

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON RULES

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, October 27, 2011
1:55 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN JAMES KENNEY, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN DARRELL CLARKE
COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO, JR.

BILL 110307 - An ordinance establishing a
neighborhood improvement district in an area
that generally includes, with the exception of
those properties having frontage on north
Broad Street, the area bounded by the
northeast corner of Broad and Vine streets,
the southeast corner of Broad and Spring
Garden streets, the southwest corner of 8th
and Spring Garden streets, the northwest
corner of 8th and Vine streets and the
northeast corner of Broad and Vine streets...

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1
2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

3 We will now begin the public hearing,
4 which is a second public hearing, on Bill
5 No. 110307, an ordinance establishing a
6 neighborhood improvement district in the
7 area that generally includes, with the
8 exception of those properties having
9 frontage on North Broad Street, the area
10 bounded by the northeast corner of Broad
11 and Vine Streets, the southeast corner of
12 Broad and Spring Garden, the southwest
13 corner of 8th and Spring Garden, the
14 northwest corner of 8th and Vine and the
15 northwest corner of Broad and Vine and
16 certain blocks of intersecting streets
17 within the area, to be known as the
18 Callowhill Reading Viaduct Neighborhood
19 Improvement District.

20 I would like to ask, since we
21 have a large number of witnesses today,
22 that if you have testified at the last
23 hearing, you are certainly welcome to
24 testify again, but we would like you to
25 at least kind of keep your remarks brief.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 If you're going to say exactly what you
3 said the last time, you could condense it
4 for us as a matter of courtesy, as a
5 matter of trying to get through this
6 hearing.

7 Secondly, I, as the Chairman,
8 am asking that when you come to the
9 microphone, you identify yourself and you
10 indicate whether or not you live within
11 boundaries of the neighborhood
12 improvement district as proposed. And if
13 you don't live within the boundaries, I
14 would like you to at least justify for
15 the record why it is that you have an
16 opinion about it or -- and certainly
17 anyone is allowed to testify. If you
18 live -- I guess if you live in Camden,
19 New Jersey, you can testify, but I want
20 to know the rationale for why you're here
21 testifying against something that doesn't
22 affect you.

23 So with that, what we'd like to
24 do is call the first panel, which is Paul
25 Levy, Sarah McEneaney and John Struble.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Please come forward.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: The Chair
6 recognizes Councilman DiCicco.

7 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon,
9 everyone. I'm going to repeat myself
10 from the last public hearing. Anyone who
11 is here who lives in the Hing Wah Yuen
12 housing development, those properties
13 have been removed from the NID, and I
14 would respectfully request those of you
15 who speak Chinese to relay that to the
16 folks in the audience who may live in
17 Hing Wah Yuen who cannot understand
18 English obviously.

19 The last meeting we had we went
20 for a couple of hours and many people
21 stayed who were affected by that. I made
22 a similar opening statement then. It was
23 not related to them, and I think in all
24 fairness, that is a message that should
25 be related and spelled out correctly,

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 that Hing Wah Yuen residents are no
3 longer included in the boundaries of the
4 NID.

5 And the other point I would
6 like to make is what I made last time,
7 there has been a lot of misinformation,
8 in my opinion, that has been circulated
9 and going around regarding this NID
10 legislation from as far back as July.
11 The majority of the misinformation has
12 been put out by PCDC, Philadelphia
13 Chinatown Development Corporation. Much
14 of that information that has been put
15 out, misinformation, suggests that this
16 NID has been created either for the sole
17 purpose or partial purpose of funding the
18 Viaduct that runs through the Callowhill
19 neighborhood. And I'm sure you're all
20 familiar with the Viaduct. We've been
21 talking about it. Nothing could be
22 further from the truth. It happens that
23 several years ago, almost 10 or 12 years
24 ago, shortly after I was first elected, I
25 met with a number of residents who live

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 in the Callowhill community; in
3 particular, Amy Hooper, and we began then
4 to discuss what improvements, if any,
5 could we make to the Reading Viaduct.
6 There was no money available at that
7 time, any City money, to be able to do
8 that.

9 Since then, with this
10 Administration, the Nutter
11 Administration, we have been able to
12 provide certain sources of public monies
13 that we could use to rehabilitate the
14 Viaduct to make it a public, a public
15 pedestrian thoroughfare that, if and when
16 it is developed, will be maintained by
17 the City Department of Recreation. None
18 of the NID funds will be used to
19 rehabilitate, improve or in any way,
20 shape or form go into the development of
21 the Viaduct.

22 Those are just a couple of
23 examples of misinformation that has been
24 disseminated throughout this community
25 since July.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 I understand that people have
3 different opinions on this issue and
4 there are people on both sides of it.
5 That's democracy. But there's been a
6 constant flow of information that has
7 come out of the Callowhill community, as
8 far as I can see based on correspondence,
9 a long, long time ago, maybe as far back
10 as a year, and public meetings have been
11 held.

12 So I just want to get the
13 record straight. You're entitled to your
14 opinion. You can be for it; you can be
15 against it. That's fine. But be against
16 it for reasons that do not have to do
17 with the misinformation that has been
18 disseminated for the last several months.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
21 Councilman.

22 Please identify yourself for
23 the record. And before you start, I want
24 to make sure that the record is clear
25 that there is a quorum in attendance with

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Councilmembers DiCicco, Goode, Greenlee,
3 Rizzo and Councilman Kenney as the Chair.

4 Please identify yourself for
5 the record and proceed.

6 MS. McENEANEY: Good afternoon.
7 My name is Sarah McEneaney and I live at
8 1115 Hamilton Street, and I've lived and
9 had my business in the neighborhood for
10 32 years. So I testified last time about
11 the vast amount of outreach we've been
12 doing, and I just wanted to bring you up
13 to speed about what happened since the
14 last hearing.

15 So on September 20th, I
16 testified in support of the NID and
17 discussed the outreach we had done up to
18 that point. A year's worth of meetings,
19 e-mails, phone calls, letters were
20 detailed in the green folders I gave you
21 that day. Not only did I testify that
22 day, I listened very carefully. It was
23 clear that the residents of Hing Wah Yuen
24 and others on the 900 blocks of Ridge
25 Avenue and Wood Street did not want to be

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 a part of the district, and the
3 boundaries were changed to reflect that.
4 I'm disappointed it had to be that way
5 and hope that these primarily residential
6 property owners will see the benefits of
7 the NID to the community and think about
8 joining the district in the future.

9 The average charge for the 30
10 remaining row homes in the district in
11 year one will be \$63, or just 17 cents
12 per day. Year five will be an average
13 payment of \$70, a two-cent-a-day
14 increase. Assessments for most
15 condominium units range from \$111, or 30
16 cents per day, to \$193, or 53 cents per
17 day. These nominal fees will pay for
18 clean sidewalks and improved safety
19 through heightened security and lighting.

20 Since the first hearing, we
21 have continued to work on effective
22 communication with all our neighbors.
23 Steering committee meetings, as always,
24 open to everyone have been held weekly.

25 Outreach in our community is

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 definitely a challenge. About one-third
3 of the properties in the boundaries are
4 vacant buildings, vacant lots or surface
5 parking lots. Many of these property
6 owners are absent and inattentive to life
7 in the neighborhood. We continue to work
8 to reach them.

9 Members of the steering
10 committee who own large properties and
11 operate businesses have reached out to
12 similarly situated property owners in a
13 peer-to-peer approach. We are also
14 working with members of PRIDE, the Port
15 Richmond Industrial District Enterprise,
16 so that large industrial businesses in
17 our area can better understand the
18 benefits of a NID to industrial use.
19 Businesses in Port Richmond pay a 20
20 percent assessment compared to our modest
21 7 percent.

22 After the September 20th
23 hearing, we again met with leaders from
24 non-profits in the district who serve the
25 Asian community. We asked them how best

10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

to reach their constituents and for their help in doing so. Following that meeting, we began a more personal approach, English and Chinese-speaking teams going to row homes and businesses with surveys, a Frequently Asked Questions handout and a response letter to a letter circulated by PCDC in opposition to the NID.

I put on the table copies of all those things I just mentioned. So we have both English and Chinese versions of these documents here.

The survey asked questions about the neighborhood, what do you like about the neighborhood, how do you participate, what changes could be made to improve quality of life, et cetera. Everyone we asked agrees that the neighborhood needs to be cleaner and safer, but many do not want to pay the proposed assessment. Many believe the City should pay for improvements. But it is the property owners, not the City, who

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 are responsible for maintaining sidewalks
3 of their buildings and lots.

4 One of the points made in
5 PCDC's letter of opposition was NID Board
6 members need not be Pennsylvania
7 residents. It's true, the NID law does
8 allow a person who doesn't live in
9 Pennsylvania to serve on the Board, but
10 only if they own property or operate a
11 business in the district. There are
12 people who work, own and operate
13 businesses in our neighborhood who live
14 in New Jersey; for example, Michael
15 Pasquarello and Jeniphur Whitleigh,
16 owners of Cafe Lift and Prohibition
17 Taproom. These are two very successful
18 residents that opened seven and three
19 years ago. Jany and George Demopoulos
20 also live in New Jersey. Their
21 restaurant at 12th and Wood Streets has
22 been a neighborhood fixture for over 30
23 years. It is our intention to put
24 together a Board of Directors made of
25 residents, business people and property

10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

owners in the district, and we clearly want an overwhelming majority who are in the neighborhood each day.

For ten years the Callowhill Neighborhood Association has committed a tremendous amount of time and energy to improving our neighborhood as volunteers. During the last year, we have worked very hard on the formation of the NID, as well as several ongoing projects, twice yearly neighborhood cleanups, the annual tire round-up, the new 10th and 13th Street bike lanes and leading the fight to save the Church of the Assumption on Spring Garden Street from demolition.

We are ready and eager to do more and hope to do so with the participation of all who will enjoy the benefits. We would very much appreciate Council approving the creation of our NID as you have done in more than a dozen other communities across the City.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 for your testimony.

3 Please identify yourself for
4 the record and proceed.

5 MR. STRUBLE: Good afternoon,
6 Mr. Chairman. My name is John Struble.
7 I live and work at 310 North 11th Street.
8 I am here to support Bill No. 110307. I
9 have lived in the neighborhood for 14
10 years and have seen it go through
11 considerable change, and I would like to
12 see our neighborhood become the next
13 improvement district in Philadelphia.

14 First, I would like to thank
15 Councilman Frank DiCicco for his work on
16 our behalf in helping us move this
17 initiative forward in City Council. In
18 my previous testimony, I spoke about the
19 benefits of the 15 improvement districts
20 in Philadelphia. Today I would like to
21 briefly describe our neighborhood and how
22 it differs from others in Philadelphia.

23 Our neighborhood is only a
24 ten-minute walk from City Hall. It is
25 approximately 45 acres that have just

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 recently been designated as blighted,
3 some of which is still zoned G-2
4 Industrial. We have some of this older
5 industrial activity that makes up 13
6 percent or almost seven acres of the land
7 in our neighborhood. We have the support
8 of many of the small and large businesses
9 for the NID. We also have nine acres of
10 parking and three and a half acres of
11 vacant land. So there is considerable
12 room for us to build more housing of all
13 types, creating a more diverse
14 neighborhood population.

15 We also have many large
16 industrial buildings that, as the
17 industry moved out, have been converted
18 into mixed-use and residential that make
19 up about 10 percent of our neighborhood.
20 This diversity will be reflected in the
21 makeup of our management association and
22 its Board. The commitment of the
23 management association and its Board is
24 critical to the success of the NID. It
25 is through them that commercial,

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 industrial and residential get their
3 ideas put into action. If you want
4 something to promote your business, if
5 you want something to promote your
6 housing project, if you want to promote
7 your commercial endeavor, you get help
8 from the NID.

9 There are many things this NID
10 can do that the City cannot, and all
11 these things are under the control of
12 neighbors that are engaged in the
13 neighborhood.

14 One of our neighbors, as Sarah
15 mentioned, who came from Greece, I think
16 she captures the essence of the benefits
17 of the NID. You don't get something for
18 nothing. You can wait and watch as
19 others go by, but you need to be engaged
20 and involved in the neighborhood.
21 Otherwise, as Jany says, you get nothing.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
24 for your testimony.

25 Please identify yourself for

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 the record.

3 MR. LEVY: My name is Paul
4 Levy. I'm President of the Center City
5 District. I do not live within the
6 boundaries of the district, but for the
7 last 15 years, our organization has
8 leased property at 12th and Callowhill
9 and I've been advising the organization
10 in terms of the mechanisms of NIDs.

11 I'll be very brief. I want to
12 simply focus on the composition of the
13 neighborhood to provide you and my
14 testimony provides basic facts about the
15 composition of the neighborhood. The
16 proposed NID will include 655 different
17 taxable parcels. A hundred and
18 fifty-seven of these, or 24 percent, are
19 business properties. While small in
20 number, they will carry about 61 percent
21 of the charges. As Sarah indicated, the
22 average industrial property will pay
23 about a thousand dollars a year, or \$3 a
24 day. The average commercial property
25 will pay about \$847 a year, or \$2.32 a

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 day. There are 340 owner-occupied units
3 within the area that are condominium
4 units, and they will pay an average of
5 \$192 a year, or 53 cents a day. And for
6 the 29 row houses in the NID, they will
7 pay an average charge of \$62 a year, or
8 17 cents a day.

9 It is a very diverse group of
10 property owners and, frankly, each of
11 those charges, while significant to the
12 owner, aren't enough to improve the
13 neighborhood, but taken together, the
14 mechanism of the NID will enable them to
15 improve the quality of the public
16 environment.

17 Finally, a look at the 2010
18 census for the proposed NID area tells a
19 very interesting story. Within the
20 boundaries of the proposed NID, there
21 were in the 2010 census 1,628 individuals
22 living there. According to the census,
23 46 percent were white, 31 percent were
24 African American, 17 percent were Asian
25 and 6 percent were other, with 7 percent

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 identifying themselves as Latino.

3 So I start where I began. The
4 proposed Callowhill NID is as diverse as
5 the City of Philadelphia. No one group
6 in this area is in a majority, and
7 therefore, as elsewhere in the City, when
8 diverse groups of individuals live in the
9 same place and share common problems,
10 it's in their interest to come together
11 and solve those problems together.

12 Thank you very much.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
14 very much for your testimony.

15 Any questions for these
16 witnesses?

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Seeing
19 none, we thank you for your attendance.

20 Next panel, Jason Hughes,
21 Matthew Werthman, Michelle Liao, Janet
22 Kroll.

23 (Witnesses approached witness
24 table.)

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Whoever

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 would like to start, please identify
3 yourself for the record and proceed.

4 MR. HUGHES: Mr. Chairman and
5 members of the Council, thanks for your
6 time today. My name is Jason Hughes. I
7 live in the Beaux Arts Lofts building,
8 which is 1238 Callowhill. I currently
9 work at Penn Medicine as the Director of
10 Research Computing.

11 In my five years of owning
12 property and residing in the
13 neighborhood, I have grown to see the
14 potential that the area has to become a
15 much cleaner, safer and greener place
16 through some very commonsense and
17 reasonably attainable means. While the
18 neighborhood has a unique flavor and
19 culture all its own, there certainly
20 exists a number of negative aspects of
21 the area that those seeking to create the
22 neighborhood would certainly like to
23 remedy. The primary goals of cleaning,
24 greening and safety are ones that are
25 universally beneficial to anyone that

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 lives, works, attends school, owns
3 property, seeks shelter, operates a
4 non-profit or even so much as walks
5 through the neighborhood. While we all
6 wish our tax dollars could be applied in
7 such a way as to make the improvements
8 our NID and the neighborhood desires,
9 this is unfortunately not a fiscal
10 reality now and likely won't be in the
11 future.

12 The idea of forming a NID is
13 attractive to me because it overcomes
14 what I believe to be a disease that has
15 slowly spread across our country, the
16 idea that we can't help ourselves, but
17 rather we need someone else to do it for
18 us. While we continue to look toward the
19 City to provide municipal services such
20 as police, fire, water, licensing and
21 inspections, street services and so on,
22 we have driven forward with the NID
23 formation to take our neighborhood's
24 destiny in our own hands and create a
25 neighborhood that the overwhelming

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 majority of residents want and deserve.
3 We seek to raise money and direct that
4 money in a surgical fashion to remedy the
5 ills of trash, dumping, graffiti, the
6 preponderance of concrete jungle that is
7 the current landscape, poor lighting and
8 security concerns that cannot adequately
9 be met by the current police force.

10 We desire these things because
11 the neighborhood is a home, it's a place
12 of business, a place of education, a
13 place of shelter and a place of
14 socialization and recreation.

15 All these uses of our
16 neighborhood can be enhanced by the work
17 the NID can do based on a comparatively
18 small assessment when measured against
19 other such groups in our city and
20 elsewhere.

