COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

St. Williams School
6234 Rising Sun Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, May 8, 2012
6:40 p.m.

PRESENT:
COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

BILLS 120164, 120164, 120166, 120173, 120174, 120175 and 120230
RESOLUTION 120167

- - -

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good evening, everyone. We're going to start now. Thank you.

Good evening, everyone.

(Good evening.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good evening, everyone.

(Good evening.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: That's what I'm talking about. Participation is a wonderful thing.

Good evening, everyone. My name is Council President Darrell Clarke. We're here this evening to have a great time. I want to thank you all for coming. This is a public hearing, an official public hearing. So there will be certain guidelines associated with the testimony.

We will be asking that you limit your comments to three minutes, primarily because we want to give an opportunity for everybody to speak. We have a very long witness list. So you

can make your statements, and if there are required comments, the Councilmembers will ask you questions and kind of ask you to go along with the guidelines, because we want to be able to get everybody -- give everybody an opportunity this evening.

I would like to, first of all, go through the public process and then we'll get into a little bit of conversation relating to our host and some other individuals.

First of all, I'd like to start this process by saying this is a continuation of the public hearing of the Committee of the Whole regarding Bills No. 120164, 120165, 120166, 120173, 120174, 120175, 120230 and Resolution No. 120167.

Ms. Lewis, would you please read the titles of the bills and resolution.

MS. LEWIS: Bill No. 120164, an ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for

the six Fiscal Years 2013 through 2018 inclusive.

Bill No. 120165, an ordinance to adopt a Fiscal 2013 Capital Budget.

Bill No. 120166, an ordinance adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2013.

Resolution No. 120167, a resolution providing for the approval by the Council of the City of Philadelphia of a Revised Five Year Financial Plan for the City of Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years 2013 through 2017, and incorporating proposed changes with respect to Fiscal Year 2012, which is to be submitted by the Mayor to the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority (the "Authority") pursuant to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an ordinance of this Council approved by the Mayor on January 3rd, 1992 (Bill No. 1563-A), by and between the City and the Authority.

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Bill No. 120173, amending Section 19-1806, entitled "Authorization of Realty Use and Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the Board of Education of the School District of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the use or occupancy of real estate within the School District of Philadelphia, under certain terms and conditions.

Bill No. 120174, amending Chapter 19-1500 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Wage and Net Profits Tax," by repealing Section 19-1508, entitled "Refunds and Forgiveness for Poverty Income."

Bill No. 120175, authorizing real estate taxes for the City of Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia for Fiscal Year 2013 and thereafter, by amending Chapter 19-1300 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate Taxes," to provide for a tax and tax rate on real property, for exclusions, and for an established

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pre-determined ratio; and by amending Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "School Tax Authorization," to further authorize the Board of Education of the School District of Philadelphia to impose a tax on real estate within the City of Philadelphia, and providing for a tax rate and for exclusions; all under certain terms and conditions.

Bill No. 120230, authorizing real estate taxes for the City of Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia for Fiscal Year 2013 and thereafter, by amending Chapter 19-1300 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate Taxes," to provide for a tax and tax rate on real property; and by amending Chapter 19-1800 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "School Tax Authorization," to further authorize the Board of Education of the School District of Philadelphia to impose a tax on real estate within the City of Philadelphia, and providing for a tax rate; all under

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certain terms and conditions.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Ms. Lewis.

This evening we continue to hearing of the Committee of the Whole to consider various bills read by Ms. Lewis that constitute proposed operating and capital spending measures for Fiscal 2013, a capital program and a forward plan for Fiscal 2014 through Fiscal 2017.

We are here this evening to continue the deliberative process. This body would love to hear from you, as I'm sure we will this evening.

Right now I would like to thank the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Mr. Bill Dolbow of the 34th Ward Leader -- sorry; 35th Ward Leader. Mr. Dolbow, you did it up right.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: If you continue to feed sandwiches and other types of food, we well come back every time, sir. Thank you.

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I would also like to extend thanks to my good friend, Councilwoman Marian Tasco, who I would like to recognize at this time.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Good evening, everyone.

(Good evening.)

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I certainly want to say welcome and thank you for coming to our City Council public hearing here in the Northeast, the Lawncrest section of Philadelphia, Lawndale area.

I want to thank my colleagues, certainly the President of City Council, for convening these public meetings around the City -- public hearings so that the constituencies we represent can come and share with us your thoughts about what's happening in the community as it relates to the budget.

The President will introduce the other Councilmembers who are here, and there will be others who will come. We just finished a hearing on the School District in City Council about ten minutes to 5:00 and we were coming from Center City. Some of them don't know where this is, and will join us.

But I certainly want to say, again, thank you to Bill Dolbow, who is not only the Ward Leader of the 35th Ward, but the President of the Lawncrest Civic Association.

Let's give him another round of applause.

(Applause.)

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: He certainly has a very active and engaging civic association, and we appreciate his leadership. He works very well with me and my office on the issues that we have to address in this community.

So we are appreciate your leadership, Bill.

