybe spend a
14 little more time on academic
15 achievement.

16 Just want to hear your
17 thoughts on that because that's
18 something that my team and I have
19 been exploring and talking to other
20 Councilmembers as well as other
21 stakeholders about.

22 DR. WATLINGTON: Thank you,
23 Chair Thomas. Yes, I found it to be
24 very enlightening to learn about
25 conversations that already have been

1 occurring among my bosses on the
2 Board of Education relative to the
3 merits of a school building authority
4 or some kind of entity like that
5 similar to what we've seen in places
6 like New York City and Washington,
7 D.C.

8 I think this project team
9 provides a great vehicle and
10 opportunity to put all of those items
11 on the table in terms of how we can
12 do the work quicker and more
13 efficiently and engage the community
14 better. So I think that's a really
15 good point that you brought up, and
16 look forward to having this project
17 team explore that under the
18 leadership of our Board of Education.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
20 you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to get
21 that information on the record.
22 Thank you, Superintendent.

23 DR. WATLINGTON: Yes, sir.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Member
25 Thomas?

1 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm good
2 to go. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
3 you, Mr. Superintendent.

4 Can you hear me? I'm sorry.
5 I just said that. I don't know if
6 you can hear me.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: No, I'm
8 good now.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank
10 you, sir.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: With that,
12 are there any other members of the
13 Committee that would like to ask
14 questions?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing
17 none, can you, Mr. Cohen, let us know
18 who the next panel of witnesses to
19 testify are?

20 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman,
21 there are no further witnesses. But
22 I did see that President Streater had
23 his hand up I assume for comment.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: President
25 Streater, you are being recognized.

1 Please state your name for the
2 record.

3 MR. STREATER: I'm Reginald
4 Streater, President of the Board of
5 Education. Just also wanted to
6 piggyback off what Dr. Watlington
7 said about some type of an authority.
8 Yeah, I think having some type of an
9 authority would be helpful to help
10 the District focus on educating
11 children and other things.

12 It seems like right now it
13 feels like we're like a city within a
14 city that has to do all the things
15 that a city has to do and educate
16 children as it relates to urban
17 planning and things like that. I
18 think an authority would be most
19 effective in helping us once we
20 figure out what to do with our
21 buildings, to actually effectuate it.

22 I know right now we're
23 working with PIDC to help with the
24 building of three schools right now
25 so that the District doesn't have to

1 oversee the actual building of a
2 school. An authority I think would
3 be very helpful for that, to scale
4 that up where if you are trying to
5 rebuild 50, 60, 70, 200 buildings,
6 that there's an authority for that.

7 So I know that Councilmember
8 Thomas is in the early stages and I'm
9 pretty sure a lot of the kinks have
10 to be worked out, but I think some
11 type of help to the District in
12 figuring out how to not only create
13 the plan but execute the plan in a
14 way that doesn't take
15 Dr. Watlington's I guess energy from
16 educating children would be helpful.
17 So looking forward to where this
18 conversation goes, and I'm looking
19 forward to being helpful in any way
20 that I can as Board Chair.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
22 so much for your comments. It's got
23 to be daunting to try to figure out
24 where those watermarks are for when a
25 school should be looked at for major

1 repairs, when it should be considered
2 for replacement. Those are big
3 decisions that have intended and
4 unintended consequences.

5 But I will tell you this: We
6 welcome out in the 4th District the
7 Cassidy School. You know, when one
8 door shuts, another one opens. And
9 when we decided to replace that
10 school, people in the community and
11 all around the City are looking
12 forward with great anticipation to
13 what comes next, whether we're
14 talking about modernized work spaces,
15 maker-spaces, weather stations,
16 things like places where you do
17 coding. It is all designed with not
18 just the current job market in mind
19 but future job markets. So we're
20 excited to take old buildings and
21 replace them with new opportunities.
22 So thank you for that.

23 With that, Mr. Cohen, what is
24 the next -- so there's no new group.
25 Are we having public comment?

1 THE CLERK: Yes, there are
2 three individuals slated to testify
3 in public comment. The first
4 individual is Judith Robinson.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we will
6 have the witnesses disconnect. We'll
7 take a brief moment to connect the
8 public comment. So thank you for
9 your testimony.

10 DR. WATLINGTON: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 MR. HILL: Thank you, sir.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Are we
14 connected, Ms. Robinson? Judith
15 Robinson, how are you there?