21 During the months I've been an
22 active member of the NID Steering
23 Committee, I've spoken with many in
24 favor, both passively and actively, and
25 also some opposed, also both passively

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 and actively. In some cases, the
3 arguments brought forth have significant
4 legitimacy and need to be addressed.
5 Primarily these deal with the fact that
6 the NID will impose an additional
7 financial burden on all who own property
8 in the district. While many of us view
9 the small assessment on our yearly tax
10 bill to be negligible, there are those
11 for which this may prove more of a burden
12 than can reasonably be borne. There are
13 those on the Steering Committee that have
14 given this much thought and much
15 discussion, and we are committed to
16 electing a Board that will explore the
17 options available to ensure those in
18 serious financial distress may seek some
19 type of relief. There are many details
20 to be worked out regarding this issue,
21 but it seems clear there are solutions to
22 help those that may need it.

23 In stark comparison to the real
24 issue of financial concern, there are
25 those that protest the formation of the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 NID primarily out of FUD, fear,
3 uncertainty and doubt. Regardless of the
4 strict legal requirements that the NID
5 must follow, the strict budgeting and
6 limits on budget increases, the openness
7 and transparency with which a NID must
8 function, the comparatively low
9 assessment that is being requested and,
10 of course, the benefits a NID can bring
11 to a long-neglected neighborhood with so
12 much promise, opponents still find
13 rationalization in their opposition.

14 While it's unfortunate, a small number of
15 those in the NID boundaries, assisted by
16 those protesting the plan that exist
17 outside the boundaries, can cast a shadow
18 of doubt on the potential effectiveness
19 of this plan. I would ask that you join
20 with those organizing this NID and
21 finding the clarity of vision to shepherd
22 the CRVNID proposal to reach the full
23 approval vote of this Council. Those
24 that have dedicated their time and
25 efforts to this cause have done so

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 because they have found this clarity of
3 vision to see the potential of our
4 neighborhood and the many ways that a NID
5 could serve to support the neighborhood
6 in reaching that potential.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 Please identify yourself for
11 the record, whoever is going to go next.

12 MS. LIAO: Who is next?

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Whoever
14 you'd like. Please identify yourself for
15 the record.

16 MS. KROLL: My name is Janet
17 Kroll and I live in the neighborhood
18 affected, and I appreciate the
19 opportunity to share my perspective.

20 I have never done this before.
21 I was motivated to do so by a letter sent
22 out by PCDC. So I say my thanks to PCDC.
23 I believe this is the law of unintended
24 consequences at work. And this is a
25 letter I wrote to Councilman Frank

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 DiCicco.

3 Dear Councilman DiCicco, I have
4 lived in the Callowhill neighborhood for
5 almost a decade, and I am writing to
6 express my very strong support for the
7 creation of the Callowhill Reading
8 Viaduct Neighborhood Improvement
9 District. I have been so impressed by
10 the inclusive and thoughtful process
11 utilized in soliciting community members'
12 feedback on the plan for the NID.

13 Multiple public meetings have been held
14 and information has been widely
15 circulated among neighbors and business
16 and property owners. There has been
17 significant opportunity for debate for
18 differences of opinion and perspective
19 and for consensus building within and
20 across all aspects of our community.

21 As the parent of a
22 five-year-old, I am excited at the
23 prospect of our neighborhood becoming
24 cleaner so that I can take my daughter
25 for walks or bicycle rides without having

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 to dodge garbage and illegally dumped
3 refuse. I am delighted that our
4 neighborhood is beginning to be seen as a
5 place for families. The NID will
6 strengthen this trend by helping to
7 create a cleaner, greener and ultimately
8 safer neighborhood that everyone in our
9 community can enjoy.

10 I was surprised and saddened to
11 receive a letter from the Philadelphia
12 Chinatown Development Corporation
13 opposing the NID. The letter contains
14 half truths and innuendo designed to
15 distort the purpose of the NID. The NID
16 has been developed through a process in
17 which debate has been welcomed and
18 differences have been worked through in
19 numerous public meetings. Frankly, I
20 don't understand why PCDC could object to
21 a grassroots-developed and
22 grassroots-controlled entity by and for
23 all of us in the community that will
24 strengthen and beautify our neighborhood.

25 On behalf of myself and my

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 daughter, Lucy, I commend your efforts to
3 help strengthen our growing, inclusive
4 and diverse neighborhood, and I urge you
5 to continue your vigorous support of the
6 CRVNID.

7 Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 very much.

10 Please identify yourself for
11 the record.

12 MS. LIAO: Michelle Liao, 11th
13 Street, 310 North 11th Street.

14 Good afternoon, Councilman.
15 I'm a business keeper, a small business
16 owner and a property owner in the NID.

17 Of course, I would prefer not
18 to have to pay the additional 7 percent
19 tax in this uncertain economic times, and
20 I would like to hold on every dollar I
21 have, but who is going to pay for the
22 amenities that I want in my neighborhood?
23 If not me, then who? I'm willing to pay
24 for a better quality of life; that is, to
25 live in a safe and clean environment.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 I'm willing to pay to be surrounded by
3 lively energy and greenery. I'm willing
4 to pay to have beautiful things to look
5 at, be it big trees, grass and flower in
6 the park and the old stone wall of
7 Viaduct.

8 I don't believe those things
9 are a whole lot to ask, but who is
10 supposed to pay for them? Who?

11 I believe we can work together,
12 pool our money and give ourselves the
13 thing that we want and need. This is the
14 sure path to hand ourselves the thing we
15 want in our community.

16 I vote yes to improvement. I
17 vote yes, again, to better our
18 environment in the future. There's no
19 reason to wait and hoping for the day
20 when the money boat will come and do it
21 for us.

22 So I ask you to vote yes for
23 the NID. Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 for your testimony.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Please identify yourself for
3 the record and proceed.

4 MR. WERTHMAN: Good afternoon.
5 My name is Matt Werthman. I live at 1220
6 Buttonwood Street in the proposed NID
7 area.

8 I'm just going to read into the
9 record a letter I wrote to Councilman
10 DiCicco in support of the NID.

11 Dear Councilman DiCicco, I'm
12 writing you this letter in support of the
13 creation of the Callowhill Reading
14 Viaduct Neighborhood Improvement
15 District, the boundaries of which are
16 anticipated to run between Vine Street
17 and Spring Garden Street and from 8th
18 Street to Broad.

19 As a resident of this
20 neighborhood who has been living here
21 since early 2005, I'm excited at the
22 prospect of creating a safer, cleaner and
23 greener environment for everyone to
24 enjoy. To that end, personally I've been
25 involved with our neighborhood

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 association and I regularly participated
3 in neighborhood cleanups and tree
4 plantings. However, the creation of an
5 NID appears to provide a unique
6 opportunity to take these causes to the
7 next level and serve to significantly
8 improve our neighborhood's quality of
9 life and strengthen property values.
10 Because of this, I volunteered my time
11 and effort to serve as a member of the
12 CRVNID Steering Committee and continue to
13 do so. Further, as an attorney, with the
14 assistance of my firm, Klehr Harrison
15 Harvey Branzburg LLP, I am providing pro
16 bono legal assistance to help with the
17 formation of the proposed NID.

18 As a member of the CRVNID
19 Steering Committee, we believe that the
20 formation of an NID by bringing neighbors
21 and businesses together will continue the
22 transformation of our neighborhood into a
23 happier and healthier place to live, but
24 also serve to make it more attractive to
25 future economic investment and

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 development.

3 I strongly encourage you to
4 support this exciting initiative.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
7 very much for your testimony.

8 Are there any questions for any
9 of these witnesses?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Seeing
12 none, we thank you for your attendance
13 today.

14 I would also like the record to
15 reflect that Councilwoman Reynolds Brown
16 and Councilwoman Miller are both here in
17 attendance at the hearing.

18 Councilman DiCicco.

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: For the
20 panel; in particular, the two young men
21 and the lady, Ms. Kroll, I did get your
22 letter, and thank you. Where did you
23 live before you moved into the Callowhill
24 district? Councilman Kenney and I were
25 just commenting about that.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. WERTHMAN: I rented in Old
3 City for a few years and then bought in
4 our neighborhood now.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Are you a
6 native Philadelphian?

7 MR. WERTHMAN: Fairless Hills,
8 about a half hour north on 95.

9 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Okay.

10 MR. HUGHES: I actually worked
11 in Philadelphia since '97, and when I
12 first moved here in '05, I rented for a
13 year at 11th and Arch Street, Vitt Karen
14 (ph) building.

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And
16 Ms. Kroll.

17 MS. KROLL: I've lived in
18 Philadelphia since 1995. I rented at
19 Fairmount and then I purchased almost a
20 decade ago in Callowhill.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Ms. Liao.

22 MS. LIAO: I'm from Bella
23 Vista, on Bainbridge Street, 6th and
24 Bainbridge, for 20 years before I moved
25 here.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I didn't
3 ask because I knew, but I forgot that
4 maybe the rest of the panel didn't know
5 that.

6 My point is, and I guess the
7 point that Councilman Kenney and I were
8 talking, you could have chose to live
9 anywhere else in the City. You chose
10 Callowhill. I suspect that when you
11 moved in, it was at the time of the real
12 estate bubble, things were looking as
13 though this neighborhood could probably
14 really take off and you're going to see a
15 lot more residential development and
16 other types of uses, but obviously the
17 bubble burst. So you're there, but
18 you're happy to be there apparently,
19 you're happy to be there and you're very
20 active in the community.

21 But the point we're making is,
22 you could have lived just about anywhere
23 else if you chose obviously, but you
24 chose that neighborhood and you're
25 committed to it, and for that, I just

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 wanted to say thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
4 Greenlee.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just one
6 second. I certainly agree with
7 Councilman DiCicco. The only thing,
8 Ms. Kroll, I don't know how you could
9 leave Fairmount. I don't know why
10 anybody would want to leave Fairmount.
11 That's the only -- I think you know where
12 I live.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you,
14 Councilman.

15 Thank you for your testimony.

16 Panel 3, Jeffrey Koopman, Jason
17 Hughes, Bruce Shelley, Robert Cheetham.

18 (Witnesses approached witness
19 table.)

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
21 identify yourself for the record and
22 proceed.

23 MR. KOOPMAN: My name is
24 Jeffrey Koopman. I did testify in the
25 last public meeting, and I thank you for

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 the opportunity, and I'll summarize what
3 I said earlier.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
5 state if you live in the NID or not.

6 MR. KOOPMAN: I do.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I don't
8 need your exact address, but just if you
9 live in the NID.

10 MR. KOOPMAN: My name is
11 Jeffrey Koopman. My wife and I live,
12 work and own property at 429 North 13th
13 Street, well within the boundaries of the
14 proposed NID. We've lived there for 11
15 years. When we moved into the area, we
16 knew what it was. It was dark, dirty,
17 ominous that had been mostly overlooked
18 and forgotten by the City, neglected by
19 its residents and transients. Over the
20 years, many of the residents have taken
21 an active role in making an effort to
22 improve the conditions that surround us,
23 a neighborhood association, a
24 neighborhood town watch program soon
25 followed. Formation of the NID seemed to

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 be the next logical step for many of us.

3 It was simple really. We were
4 informed by the City and state agencies
5 that they did not and will not have any
6 funds available to pay for regular
7 cleaning and trash removal, particularly
8 from vacant and public property. The
9 funds were not available for additional
10 lighting, and the funds wouldn't be
11 available for additional police patrols.
12 So we as neighbors would have to assume
13 some of these responsibilities ourselves.

14 We planted trees. We
15 encouraged building owners and our
16 Councilman to improve outside surface
17 lighting. We have arranged and
18 participated in neighborhood cleanups,
19 but these combined efforts have not been
20 enough.

21 As citizens, we have a unique
22 opportunity to take advantage of the many
23 positive changes happening in and around
24 our neighborhood. Whether it's the
25 significant residential and commercial

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 developments on North Broad Street, the
3 proposed Spring Garden Parkway and the
4 possible reclamation of the Reading
5 Viaduct, it is all happening around us,
6 and if we ever had an opportunity to
7 effect positive change in our
8 environment, it's right now.

9 Each of these projects have
10 required financing and a commitment by
11 all those involved. The formation of a
12 NID in our neighborhood is no different.
13 You already have the commitment of your
14 neighbors who want to volunteer their
15 time and expertise to effect this change.
16 And, more importantly, for roughly the
17 cost of one month's Triple Play option on
18 Comcast, the average resident in the area
19 can finance their respective assessment
20 portion for one full year.

21 It is with continued optimism
22 that I look forward to our neighborhood's
23 future, and I ask those of you that have
24 a vested interest in improving your own
25 surroundings to make a small capital

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 investment into your own future by
3 supporting this proposal.

4 Thank you.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
6 very much.

7 Please identify yourself for
8 the record.

9 MR. CHEETHAM: My name is
10 Robert Cheetham. I do not live in the
11 neighborhood, but own a business in the
12 neighborhood located at 340 North 12th
13 Street.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

15 MR. CHEETHAM: Mr. Chairman and
16 members of Council, thank you for this
17 opportunity to provide feedback regarding
18 the NID. I did testify at the last
19 session and will try to summarize as well
20 as add a little bit to what I said at the
21 time.

22 In terms of background, I'm not
23 a native of Philadelphia. I grew up in
24 the Midwest. I lived overseas for
25 several years, came to Philadelphia in

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 1994 to go to graduate school. After
3 finishing school, I stayed on. I worked
4 at the Philadelphia Police Department in
5 the City of Philadelphia for four years.

6 I started my business around
7 2000, worked out of my apartment that I
8 was renting at the time. But as the
9 business grew, I needed to start to hire
10 people, and I opened my office in the
11 Callowhill neighborhood in 2002.

12 Over the last nine years, we've
13 grown from one person to a little over 30
14 people. We're in the high tech business.
15 Unlike a lot of the rest of the economy,
16 we're in a very competitive labor market.
17 We want to continue to keep and grow our
18 business here in Philadelphia and in the
19 Callowhill neighborhood, but we have some
20 serious, serious quality of life concerns
21 that are real and significant.

22 I think this NID is an
23 important grassroots effort that will
24 make substantial progress towards solving
25 some of these. And I say this not just

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 as someone who goes to work there and
3 spends a lot of time in this
4 neighborhood, but as someone who has to
5 attract people in a competitive labor
6 market to come work for my company.

7 As an employer, we always try
8 to recruit locally, but we end up
9 competing for software engineers all
10 across the United States and around the
11 world. A few weeks ago -- I think the
12 last time I was here I told you about
13 someone I was interviewing that day who
14 lives in New Mexico. Well, in that round
15 of folks we were interviewing, I had
16 folks from Arizona, New Mexico,
17 Minnesota, Boston and applicants from
18 many other parts of the world.

19 When we find the right person,
20 sometimes they live here, but often they
21 live not just outside Philadelphia but
22 some other part of the country, and we
23 need to attract them, convince them to
24 come work here, and that is a tough case
25 to make. They walk in for an interview

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 and they walk past trash and graffiti and
3 other types of quality of life concerns
4 that are real and significant.

5 So I'm here to make a case --
6 even though this will raise my costs, I'm
7 here to make a case about economic
8 development, about employment, about tax
9 revenue for the City, as well as about
10 the livability and quality of life of the
11 neighborhood in which our business is
12 located.

13 Quite frankly, this is selfish.
14 I want to have a vital and dynamic
15 neighborhood that will make it easier for
16 me to convince people to come work for
17 me, come live in Philadelphia, pay taxes
18 here, raise their children here and make
19 a life here. I see the proposed NID as a
20 vital way to make that possible.

21 Thanks very much for your
22 attention.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
24 very much. Have you determined your
25 potential NID cost annually as a business

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 person?

3 MR. CHEETHAM: We are not a
4 property owner, so we rent in a building.
5 We have discussed it with our owner. Our
6 owner has agreed -- he also testified
7 last time, and he's actually agreed not
8 to pass on the cost.

9 That said, I would voluntarily
10 pay this even though I'm not a property
11 owner.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you know
13 the amount?

14 MR. CHEETHAM: If I owned
15 property, it would probably be on the
16 order of a few hundred dollars a year.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.
18 Please identify yourself for
19 the record.

20 MR. SHELLEY: My name is Bruce
21 Shelley and I am a business owner in the
22 area and I have probably about 30,000
23 square feet of property.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You could
25 give yourself an advertisement if you'd

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 like. You can say what the name of your
3 business is.

4 MR. SHELLEY: I can. Thank
5 you, and I will. Only because of the
6 fact that Shelley Electric has been in
7 the area at this point since 1940, and in
8 1940 and over the last, I guess, many
9 years and three generations, I've seen a
10 lot of things happen in the neighborhood.
11 I certainly have seen the blight that has
12 developed during the '60s and the '70s,
13 and I have been so pleased to see the
14 benefits that have come up with some of
15 the basic renovations that have occurred.

16 But what I will say is that in
17 order to get onto the next level, in
18 order to continue the development and to
19 see this neighborhood flourish, we need
20 to have a NID and also get cooperation
21 from the Center City District, and then
22 we will see good things happen in this
23 neighborhood.

24 So, Councilmembers, I'm here to
25 support this wonderful development here.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

3 And have you determined your business's
4 cost?

5 MR. SHELLEY: Somewhere around
6 \$2,000 a year.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.
8 Thank you.

9 MR. SHELLEY: And I would
10 appreciate that because I have been doing
11 the cleanup in the area myself over the
12 last many years.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: So you're
14 potentially saving money.