Let me recognize just some of the people in the community who -- I won't name those who are going to testify, but who we've been working with. Charlie Harris is here representing State Senator Shirley Kitchen. Charlie is still here. He's over there probably eating one of those delicious sandwiches.

Jeff Hackett, who heads up the Sturgis Advisory Board, which is at 65th and 2nd Avenue in the Olney area. Ducky Birts, who represents the Office of Congressman Bob Brady; Eric Hardaway, who represents the Office of State Representative Dwight Evans; Lieutenant Tomlin from the 2nd District; Captain McCarrick from the 2nd District. The police officers in this district are very cooperative and they're always here, and we really appreciate their support and their service to this city and to this community.

We have Mr. Otis Cook from the Department of Streets, the Enforcement

Supervisor there, here to listen, those staff members who are here to hear your concerns around the areas that they're in. They will not be testifying, probably will not be speaking, but will take your concerns back to their office.

Ms. Janice Shulman, the 53rd -- where are you Janice? There she is standing in the back. She's the Ward Leader of the 53rd Ward.

Thank you all for coming.

And Father Joe Watson of St. Williams. Father, thank you so much for allowing us to come. We really enjoy coming to this facility, because you're always so welcoming and allow us to come in and have whatever kind of programs we have. We thank you so much for your service to this community.

So I'd like to thank you again for coming and hope that -- if you have not signed up to testify, please go to the table over to the right and sign up, and your name will be called in turn.

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Thank you again.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Will you dance for us?

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Next time.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm sitting next to a star. Thank you so much, Councilwoman.

Right now I'd like to recognize the Councilmembers here today: Councilman Bill Greenlee to my left, who is a Councilmember at-large, obviously Councilwoman Tasco, Councilman Kenyatta Johnson, Councilman Mark Squilla and Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez. I want to thank them for being here this evening.

As I said earlier, this particular session is for purposes of giving statements and comments and testimony relating to this particular fiscal year's budget. So we'd ask that you please try to limit your comments to the budget process that we are in the midst of.

I think, Councilwoman, you have some people here, staff members here for other issues?

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Yes. We have -- the table in the back we have staff members. If you have a constituent problem or something that you want us to address, please give it to the staff so that we can handle it through the office. We're here to talk about the budget issues and how we pass the budget, what we spend your money on in City government.

So they are in the back. All my staff is here. So please give your problems, your concerns, to those staff members.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Councilwoman.

We're going to start now. Ms. Lewis, would you please read the name of the first individual who is going to testify.

MS. LEWIS: Bill Dolbow.

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(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. DOLBOW: Good evening, everyone.

(Good evening.)

MR. DOLBOW: I'd like to thank you all for coming out. President, thank you for coming here and having this session. I know most of you, everybody up there. I want to thank you for all your help, and I'm sure I helped every one of you, and I want to continue to do that service.

One person up there is lucky that they showed up, and that's Mr. Squilla. Can you raise your hand, sir, so everybody knows who you are.

Mark Squilla, I don't know if you know, him and I worked for the Auditor General for 27 years together before he ran for Council. So congratulations to you.

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And Billy was my boss.

MR. DOLBOW: Don't forget that.

Did you know there's food back there? Did you know there's food back there?

COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: No, I didn't. I missed it.

MR. DOLBOW: See, that's how much you know him.

I'd like to thank everybody here for coming to Lawncrest. What we consider Lawncrest is, it's two neighborhoods in one. It's.

Crescentville that came up to the recreation center and Lawndale starts. That's where they came up with Lawncrest. So if you didn't know that. We think it's Lawncrest. It's the city of Lawncrest in the County of Philadelphia. That's the way we look at it, and everybody is always welcome here.

There's a couple of issues that I'd just like to talk about. Being the President of the community association, the biggest thing that we have is L&I

issues, and that's a real important thing, quality of life. We know it's tough. I was out with Dwight Evans a couple weeks ago and we were doing the neighborhood, and we came up -- it was a Saturday, and there was a guy spray painting a car right next to the recreation center, and there's nowhere you can call on a Saturday. I mean, that's the things that we need to get to.

CLIP, which is a great organization that helps us out very much, keep them going, but at the same time, again, a couple people that I'd like to mention. Marian Tasco, having her as a Councilwoman, none of you guys -- if you don't know, she's just so wonderful for us. I mean, her staff, it's just -- it's great to have a Councilperson that does their job. And thank you for everything you do for us.

So I have nothing else to add. The next speaker is going to continue where I left off.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

MR. DOLBOW: But thanks for coming. You're always welcome back.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

MS. LEWIS: Phil Grutzmacher.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. GRUTZMACHER: Good evening.

Is that ringing? No. Okay. I gotta talk fast.

Good evening. My name is Phil Grutzmacher and I am the Secretary of the Lawncrest Community Association as well as a member of the Association's Zoning and L&I Committee. I would like to reinforce the testimony of President Dolbow concerning how critical the enforcement of L&I regulations is to communities such as Lawncrest.

On a strictly voluntary basis, community groups such as ours serve as the crucial eyes and ears for the Department of License and Inspection.