16 MS. ROBINSON: Good
17 afternoon.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: There we
19 go. How are you, Ms. Robinson?

20 MS. ROBINSON: I'm doing
21 fine.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Would you
23 state your name for the record and
24 please submit your comment.

25 MS. ROBINSON: Oh, good

1 afternoon. My name is Judith
2 Robinson, and I'm here to testify on
3 several bills or as it relates to
4 Bill -- or Resolution, I should say,
5 230089. I think the School District
6 should really focus on our children,
7 our graduates. It's so important
8 that we make that the focus.

9 I am on the Environmental
10 Advisory Council, okay, for the
11 School District. And I was quite
12 alarmed to hear I guess these very
13 hazardous stories about the School
14 Board. And I just want to reiterate
15 what the folks from the School
16 District (inaudible) had presented to
17 us, that it's a process that's
18 working. And I don't want us to be
19 so far in an emergency mode that we
20 don't look at this as an opportunity.

21 You're talking about billions
22 of dollars, all kinds of contracts.
23 I really appreciate the fact that we
24 can sit down, have a plan and think
25 of how we can be inclusive, inclusive

1 of all involved. The children, the
2 students who use these facilities,
3 yes, we must consider them first and
4 foremost, the teachers, the support
5 staff, all of those folks. But these
6 environmental issues, as I know as
7 being an environmental educator and
8 former one, are going to be forever.

9 We keep coming up hearing
10 about viruses and a biological
11 warfare is going to be the future, so
12 let's not be so alarmed that we don't
13 look at these opportunities and think
14 about how we can include everybody.
15 We're not going to tear down all of
16 our buildings. Historic Preservation
17 will prevent that.

18 I think we need to be clear.
19 I'm going to go back to this 2017
20 report, and I think we all should
21 refresh our minds, because as we talk
22 about these dollars and how they're
23 increased in value over a period of
24 time, we also must think about
25 prevention.

1 I know this as a real estate
2 professional, certain environmental
3 hazards, they tell you not to touch,
4 not to bother them, leave them in
5 their present state. Asbestos over
6 many years was very much a great heat
7 conductor. It was used for a good
8 reason -- for good reasons. We know
9 lead is no longer used in paint since
10 1978.

11 So I just want to caution us
12 about these emergencies. My alma
13 mater is Simon Gratz. And what I saw
14 on the news was the newer part of the
15 building. A lot of our buildings in
16 North Philadelphia are relatively
17 new, so I just want to caution us as
18 we focus on these environmental
19 issues.

20 Slow up the pace of the bid.
21 I think it's going to require
22 planning. I feel very good about
23 those meetings that are held with the
24 Environmental Advisory Council. I've
25 been attending them for a couple of

1 years now. I've attended most of
2 them. I thought we were getting
3 cogent clarity on these environmental
4 issues.

5 I think we need to think
6 about environmental justice as we
7 build these issues, because you know
8 what I hear and I've noticed this
9 since I really took a real dive into
10 what was going on in the School
11 District back in 2013 when they were
12 proposing to shut down all of our
13 schools, and I saw that a lot more
14 attention is paid to capital
15 projects.

16 We can put \$1 million on a
17 roof, which I find to be
18 exorbitant --

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Ms. --

20 MS. ROBINSON: Okay. But
21 we're not so focused on that our 3rd
22 grader can read on grade level, you
23 know. All of these issues are
24 important. But as an African
25 American in the heart of North

1 Central, that's what I'm looking at
2 too. And that's what I looked at in
3 2013.

4 Just as an example, I'm just
5 going to tell you how we can get this
6 done and we all have eyes to look so
7 we need to have expertise at the
8 table. I've been watching this for
9 years. Pierce School over here at
10 23rd Street in North Philadelphia was
11 being done now -- it was demolished
12 and refurbished -- or rebuilt I
13 should say.

14 But a little bit before that
15 decision was made, over \$1 million
16 was spent, and you can check the
17 records because that's what I go by,
18 documents, \$1 million was spent
19 putting lintils in that (inaudible)
20 building that was demolished not too
21 long ago afterwards.

22 Now, if anyone knows about
23 lintils and their architectural part
24 of a building, there's no way that
25 money should have been spent. So we

1 need to know that we have expertise
2 in the room. I have been on several
3 facility manager boards or
4 committees. So you have expertise in
5 the community. We don't have to
6 reinvent the wheel.