15 MR. SHELLEY: Excuse me?

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You're
17 potentially saving money by pooling your
18 NID assessment.

19 MR. SHELLEY: Yeah. Based on
20 my salary, yes.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.
22 Thank you.

23 Any questions for these
24 witnesses?

25 (No response.)

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Seeing
3 none, thank you very much.

4 Next set of witnesses are
5 Tamara Sepe, William Curran and Matthew
6 Pestronk.

7 (Witnesses approached witness
8 table.)

9 MS. SEPE: William Curran is
10 putting money in the meter.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Before the
12 Parking Authority gets here.

13 Whoever would like to start,
14 please identify yourself for the record.

15 MS. SEPE: Mr. Chairman and
16 members of Council, my name is Tamara
17 Sepe. I live within the boundaries of
18 the proposed NID. I also own property,
19 run my business and am raising my
20 11-month-old son within the boundaries of
21 the NID.

22 The last time that I spoke I
23 testified about the number of children in
24 the neighborhood and the impact on their
25 education and quality of life. I am an

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 early childhood educator. I have worked
3 for the early intervention system in
4 Philadelphia for ten of the last 13 years
5 providing services, free services, to
6 children with disabilities throughout the
7 City, and I am known within my
8 professional community as a child
9 advocate.

10 As an advocate for child
11 well-being, I want to point out some
12 facts about our neighborhood. There are
13 three schools included in the NID
14 boundaries and one school that is
15 partially included within the NID
16 boundaries. These serve between 1,500
17 and 2,500 children depending on whether
18 or not you count that fourth school. To
19 put this in perspective, this represents
20 between 1 percent and 1.6 percent of the
21 total number of children attending school
22 in all of Philadelphia, and this is all
23 within a neighborhood that is just
24 one-tenth of a square mile or one
25 ten-thousandth of the total land area of

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 the City. For the schools with available
3 data, 79 percent of these children
4 qualify for free or reduced price school
5 lunches.

6 In addition to schools, we have
7 social service agencies, such as
8 Bethanna, a foster care and adoption
9 agency, and Chances, a residential
10 treatment facility for mothers and
11 children. We have at least one day care
12 and two churches with youth programs, as
13 well as a growing number of families
14 living in the area.

15 Since the last hearing, as part
16 of our continued outreach efforts, I have
17 begun to contact these schools and social
18 service agencies to learn more about
19 their concerns and visions for the
20 neighborhood. I have learned that many
21 of these schools have community service
22 and civics components to their
23 curriculums. The founder of one of these
24 schools that is particularly well known
25 for its civics curriculum gave me

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 permission to share parts of our
3 conversation today.

4 She proudly described the work
5 her students do in the community, from
6 work with the homeless to making special
7 efforts to appreciate our city's police
8 officers. I asked her what concerns she
9 had about the neighborhood, and she
10 described how her staff has their cars
11 broken into, how her maintenance team
12 must clean up after criminal activities
13 such as prostitution, short dumping and
14 drug use.

15 When I asked her how this
16 affects her students, she emphasized the
17 contrast between the values of
18 citizenship she teaches inside her school
19 and the state of the neighborhood
20 immediately outside it. It undermines
21 the lessons she teaches her children, she
22 said, and sends a message that no one
23 cares.

24 I also asked her what attracted
25 her to this neighborhood. Her answers

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 echo those of many I have talked to -
3 convenience of Center City and public
4 transportation, some good neighbors and
5 diversity of the residents. But, sadly,
6 because of neglect, blight and poor
7 security, these strengths remain hidden
8 to many, only partially realized. Most
9 residents, school children and other
10 people in the neighborhood move as
11 quickly as possible from their buses or
12 cars into their respective buildings to
13 avoid the grind and sense of danger
14 afforded by empty lots, abandoned
15 buildings and neglected litter-strewn
16 sidewalks.

17 We cannot continue to allow
18 children and families to live and attend
19 school in this unhygienic, dangerous
20 environment. We cannot allow -- continue
21 to allow a group of absentee landlords
22 and uninvolved property owners to inflict
23 the consequences of their collective
24 negligence on our city's children.

25 When I travel to other

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 neighborhoods throughout the City to work
3 with children, I see many examples of
4 what a healthy relationship between a
5 school and a community looks like. In
6 those neighborhoods, children go on
7 walks, they greet and interact with
8 residents and attend field trips to
9 nearby businesses. Our neighborhood has
10 a potential to become a place like this
11 where they can benefit from the hands-on
12 experiences of being educated in a
13 functional community, but we must meet
14 our basic responsibilities to provide a
15 safe, clean environment first.

16 The vision we have for this
17 neighborhood is a clean, safe and vibrant
18 community populated by an economically
19 and ethnically diverse group of
20 residents, students, businesses and
21 non-profits.

22 Because of some of the pressure
23 from the opposition, the people
24 testifying on our behalf today do not
25 represent the full diversity and breadth

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 of our support. In our private
3 conversations and correspondences with an
4 ethnically and economically diverse range
5 of neighbors, business owners and leaders
6 of non-profits, we have had more than one
7 person tell us they support us, but that
8 they cannot speak publicly on behalf of
9 the NID because of fear of economic,
10 political or social repercussions. When
11 the final count is completed and the NID
12 is approved, we are committed to creating
13 a Board reflective of the diversity of
14 our neighborhood and dedicated to making
15 a clean and safe neighborhood a reality.

16 I, along with many of the
17 people you see testifying in favor of the
18 NID today, already spend many, many hours
19 of volunteer time improving this
20 neighborhood. Participating and
21 organizing cleanups, partnering with the
22 police and working on historical
23 preservation projects are just a few of
24 the ways the NID supporters you see here
25 today are already improving this

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 neighborhood. We ask you today to
3 support the creation of our neighborhood
4 improvement district as a vehicle for
5 continuing the work already begun and for
6 helping this neighborhood realize its
7 full potential.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 for your testimony.

10 Mr. Curran, did you beat the
11 Parking Authority?

12 MR. CURRAN: I did.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Oh, good.
14 I'm glad.

15 Whoever would like to go next,
16 please identify yourself for the record.

17 MR. CURRAN: My name is Bill
18 Curran. I have had an architectural and
19 metalwork design and fabrication business
20 in the neighborhood for 11 years. I also
21 live, own property and have a family
22 here.

23 At the September 20 Rules
24 Committee hearing, I spoke about the
25 historical importance of this

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 neighborhood. A section of the proposed
3 NID is in fact on the National Register
4 of Historical Places. I spoke about what
5 a loss it is for a city, where history is
6 a major natural resource, to allow this
7 icon of our industrial past to fall to
8 ruin. While I still consider this an
9 important point, I want to speak about
10 something more personal today.

11 Two winters ago on a cold
12 Friday night a man was sitting on the
13 steps of the building on my corner at
14 10th and Hamilton surrounded by police
15 with blood pouring from his forehead. He
16 had been hit in the skull for a week's
17 wage he was carrying in cash in his
18 pocket. This was part of a crime spree
19 in the same one- or two-block area where
20 Asian and Latino immigrants, perceived as
21 unlikely to go to the police, were being
22 systematically targeted for their Friday
23 night cash wages. These men were
24 vulnerable as they walked down 10th
25 Street through a natural dead zone with a

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 large factory on one side and an
3 abandoned lot on the other. After 5:00
4 p.m., this particular area is unlit and
5 empty. Many weeks later, the police were
6 able to make some arrests, but not until
7 there were quite a few more victims.

8 As the prospect of the NID is
9 before us, I can't help but reflect back
10 to that evening and wonder if this would
11 have happened had there been adequate
12 lighting and if the sidewalks had been
13 better maintained, giving the impression
14 of a cared for and guarded neighborhood.
15 I will never know for sure, but what I
16 can say with certainty is that based on
17 the results of a study done on
18 improvement districts in Los Angeles is
19 that when an improvement district is
20 formed and money is spent on security,
21 crime goes down. More specifically, for
22 every \$10,000 spent on security, 3.4
23 fewer crimes occurred in that area.

24 I've heard the argument about
25 how we already pay for these security

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 services when we pay our taxes, but this
3 isn't entirely true. Property owners are
4 responsible for maintaining their own
5 sidewalks and keeping them free of litter
6 and debris, a function that would be
7 aided by an NID. Most importantly, as
8 good citizens of both our neighborhood
9 and our city, we are responsible for
10 partnering with the City to make sure
11 resources are used effectively.

12 I see the partnership as a
13 critical function of the NID. I have
14 volunteered for cleanups, served on the
15 Board of the neighborhood association and
16 watched the efforts of my neighbors for
17 the last 11 years, and I have seen
18 improvements. But I know to the degree
19 of change we need to accomplish, and it
20 can't be achieved on volunteer efforts
21 alone. We need an NID.

22 As a father, business owner and
23 employer in the neighborhood, property
24 owner and engaged citizen, I ask City
25 Council to support the NID as a way to

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 make the neighborhood a safer place to
3 live, work and do business.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
5 for your testimony. Have you calculated
6 both -- you are both a resident and a
7 business owner?

8 MR. CURRAN: Yes, I am.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you have
10 two separate facilities, two properties?

11 MR. CURRAN: I do, yes.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: What is
13 your calculation on your total annual
14 contribution? Have you done it? If you
15 know offhand.

16 MR. CURRAN: I believe on the
17 one property over on Wood Street, it's a
18 little over 200, and then as far as the
19 one on Hamilton, it is that one I'm not
20 exactly sure.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Just
22 curious.

23 MR. CURRAN: Three hundred.
24 Excuse me.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: People are

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 asking for this, but I want to make sure
3 the record is clear what you're willing
4 to contribute to it voluntarily. So
5 thank you.

6 Please identify yourself for
7 the record and proceed.

8 MR. PESTRONK: My name is Matt
9 Pestronk. I'm not a resident of the
10 neighborhood. I'm a resident of
11 Washington Square. I'm the developer of
12 the Goldtex Building, which is a highly
13 prominent, currently an eyesore, building
14 at 12th and Pearl.

15 As the developers of the
16 Goldtex Building, we're excited that the
17 neighborhood surrounding our property is
18 slowly nearing its potential to offer all
19 the people in the neighborhood a higher
20 quality of life. The operative term I
21 mentioned is "slowly." While the
22 completion of the Goldtex Building will
23 no doubt bring a new wave of real estate
24 speculation and development to the
25 neighborhood, Goldtex will be one of the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 only large-scale improvements to the
3 neighborhood streetscapes when it will
4 have been delivered next summer.

5 Many opponents of the NID could
6 accuse us of being self-interested in our
7 support for its formation, but nothing
8 could be further from the truth. We have
9 no additional property holdings in the
10 neighborhood and have no immediate plans
11 to make further investments. The reality
12 is that our property is on the edge of
13 the neighborhood and is physically
14 oriented towards Center City and
15 Chinatown equally as it is to the
16 Callowhill neighborhood. You don't have
17 to -- someone coming to rent an apartment
18 in our new building won't have to walk
19 through -- will not have to walk through
20 any part of the Callowhill neighborhood
21 to reach our property. So our interest
22 is truly in aligning with the
23 neighborhood. We've always planned on
24 maintaining our property and the
25 surrounding streetscapes out of our own

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 private funds because we can't count on
3 the NID existing.

4 The opportunity to provide a
5 cleaner and safer environment through the
6 formation of the NID is simply the right
7 thing to do for everyone. No one wants
8 to pay any more taxes, but the
9 opportunity to create Philadelphia's next
10 great neighborhood is simply the
11 definition of low-hanging fruit. The
12 proximity to Center City and Chinatown,
13 access to mass transit and, best of all,
14 its harmonious, mostly, and diverse
15 existing resident base are all factors in
16 the equation that equal the potential for
17 an enhanced quality of life that is just
18 easily attainable.

19 From a financial perspective,
20 the City doesn't have the money to pay
21 for the services which are desperately
22 needed for the neighborhood. It's a sad
23 fact. Everyone says the City should pay,
24 the City should pay. It's just not in
25 the budget.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Everyone at this hearing is
3 probably a property owner or is
4 responsible in some way for the payment
5 of these proposed increased NID dues,
6 but -- so everybody is a property owner,
7 so everybody understands basic economics.
8 It's pretty simple. A piece of land in
9 Center City that can support 12 times its
10 lot area in development and has similar
11 zoning to much of the vacant land in the
12 Callowhill area is generally worth about
13 \$35 a foot. In Callowhill, the same land
14 is worth \$10 a foot or even substantially
15 less. Rental rates for commercial and
16 apartment buildings, mainly rental
17 apartment buildings, are basically the
18 same in Callowhill as they are in the
19 lesser upscale parts of Center City but
20 still established neighborhoods. But the
21 appearance of the neighborhood is just
22 keeping values down. It's a simple
23 investment for property owners to make
24 that will have a very, very high ROI.

25 We just obtained a construction

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 loan for our project after approaching
3 numerous lenders, and the reaction among
4 bank lenders of the neighborhood was
5 generally not positive. And it's
6 amazing, there's no serious, serious
7 violent crime issues in the neighborhood,
8 but it looks like a wasteland. Luckily,
9 we were able to convince lenders, after
10 making a major investment ourselves, to
11 provide funds for the project, and we're
12 excited to get it built.

13 So we really feel like the
14 threat of gentrification in the
15 neighborhood, which is a major concern of
16 some of the opponents of the NID, is
17 completely unfounded. No one has to
18 leave or will be forced out, but it just
19 seems like the economic thing to do to
20 make -- to agree to a sub 15 percent
21 increase in your existing real estate
22 taxes to have your property value nearly
23 double or even better in some cases, it
24 just seems like an easy proposition to
25 me, and I hope the NID ultimately is

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 realized.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
4 very much for your testimony.

5 Are there any questions for
6 these witnesses?

7 (No response.)

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Seeing
9 none, we thank you for your attendance.

10 Next panel is John Chin,
11 Cecilia Yep, Philip Browndeis and James
12 Morton.

13 (Witnesses approached witness
14 table.)

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Good
16 afternoon. Please identify yourself for
17 the record and proceed.

18 MS. YEP: Good afternoon. My
19 name is Cecilia Moy Yep. I am a founder
20 and direct emeritus of the Philadelphia
21 Chinatown Development Corporation, known
22 as PCDC. PCDC is a non-profit 501(c)(3)
23 organization that has been in existence
24 for 45 years. The organization was
25 founded in 1966 when the state threatened

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 to demolish the Holy Redeemer Church and
3 School to make way for the Vine Street
4 Expressway. The community was successful
5 in saving the church and school and is
6 currently celebrating its 70th
7 anniversary.

8 The scaled-down Expressway as
9 designed today separated the church and
10 school from the core of Chinatown. The
11 Expressway and all the other major urban
12 renewal projects in Center City caused
13 the community to lose 25 percent of its
14 housing stock. Relocation for displaced
15 persons was difficult. The community was
16 told to grow to the north, which we did,
17 with consultants, developed the
18 comprehensive plan for the growth and
19 development of the community, known as
20 the Chinatown North Plan. Here's a copy
21 of it (indicating).

22 The community knew that in
23 order for the church and school to
24 survive, we would have to fortify and
25 support it. The Hing Wah Yuen

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 development was planned and implemented
3 with 51 houses of mixed-income levels at
4 8th to 9th Street on Vine across from the
5 church.

6 This development was a very
7 difficult project, as it was built over
8 the Center City Commuter Rail Tunnel. In
9 1999, the Fannie Mae Foundation awarded
10 PCDC the National Maxwell Award for
11 Excellence in Community Development. The
12 following year, plans for the Sing Wah
13 Yuen development were implemented with 11
14 more housing units.

15 PCDC moved our office from the
16 center of Chinatown to Chinatown North to
17 support the pioneers who were willing to
18 settle in the barren area. So for the
19 past 25 years, PCDC has been updating
20 plans and developing Chinatown North.

21 I'm giving this background to
22 you so you can understand why our
23 community is upset with the NID
24 legislation. Chinatown North is an area
25 from 8th to 12th Street and from Vine to

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Spring Garden Streets. We consider
3 Callowhill a neighborhood on the other
4 side of the Reading Viaduct. The
5 Chinatown community had no knowledge, nor
6 were we properly informed in the planning
7 of the NID plan, nor were we considered
8 in the process. The Callowhill East
9 group now consider us in their plan, only
10 because they need our money. Only now
11 did they decide to include us. That is
12 why this is an unjust and unfair tax and
13 is simply taxation without
14 representation.

15 Callowhill East set up a Board
16 of persons who don't reside in the
17 neighborhood. None of our residents are
18 on their Board, and yet this is the Board
19 that is going to make decisions as to how
20 to spend our tax money. You can bet your
21 bottom dollar the tax money won't be
22 spent in our neighborhood, because our
23 community will not have any say in the
24 decisions they make.

25 Their dream is a park on top of

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 a viaduct. Our dream is a multi-service
3 community center to provide recreational
4 activities for our children, health
5 services for our neighborhood, a center
6 that will provide services for our senior
7 citizens and much-needed housing for our
8 residents. That's what we are working on
9 and have been for the past ten years, and
10 that is our community's focus. If we
11 want to go to a park, we can go to
12 Franklin Square. It's just a block away
13 at 8th Street.