Essentially we serve as the intelligence-gathering operation of the City with respect to land use regulation.

While we are happy to serve this quality of life enhancing function for our communities, it is important that the City uphold its end of the bargain as well. L&I must be given adequate resources to enable vigorous enforcement of zoning and other land use regulations. Nothing is more frustrating for us than to win a case before the Zoning Board only to have the disallowed use continue unabated. Disallowed duplexes and triplexes that continue to operate unabated are an especially egregious example of this phenomenon.

Citizen reporting and subsequent inspection and enforcement of L&I regulations are all important parts of land use regulation. The institution of the 3-1-1 system has greatly enhanced the reporting part of this equation. We urge the Council to adequately fund the

inspection and enforcement parts of the equation as well.

By our continued presence in the community, we are holding up our end of the bargain. We urge the City to uphold its part as well.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Gordon Myles. Gordon Myles.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. GORDON: Thank you. It's actually Myles Gordon.

Council President Clarke and fellow Councilmembers, briefly, just to go back to what Bill said, 3-1-1 is not open on the weekends, and I remember on January 22nd when there was ice on the streets, there was no one you could call to get streets salted. I even called the

police. They tried to be helpful, but I had a lot of senior citizens, because I'm a committee person in my neighborhood, and no department, even PECO, PGW, nobody knew who to call to get certain streets that were a sheet of ice that morning when it was very cold taken care of. So that may be an issue you want to look into.

But I'm here to discuss the budgetary process, and, in particular, I want to follow up on last year's hearings. One person seemed to stand out last year because of what he asked, and it was ironically former Senator Milton Street. And he asked, How do we get a $600 million budget deficit in the School District? This year it's somewhat less, but nobody really can answer that question. And we really need to get into that question, because it affects real estate taxes, the potential of the AVI increases and many other issues that are destroying our city.

First and foremost, how can a School District that can't even manage their budget teach our kids how to manage their budget when they have families? That's a serious problem, and we ought to look into it.

I think Councilman Oh and some others have really touched on that issue this past week when he said there's no accountability for our School District, because the state is running it. But even years ago when the City ran it, there is nobody overseeing that School District budget, and they really need to have an overseer. So how about letting some of us people be part of a community process or an oversight board, like they have with the Police Department, to have some input and suggestions and maybe even some mandatory authority to do what we need to do to make our schools better, to make our kids get a better education, and so we don't have to sit here every year and get another real estate tax increase,

whatever name you give it. It would seem to make your job easier, our job easier and keep people, particularly middle-income people, staying in Philadelphia instead of moving to the suburbs. Because if you go with the AVI and we raise the real estate taxes, guess what? A lot of middle-income people are going to say, You know, I can go to Abington or I can go to Camden County or somewhere else. For the difference, it's going to be smaller and smaller. We can move.

One other quick thing would be in relation to audits. Maybe we can have independent audits of PGW, PECO, the Parking Authority, SEPTA, the schools and Water Revenue and see what's really going on there, but if you decide to do that, it's got to be done by a firm outside of Pennsylvania so there will be no potential political interference, and we can find out what's really going on and how to manage the City better within

fiscal constraints.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Sue Rosenthal.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. ROSENTHAL: Members of City Council, welcome to the Northeast. My name is Sue Rosenthal. My address is 1343 Ascot Place in the farthest northern part of our city, and I am a proud Philadelphian.

Since 1973, I have chaired the Community Board of Health Center 10, the Judge Edward B. Rosenberg Health Center on Cottman Avenue, and thank you for naming it after such an important and loved Philadelphian.

It is the busiest of the eight City health centers. For an initial appointment at my health center, the wait is eight to ten months. Since last June 30th, we have served 15,337 patients who were treated in 57,973 visits.

Our City's eight public health centers last year treated a total of more than 90,000 Philadelphians in over 400,000 visits. New clients are increasing at 6 percent a year. Just in the Northeast alone, there are 60,000 Philadelphians who have no health services. Think of the tremendous needs of the rest of the City.

Health Commissioner Dr. Schwarz recognizes the need for another health center. He is seeking federal and private funding. It will also need some City capital funds in addition to what Dr. Schwarz is successful in obtaining.

Many Philadelphians are unable to seek medical services until their health is severely compromised, because they have no insurance and no way to pay for medical treatment. Our health centers must be supported. They are the first line of defense of the health of our Philadelphia citizens.

Sick adults don't work and

don't earn. Sick children don't go to school and don't learn. Allocating funds for our health is the responsibility of our City government.

You do have partners in helping to fund our health centers. Every 23 cents the City spends provides a dollar's worth of health center care. Charges to clients, Medicare, Medicaid and private insurance provide the other 77 cents. I would invest 23 cents to earn a dollar in a heartbeat.

For Philadelphians, the health centers need every penny you provide them and more. Please do not cut their funds.