7 Anybody with expertise like
8 myself in real estate and industrial
9 real estate and commercial real
10 estate have been watching this stuff.
11 And to help our School District, I
12 contend we have expertise here.
13 Maybe you all didn't know I'm on this
14 Environmental Advisory Council that
15 you even know that exist. I did
16 reach out to every Councilperson on
17 this Committee to let them know those
18 questions that I would have asked.
19 Thank you all for asking some of them
20 too.

21 There's a lot to deal with,
22 with the District. I swore off back
23 in 2013. It was too much for me. I
24 try to stay in my lane, but my lane
25 is always anywhere dealing with the

1 community. So I guess I have to pay
2 more attention to what's going on at
3 the School District.

4 I was there. I saw the
5 guardrails. Dr. Watlington, thank
6 you very much. I will be following
7 up. And I just thank you all for the
8 time. As budget hearings are coming
9 up, we will to be continued. And
10 thank you so much for the time. Have
11 a great day.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
13 for your testimony. And you're so
14 right, that we have to pay attention.
15 If nothing more, COVID taught us
16 about emergency panic spending. When
17 we were trying to solve some of the
18 issues related to ventilation in our
19 classrooms, we hastily ran out and
20 bought like 10,000 window fans, these
21 little fans that you would see that
22 were supposed to suck the exhaust and
23 therefore virus out of the windows,
24 and were found to be relatively
25 useless. And we spent all that money

1 in a knee-jerk fashion which was a
2 waste.

3 But what we have evolved to
4 is looking at filters and exhaust
5 systems and looking at doubling-down
6 on the filter on HVAC to be more
7 effective. So when we take our time,
8 when we study, when we take our
9 knowledge and then apply it through
10 good purchasing of equipment, that
11 benefit goes on way beyond a virus.
12 It creates a better environment for
13 our kids. So your comments are duly
14 noted. Thank you so much for them.

15 Mr. Cohen, who do we have
16 next?

17 THE CLERK: The next
18 individual for public comment is
19 Lizzie Rothwell.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES:
21 Ms. Rothwell, are you there?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILMAN JONES:
24 Ms. Rothwell?

25 MS. ROTHWELL: Hello?

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Hey,
2 Ms. Rothwell. How are you this
3 afternoon?

4 MS. ROTHWELL: I'm okay. How
5 are you?

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: Good.
7 Would you state your name for the
8 record and please give your
9 testimony.

10 MS. ROTHWELL: Okay. Just a
11 moment. Sorry. Let me just put you
12 on mute. I guess I'm trying to --
13 I'm watching it. So, yes, my name is
14 Elizabeth Rothwell and I'm an
15 architect, a parent and a resident of
16 West Philadelphia. My children
17 attend Henry Lee Elementary which is
18 our catchment K to 8 school, and it's
19 full of wonderful teachers, a
20 supportive staff and a warm community
21 of fellow students.

22 Our school building, however,
23 like many in the District is over 100
24 years old. According to the 2017
25 Facility Conditions Assessment, it

1 needs over 14 million in repairs. I
2 don't know whether the 2022 Facility
3 Conditions Assessment shows that some
4 of these repairs have been completed
5 or whether new ones are now needed
6 because the 2022 report for Lee has
7 not been made public.

8 What I can tell you though is
9 that when my husband and I were in
10 the building in January for teacher
11 conferences, we sat next to a Legacy
12 heating unit in the hallway. You
13 could actually see visible waves of
14 heat rising off of this. Needless to
15 say, we kept our distance from the
16 exposed surfaces of that unit.

17 I can also tell you that my
18 son's classroom in the basement
19 cafeteria in the building regularly
20 have carbon dioxide concentrations of
21 over 1200 parts per million. These
22 are measurements he's taken with a
23 portable CO2 monitor, which are
24 consistent with the ventilation
25 reports that the District released in

1 fall of 2020, which shows 0 cubic
2 feet per minute of airflow in about
3 two-thirds of Lee's classrooms.

4 As was just being spoken
5 about, the issue of inadequate
6 ventilation in our school buildings
7 came to light in the context of the
8 COVID pandemic, but really dates much
9 farther back. The pre-pandemic
10 ASHRAE standard for building
11 ventilation, so the industry standard
12 calls for 15 cubic feet per minute of
13 fresh air per person in the room.
14 Again, my son's classroom has 0 cubic
15 feet of fresh air supply to it.