14 You can easily see why we are
15 against this legislation. It is so
16 unfair and so unjust. It's taxing our
17 community for something we had no input.

18 This is not to say we are not
19 for safe and greener, cleaner
20 neighborhoods, as we have already been
21 working in our area to address these
22 issues. We've greened and planted trees.
23 We recently worked on the plaza at 10th
24 and Vine Streets for open space, a
25 neighborhood project. We don't need to

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 start an NID for something that we have
3 been doing all along.

4 You can see what we have done.

5 I don't know if you can say the same for
6 Callowhill East. If they want this
7 legislation to clean railroad tracks on a
8 viaduct which they don't even own, let
9 them pay for it. They did not include
10 our community in their plan. Then why
11 should we have a surcharge on our taxes
12 to pay for their plan?

13 The Chinatown community has our
14 own plans and have set our goals. We're
15 not surcharging their taxes, so why
16 should they surcharge us?

17 We also resent the fact that
18 after our community has been working in
19 the neighborhood for the past 25 years as
20 Chinatown North, now they are trying to
21 make us part of their Callowhill
22 neighborhood's association. Thanks, but
23 no thanks. Our community does not want
24 to be a part of their proposal, because
25 they have not been transparent and they

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 don't deserve our trust. They excluded
3 us in the planning until it came time to
4 pass the legislation which imposes a tax
5 on us. Their plan is not a benefit to
6 our community, and they know it. That's
7 why they didn't involve us. It's only
8 because they now need our money.

9 If that's not the case, then
10 great, exclude us. If the Callowhill NID
11 wants to clean up the Viaduct, they can
12 roll up their sleeves and go to work.

13 City Councilmembers, do not
14 pass this legislation. This is an unfair
15 and unjust legislation and is definitely
16 taxation without representation.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.
18 Before I recognize Councilman DiCicco, I
19 for the life of me from this hearing and
20 the last hearing, I can't understand why
21 your goals and the goals of the NID are
22 mutually exclusive. I just don't
23 understand it. And I think last time we
24 went through a very precise process of
25 cutting out all of the concerns or the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 residences and businesses in the area
3 that is Chinatown proper and Hing Wah, I
4 believe, was taken out. I don't know if
5 you live in the NID district or not, but
6 I really don't understand why one set of
7 goals and another set of goals are
8 mutually exclusive. I'll never get it.

9 MS. YEP: Well, one thing, you
10 took out 90 votes. Okay? And they know
11 they need those votes to pass this
12 legislation. But you didn't go far
13 enough. You should go up to the Viaduct,
14 because we're on this side of the
15 Viaduct. They're on the other side of
16 the railroad tracks. We go from 12th
17 Street to 8th Street. They go from 12th
18 to Broad. We have a much larger
19 population and area than they do.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But
21 wasn't --

22 MS. YEP: So if you take out
23 the 90 votes and they're not going to pay
24 taxes, that imposes taxes on all the rest
25 of the community. And it's a progressive

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 tax, a tax that goes up every year. We
3 already are threatened with a 10 percent
4 tax by the City, an additional 7 percent
5 this year, and it's going to go up
6 constantly.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you know
8 if --

9 MS. YEP: A lot of those people
10 had bought properties and they're under
11 tax abatement. We're not. We've been
12 there for a long time.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you know
14 of the people who are left in, not the 90
15 that were taken out but the people who
16 were left in, do you have any information
17 on how many of them are senior citizens
18 or on income that would qualify for the
19 Pennsylvania state tax rebate program?
20 Do you know that?

21 MS. YEP: Yes, I know that.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: How many
23 within the NID area, people you're
24 concerned about, how many of them qualify
25 for the tax rebate?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MS. YEP: Not too many.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you

4 know --

5 MS. YEP: Well, we have two

6 handicapped units in that development,

7 and I would say that --

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Which

9 development?

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Which

11 development?

12 MS. YEP: -- 30 of them are

13 under --

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.

15 Which development?

16 MS. YEP: -- subsidized

17 housing.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Which

19 development are you talking about?

20 MS. YEP: I'm talking about

21 Hing Wah Yuen.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But they're

23 out.

24 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: They're

25 out.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MS. YEP: I know, but you're
3 saying they're out, but their 90 votes
4 are out, too.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But they're
6 not being taxed. I don't understand what
7 the problem is. I thought we solved that
8 last time.

9 MS. YEP: But then when you
10 take out that many people, then the tax
11 burden goes up. You have a certain
12 budget and you have to meet that budget,
13 so that imposes -- not a 7, maybe a 14
14 percent increase in taxes. They're all
15 looking at two, three hundred.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
17 DiCicco.

18 MS. YEP: We would just like to
19 be out.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You're out.

21 MS. YEP: We also support --

22 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Cecilia,
23 with all due respect, you and I have
24 worked together.

25 MS. YEP: I know we have.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: But for
3 maybe the casino issue, we were pretty
4 much in sync on all other matters.

5 MS. YEP: Exactly.

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: But you
7 keep referring to "we." Hing Wah Yuen is
8 out. You can say they took 90 votes out,
9 but they're out because the argument that
10 was made at the last hearing was that the
11 folks who live in Hing Wah Yuen are poor,
12 live in a below-poverty level and they
13 can't afford it and that they have their
14 own homeowners association, of which my
15 understanding from Ms. Young, I believe
16 it was, that they're paying somewhere
17 around \$130 to \$140 per month.

18 MS. YEP: She misunderstood the
19 question.

20 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So if -- I
21 don't know what it is. That's what I was
22 told. So let's assume it's 140 a year.
23 The reality of this whole thing is, they
24 wanted out. The rest of the NID, the
25 folks that I've been dealing with, said

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 if they want out, fine. You're making
3 the assumption that the NID could
4 arbitrarily change the tax structure at
5 will. It doesn't work that way.

6 And I just want to go over a
7 couple of things. You talked about 10th
8 and Vine at the plaza. How did that
9 happen?

10 MS. YEP: It was --

11 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: You said
12 "we" made it happen. You were saying
13 "we" made it happen. How did that
14 happen?

15 MS. YEP: We had the
16 cooperation of Hahnemann University
17 Hospital and with PennDOT.

18 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Government
19 money, City of Philadelphia --

20 MS. YEP: Yeah, some of it.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: -- my
22 office helped fund that, correct?
23 Correct?

24 MS. YEP: Yeah.

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Franklin Square, whose money
3 went into developing Franklin Square?

4 MS. YEP: City and state.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

6 You mentioned a couple of
7 others. Hing Wah Yuen, was it not
8 subsidized with government money?

9 MS. YEP: HUD.

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Government
11 money.

12 So when you say "we," with all
13 due respect, it isn't that Chinatown had
14 an organization that funded all these
15 projects, and that's not -- I'm not
16 criticizing that, but don't make it sound
17 as though Callowhill is looking for
18 something that they're not entitled to.
19 They're taxing themselves, when
20 government paid for all of those
21 amenities that you just spoke about that
22 Chinatown has been the beneficiary of for
23 at least 16 years that I've been in
24 office.

25 MS. YEP: Well, true, but the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 fact --

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And when
4 you say "we," I assume -- and correct me
5 if I'm wrong -- you're talking about
6 Asian Americans?

7 MS. YEP: I'm talking about we
8 did the work together to make it happen.

9 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: When you
10 say "we" --

11 MS. YEP: Nothing happens.
12 They can make it happen for their
13 community. Why don't they do it.

14 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Well, we
15 are. The Viaduct --

16 MS. YEP: We don't tax our
17 people.

18 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: The
19 Viaduct will be government monies, not
20 NID money.

21 MS. YEP: But it's tax money.

22 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: What tax
23 money?

24 MS. YEP: They want to tax the
25 people.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: That's not
3 for the Viaduct.

4 MS. YEP: That's where it's
5 going to go.

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: All right.

7 MS. YEP: It's true. I mean,
8 the people here, 35 to 40 percent of our
9 community are in the poverty level.

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: But we
11 went through this with John Chin at the
12 last meeting. I need to interrupt you.
13 When you take that 35, 40 percent of the
14 people in Chinatown, the percentage of
15 people, that 45 percent that are below
16 poverty, and you segregate them or take
17 those people that may be in the NID, that
18 number probably goes down to 4 or 5
19 percent. And if they do qualify -- if
20 they are under the poverty level,
21 Councilman Kenney was alluding to this,
22 they're entitled to 100 percent real
23 estate tax rebate. So even if they
24 increased \$100 a year, \$500 a year, those
25 folks are not going to actually pay a

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 cent, because the State of Pennsylvania
3 is going to give them back all of their
4 real estate tax money anyway.

5 MS. YEP: But --

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And
7 they're going to get the benefit of the
8 NID.

9 MS. YEP: Who is?

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: The people
11 who live in the community.

12 MS. YEP: We won't see it on
13 our side of the railroad tracks.

14 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: You want
15 it on your side?

16 MS. YEP: No.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Then you
18 won't see it.

19 MS. YEP: We'll do it ourself.
20 We don't want to be in the NID.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Well,
22 maybe I should wait for Mr. Chin, because
23 I have a question about that. Would you
24 consider a NID for Chinatown?

25 MR. CHIN: You're asking me?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Well,
3 anybody.

4 MS. YEP: Well, if we have
5 input in it and we are part --

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Would you
7 consider a NID or a BID in the Chinatown
8 community, creating your own NID and/or
9 own BID?

10 MS. YEP: Yeah.

11 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I've been
12 asking -- for 16 years I've been trying
13 to encourage Chinatown, as you know, to
14 create its own BID. Now you're ready to
15 do one?

16 MS. YEP: Yes.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So let's
18 talk before I leave and we'll create a
19 BID for Chinatown.

20 MS. YEP: Okay.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

22 MS. YEP: At least we will have
23 control of our tax money.

24 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: You can do
25 whatever you want. We will create a BID

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 for the Chinatown community.

3 MS. YEP: That's why we don't
4 want to be part of the Callowhill --

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: You're not
6 part of it.

7 MS. YEP: We don't want to be
8 part of it.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: But you're
10 not.

11 Please, whoever is next.
12 Mr. Chin, if it's you.

13 MR. CHIN: Good afternoon,
14 Chairman Kenney and Councilman Frank
15 DiCicco and members of the Rules
16 Committee.

17 Before I begin my testimony, I
18 do want to address some earlier comments
19 that Councilman DiCicco made before the
20 hearing started.

21 Councilman DiCicco mentioned
22 that PCDC put out misstatements in the
23 literature that we put out in the
24 neighborhood, specifically to the fact
25 that the neighborhood improvement

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 district is connected with the
3 development of the Reading Viaduct. I
4 would just like to share five points with
5 you, and our statement is based on these
6 five points.

7 This is not in my testimony,
8 but, number one, the original legislation
9 that was written, there was a statement
10 in there that Deputy Mayor Alan
11 Greenberger asked to be removed. That
12 statement made reference to the fact that
13 the NID would basically engender the
14 development of the Reading Viaduct.
15 That's number one.

16 Number two, the name of the NID
17 itself, Callowhill Reading Viaduct
18 Neighborhood Improvement District, leaves
19 one to believe that there is a connection
20 between the NID and the Reading Viaduct.

21 Thirdly, in a meeting with
22 Sarah McEneaney, John Struble and a few
23 other people, I specifically asked Sarah
24 McEneaney if she would pledge that none
25 of the monies raised with the NID would

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 go towards the Reading Viaduct, and she
3 declined to do that.

4 Number four, Paul Levy in his
5 presentation at a community meeting of
6 his PowerPoint presentation of this
7 Reading Viaduct greening project and
8 neighborhood improvement where he showed
9 both greening and affordable housing, he
10 specifically stated that the mistake that
11 the neighborhood and the High Line made
12 was that they did not establish a
13 district to pay for the operation to the
14 High Line, and they're having a difficult
15 time doing that now. So what he proposed
16 for this area here is that this area
17 should start a NID to avoid that same
18 mistake.

19 And, lastly, in a conversation
20 I had with a funder from the Fels
21 Foundation, Helen Cunningham, she
22 specifically said that her understanding
23 is the NID is very much connected to the
24 Reading Viaduct development.

25 So based on these five points,

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 our understanding is that the NID had
3 everything to do and connected with the
4 Reading Viaduct.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Could I ask
6 you a question before you get started?
7 What are the boundaries of PCDC?

8 MR. CHIN: Our boundaries go up
9 to Spring Garden, 8th Street to 11th
10 Street. That's our planning area.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And what
12 percentage of the PCDC catchment area
13 exists in the NID as we speak to the
14 legislation today?

15 MR. CHIN: Anything east of
16 11th Street.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Just give
18 me a ball park percentage of the hundred
19 percent of the catchment area of PCDC
20 based on this legislation, how much of
21 that is in the NID?

22 MR. CHIN: I guess 40 to 50
23 percent.

24 MS. YEP: Maybe more.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: No.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. YEP: They go all the way
3 to 8th Street.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: See, the
5 problem sometimes in the testimony
6 against this is that the boundaries keep
7 changing. One hearing the boundaries are
8 described as one area and the next
9 hearing it's described a little larger.
10 It's kind of floating boundaries.

11 But when you testified last
12 time, it was okay with PCDC that we did
13 the amendment that took out all of those
14 residential properties in the NID
15 boundary; is that correct?

16 MR. CHIN: Well, you proposed
17 it.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are you
19 unhappy with it?

20 MR. CHIN: No. The 60
21 homeowners are not unhappy with it.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is PCDC in
23 agreement with the amendment that we
24 passed or we added to the bill last
25 hearing?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. CHIN: Yes. We want that
3 excluded from the district, yes.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: All right.
5 Thank you.

6 Please -- I don't know if you
7 have identified yourself or not. Please
8 identify yourself and proceed.

9 MR. CHIN: I am John Chin, the
10 Executive Director of the Philadelphia
11 Chinatown Development Corporation. I
12 testified on September 20th against this
13 bill. My testimony is against this bill
14 again today.

15 I'd like to take this
16 opportunity to focus my comments on two
17 specific points. First, I would like to
18 highlight the work that PCDC has carried
19 out to remove blight and transform
20 Chinatown North into a livable
21 neighborhood.

22 Second, I would like to point
23 out that the problems that we experience
24 in our neighborhood are the result of
25 policy decisions and economic factors

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 over the decades. So imposing a 7
3 percent tax on the property owners and
4 throwing money at the problems is not a
5 solution.

6 PCDC has worked tirelessly to
7 create a neighborhood in which families
8 of all income levels can live together
9 and children can play without fear of
10 criminals lurking in the shadows or being
11 hit by highway traffic along Vine Street.
12 PCDC has implemented neighborhood plans
13 to foster a live-work community.
14 Residents can live in the neighborhood
15 that they work, and the small businesses
16 can hire from within the neighborhood.

17 Chinatown has always been a
18 live-work neighborhood. Chinatown is a
19 gateway for new immigrants, and small
20 businesses are a means for immigrants to
21 obtain the American dream. This is true
22 of the immigrant neighborhoods throughout
23 Philadelphia and especially of Chinatown.
24 The fact is that immigrants that come to
25 this country with limited English

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 proficiency have limited employment
3 options. PCDC has worked to ensure that
4 Chinatown continues to expand for both
5 businesses and residents. PCDC has
6 developed the following projects over the
7 last 20 years to transform Chinatown
8 North into a desirable live-work
9 neighborhood. I would add that
10 Councilman DiCicco has been instrumental
11 in funding these projects.

12 In 1993, the project of Hing
13 Wah Yuen, 51 units of mixed-income
14 housing, started.

15 In 1998, PCDC worked with the
16 Philadelphia Planning Commission to
17 rezone the area from 9th to 11th from
18 Vine to Spring Garden from industrial use
19 to commercial/residential use.

20 In 2003, we built Sing Wah
21 Yuen, 11 units of mixed-income housing
22 and mixed-use housing.

23 In 2006, we worked with the
24 Philadelphia Horticultural Society, the
25 TreeVitalize program, and we planted 140

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 trees in the neighborhood.

3 In 2008, we worked on the
4 southern part of Chinatown and restored
5 the Friendship Gate to preserve it.

6 In 2010, we put money into the
7 10th Street Plaza, a community park,
8 which transformed a blighted piece of
9 property into a community park on the
10 Vine Street Expressway.

11 And right currently, in 2011,
12 we are working two streetscape projects,
13 along 10th Street and 9th Street. We're
14 actually putting in brand new lighting,
15 sidewalks and new designs to highlight
16 the culture of Chinatown.

17 PCDC cares about this
18 neighborhood and has worked tirelessly to
19 improve it for all to enjoy. Our focus
20 has always been to help those who are
21 most in need. We want to continue doing
22 our work and carrying out our vision and
23 mission for Chinatown. We do not want
24 this NID, which does not have an
25 understanding of immigrant issues and our

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 neighborhood issues to come all the way
3 east into Chinatown North and encroach on
4 another neighborhood's priorities.