Thank you for listening.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

MS. LEWIS: Therese Garvin.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. GARVIN: Good evening. Thank you for having me. My name is

Therese Garvin. I'm of the President of the PFD's Families Association and I'm the wife a firefighter of 20 years. I'm here tonight to talk about the dangers of brownouts. There was three teens that died in a Tacony fire on Torresdale Avenue. Engine 38, which was demolished, was two minutes away. I'm sure their family doesn't really care that a chief's car got there in three minutes with no tools or water, or as the Commissioner likes to say, in national standard time.

The Fire Administration is so caught up with fire safety and people having smoke detectors, but they randomly close three firehouses every day and every night. How does this make sense? Do I think that a smoke detector could drag my kids out of a fire? Absolutely not. Do I think that a smoke detector is important? Yes. We agree with the Administration about smoke detectors being important, but would it be safe to have one working smoke detector in your

house and just move it from floor to floor randomly every night before you go to bed?

They know brownouts are unsafe, and I find it every time they say they're not, they insult my intelligence, and I find it offensive.

There was also a Sparks Street fire where there were several deaths, is another example of the dangers of brownouts. Engine 51, which is several miles away, were on the scene in six and a half minutes. Engine 61 was browned out. It could have been there in three. We tested these times in traffic.

We can only speculate that these deaths could have been prevented. Logic says the outcome definitely would have been different.

We can't predict fate, but the City Administration and the Fire Administration are putting the almighty dollar before the fate of the citizens and its firefighters. It's so sad to see

that the very people who ask my husband and his fellow firefighters to protect the City and their families are doing the absolute minimum to protect them.

I could stand here before you tonight and talk about that we haven't had a raise in three and a half years or that the equipment has been downgraded, but right now their safety is our priority.

Firefighters and their families are simple people. We don't drive fancy cars or go on lavish vacations. We get excited every year when we get our calendar to find out if we can spend Christmas or Thanksgiving together. My point is, we gladly make sacrifices because our loved ones just love being firefighters.

I expect and plead that this city does everything in their power to make sure he comes home to me. The nightmare the Sweeneys and Nearys are living right now is something we all

fear. When I see a red chief's car ride down my street, I literally get sick to my stomach. When they pass my house, I bless myself and thank God and know that at least today, right now, he's safe and he's coming home.

Please, just do whatever is in your power to let my husband come home to me. Let him have an opportunity to retire with me and dance with his daughters at their wedding. Please protect him like he protects you.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Cathy Scott.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. SCOTT: Good evening, Council President Clarke, Councilmembers and neighbors. My name is Catherine Scott and I am President of AFSCME District Council 47. Our members are librarians, recreation leaders, nurses and doctors in the health centers and

probation officers, to name a few jobs. Like you, those local union members and I live and work in the City of Philadelphia. I live in Fox Chase. We pay the same taxes and receive the same City services as everyone here.

No matter the rhetoric, the proposed budget gives us the clearest picture of the priorities of the Nutter Administration. Over the years, I have testified before City Council and suggested ways that the City could save money and/or enhance revenues. Most of those suggestions have been adopted in some form by this Administration. I have been a strong advocate of payment in lieu of taxes for non-profits who do not pay real estate taxes, and I am hopeful that the recent Supreme Court decision will spur it to be more aggressive and reviewing whether non-profits should pay real estate taxes.

This Administration seems to believe that expensive consultants and

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contractors, most of whom never lived in the City of Philadelphia nor paid real estate taxes or the same percentage of sales tax we pay, know more about providing services to Philadelphians than the employees who actually do the work.

Since 2008, I have testified about the exploding costs of contracting out in the City budget and the savings which could be achieved by hiring City employees to perform this work. This year I will focus again on the Department of Public Health, which has 36 percent of the work performed by contractors.

For example, since 2007, two contracted agencies have provided pharmacy services, PharmPro and General Healthcare Resources. Each pay contracted pharmacists $70 per hour. City pharmacists are hired at 37.32 per hour. PharmacyPro's contract in 2007 was $495,000. The 2010 to '11 contract was $1,775,685, an increase of 359 percent.

In his testimony on April 30th,

2012, Dr. Schwarz was asked if there was a difference between the cost of contract employees and civil service employees. He testified that the costs are comparable. Compare this to Dr. Schwarz's testimony in 2011 when he agreed with my testimony that there were significant potential savings in the Health Department if the Department hired civil service employees.

Since contracts like I just cited are much more expensive, Dr. Schwarz's testimony to you defies belief.

The City cannot maintain services to its citizens with the staff reductions contained in this budget. No one explains to the public the departments are so understaffed that it is impossible to provide adequate services. This budget proposal continues to punish non-uniform City employees, who have sacrificed by not receiving a raise since 2007. Their net pay is much less

now than four years ago, and the Nutter Administration's Five Year Plan projects no raises through 2017. That is ten years without a raise. This is a matter of dignity. Yet, this budget and the accompanying Five Year Plan even assumes savings from employees beyond this Mayor's term.

At the same time, the City has and continues to divert substantial City resources to new discretionary spending initiatives by borrowing money in order for the City to have improvements, and the impact on this city's mounting debt from new discretionary spending diminishes funding for services related operating expenditures.