16 There was a moment in late
17 2020 when I thought the School
18 District was going to address this
19 problem on a District-wide scale and
20 they did not. By summer 2021, the
21 District had stopped updating these
22 airflow spreadsheets that they had
23 shared in the fall of 2020.

24 They had been updating them
25 through that spring to reflect the

1 limited repairs they were making.
2 But then instead of providing
3 effective air quality mitigation via
4 filtration in classrooms that lacked
5 a functioning ventilation system, the
6 District spent \$4.5 million on
7 ionizing air purifiers which supply
8 at most 60 cubic feet per minute of
9 air using an unproven technology,
10 ionization, not filtration.

11 In short, three years into an
12 airborne pandemic our children are
13 still sitting in classrooms with an
14 insufficient supply of clean air and
15 no filtration-based air cleaners.
16 But again, none of this information
17 is new. Between 2011 and 2016, a CDC
18 NIOSH team took measurements of
19 temperature, humidity and carbon
20 dioxide in 50 of our buildings. They
21 collected dust samples, carried out
22 mold and moisture assessments,
23 conducted surveys of health of the
24 teachers who taught in these
25 buildings, and concluded that their

1 health was being adversely affected
2 by building conditions.

3 Throughout the current school
4 year, I've been working with Philly
5 DSA's Safe Air Campaign to provide
6 DIY air cleaners for District
7 classrooms. These air cleaners are
8 known as Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes, and
9 they use MERV 13 filters and a box
10 fan to clean 600 cubic feet per
11 minute or more of classroom air.
12 That's 10 times the volume of the
13 District's ionizing purifiers.

14 Putting these boxes into
15 every classroom in the District would
16 cost under \$1 million per year and
17 would help control viral spread as
18 well as removing mold spores and
19 asbestos fibers from the air in
20 buildings where that's necessary. Of
21 course, like many District parents I
22 live in fear of finding out any day
23 that moving asbestos fibers is
24 necessary in my kid's classroom. But
25 of course, this is an intermediate

1 step, it's a band-aid. What we
2 really need at Lee and many other
3 buildings is a comprehensive overhaul
4 of the building HVAC system.

5 In a District with over \$8
6 billion in deferred maintenance and
7 no apparent route out of it, it's the
8 best I can do as a parent and a
9 community member. Please, this is
10 not my job. Please, the District
11 needs to tell us how they're going to
12 prioritize the many urgent upgrades
13 that are needed across all of our
14 buildings so that every student can
15 go to school in a safe, modern
16 facility.

17 There are no more lessons
18 that need to be learned here.
19 There's no more alarms that haven't
20 already been rung, and there's really
21 only a small amount of listening that
22 needs to be done here. We need a
23 plan. Thank you for the opportunity
24 to testify this afternoon, and good
25 luck.

1 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you.
2 I know it isn't your job, but it's
3 all of our shared responsibility, and
4 we thank you for your testimony. I
5 remember being in Korea close to 20
6 years ago and they had those similar
7 boxes. I had never seen them before.
8 But in the environment we were in,
9 back then some of the business people
10 I was meeting with liked to smoke
11 cigarettes indoor, and that was their
12 answer to filtration. They didn't
13 have exhaust systems. They just
14 cycled and filtered the air in a way
15 that kept it breathable, and that was
16 20 years --

17 MS. ROTHWELL: If you can't
18 eliminate the source of the
19 contaminant, that's the next big
20 thing. But, yes, thank you. We need
21 something.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you
23 for your comments.

24 Mr. Cohen.

25 THE CLERK: Mr. Chairman,

1 there are no other individuals for
2 public comment.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is there
4 anyone else here to testify on this
5 resolution?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: Any
8 comments from members of the
9 Committee?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: Seeing
12 none, this Committee on Public Safety
13 and Education will stand at recess
14 until the call of the Chair. Thank
15 you all for your patience. Thank you
16 for your testimony and we have a lot
17 of work to do to deal with our
18 environment in our school buildings.
19 Thank you.

20 (Joint Committees on Public
21 Safety and Education concluded at
22 2:26 p.m.)

23

24

25

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 this is a correct transcript of the
same.

TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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