5 Chinatown North is the
6 community's only avenue of growth, and as
7 you have heard, PCDC has worked to
8 improve this neighborhood. Over 20 years
9 ago, we were told by urban renewal
10 project proponents that the community can
11 go across Vine Street Expressway and
12 expand that way. This neighborhood has
13 many deficits that are the result of
14 industrial abandonment and government
15 policy. There are three major homeless
16 shelters and one halfway house in this
17 area that impose havoc on the community.
18 In fact, the men that enter and exit
19 these institutions also wreak havoc along
20 Market Street. Take a look at the police
21 crime reports, which I provided. I point
22 this out because the government has
23 contributed to the blight in this
24 neighborhood. Imposing a 7 percent tax
25 on the people in the neighborhood to

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 clean it up is not fair. The City has to
3 take ownership of these problems rather,
4 not just tax the people and throw money
5 at the problem.

6 I oppose Bill 110307.

7 Chinatown North has its own planning
8 area, and PCDC has successfully improved
9 the neighborhood. We understand the
10 needs of the community. Chinatown North
11 should retain its own identity and
12 vision, which is specific to addressing
13 the needs of this immigrant community.

14 Secondly, the government must
15 do its share about the blighting effect
16 of the men's homeless shelters and the
17 halfway house in this neighborhood.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
19 for your testimony. I will again say for
20 the record that I am bewildered as to why
21 your plans for Chinatown North and the
22 establishment of a NID are mutually
23 exclusive. I don't see it. I'm trying
24 to see it, but it just doesn't make any
25 sense.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 So thank you.

3 Sir, could you please identify
4 yourself for the record.

5 MR. BROWNDIEIS: Yes. My name
6 is Philip Browndeis and I live at 1220
7 Buttonwood Street.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are you in
9 the NID? I'm sorry.

10 MR. BROWNDIEIS: Yes, I am.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. BROWNDIEIS: Members of the
14 Council, Councilman DiCicco, you were
15 misled by the supporters of the Reading
16 Viaduct project and Paul Levy to believe
17 that the neighborhood would support a tax
18 increase. You do not have the consent of
19 the people. The resistance to the tax
20 increase grows stronger every day. The
21 owners of more than 300 properties have
22 signed letters of opposition to your
23 plans for us, and more sign every day as
24 they learn what City Council has in store
25 for them.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 The conflict in our
3 neighborhood began when a tiny group of
4 loft-dwelling elitists decided to treat
5 longtime residents and Asian business
6 owners as though they were guests in
7 their own neighborhood. But the worst is
8 yet to come. If the NID is created, the
9 neighborhood will be run as a private
10 corporation with a Board of Directors who
11 do not even have to be residents or
12 property owners of our neighborhood.

13 The privileged few supporting
14 the NID tell us that the average tax will
15 be only \$155 a year. Maybe that is not a
16 lot of money for someone who doesn't have
17 to raise a family, save for college or
18 live on retirement savings, but for many
19 residents in our neighborhood, it is a
20 lot of money.

21 We are told that the NID is not
22 for the funding of the Reading Viaduct
23 Park, but the corporate address listed
24 for the NID is owned by Sarah McEneaney,
25 co-founder of the Reading Viaduct

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 project, and the NID will pay her rent
3 each year.

4 We are told that the NID will
5 pay for street cleaning and lighting.
6 However, in the original budget, the
7 yearly allocation for marketing and
8 promotion averaged over \$8,600 per year.
9 In the amended bill, the yearly
10 allocation is now over \$18,000 annually.
11 Why has the budget for marketing,
12 promotion and improvement studies
13 increased more than 50 percent if the
14 sole purpose of the proposed NID is
15 street cleaning and lighting?

16 Alan Greenberger said in the
17 October 6th City Paper, This is what's
18 going to happen all over the City in the
19 near future. You're going to see these
20 quasi-public and quasi-private
21 partnerships.

22 Gary Reuben of the Regis Group
23 and Matt Pestronk of Post Brothers
24 Apartments, both real estate developers,
25 should be happy with the Deputy Mayor's

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 statement. As they explained in the last
3 hearing, the NID will be good for their
4 property investments. In other words, I
5 will be taxed in order to subsidize the
6 risk they took investing in my
7 neighborhood. For real estate
8 developers, landscape architects and
9 designers, there is no better feeling
10 than spending other people's money.

11 I'll take my stand with my
12 neighbors on Buttonwood Street, Maria and
13 Jimmy Bekas, who own the Newtown
14 Restaurant at 420 North 9th Street.
15 They've lived in the Callowhill
16 neighborhood for over 40 years and raised
17 a family there. Their roots run deep in
18 Callowhill, but I'll bet they never
19 thought they would live to see the day
20 that their loft-dwelling neighbors would
21 shake them down for \$155.

22 And now the Bekases are being
23 told to pay a tax to a private
24 corporation for the basic municipal
25 services that the City of Philadelphia

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 should be providing.

3 Perhaps the City should use the
4 \$5 to \$10 million they plan to contribute
5 to Paul Levy's Dilworth Plaza vanity
6 project for services like additional
7 street lighting in our neighborhood.

8 Paul Levy's original purpose
9 for the NID was to attract funding for
10 the Reading Viaduct Park and provide for
11 its annual maintenance. The people of
12 Callowhill North Chinatown refused to
13 submit to his dictates and the language
14 was removed from the NID mission
15 statement.

16 Paul Levy and City Council may
17 view us as a nuisance because we still
18 believe in representative government and
19 not corporate rule over our lives. But
20 if this is still a government of the
21 people, for the people and by the people,
22 then do the right thing and kill this
23 bill.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 for your testimony. I just want to make

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 sure the record is clear that --

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I want to
5 make sure the record is clear that this
6 is a democratic process, because the
7 people who were in the NID boundaries
8 will be able to vote yes or no to
9 establish the NID. So if what you're
10 saying is true, you have nothing to worry
11 about, it's going to go down in flames.

12 MR. BROWNDEIS: Well, actually
13 it's a negative election. It's not
14 supporters who must prove. It's us who
15 oppose it.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: If everyone
17 in that NID boundary is as angry as you
18 are, then it's going to go down in
19 flames. So it will be a democratic
20 process despite what you contend.

21 MR. BROWNDEIS: Well, once the
22 NID is created, it's no longer a
23 democratic process.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: No. The
25 NID would be created -- you can stop the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 NID and people -- the large number of
3 people you claim are against this NID in
4 that boundary, this will go down in
5 flames and you'll be happy.

6 MR. BROWNEIS: Well, so it
7 shall be, so it shall be done.

8 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: It will be
9 a sad day for the neighborhood.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
11 identify yourself for the record and
12 proceed.

13 MR. MORTON: My name is James
14 Morton and I live at 1238 Callowhill.

15 I don't have any Councilmembers
16 to listen to me.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's my
18 mother.

19 MR. MORTON: I just got two
20 left.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Some of
22 them actually are listening in their
23 offices. This is piped into all of our
24 offices. Sometimes they're sitting doing
25 other work.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. MORTON: Fine. Fine.

3 Okay.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I normally
5 don't take comments from the gallery, but
6 it's starting to get a little irritating
7 at this point. I apologize.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: My mother
9 is fine, so thank you.

10 MR. MORTON: Okay. I'd like to
11 say that -- I said I lived at 13th and
12 Callowhill. I'm retired. I say that to
13 say that I'm home every day because I'm
14 retired.

15 I know John Struble. John
16 Struble knows me. I know Sarah
17 McEneaney. Sarah McEneaney knows me.
18 Both of them live no more than four
19 blocks from where I live.

20 Now, having said that, I would
21 like to say that I have never been
22 contacted, outreached or anything else
23 concerning the development, planning,
24 implementation of this NID. So all that
25 testimony that you've heard so far about

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 outreach, community involvement, et
3 cetera, et cetera, I'm sitting right
4 there all day every day and I have never
5 been contacted, outreached or involved.
6 I just wanted to make the record clear
7 for there.

8 Now, as far as my statement,
9 I'm opposed to the NID in principle, not
10 because it'll cost me a few extra
11 dollars, but in principle. And in
12 principle, what I see is that by using
13 this state law to set up these
14 quasi-public whatever across the City,
15 you're going to set up a network where
16 certain communities get better service
17 than other communities. Now, in my
18 opinion, this is just flat-out
19 discrimination. One community gets it
20 better than another community.

21 Now, I've been fighting against
22 discrimination my entire adult life, and
23 I see this as just a high-tech
24 gentrification introduction of
25 discrimination all over again. I think

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 if you have a city where certain areas
3 get treated better than other areas,
4 pretty soon the people in that city are
5 going to take notice of that and it's
6 going to poison the atmosphere in your
7 city. I'm opposed to it in principle.

8 Now, as I said, I live in the
9 Beaux Arts Lofts Condo. As a condo
10 owner, I pay City property tax. I assume
11 that my paying of the City property tax
12 goes to having clean, safe streets.

13 Now, in addition to that City
14 property tax, as a condo owner I pay a
15 condo fee. That fee goes to cleaning of
16 the streets around my building and the
17 removal of trash. So now I pay twice for
18 the cleaning of the street and the
19 maintenance. This NID would impose an
20 additional 7 percent surcharge again for
21 cleaning, maintenance, clean, green
22 streets, public safety, et cetera. So
23 now it looks to me as though I'm paying
24 three times for the same service. That
25 doesn't make any sense.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 And, again, in principle, I
3 think that everyone in the City should
4 pay their property tax. It should all go
5 into a bucket, and the City services
6 should be distributed evenly. Every
7 community is entitled to clean, safe
8 streets, whether they be a loft community
9 where people have a lot of money or
10 whether it be a part of the City where
11 people have less money. Everybody who is
12 a resident of Philadelphia is entitled to
13 a clean, safe street. We shouldn't have
14 to pay a 7 percent surcharge to get a
15 clean, safe street.

16 Beyond that, the Councilman
17 said that people will be able to vote for
18 or against the NID and if we have more
19 votes for than against, we would win. My
20 reading of the law that I was sent stated
21 that the opponents have to get 51 percent
22 and if we fail to get 51 percent, the NID
23 goes into effect without the vote of the
24 Council. So what we have here is a
25 one-sided vote. The opponents have to go

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 out and go into the community and get
3 signed statements to vote. The
4 proponents don't have to do anything.
5 That is totally unfair. That is so
6 unfair, that is so undemocratic, I don't
7 even see how anyone could support that or
8 have anything to do with that.

9 I understand it's a state law.
10 When I asked about it, I was told, Oh,
11 nothing can be done. It's a state law.
12 Well, we shouldn't be going by the state
13 law. It's totally unfair. We have to
14 get 51 percent. The proponents don't
15 have to do anything. So what the
16 Councilman just said, that we'll take a
17 vote yes or no, I'd like to know if the
18 Councilman knows something that I didn't
19 understand from reading the bill.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I don't
21 understand the question. All I've said
22 was that if the opposition is as much as
23 this gentleman says it is in the
24 community, then it's going -- it will be
25 defeated. If the opposition is that

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 angry and is that motivated, then they
3 will defeat it. That's a simple
4 statement. That's all I said. They have
5 a chance to express that opinion.

6 MR. MORTON: What you said if
7 you look at the transcript, you said yes
8 or no. You said vote yes or no.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: No. I said
10 we will vote yes or no. We'll vote yes
11 or no, and then the community if they're
12 angry about it and they want to defeat
13 it, they will defeat it. So there is a
14 democratic process.

15 MR. MORTON: Again, I read the
16 material that was sent to me from the
17 Clerk, and it states there that if we
18 oppose, we have to get 51 percent.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Right.

20 MR. MORTON: And if we fail to
21 get 51 percent, if we get 50 percent, 49,
22 48 percent, then the bill will pass
23 automatically.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I know a
25 candidate in the last election who lost

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 by 46 votes, and I'm sure she's not real
3 happy about it either, but you have to
4 win or lose an election.

5 MR. MORTON: Yes, win or lose,
6 but we have to come up with 51 percent.
7 The other side doesn't have to come up
8 with anything.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I
10 understand what you're saying.

11 MR. MORTON: That's just unfair
12 and undemocratic. I don't see how the
13 Council could even implement something
14 like that.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: As you
16 said, it's a state law.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: State
18 mandate.

19 MR. MORTON: My next bullet
20 point, there's certain people, like I
21 said, living in the lofts. There's
22 high-income people, developers, Mr. Levy
23 and so forth. They see the neighborhood
24 as a place maybe an empty canvas or blank
25 canvas where they want to develop it.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 That's fine. I think that in American
3 culture, we have a principle and the
4 principle is do it yourself. Take
5 personal responsibility. If Mr. Levy
6 wants to develop this area for a profit
7 to make his business more profitable --

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.

9 Mr. Levy, so the record is clear,
10 Mr. Levy is not a developer. He doesn't
11 make any money from any development. He
12 runs the Center City District. He is not
13 developing anything. He is running --
14 he's administrator of a district that
15 cleans and lights and does advertising
16 and that kind of stuff. So I don't want
17 your comment to be reflected in the
18 minutes that somehow he's here for a
19 profit-making motive. That's not the
20 case.

21 MR. MORTON: Okay. I hear you.

22 Let me rephrase that.

23 If individuals want to develop
24 in this area and they want to take
25 certain steps that would increase the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 value of their properties, what I'm
3 saying is, let them pay for it
4 their-selves.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. MORTON: That's the
7 American tradition that I know of. If
8 you want to be a capitalist and you want
9 to increase the value of your property,
10 you form up a corporation and you sell
11 some shares and you raise some money and
12 you take the risk. What this state law
13 does is have one neighbor tax another
14 neighbor. That's got to be
15 unconstitutional. I'm not a lawyer, but
16 I'm saying that's got to be
17 unconstitutional. I do know that Justice
18 Nigro, Nigro, whatever his name is --

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Former
20 Justice Nigro.

21 MR. MORTON: Former.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: He was
23 defeated in election, so...

24 MR. MORTON: Yes, but don't we
25 still give him the honorary title?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Not me.

3 MR. MORTON: Well, what I'm
4 saying is, I suppose you realize that he
5 does have a class action suit against the
6 Center City -- he has a class action
7 suit.

8 The point is, this is just
9 unfair. It's undemocratic. It's just
10 not right. My neighbor is going to
11 impose a tax surcharge on me for my
12 neighbor's private project. Now, if I
13 don't like it, can I vote my neighbor out
14 of the neighborhood? How can I -- who
15 can I hold accountable? Who can I vote
16 against? Mr. DiCicco is retiring.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm
18 running. You can vote against me if you
19 want. I wouldn't like you to, but if you
20 feel that strongly about it, I guess
21 whoever votes for it you can vote
22 against. I mean --

23 MR. MORTON: Well, again --

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: People
25 voted against me or for me for various

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 reasons. I respect that.

3 MR. MORTON: Maybe I'm
4 confused, but my reading of the law or
5 what I think was the law again stated --
6 maybe somebody in the audience might have
7 a copy of it. It stated that if we fail
8 to get 51 percent --

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: That's what
10 it says, yes.

11 MR. MORTON: -- the NID will be
12 created without the vote of Council. So
13 I don't have any Councilman that I can
14 hold accountable. Who can I hold
15 accountable?

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: If we vote
17 to approve this and send it to the
18 residents, you can hold those who voted
19 in favor of it accountable.

20 MR. MORTON: All right. Thank
21 you.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You're
23 welcome. Thank you. Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Mr. Cibik, Mr. McColgan --

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY:

4 Mr. McColgan here?

5 MR. CIBIK: He had to leave.

6 (Witness approached witness
7 table.)

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.

9 Mr. Cibik, could you do me a favor and
10 have a seat and then identify yourself
11 for the record. And I'd ask if
12 Mr. Schall please come forward.

13 MR. SCHALL: Thank you.

14 (Witness approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Mr. Cibik,
17 please identify yourself for the record.

18 MR. CIBIK: Michael Cibik. I
19 am the 5th Ward republican leader here in
20 Center City.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
22 proceed.

23 MR. CIBIK: Sure. Again, my
24 name is Michael Cibik. I'm the 5th Ward
25 republican leader. I've lived in the 5th

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Ward for almost 20 years. I've lived in
3 Center City almost 30 years. The
4 Callowhill North Chinatown neighborhood
5 is in the 5th Ward. It encompasses
6 mostly the 26th and the 25th Division.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Mr. Cibik,
8 I hate to interrupt you, but I had asked,
9 do you live in the NID or do you have
10 property in the NID?

11 MR. CIBIK: No, I do not.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.
13 Fine. Thank you. Thank you.

14 MR. CIBIK: I'm just in the
15 ward.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Sure. If
17 someone is for or against it, I want to
18 make sure that they got skin in the game,
19 but you certainly obviously clearly have
20 a right to testify any way you like, but
21 I just think the record is more
22 reflective of who actually is going to
23 pay it or not pay it.

24 MR. CIBIK: No, I do not.

25 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 very much.

3 MR. CIBIK: I became aware of
4 efforts of City Council to raise taxes on
5 the neighborhood and the grassroots
6 campaign by neighbors united to defeat
7 the ordinance. So that's how I got
8 involved, and they had contacted me.