Budgets clearly define our priorities. This Administration thinks it is more important to renovate Love Park or build a skating rink outside City Hall than have contracts with its employees which include fair wage increases and benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Ms. Scott.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: John Krol. John Krol.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. KROL: Good evening. Sitting off to my right and Jeff Hackett in the back are all employees of the School District like myself, and they have come out tonight to offer support. So I'd just like to acknowledge them.

Some of the Councilmembers, Ms. Sanchez, President Clarke and Mr. Greenlee, I met before. I had the opportunity to speak at a City Council "save the jobs" hearing and I also spoke three times at the SRC meetings.

Good evening. To the members of Philadelphia City Council Committee of the Whole, I am John Krol, a proud

employee of the Philadelphia School District Maintenance Department for over 19 years. All the members of my union, Local 1201, 32 BJ, 2,700, have all been served with layoff notices, which includes all the building engineers, all cleaners, all maintenance mechanics and all bus drivers. Currently, the School District has solicited bids from outside contractors to do our work that is currently being done by all the 2,700 union members.

The layoffs of these members will begin at the end of June with the first wave, followed by the second group in September of 2012 and the remaining group in December 2012.

In an article written by Kristen Graham April 24, 2012 of the Philadelphia Inquirer, it states that the officials of the School District have briefed City Council and staff members on the plan to modernize custodial services.

To the City Councilmembers, do

all of you agree with the outsourcing plan as stated in this article? If any or all of you members are in agreement to outsource, please remember that the 2,700 soon-to-be-laid-off members, some of those 2,700 who live in Philadelphia, we will have to remember who not to vote for in the next Council election.

Isn't it your civic duty to represent and protect all the people in your councilmanic districts, voters who have voted you into your elected office in which you hold today?

I ask all the City Councilmembers to take a stand, take a stand for what is right, the right moral obligation to help save and protect our jobs.

If I can please continue.

Please act soon, for June 12th is not far away.

I would like to speak about the agenda tonight. Currently, the School District, a non-profit entity, is paid

$7,000 per student, while the charter schools, a for-profit entity, are given 11,000 per student, a $4,000 difference. Charters can pick and choose what students they want. The School District is required by law to accept anyone and everyone.

So here is something to think about: Every taxpayer of Philadelphia and taxpayer of Pennsylvania pay property tax and state tax, and a portion of these taxes go to the Philadelphia School District, a non-profit entity. The problem is, our taxes are also funding the charter schools, which are for-profit companies.

With the City of Philadelphia and the State of Pennsylvania always trying, and most times succeeding, increasing our state taxes, sales taxes and property taxes and numerous other business taxes, how is it legal and fair that the taxpayers of the City of Brotherly Love and Commonwealth of

Pennsylvania are paying and supporting charter schools, for-profit companies?

Some of these charters are partly --

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Sir, sir, because in all due respect, and I know you're from BJ, but we really want to kind of hold to it, because we have a lot people who live in this neighborhood. We want to make sure that everybody has an opportunity, please. So kind of wrap up, please.

MR. KROL: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Clarke.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: You're welcome.

MR. KROL: Some of these charters are partly or fully owned by our elected officials. Some elected officials own more than one charter. How is this fair? How is it legal for these officials to hold an elected office and be involved with the running of charter schools? Is this not an act of

corruption? In my mind, this is a conflict of interest, a double-dipping practice that needs to stop and the stopping of this practice needs to stop immediately.

With the heavy heart, I ask for your support to save our jobs and to draft legislation to stop the use of our public tax monies to be used for for-profit charters.

I do thank you. Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Walter Marlin.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. MARLIN: Good evening. My name is Walter Marlin, President of the Charles Finley Rec Center Advisory Council, as well as a Board member for the Philadelphia Parks Alliance.

To Council President Darrell Clarke, all associate Councilpersons,

especially our own District 9 Councilperson, Marian Tasco, thank you for all your continued support.

I come to you today as a retired administrator for the Philadelphia Prison System, a 30-year volunteer of the Department of Parks and Recreation and a Board member of the Philadelphia Parks Alliance.

Our prison system unfortunately experiences the end result of a system that leaves our children and young people with few options, except to run the streets and find something to get into, something usually illegal.

If there were more adults, supervised and organized activities within Parks and Recreation, maybe, just maybe, so many of our young people would not be locked up in our county jails and prisons.

The Department of Parks and Recreation struggles to provide facilities for use in your councilmanic

districts. Continued budget cuts have and are taking its toll on deferred maintenance and inadequate staffing in all neighborhoods. It becomes a question of pay it now to Parks and Recreation or pay it later to our Prison System.

Some cleaning and maintenance are now done by volunteers. Many programs are now run by volunteers. Where are our tax dollars that were collected to support our children, grandchildren and seniors?

Some facilities in Parks and Recreation are literally trying to keep their doors open and the lights on.

We call on the Mayor and City Council to restore the 8 million to Parks and Recreation because in 2008, the Mayor and City Council approved a $56 million Parks and Recreation budget for FY 2009. Five months later in response to the economic downturn, they reduced the Parks and Recreation budget by 6 million, down to 50.1, wiping out the promised

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increases and reducing it below even what it was in 2008.