9 I know these are tough times
10 and Council doesn't want to be seen as
11 raising taxes in this bad economy, but we
12 seem to be now chartering a private
13 corporation to tax the people of
14 Callowhill North Chinatown. And it's
15 been said it's \$155 a year and that's not
16 a lot of money, and, of course, I go on
17 and say it's really only \$13 a month, \$3
18 a week, 5 cents a day. It reminds me
19 what a wise old Senator from Illinois
20 said years ago. His name was Everett
21 Dirksen. He said a million here and a
22 million there, sooner or later it adds up
23 to real money.

24 So this is a lot of money for a
25 lot of people in this community, the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 \$155.

3 When I walk through the North
4 Callowhill Chinatown neighborhood, I see
5 there are small family industrial
6 factories left in Philadelphia, and a
7 significant number of these businesses
8 have been started or raised by Asian
9 entrepreneurs. They already are paying a
10 business privilege tax, a net profit tax,
11 real estate tax, U&O tax, and now they're
12 going to have to pay a street tax in
13 addition to all of this. I think we have
14 to stop considering them a cow that we
15 just keep on milking, because sooner or
16 later they're going to end up leaving the
17 City, as many businesses have in the last
18 several years.

19 The NID is not the change that
20 we need for Callowhill North Chinatown.
21 All we've done is turn neighbor against
22 neighbor, and that's been by other
23 testimony prior to mine. And what we've
24 done is, we've almost created some kind
25 of a class or social warfare. What we've

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 done is destroy a lot of the friendships
3 that we've had in the neighborhood,
4 similar to what happened when we had the
5 stadium issue and also when we had the
6 gambling casino. Now we're going to have
7 this NID. It could certainly encompass
8 the same goal and results.

9 So what we don't want to do is
10 turn the neighborhoods of Philadelphia
11 into a private corporation, but instead
12 turn the neighborhoods over to the
13 participants and the people.

14 We keep telling the residents
15 of Callowhill that we don't have the
16 money to clean up the graffiti, to remove
17 the street lighting -- or improve the
18 street lighting, but what I would propose
19 maybe if we opened up publicly the budget
20 hearings, maybe we could provide that
21 money and then we wouldn't have this
22 situation with the NID. So until that
23 time comes, I would please ask that you
24 have no increase in taxes and vote no on
25 Bill 110307.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
4 for your testimony.

5 Councilmember --

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY:
8 Councilmember Greenlee, please.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Just very
10 quickly. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 Mr. Cibik, just one thing. You
12 say make your budget hearings open to the
13 public. Out budget hearings are
14 definitely open to the public. Three
15 months or so we're sitting in here every
16 day at budget hearings.

17 MR. CIBIK: Oh, they are open
18 to the public?

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Yes.

20 MR. CIBIK: I did not know
21 that.

22 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Come on
23 down.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Turn on
25 Channel 64, you'll find us.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 And one other thing. You talk
3 about the \$5 million for Paul Levy's
4 latest pet project --

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I don't
6 think that was -- was that you?

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It's
8 right here.

9 You're talking about Dilworth
10 Plaza? Is that what you mean? What do
11 you mean by --

12 MR. CIBIK: I did not mention
13 that. I took that out.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It was in
15 your written statement.

16 MR. CIBIK: I know. It's -- I
17 improvised a little and took it out.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
19 right.

20 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Made it a
21 little shorter, that's all.

22 MR. CIBIK: Time was of the
23 essence.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 for your testimony.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Please identify yourself for
3 the record.

4 MR. SCHALL: Thank you, members
5 of Council. My name is Robert Schall.
6 I'm an attorney in Philadelphia. I
7 represent a non-profit corporation called
8 North of Vine Associates. It's newly
9 formed, otherwise known as NOVA. And I
10 wanted to make a comment about the
11 conduct of the hearing today. We
12 appreciate Council's attention, their
13 good humor, their thorough investigation
14 of this matter. This is a highly
15 democratic process, and we applaud your
16 service. Thank you.

17 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

18 MR. SCHALL: I wanted to follow
19 up on an issue -- I also wanted to orally
20 amend my written supplement to the
21 Council where I refer to the MAA. Rather
22 it's meant to refer to the Community and
23 Economic Improvement Act that we're
24 talking about here today.

25 The concern of...

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.

3 We're listening, but what's really
4 critical here is the record, you get on
5 the record. We were just discussing a
6 witness list issue.

7 MR. SCHALL: You want me to
8 continue?

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
10 proceed.

11 MR. SCHALL: Okay. So
12 following up on what the gentleman said
13 here earlier about the Nigro case, what
14 most of the businesses and people in the
15 NID zone are concerned with are the fair
16 application of the assessment, and when
17 we look at the application of the
18 assessment, we look at whether or not
19 it's really -- is it an assessment or is
20 it really a tax. And a lot of questions
21 that people are asking are, you know, why
22 are certain properties exempt from this
23 assessment, what investigation has been
24 done to look at whether or not
25 non-profits that are in the zone should

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 really be held responsible for the same
3 assessment. And this gets down to
4 whether or not this is an assessment or a
5 tax. We think certainly that the way it
6 has been implied in the past with the
7 CCD, it's been a tax, and if it's been a
8 tax, then it should be uniformly applied.

9 I think there's some concern,
10 rightly or wrongly, about this idea that
11 in-kind services that could be supplied
12 by certain corporations would be uniform
13 under this scenario, and so we -- so the
14 business owners that are part of the
15 non-profit that have some of the same
16 goals as the sponsors of this bill feel
17 as if there is not a fair-handed
18 application. There will not be a
19 fair-handed application of the assessment
20 because of the --

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm just
22 curious. You're a non-profit?

23 MR. SCHALL: Yes.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Do you pay
25 the assessment?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. SCHALL: Our non-profit is
3 located at the Newtown Restaurant, and
4 they pay the taxes. They pay property
5 taxes.

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: It's
7 located in the same building as the
8 restaurant or it's in the restaurant?

9 MR. SCHALL: That is the
10 registered address of the non-profit.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm saying,
12 is it in a floor of the restaurant?

13 MR. SCHALL: That's just the
14 registered office for purposes of
15 receiving mail, but it's actually a
16 functioning restaurant who pays property
17 taxes.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You're
19 representing the restaurant or
20 the non-profit?

21 MR. SCHALL: No. I'm
22 representing a group of business owners
23 that are part of the North of Vine
24 Association.

25 So the argument is, with the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 final plan, that in the final plan they
3 talk about assessments that are to be
4 levied against people who benefit from
5 the services that are going to be
6 provided under this scheme, and we
7 believe that the assessments are not, as
8 stated in the final plan, uniform. We
9 don't believe that they can be uniformly
10 carried out, and we believe that that
11 violates the Pennsylvania Constitution.
12 So that's the --

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are you
14 contending that the non-profit should be
15 paying?

16 MR. SCHALL: Well, for certain
17 non-profits who are no longer at the
18 address in a tax assessment and there's
19 either a vacant building and they're not
20 performing any non-profit work, well,
21 then that property should be assessed.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: All right.
23 Please continue. I'm sorry. Please
24 continue.

25 MR. SCHALL: So that's the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 nugget of what NOVA and the business
3 owners are arguing about and saying, that
4 the tax and the assessment will not be
5 fairly uniform or applied fairly.

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Do you
7 have a list of those properties that are
8 no longer occupied that were once
9 occupied by non-profits?

10 MR. SCHALL: I don't.

11 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I would
12 appreciate it if you can get that list to
13 me.

14 MR. SCHALL: I'd be happy to.

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Because if
16 it's a freestanding building and it's
17 owned by an entity that is a private
18 owner, I would think that they should be
19 paying the tax, too. I would agree with
20 you there.

21 MR. SCHALL: Right.

22 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: We're not
23 talking about churches and religious
24 institutions, right?

25 MR. SCHALL: No, I'm not

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 talking about churches or religious
3 institutions.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Buildings
5 that once were occupied by non-profits
6 which are now vacant?

7 MR. SCHALL: Correct.

8 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Okay.
9 Please submit that to the Chair.

10 MR. SCHALL: I certainly will
11 be happy to.

12 And then I would just ask City
13 Council to recall the issues with the
14 previous tax involving the school budget.
15 Council had great trouble in terms of
16 coming up with a resolution in that
17 matter, and you did what was best for the
18 community, and I think you felt pain from
19 that and -- you certainly did, and the
20 pain that you may have felt then is the
21 pain that some of the people here are
22 feeling as well. And I know you're
23 sympathetic and you can see that on your
24 face, but we would object to the final
25 plan as stated with respect to how the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 tax is being collected, because we don't
3 think it's uniform.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
5 very much for your testimony.

6 MR. SCHALL: Thank you.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please,
8 Steve Crane and Victoria Siu.

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
12 identify yourself for the record and
13 proceed.

14 MR. CRANE: I'm Steve Crane. I
15 own a building in the NID. I have a
16 business there. My burden will be on the
17 \$2,000 a year level.

18 I live in the City. I've been
19 a resident of Councilman Clarke's area
20 for approximately 50 of my 66 years, and
21 I might point out that area, the Art
22 Museum, has done splendidly without the
23 burden of a NID, and there are a number
24 of objections that we, the majority, have
25 to this NID proposal.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Of course, we all know that
3 it's not affordable for the people. I
4 won't dwell on that. We also know that
5 the majority is against ceding control of
6 not only their dollars but the
7 neighborhood to a distinct minority. The
8 distinct minority, which as incorporators
9 of this proposed NID, would appoint
10 themselves to the Board of Directors and
11 have rights, if you read the bylaws, sir,
12 to appoint their successors, locking out
13 the majority.

14 I believe City Council, last I
15 checked, had to submit to the voters
16 every once in a while.

17 We also object to the nature of
18 the bureaucracy. Just to give an
19 example. We love trees. The people who
20 are in favor love trees. We all love
21 trees like apple pie. As determined
22 homeowners and as small business people,
23 there's not one of us that can't plant a
24 tree for a couple hundred bucks.

25 Now, Paul Levy was here. He

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 runs an institution that has a different
3 constituency. They love trees as well,
4 and they plant trees for \$4,000 each.
5 You can look at their website.

6 To us, that's like the \$400
7 hammer and the reason why we want to have
8 control ourselves and not to cede it to a
9 bureaucracy.

10 We do have alternatives, as do
11 exist in other neighborhoods quite
12 successfully, and, that is, an
13 incorporated neighborhood association
14 that does good work and does not have
15 involuntary taxes.

16 We also object to the sloppy
17 way that this bill has proceeded. There
18 are scores of people who have not
19 received anything, scores of people that
20 have not been outreached, and certainly
21 scores of people that have not had an
22 opportunity to get in a neighborhood
23 situation and have our opinions
24 expressed.

25 What we're asking City Council

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 to consider is to show the world that
3 Philadelphia respects the democratic
4 method, to show the world that
5 Philadelphia is not one of those mindless
6 tax-and-spend entities. What we are
7 asking City Council to do is, if you see
8 the 51 percent of the aggregate taxable
9 assessments are in favor of it and if,
10 furthermore, they have an open democratic
11 process where anybody can be elected to
12 the Board, then let's go. Until that
13 happens, don't move the bill.

14 Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
16 for your testimony.

17 Please identify yourself.

18 MS. SIU: Hi. My name is
19 Victoria Yu-Chen Siu. I do live in the
20 NID proposal on 13th and Spring Garden.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

22 MS. SIU: Good day, members of
23 City Hall, my neighbors and fellow
24 Philadelphians. I am here pleading for
25 the sanctity and respect of my beloved

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 homestead. With the home is attached a
3 mom-and-pop storefront in a diverse and
4 progressive community. All are being
5 threatened by wasteful big-business
6 tactics suited under a diabolical package
7 and titled Bill No. 110307 being opposed
8 today as spelled out by the Callowhill
9 Neighborhood Improvement District, Inc.

10 This erroneous bill demands
11 disproportionate tax burdens that will
12 drain your constituents out of their
13 blood, sweat and tears for such items,
14 for example and well stated in their
15 bill, \$247,370 in its first fiscal year
16 of spending, not limited to marketing and
17 promotion and personnel and
18 administration.

19 I am not going to waste time
20 and insult common sense that this bill is
21 wrong and can only hurt and devastate
22 families and businesses already in this
23 well-established and progressive
24 community.

25 Honestly, the deviant ability,

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 diabolical nature of these types of bills
3 undertaking the neighborhood improvement
4 category are irresponsible and dangerous
5 to many good-acting communities.

6 Bill No. 110307 is bringing
7 heavy hearts and devastation to a broad
8 spectrum of dignified individuals that
9 make up this community, this mixed
10 community, inclusive of employed and
11 underemployed and unemployed, this unique
12 district made of businesses, big and
13 small, this healthy-minded and supportive
14 community populated with faces of
15 mixed-income elders, individuals in need
16 of rehabilitative services, individuals
17 without home, diligent students,
18 intelligent professionals and growing
19 families, all of whom has been well
20 rooted from door to door, unit by unit,
21 store to store, space and place as
22 defined within the borders of this
23 progressive community without Bill No.
24 110307.

25 Truly, how can any good-faith

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 neighbor support a community instead of a
3 program dependent upon address per
4 address disharmony?

5 Please, City Council, for the
6 people, do the right thing and vote down
7 this bill promptly. In your show of
8 support of all the well-established,
9 diverse addressees affected by this bill
10 and for one taking root -- and for the
11 ones taking root for generations to come,
12 show the world that this first-class
13 city, my hometown, Philadelphia, cares
14 and does flourish with communities mixed
15 with harmonious families, mom-and-pop
16 shops, along with greater scale of
17 commerce. Show your respect to all of
18 the longtime tax-paying folks who day in
19 and day out do all they can to be
20 responsible neighbors, employers and
21 constituents in this steadily progressive
22 community.

23 We don't welcome bullies. We
24 are too wise for rip-off artists and
25 scammers. We have no need for any

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 entities, monsters suited in passive
3 aggressive tyranny in our gentle,
4 progressive and well-established
5 community.

6 Thank you for the opportunity
7 to speak and plea for the understanding
8 and for the immediate legislative action
9 to oppose and stop the madness installed
10 in Bill No. 110307. Please do not make
11 this agreement conceived by the
12 Callowhill Reading Viaduct Neighborhood
13 Improvement District.

14 Thank you. And I am a
15 Philadelphian since first grade, public
16 school, Morrison Elementary, Central High
17 School of Philadelphia, Drexel University
18 and presently University of Pennsylvania.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Terrific.

20 MS. SIU: Thank you.

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
22 for your testimony.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
25 DiCicco, please.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you.

3 In your testimony, you mention
4 you live at 13th and --

5 MS. SIU: 1240 Spring Garden
6 Street.

7 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And your
8 parents have a business?

9 MS. SIU: They had a business
10 there, which raised me and my siblings.

11 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: They still
12 have it?

13 MS. SIU: It's presently
14 closed, but the storefront is still a
15 retail site and is now my property, and
16 my property is known, as my
17 understanding, as mixed use. So I fall
18 under --

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Is it a
20 vacant storefront now?

21 MS. SIU: At this moment, it
22 is. It's being -- I'm in discussion of
23 entertaining viable lessees, yes.

24 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: What kind
25 of people are coming in? What types of

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 businesses are looking at
3 your storefront?

4 MS. SIU: Food service
5 operation, yes.

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Food
7 service meaning?

8 MS. SIU: Restaurants, yes, but
9 I'm open to others.

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Do you
11 think that if the mission of this NID
12 were to become a reality, cleaner, safer,
13 more attractive neighborhood, that would
14 not benefit the retailer who is looking
15 to open up your store? You don't think
16 that would create more business?

17 MS. SIU: I think that the
18 mission sounds wonderful. I think that
19 the approach and at this moment the way
20 it's presented in that stack of paper
21 that was mailed to my home and many of
22 the affected addressees is not correct.

23 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: We're
24 following the state mandate, which
25 requires public meetings and public

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 notification. That's all we can do here.

3 MS. SIU: No, no, no. I

4 welcome the U.S. mail being used properly

5 and the state law being respected. What

6 I don't welcome is the fact that they're

7 going to cause a burden -- it's

8 involuntary. It's not on a voluntary

9 basis. From what I understand, in a

10 community and neighborhood organization,

11 it's voluntary. Where what is being

12 presented in the mail and why I'm here

13 today and what I oppose is that it's

14 going to not be voluntary. It's going to

15 be subjected upon everyone, agreeable or

16 not.

17 (Applause.)

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Every

19 tax -- there are no voluntary taxes, with

20 the exception of the hotel tax, which the

21 hoteliers asked for, and the Center City

22 District tax, which the business

23 people -- but if you're talking about

24 federal income tax or state income tax or

25 city wage tax, there's no voluntary tax.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 You either pay or you go to jail.

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I don't
4 think --

5 MS. SIU: And those taxes are
6 not what we're discussing today.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I
8 understand.

9 MS. SIU: The bill is proposing
10 an additional type of surcharge as
11 described in the paper. I'm not here to
12 object the law and government of the
13 United States, no.

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank
15 you --

16 MS. SIU: Please make that
17 clear.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
19 for your testimony.

20 MS. SIU: You're welcome.
21 Thank you for your time.

22 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Richard
23 Antner, please, Takuma Nathuka and Tony
24 Intenzo.

25 (Witnesses approached witness

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 table.)

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
4 identify yourself for the record.

5 MR. ANTNER: Good afternoon.
6 My name is Richard Antner. I have four
7 properties on the north side of Vine
8 Street that abut Roman Catholic High
9 School. In those properties, I run a
10 business called Rich Art Graphics. We
11 produce large format digital printing.
12 It was started by my father at the end of
13 the Second World War in 1945. I'm second
14 generation. My two sons are now in the
15 business. So we have been in that
16 location doing what we do for 67 years.

17 The printing industry is part
18 and parcel of the advertising industry.
19 When times get tough, the first thing
20 that businesses will do is cut out
21 advertising, because it's the easiest
22 thing to get rid of.

23 When the economy turned sour in
24 2007, we got killed. Our sales went down
25 by like 25 percent. It's now four years

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 later and we still have not recovered.

3 If this NID goes through, which
4 I cannot afford, my participation is
5 going to be about \$1,100 a year. I can't
6 afford it. Times are really tough.

7 In terms of taking personal
8 responsibility and looking after your own
9 building, a couple years ago I put in all
10 new windows in my building. Six months
11 ago I painted the front of the building.
12 Two days ago I put in a new roof on the
13 building.

14 So I'm doing what I have to do
15 to maintain my property and the immediate
16 area in which my business is located. I
17 don't need a NID to do it for me.

18 I have tenants on the third and
19 fourth floor. It sounds strange, but it
20 really is so, there's a wedding chapel.
21 They do weddings for people who cannot
22 afford more luxurious weddings. They
23 wouldn't rent from me and they would not
24 be in my immediate area if they
25 considered my area unsafe.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 It's a nice area in which to
3 work, and I really don't see that this
4 proposal is fair. In these economic
5 times, people cannot afford it. I can't
6 afford it. I've been in business for 67
7 years and I can't afford it, and I urge
8 you not to let this go through.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
10 for your testimony.

11 Please identify yourself for
12 the record, whoever is going to go next.

13 MR. SU: My name is Victor Su,
14 and I'm representing my mother and father
15 who own property in the NID. We also --
16 they run a business out of a few of their
17 properties and we also have resided in
18 the area for almost 20 years.

19 MR. NATHUKA: My name is Takuma
20 Nathuka. I also own property and
21 business in the NID. We're partners on a
22 venture, so I'll speak on behalf of him.

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

24 MR. NATHUKA: Basically we have
25 been around as a small business for the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 past ten years. It started by my wife, a
3 female-owned business, and, of course, we
4 were in advertising as well, and we have
5 had to endure with this tremendous
6 hardships as the downturned economy has
7 forced us to segue into other aspects of
8 our business. And as of this year, we
9 have noticed, especially in our area,
10 exceedingly high rate of homeless,
11 literally camping out on our doorsteps,
12 eating, urinating, defecating. I have
13 pictures and videos of this, upon
14 request. Most not willing to move until
15 the police are summoned. A wait of
16 between 15 minutes to an hour and a half.
17 This, in turn, really affects us, our
18 customers, to the point where they do go
19 somewhere else, as well as Rich Art, as
20 well as the Vine Street Cafe, which is
21 another reason that they've had to close.
22 When these homeless people don't move,
23 there's nothing we can do.

24 And the only thing I have heard
25 about the new NID is from the testaments

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 of everyone else, is that the basis seems
3 about cleaning up and lighting, cleaning
4 up and lighting. I'm sure there must be
5 more to it, but if that's the case of
6 cleaning and lighting, it really doesn't
7 seem that it's pertinent to us, because,
8 first of all, I have taken it upon myself
9 and the local friends to clean up the
10 streets on a daily basis, and I've also
11 been fined for cleaning up the streets by
12 taking -- bagging up the garbage and
13 where do I place all this refuse?
14 Sometimes I have to put it on the street,
15 and then we get fined from the Streets
16 Commission for that.

17 But we take care of the trash
18 on a daily basis. So I don't see the
19 point of having the cleanup to have any
20 pertinence to this.

21 Another issue, just the area
22 that we've been in, we have low spots on
23 the street where water accumulates. This
24 water retains and it gets splashed on our
25 building. We've called Streets, Water

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 and gas departments for the past near
3 eight years to get this resolved. It's
4 been an interesting issue. It's never
5 been resolved.

6 So basically with issues like
7 these, like the core --

8 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Excuse me
9 for interrupting. Have you ever
10 contacted my office about that?

11 MR. NATHUKA: I have not
12 contacted your office, but I've
13 contacted --

14 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Please do
15 so tomorrow, Friday. Please do so.

16 MR. NATHUKA: Okay.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I'll try
18 to help you.

19 MR. NATHUKA: Because it's been
20 a balance, and I've recorded all the
21 phone calls.

22 So with issues like this, which
23 are real, we're adamantly against this
24 new NID, which creates unreasonable and
25 unjustified taxation without our

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 representation in this recession of
3 economy right now.

4 And, for example, the NID will
5 install street lights. The U-Haul across
6 the street from us has installed a
7 tremendous amount of lights. It looks
8 beautiful, looks bright, looks wonderful.
9 Now we have more homeless that are
10 reading under the nice beautiful street
11 lights, creating another interesting
12 effect at night.

13 The NID will clean the streets.
14 That would be very good, but we already
15 do this on a daily basis. Remove
16 graffiti? Well, that could -- that would
17 be nice, but we've already taken this.
18 I've purchased a power washer, as other
19 businesses locally know me. They are
20 welcome to use it, and we take care of
21 that as well. And you're welcome to use
22 my equipment.

23 So just in a nutshell, what do
24 we have to gain from this, by the NID
25 people that may not even live in this

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 area making these frivolous decisions for
3 us, which really do not seem clearly in
4 the best interest for us as well as to
5 take our hard-earned money? The answer
6 is, you know, for me it's nothing, and
7 it's just not fair. So offer vote no to
8 the Bill 110307.

9 Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
11 very much for your testimony.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.

14 Phillip Chan, Anis Nasr, Ken
15 Liang.

16 (Witnesses approached witness
17 table.)

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
19 identify yourself for the record and
20 proceed.

21 MR. NASR: My name Anis Nasr.
22 I'm a property and business owner within
23 the boundary of the bill.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
25 proceed.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. NASR: First, I want to
3 thank you by staying and listening to us.

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Oh,
5 absolutely. You're welcome.

6 MR. NASR: I'm here today
7 because I oppose what NID represent.
8 Because certainly does not represent me,
9 my opinion, nor my interest. And to make
10 it worse, clearly does not represent the
11 majority.

12 NID represent a group of people
13 who arbitrarily came up with idea of how
14 to spend my hard-earned money, people I
15 don't know, I never saw and they never
16 took my opinion or ask me if it would
17 affect me and my business. They clearly
18 represent their own interest and are far
19 from caring about our community.

20 How can NID be so negligent to
21 undermine the current economy situation?
22 Trying to keep our business open,
23 maintaining job and fair prices for our
24 customer has been a challenge. The tax
25 skyrocketing, and with an extra expense,

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 how long would we be able to stay in a
3 business?

4 How can anyone support the NID?

5 So why would you allow NID to impose such
6 burden on us? It is just not fair. Not
7 fair. And thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
9 very much for your testimony.

10 (Applause.)

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
12 identify yourself for the record and
13 proceed.

14 MR. CHAN: Yes. Thank you, my
15 dear Council. My name is Phillip Chan.
16 I have properties on 814 and 820 Spring
17 Garden Street. I'm now paying over
18 \$60,000 real estate tax.

19 I come to the Philadelphia in
20 1977. At that time, the United States,
21 Philadelphia, Chinatown was filled with
22 possibility and opportunity to
23 (unintelligible). Today I stand and work
24 at the same area, but the business tax
25 and the real estate tax was a lot more.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 More tax, more bankruptcy, less
3 opportunity, hard to do business.

4 Thank you, my Councilman.

5 (Applause.)

6 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
7 very much.

8 Please identify yourself for
9 the record.

10 MR. LIANG: My name is Ken
11 Liang and I'm speaking on behalf of my
12 uncle that's affected in the area.

13 What's going on is that, of
14 course, the economy is down, and now we
15 are putting more tax, like they said.
16 It's going to be hard for us to, let's
17 say, move on or develop in a sense.
18 Okay? Maybe \$700 a year, somewhere
19 around there that he's paying. He have
20 multiple property around there. But the
21 thing is that \$700 is not a lot to some
22 people or maybe some business, but bigger
23 business, of course, I'm probably sure
24 that they're paying more in that. Okay?
25 But like everyone said, we're in crisis

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 basically. Putting more taxes, more
3 burden. All right? Now we have to cut
4 hours on employees, less employment and
5 then it affects -- it's like a domino
6 effect. It's going to affect not just
7 the business, it's going to affect the
8 employees and everyone else.

9 And then there's a NOVA
10 association, non-profit. We would rather
11 have people donate money into a community
12 like you said than rather have NID come
13 in. We don't know who they are. We know
14 what PCDC is, and we know what people
15 that comes around us and telling us about
16 this proposal that's happening, you know.

17 We'd just rather not have the
18 NID in and rather have someone in our
19 community create a community to actually
20 clean up the neighborhood, and whoever is
21 in, is in. We don't have to be forced to
22 be taxed.

23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 very much for your testimony. Thank you.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 (Applause.)

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Jim Wade,
4 Anna Lu, Demetrius Berkas.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
8 identify yourself for the record, whoever
9 would like to start first.

10 MS. LU: My name is Anna Lu and
11 I'm here on behalf of my father who owns
12 property in the neighborhood, in the
13 affected area.

14 Just like a lot of immigrants,
15 my dad, he wants to be here today, but he
16 couldn't be here today because he have to
17 work. He wakes up 5 o'clock every
18 morning and goes to work for 12, 13 hours
19 a day so he can afford the mortgage and
20 afford school for me and my sister. And
21 he wants me to be here today to show
22 support to tell you guys that he wants to
23 vote no to the bill.

24 A few hundred dollar is not a
25 lot, like somebody said. It's just cable

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 bills, Comcast bills. But to a lot of
3 immigrants, it's a lot. It's food on the
4 table. It's electric bill, utility
5 bills. And no one should say that --
6 when they decided to come up with the
7 NID, nobody ever come out and ask my
8 father or get any opinions, nor did any
9 paperwork or anything that explained to
10 him what this is for. Everything that's
11 sent through the mail was in English,
12 which he doesn't understand, and nobody
13 ever gets his opinions.

14 So I don't think the bill is
15 fair, and on behalf of my father, please
16 vote no to the bill.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
19 for your testimony.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
22 identify yourself for the record.

23 MR. WADE: My name is Jim Wade
24 and I have a property, a business, at 445
25 North 11th street, and I started my

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 business April 1st, 1980. I don't have
3 to tell you that the last two to three
4 years have been difficult, but maybe I
5 do.

6 This tax increase couldn't come
7 at a more inoperative time. We've had a
8 30 percent decrease in work, had to cut
9 hours, do more and more to pay the bills.
10 It is a major problem, as I feel much of
11 the elected ruling body doesn't work in
12 the business world and doesn't understand
13 the businessman. Our pockets are thought
14 to be bottomless and a well to be drawn
15 from whenever the need arises.

16 In meeting with other business
17 owners in the area, I know I'm not alone,
18 and we are still in a serious recession.
19 I have a three-man shop and you might
20 say, well, I won't be missed. But I
21 provide service for a manufacturer that
22 still has the sign "made in the USA" on
23 his products. How rare is this? He has
24 30 to 50 employees and relies on me daily
25 to finish his product. We take pride in

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 our work.

3 The businesses in the City are
4 treading water and having to lay off not
5 just employees, but friends, families who
6 depend on them. The more debt laid at
7 our feet, the higher the unemployment and
8 the higher the tax burden on those left.
9 This is a downward spiral that we're in.
10 I pray for wisdom for all of us, and I
11 pray for your leadership as well.

12 Thanks.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
14 for your testimony.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
17 identify yourself.

18 MR. LING: My name is Kim Ling.
19 I own a small business in 1104 Buttonwood
20 Street and I am the property owner, too.
21 My son lives in one of my properties that
22 I own.

23 I pay a lot of tax. I have
24 four employees only. Every time I write
25 checks to tax, I sweat. I don't want any

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 more tax.

3 But still I want to improve my
4 communities. We have -- that's why we
5 set up association, NOVA. We can vote
6 the members. We can control them. If
7 they don't do good jobs, we kick them
8 out.

9 We don't want the NID. We
10 don't want the BID. I want to spend all
11 my money under our control.

12 Thank you.

13 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
14 very much for your testimony. Thank you.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thanks for
17 coming in.

18 John Yuen, Cheri Honkala and
19 Mike Untermeyer. Is Mr. Untermeyer here?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: No? Okay.

22 (Witnesses approached witness
23 table.)

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
25 identify yourself.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. YUEN: My name is John
3 Yuen. I did testify at the last hearing.
4 I was amended out since then, but as I
5 mentioned, my wife and I, we did start
6 the petition campaign.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.
8 You said you're in or out?

9 MR. YUEN: I'm out now. But
10 during our petition campaign, we heard a
11 lot of heart-felt stories from not just
12 residents, not just property owners as
13 well as business that is within the NID
14 currently.

15 I do have two small children I
16 do raise. I do work every day. In fact,
17 I did take off today as well as the first
18 hearing in support -- or actually in
19 opposition of this bill, and I'm going to
20 try to make it short. I understand it's
21 a very long day for everybody.

22 My name is John Yuen and I'm
23 currently the President of NOVA, North of
24 Vine Association. First, I'd like to
25 thank the member of City Council for this

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 opportunity to voice our concern
3 regarding this bill. Our members are
4 property owners as well as
5 long-established businesses in our
6 community.

7 We have heard many businesses
8 and property owner testimony earlier.
9 This bill that's in consideration will
10 have major impact to those who are
11 struggling to keep their business afloat,
12 especially in this economic time.

13 You can see that this community
14 consists of many ethnicities and not
15 solely Chinese. This community has a
16 unique history of accomplishment without
17 forced taxation. There are as many
18 community organizations per block as some
19 area have Starbucks, coffee shops. To
20 name a few, the Ho Yu Association, the
21 Philadelphia Chinatown Development
22 Corporation regularly provides services,
23 improve the area, apply for grants and
24 win approval of the citizens by listening
25 to them. This community gets the job

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 done and will continue to do so without
3 taxing its citizens.

4 So I would like City Council to
5 reconsider all the negative impact to its
6 citizens and businesses if this bill is
7 passed. This bill is simply not fair.

8 Thank you very much.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
10 for your testimony.

11 (Applause.)

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Councilman
13 DiCicco.

14 Hold on.

15 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I meant to
16 ask, you were at the meeting yesterday?

17 MR. YUEN: No, I wasn't.

18 Actually, I was at work.

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: When was
20 NOVA created?

21 MR. YUEN: About a week, two
22 weeks ago. And it basically was
23 understanding of mostly business owners
24 and --

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Just hold

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 on. Two weeks ago. It's a 501(c)(3)?

3 MR. YUEN: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Is there a
5 schedule in place on raising money for
6 things that NOVA would like to do and not
7 let them, whoever "them" are --

8 MR. YUEN: That's correct. One
9 of the things --

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So let me
11 ask you a question. Have you come up
12 with an assessment for each of the
13 business owners?

14 MR. YUEN: No. What we decided
15 as a group, who is our member, it's going
16 to be strictly a voluntary basis --

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So when --

18 MR. YUEN: --in terms of
19 contribution and donation.

20 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So how
21 many members are in NOVA?

22 MR. YUEN: Currently on the
23 official list is about 20 to 30.

24 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Twenty to
25 30 business owners and/or operators?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. YUEN: And also residents
3 within the neighborhood.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: And what
5 do you plan on doing to enhance your
6 business and/or community?

7 MR. YUEN: Well, in addition to
8 the current service that's provided like
9 from Callowhill, they do have cleaning
10 service, as well as the Chinese Christian
11 Church. We also plan to do the same
12 thing, to actually clean our
13 neighborhoods as well as providing
14 lighting and possibility, one of the
15 discussions that obviously we have to
16 raise funds for, camera system.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Lighting
18 to your individual property?

19 MR. YUEN: Individual property
20 as well as neighborhood blocks.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Where is
22 that money going to be generated from?

23 MR. YUEN: Again, this is going
24 to be strictly a voluntary basis.

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So if no

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 one donates money, you can't do the
3 things that you said you'd like to do.

4 MR. YUEN: Well, certain
5 things --

6 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Or if they
7 don't donate enough money to get those
8 services, you won't --

9 MR. YUEN: It depends again.
10 These are things, certain agendas, that
11 we want to actually put on the table, and
12 certain things we have budget for, we
13 will do. Certainly things like clean the
14 street does not require any particular
15 budget. We just require basically
16 muscles and sweat.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: I've been
18 doing this for 44 years and those muscles
19 after the first two events, they go away.