The Mayor promised to reinstate the increases in 2011. The promised increases in the Five Year Plan would have gotten the Parks and Recreation budget to 59.6 million by 2013. It never materialized. These increases were to be funded by the increase in the parking tax. The parking tax was and still is being collected, but there have been zero increases to Parks and Recreation. In fact, the effective budget for FY 2013 is 45.7 million, one of the lowest in many years.

The Mayor promised to reinstate the increases in FY 2011. City Council approved the increase, but the Mayor and Council never agreed on how to fund it. Therefore, Parks and Rec once again never received promises -- never received the promised increase.

The Mayor has proposed a $47.8 million budget for Parks and Recreation

in FY 2013. The Parks Alliance is proposing that City Council restore the 8 million. That would get Parks and Recreation back to 56 million, the amount promised and approved four years ago.

We call on the Mayor to restore -- the Mayor and City Council to restore the 8 million to Parks and Recreation because well-funded parks provide safe, clean places for our children and adults to play, learn and interact and succeed.

I'm going to cut the rest of my comments short because of time.

Restoring the 8 million to the high-performing Department of Parks and Recreation will pay enormous dividends in creating economic prosperity and a better quality of life for residents, businesses and visitors and will make Philadelphia a more competitive city. Thanks to Mayor Nutter and City Council, the new Department of Parks and Recreation has a visionary leader and a highly effective

staff that get the most out of every municipal dollar while leveraging private investment and volunteer sweat equity.

Thank you for your time.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you. Sir, real briefly, I just want to say in terms of process -- and I do recall, because most of us here were members of Council when the initial commitment for the additional funding for the Parks was put in place and, as you said, the downturn in the economy caused us to have to put that money in the General Fund and not be spent on Parks and Recs.

One of the issues is and the challenges, frankly speaking, as it relates to what Council can do, at the end of the day, City Council could tomorrow say that we're going to put an additional $4 or $5 million in the Parks and Recs budget, but those of you who know the way government works, if the

Mayor chooses not to spend it, there's no way that we can force him to spend it.

So as we insert additional dollars in any department, what we try to do is get a commitment and an agreement with the Mayor, because we do in fact want it to be spent. So we can probably go through a process that would make the advocates happy and say we're putting the money in the budget, fully well knowing that it's not going to get spent.

So personally I don't like playing that game with people. So I would like to, as it relates to additional funding being put in the budget, having an understanding and an agreement with the Mayor that it will in fact be spent, because I don't want to set up a scenario where you all think it's going to be spent and it's actually not spent.

That's just the way the Charter is set up. We appropriate; the Mayor gets to spend it, and that's the way it

was done quite some years ago at this point.

Thank you.

Ms. Lewis.

MS. LEWIS: Cassandra Hayes.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. HAYES: First off, I really want to just congratulate Councilwoman Tasco on your fabulous performance for sickle cell. You represented your district so amazingly.

(Applause.)

MS. HAYES: So fleet of foot. It was a pleasure.

My name is Cassandra Hayes and I serve on the Board of the Business Association of West Park. I'm also on the Penn State Extension Board of Philadelphia and on the West Philadelphia Alliance for Children, and I'm here to testify on behalf of those organizations, but mostly and simply on behalf of Philadelphia's children and youth.

We say over and over that children are important, that children have unlimited potential and value, and that children are our future. Yet, out of the same mouth, we continue to neglect them. We deprive them of safe, clean, maintained places to exercise, to play, to learn, to unwind and just breathe a little fresh air.

When we neglect and underfund our parks and recreation areas, we are neglecting our kids. We're ignoring the many struggling families in Philadelphia who can't afford to send their kids to camp in the country, and we continue to cast a blind eye to the spiraling asthma and obesity epidemic that plagues our city. We send the message loud and clear to our kids and adults that shabby, dilapidated recreation facilities, playgrounds filled with broken bottles, and overgrown ball fields are good enough for them.

When we talk about way to build

healthy communities, instill pride and hope in our young people, to make our residents healthy and fit, to make our neighborhoods economically viable and our City competitive, too often we leave investment in the parks and recreation out of the equation. Sadly, our children pay the price and ultimately so do we as adults when kids find destructive and violent ways to spend their free time.

Instead, let's do something really radical. Let's vote for a vibrant city. Let's vote for tree-filled parks. Let's vote for a wonderful recreation place and facilities. Let's vote for healthy and fit kids. Let's vote for great places to live and work.

It's time for City Council and the Mayor to honor the promise made to increase the budget for Parks and Recreation. This was a promise that really was made four years ago. It's time to restore $8 million to the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Let's vote to be clean and green, because at the end of the day, that's a vote for Philadelphia.

Thanks.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Brett Mandel.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. MANDEL: Good evening. As we all in this room know, we must fix what's wrong with real estate taxation in Philadelphia. From house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood, block to block, similar properties are paying dramatically different tax bills. Some are paying too much; some are not paying their fair share.