20 How do you -- I guess my point
21 I'm trying to make is, I've been
22 listening and we've been listening to "we
23 don't want them to control our
24 community." "Them" I assume you mean the
25 people who first came up with the idea of

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 creating a NID?

3 MR. YUEN: Yeah.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: My point
5 is, if you're voluntary -- it's going to
6 be a voluntary organization. So if you
7 don't raise money other than the muscle
8 to clean the street, you're not going to
9 accomplish anything, but if you do want
10 to do other things, you're going to have
11 to tax each other or voluntarily say give
12 us money.

13 MR. YUEN: Voluntary.

14 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Suppose
15 you have a lighting project that requires
16 a hundred thousand dollars.

17 MR. YUEN: Then, first of
18 all --

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: So 20
20 businesses will have to raise a hundred
21 thousand dollars, which is a lot more
22 than --

23 MR. YUEN: If we choose. If
24 the budget is not there, you have to live
25 within --

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: It won't
3 get done.

4 MR. YUEN: You can't say I want
5 a Cadillac when you can afford a
6 Volkswagen.

7 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: No
8 disrespect, which is what has happened
9 for the last 30 years in that community
10 until a new non-profit has been created
11 to address these problems.

12 MR. YUEN: But the first step
13 is actually taking initiative, and we
14 have taken initiative, and that's really
15 the first step, willingness to actually
16 take care of our own community.

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Why don't
18 you come together, as Councilman Kenney
19 said earlier, and work. As I said
20 yesterday and I believe Susan said
21 something earlier, this Board that
22 everyone thinks is going to be a
23 dictatorship has really not been
24 established yet. I will do everything in
25 my power to ensure that members of the

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 business community and property owners
3 are represented on that Board.

4 MR. YUEN: Absolutely. I
5 perfectly agree with that, but I just
6 received a package like from, I guess,
7 City Hall last week of August, it
8 wasn't -- I mean, I wasn't part of the
9 actual process.

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Well, I
11 know this association, I know the folks
12 here, and for 16 years, I know the
13 struggles and the attempts that they've
14 made to improve their community.
15 Notifications out, cleanup days, planting
16 of trees. It's been written about in the
17 newspaper. So when people tell me that
18 they don't know who these people are,
19 it's like they dropped out of the sky,
20 and they've been here for 30 years.

21 MR. YUEN: I applaud what
22 they're doing in terms of trying to do
23 the clean street. I applaud PCDC, what
24 they have done in the neighborhood, but
25 this is also another group of people who

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 also are willing to take it forward that
3 we want to be part --

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Then you
5 should be a part -- the NOVA could be
6 under the umbrella, if you will, of the
7 NID. You become the business entity or
8 interest involved in the NID. This could
9 be a win-win for everybody. I have never
10 seen -- and I'll end with this --

11 MR. YUEN: I'm not taxing our
12 neighbors.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Of all the
14 BIDs I've done in my district that have
15 all met with serious stiff opposition at
16 the outset -- I don't want to pay any
17 more taxes, we pay enough, business is
18 bad. I recognize and respect that -- not
19 one of those BIDs that had to be renewed
20 has not yet been renewed. Everybody is
21 in favor of it.

22 MR. YUEN: I'm not disagreeing
23 with your statistics. All we're saying,
24 give us a chance, because I think with
25 our -- I think our energy, we found --

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 within two weeks, we got a lot of people,
3 and all we do is just give a chance.

4 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Volunteers
5 won't get the job done, I will tell you
6 that.

7 MR. YUEN: I respect your
8 opinion, but I differ.

9 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I
10 appreciate it.

11 Just one final comment, and
12 I'll say this just to you as I've said it
13 to both John Chin and Mrs. Yep. These
14 things are not mutually exclusive. It
15 doesn't have to be one or the other.
16 It's just that -- I say I'm still -- as
17 much as I've sat through these hearings
18 for two sessions now, I still don't
19 understand the whole concept that if they
20 do this, you can't do NOVA.

21 MR. YUEN: Not necessarily. I
22 think we have the same cause in terms of
23 having cleaner, better community. I felt
24 as a homeowner -- and I'm busy with my
25 life, raising two children, and also my

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 wife works evening, so we're round the
3 clock. This is not something that we
4 want -- I want to go back to my life, but
5 with this issue, I mean, I felt really
6 strongly and passionate about.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I hear you.

8 MR. YUEN: There's no reason
9 why -- this is a great country. This is
10 democracy in the works.

11 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I think
12 PCDC and NOVA and the NID could all live
13 happily ever after, but...

14 MR. YUEN: I also wish to see
15 that one day.

16 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay.
17 Good.

18 MR. YUEN: Thank you.

19 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you.
20 Please identify yourself for
21 the record and proceed.

22 MS. HONKALA: My name is Cheri
23 Honkala and I am a green party candidate
24 running for Sheriff of Philadelphia.
25 I'm --

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I'm sorry.

3 Before you -- we had asked everybody, are
4 you in the NID?

5 MS. HONKALA: I was just going
6 to say that.

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Okay. I'm
8 sorry. Thank you.

9 MS. HONKALA: Again, my name is
10 Cheri Honkala and I'm a green party
11 candidate for Sheriff of Philadelphia. I
12 do not live in the neighborhood, but I
13 have been campaigning for months in
14 Chinatown and have been door-knocking,
15 and I'm the only candidate that has
16 translated posters on just about every
17 business in Chinatown.

18 The people of Callowhill and
19 North Chinatown are fighting to preserve
20 their neighborhood from a corporate
21 takeover, but it's not the usual bad guys
22 like the big banks foreclosing on homes
23 or BP polluting our drinking water. No.
24 It's some of our own City Councilmembers
25 that demand submission to corporate

10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

control.

They say that the people of North Chinatown are opposed to development because they want open spaces for affordable housing. Housing is a basic human right that comes before the profits for real estate developers. No residential property owner should ever be expected to subsidize the investments of developers.

They say that the people of Callowhill North Chinatown are opposed to progress. Is it because they refuse to pay for a vanity project for the privileged? Why should one neighborhood pay the annual maintenance costs for a public park that is open to everyone? If the money is not for the park, then why does Monday's Daily News article make it so clear that the goal remains the same for the backers of the NID?

They say that the people of Callowhill North Chinatown are cheap because they refuse to pay a modest

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 corporate tax of \$155 a year. That may
3 be a modest amount for the privileged,
4 but if you're raising a family or having
5 to pay medical bills, maybe 155 is a lot
6 of money. And if they can't afford to
7 pay their corporate tax, then the Sheriff
8 is expected to place a lien on their
9 property.

10 When I'm elected Sheriff, I
11 will not place a lien on anyone's
12 property because they cannot afford to
13 pay a corporate tax to NID, BID or any
14 other entity chartered by City Council.

15 It's time for City Council to
16 accept responsibility for neighborhood
17 improvements and stop the collusion with
18 real estate profitters and the privileged
19 to expect the people to subsidize their
20 profits.

21 Please do not pass this bill.
22 Gentrification and pushing neighbors
23 around and not involving them doesn't
24 equal a quality of life.

25 Thank you.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
3 for your testimony.

4 (Applause.)

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Is there
6 anyone else to testify on this bill?

7 Yes, sir. Please come forward.

8 Sir, you can take the short
9 way.

10 (Witness approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Please
13 identify yourself for the record.

14 MR. MOY: My name is George
15 Moy. I'm one of the founders of PCDC.
16 That was 45 years ago.

17 The following is my comments to
18 the bill that's being acted on:

19 Chinatown is a neighborhood
20 that has been chosen time and time again
21 for projects that no other community
22 wants. Many of the comments posted
23 regarding the issue of the Reading
24 Viaduct indicates a lack of knowledge of
25 Chinatown's past history. The following

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 facts are an attempt to inform the
3 uninformed of what makes this ethnic
4 community what it is today:

5 For example, the Independence
6 Mall redevelopment project reduced
7 Chinatown by approximately 15 percent and
8 stretches all the way to the east side of
9 9th Street. The residents at the time
10 were not aware of the significance of
11 this project as it took place in the late
12 1950s and early 1960s. The people were
13 not organized to meet those challenges.

14 The Vine Street Expressway
15 sliced Chinatown in half. It also
16 removed another approximately 15 percent
17 of a vibrant community. It threatened to
18 eliminate the only facility built in the
19 United States specifically for the
20 Chinese, the Holy Redeemer Chinese
21 Catholic Church and School. It is of
22 historical significance.

23 There was a proposal to
24 construct a ramp from the Expressway that
25 ran south to Market Street. This ramp

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 would have destroyed all three of the
3 christian churches in its path. The
4 churches provide an invaluable service in
5 assimilating the immigrants.

6 An alternate plan was in place
7 of a -- an alternate plan in place of a
8 single ramp described above as two ramps
9 on either side of Chinatown.

10 Fortunately, the plan did not come to
11 fruition.

12 The Center City Commuter Tunnel
13 was built between 9th and 8th Streets in
14 the 1970s. It was not actively opposed
15 by Chinatown, as the community had its
16 hands full in dealing with the many other
17 projects noted herein.

18 Originally the Metropolitan
19 Hospital was located in Society Hill.
20 They were relocated to 8th and Race
21 Streets. It dashed Chinatown's plan to
22 relocate residents and businesses that
23 were being displaced by urban renewal.

24 The Market Street East Urban
25 Renewal Plan consists of a series of

10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

garage structures on the south side of Arch Street that stretches from 8th to 12th Street. It effectively boxed in and would have isolated Chinatown had not Chinatown negotiated a solution, the Chinatown Gate at 10th and Arch Streets.

The Gallery project also impacted Chinatown both pro and con. Initial construction had no input from its neighborhood to the north. It had solid concrete panels facing Chinatown until it accepted PCDC's recommendation to have clear glass panels on either side of the 10th Street overpass.

COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Mr. Moy?

MR. MOY: Thereby --

COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Mr. Moy, can I just interrupt you, respectfully, for a moment. I think most of us here are all relatively aware of the history of the Chinatown development issues, but could you confine to what any of these projects have to do with the NID, because that's really what we're trying to get on

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 the record.

3 Do you live in the NID? I'm
4 sorry. We had asked every witness if you
5 live in the NID or not.

6 MR. MOY: I don't necessarily
7 believe that all the Councilpeople are
8 aware of the history of what Chinatown
9 had to face in the last --

10 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: And I
11 respect and I appreciate that, but we
12 have to remember too, I grew up at 3rd
13 and Snyder and they built a highway right
14 down the middle of my neighborhood, and
15 it was an Irish American neighborhood and
16 to the north it was a Polish American
17 neighborhood, and those people were all
18 displaced. Sometimes governments do
19 stupid things and it affects people, but
20 I don't know whether highway location
21 was -- I mean --

22 MR. MOY: I'll try to --

23 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: They
24 wrecked the eastern end of South Philly,
25 and I got over it. I mean, it's like --

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 MR. MOY: I'll try to make it
3 brief by just mentioning some of the
4 other projects without describing it.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: I just want
6 you to --

7 MR. MOY: There was the
8 Convention Center I and the extension.
9 There was the federal prison. There was
10 a Phillies ball park proposed and also
11 the casinos.

12 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: You're
13 welcome, because we knocked that ball
14 park out of the park. When I was sitting
15 over here, we did that, if you remember.

16 MR. MOY: Why would anyone want
17 to hamper or destroy Chinatown? We are a
18 neighborhood that should be replicated,
19 assisted in its growth and not stunted
20 for the following reasons, and I'll just
21 read quickly through those.

22 The poor and well-to-do live
23 side by side in Chinatown in harmony.
24 There are thriving, hard-working people
25 of family orientation. Juvenile

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 delinquency is practically non-existent.
3 Crime committed by others, not residents.
4 The recent arrivals and the old-timers
5 support one another. Assimilation is
6 rendered by the churches and schools.
7 Non-profits are supported by the people.
8 Volunteer services such as clinics, legal
9 aid are rendered by many in the
10 community. Any new taxes, especially in
11 this recession, is sure to be a job
12 killer. The taxation without
13 representation, this is what that is.

14 Now, I'll cut this down, too.

15 Mr. Struble, one of the
16 supporters of the NID, described the
17 Viaduct as scary. Well, dressing it,
18 putting icing on it is not going to
19 change the nature of it. It's going to
20 make it permanent.

21 Now, Chinatown -- PCDC funded
22 itself -- funded a three-month pilot
23 program to clean up Chinatown, and it was
24 a success. We wanted to use the pilot
25 program to talk the businesses in

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 Chinatown and the residents to make that
3 program a success. We're now -- we've
4 been involved in that, and we're having
5 some success.

6 Now, the Center City District
7 wanted Chinatown to be part of that
8 program, their program. The problem was
9 that you would have dozens of street
10 cleaners, about two or three in a pack,
11 walking down the street, picking up
12 cigarette butts and whatever. The one
13 person that we hired in this three-month
14 program did the work of those dozens.
15 So, you know, you're a business person
16 and you see a group of people shooting
17 the bull in a side alley or side yard or
18 on a side street and you know you're
19 going to be having to pay for that, that
20 doesn't induce or persuade business
21 owners to want to be part of that
22 program. We're trying to do it ourselves
23 more efficiently so that it becomes a
24 permanent program.

25 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Mr. Moy,

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 the NID does not affect Chinatown. It's
3 not within the boundaries.

4 MR. MOY: Chinatown North.

5 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: But the
6 Chinatown -- you hired people to do
7 Chinatown. You're talking about --

8 MR. MOY: Yes. It can be
9 extended. We can --

10 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Okay.

11 MR. MOY: -- convince the
12 people --

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: You do
14 know that Hing Wah Yuen is out? They're
15 not in the boundaries. Do you know that?

16 MR. MOY: Pardon me?

17 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: That Hing
18 Wah Yuen is out, they're not part of
19 this.

20 MR. MOY: Yes. But to me,
21 that's conquer and divide. Divide and
22 conquer.

23 (Applause.)

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Wait a
25 minute. Do you want back in?

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: If you
3 would like, I would amend the bill right
4 now and put Hing Wah Yuen back in. So if
5 the NID passes, you will be taxed.

6 (Applause.)

7 MR. MOY: When you jump off a
8 cliff --

9 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: You want
10 Hing Wah Yuen back in? Is that what
11 you're saying?

12 (Audience members yelling
13 "yes.")

14 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Why did
15 you tell us to take it out two weeks ago?

16 MR. MOY: No. You suggested
17 it.

18 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Aren't the
19 same thing -- don't the same poor people
20 who couldn't afford the NID still live in
21 Hing Wah Yuen?

22 MR. MOY: They didn't realize
23 what that offer meant.

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Thank you
25 very much for your testimony. I

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 appreciate that.

3 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: That's the
4 most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

5 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Anyway,
6 we're just waiting for one returning
7 Councilmember.

8 That will conclude our public
9 hearing on this issue and we are waiting
10 to convene our public meeting. We are
11 waiting for Councilman Rizzo to return.
12 He'll be back in a few minutes.

13 (Pause.)

14 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: We will now
15 convene our public meeting with a quorum
16 present of Councilmen Rizzo, Clarke,
17 Greenlee and DiCicco.

18 The Chair recognizes
19 Councilmember DiCicco to offer amendments
20 to Bill No. 110307.

21 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman. Amendments have been
23 distributed to all members of this
24 Committee. I would move for the adoption
25 of the amendments.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 (Duly seconded.)

3 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Moved and
4 seconded.

5 All in favor?

6 (Aye.)

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: There are
8 none opposed. Bill No. 110307 will be
9 amended accordingly.

10 The Chair recognizes
11 Councilmember DiCicco for a motion on the
12 amended bill.

13 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: Thank you,
14 Mr. Chairman. I move that Bill No.
15 110307, as amended, be reported out of
16 this Committee with a favorable
17 recommendation -- one technical question.

18 (Off-the-record discussion.)

19 COUNCILMAN DiCICCO: -- with a
20 request for a suspension of rules so as
21 to allow first reading at the next
22 session of City Council.

23 (Duly seconded.)

24 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Moved and
25 seconded.

1 10/27/11 - RULES - BILL 110307

2 All in favor?

3 (Aye.)

4 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: Are there
5 any opposed?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILMAN KENNEY: There are
8 none opposed. Bill No. 110307, as
9 amended, will be reported out of this
10 Committee favorably and a request made
11 for rules suspension to allow for first
12 reading at our next Council session.

13 That concludes the Rules
14 Committee for today.

15 (Committee on Rules concluded
16 at 4:35 p.m.)

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2 CERTIFICATE

3 I HEREBY CERTIFY that the
4 proceedings, evidence and objections are
5 contained fully and accurately in the
6 stenographic notes taken by me upon the
7 foregoing matter on October 27, 2011, and that
8 this is a true and correct transcript of same.

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14 MICHELE L. MURPHY
15 RPR-Notary Public
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17
18

19 (The foregoing certification of this
20 transcript does not apply to any reproduction
21 of the same by any means, unless under the
22 direct control and/or supervision of the
23 certifying reporter.)
24
25