But there is a way to do it well and there's a way to do it right. We must understand what the values of our homes are before we consider what tax rate you're going to apply and what tax policies you are going to apply to those rates.

To channel Abbott and Costello, values come first, what's the tax rate should be second, anything else is absurd.

I urge you to wait and see what the values of our homes are when the City finally completes the reassessment before you enact any tax rates or any tax policies. I urge you to reject the Administration's logic on two fronts.

You are told by the Mayor that we must enact the Actual Value Initiative before you see the values because we have to fund our schools. Of course, that's baloney. You decide whether the schools should get extra money from the citizens and you decide how. And, frankly, before you choose to have the people who are paying taxes endure yet another tax increase, it would be lovely if we collected taxes from some of the folks who owe about a half billion dollars in taxes.

(Applause.)

MR. MANDEL: You are also told that we have to enact the Actual Value Initiative to capture the value increase that has happened across the City over the past decade. That's rubbish. Between the illegal spot assessments that the City has carried out over the past decade and the temporary tax increases that we've put in place over the last two years, real estate tax collections are up by more than a third over the past decade. You have already captured that value.

I urge you to separate these two debates. Have a debate about school funding. Have a debate about property taxation. You may get one chance to do this in this generation. I urge you to do it well and to do it right.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Cynthia Masiejczyk. Cynthia Masiejczyk.

(No response.)

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MS. LEWIS: William Conaway. William Conaway.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. CONAWAY: Good evening, Council. My name is Bill Conaway, the Director of Community Relations at the Philadelphia Protestant Home. The Philadelphia Protestant Home is a continuing care retirement community with a 122-year history in providing a home for seniors in the Lawncrest community for over 122 years. I'm here representing the current 600 residents and all future residents who have a significant interest in the Lawncrest community and the City of Philadelphia.

Attending many Lawncrest Community Association meetings and other meetings through the community, came up with some bullet points that may be of interest.

As part of the community, we'd offer support to any programs or ideas

that would stimulate a positive improvement and activity on Rising Sun Avenue. One idea that has been discussed is to change trash collection for Rising Sun Avenue to another day. The current day is Monday. The trash is placed curbside as early as Saturday afternoon. A change to Tuesday would help the overall appearance of the Avenue.

To have more than one street sweeper available to clean Rising Sun Avenue. The Avenue is not cleaned for a period of time while a single piece of equipment was in for repairs.

Keep the Lawncrest Library open and do not reduce the hours of operation.

Keep the swimming pool open during the summer months.

Increase programs at the Lawncrest Recreation Center, including the Community Action Center and a mini City Hall so City services could be accessible.

We'd like to see a crackdown on

property owners and renters that do not care for their properties.

We would like to see L&I have the ability to make site visits on weekends or when potential issues could be occurring.

The use of cameras to monitor the illegal dumping along the 5600 block of Newtown Avenue; road repair to Tabor Avenue from Levick Street to Adams Avenue; approval for the request has been submitted for a stop sign at Martins Mill and Tabor Avenue.

We'd like to see our firehouse, Engine 64, not be part of the brownout program. This program could delay the response to --

(Applause.)

MR. CONAWAY: -- our community in case of emergencies.

In closing, we'd like to see an increase of police presence. This would be in the form of additional officers, patrols and surveillance cameras along

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Rising Sun Avenue.

The Philadelphia Protestant Home is in the healthcare business. We understand the challenges of being asked to do more with less. We also understand this will take participation from people who live and work in this community. Together we need to find a way to work with each other.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to share some of our ideas.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Phyllis Swing.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. SWING: Hi, everybody. Councilwoman Tasco, thank you. All the other Councilmembers, thank you. I have something written, but I don't know how much of this I'm actually going to say, to be perfectly honest with you.

I want to piggyback on a lot of what other people were talking about, and the biggest thing -- I'm a community

leader. I've lived in this community 15 years. License and Inspection in the City of Philadelphia is a total nightmare. I have seen the quality of life in my community and in Lawncrest dwindle as a result of all the rules and regulations that L&I has on the books but doesn't enforce. And then they enforce them and there's no followup.

People talked about the weekend issue. We've had issues in our community where we need to make a call on a Saturday afternoon and there's nowhere to call. 3-1-1 is not available. Then when you do get 3-1-1, you're told it's 30 days before they'll send someone out. Well, by the time that 30-day period is up, the illegal construction or the work that is being done without permits and licenses is done, and then nothing can be done.

We have a house in Somerdale that did some work and it was totally illegal and it still sits there, because

there's nothing the City can do about it.

License and Inspection needs a total overhaul. There needs to be more funding, more staff, you know, more enforcement of that.

The other thing, a lot of people talked about it, Parks and Recreation. I look at it as just Recreation. I'm not used to the Park and Recreation part.

There's not safe recreation centers in this community for our kids to play in. We have a recreation center in our area that doesn't have equipment. The equipment that's there is falling apart. The fields, they're not overgrown right now, but there's no safe place for our kids to play. They can't go to the pool because the pool doesn't work properly. They can't play on the swings because, guess what, there's no swings.

So I just beg and plead with you to -- the schools are important, and I'm not saying they're not, but please

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fund License and Inspection and don't take any more money away from Parks and Recreations, because our kids need it.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Stanley Scott. Stanley Scott.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. SCOTT: Hello. I'm Stanley Scott. I'm President of the Greater Olney Citizens for Progress.

You have to excuse me. I don't have a written summation, because I'm just coming out of the hospital. Me and my family found out I was diabetic the hard way.

But what I'm here about is that the Olney community has been abandoned as far as City services are concerned. I know the Councilwoman walked through with us, but the problem is all throughout Olney, our large buildings and anything of any size has been converted for

different types of commercial use. Either it's business use, which I know there are no licenses for, or they have been turned into group homes. You see these people walking up and down 5th Street during the day and they don't have a clue as to where they are.

On the weekends, we try to get someone from L&I or somebody to come out and take a look at some of these situations, and there's nobody available.

Now, the police have had several incidents with these people and with these things going on in our community, but I think it's something that Council needs to focus in on, because we need someone on the weekends somewhere who will come out and address our problems. And that's all I have for you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Robert Brooks.

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(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. BROOKS: Good evening. My name is Robert Brooks and I'm Project Director for Greater Philadelphia Asian Social Services. Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to testify here today.

GPASS has been here over 20 years. We're a non-profit agency located on 5th Street. We do both individual and community empowerment. Mr. Eunyoun Kim is still in charge. Councilwoman Tasco has been our friend and our supporter over the years.

We provide many different services. Currently, GPASS provides approximately 1,600 families emergency assistance with EA -- energy assistance programs, conservation and housing programs. However, over the years and even through this year, the poor economic and political landscape has put the budget decision-makers in a difficult

position and unfortunately GPASS, like other non-profit services, experiencing funding cuts and are asked to do more with less.

The federal, state and county budget cuts translates into fewer services for the people who really need them. It's crucial that these services continue, that we continue to service and get the resource to people. Our staff, even myself many times, reach into their own pockets to make sure that people get the things that they need.

GPASS is a family, and we want families to feel safe and secure in their homes, they have their basic needs met, have the water run, have their lights on, live in a secure community. Our goal is to create an atmosphere which is conducive to positive relationships. Our vision is to maximize the capacity of all residents of Philadelphia.

We serve the community and our primary focus is on the, what we call,

lower socioeconomic; i.e., poor, but these people have faces, these people have families, and we want to continue providing services to them. So when you're talking about the budget, please remember there's people out there who is in dire need and deserve your help.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Jim O'Keefe.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. O'KEEFE: Good evening. Thank you. I'm Jim O'Keefe. I work in City Committee in the 53rd Ward.

Passing along a few comments from constituents in my division, there's a complaint, several complaints, that the ten-year tax abatement is a little excessive. I think a three-year tax abatement for new residents, new facilities is reasonable.

Another thing, according to the Inquirer, Thomas Knudsen suggests that if we close 45 or so schools, we could save

$30 million. Coincidently, that's the exact amount Governor Corbett just contributed to Delta Airlines to buy the Trainor oil facility. Sad that that money couldn't come to the City schools.

Pardon me for being nervous.

It might appear that I don't like the Governor, but that's not true. I just don't like the way he rules. He has the ability to fund the schools by taxing the oil drillers, the gas drillers, and he doesn't do it. I think we should lobby Harrisburg.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Ken Yang. Ken Yang.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. YANG: Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ken Yang and I am the Director of Contract Management at the Korean Community Development Services Center.

We're a 501(c)(3) non-profit that's been serving the needs of the Olney community as well as Greater Philadelphia for the past 29 years through a variety of different community-based programs. Thank you, Councilwoman Tasco, for all of your help over the years, and for the rest of the Council, thank you for this opportunity.

Five quick points, and these remarks are made in conjunction with the Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations.

The first thing is funding cuts versus new resources. We as community development corporations understand that the City faces federal and state budget cuts. We know that the depressed economy has severely reduced revenues for the City and challenge individuals also to their breaking point. Despite that, pressure continues to mount in the City to expand the tax base, create jobs, build new homes, repair existing homes

and prevent homelessness. We think that the City can strike a balance. Eliminating vital programs now, we feel, would cost the City much more in the long run. We urge the City to make wise investments now of revenues from the General Fund into affordable housing, neighborhood economic development and an effective vacant property system.

Because of the constraints of CDBG funds, we implore the City to provide more flexible resources from the General Fund or capital budget to support commercial, mixed-use real estate development. Investing in fit-outs, streetscape improvements on neighborhood commercial corridors and revitalization of disinvested commercial corridors surrounded by moderate-income residential neighborhoods we think in the long run would strengthen neighborhoods and the City's bottom line. We urge the City to make these investments now for a better City tomorrow.

Secondly, the circuit breaker measures for low-income homeowners. We'd like to thank Council President Clarke and the Council leadership for the AVI protection bills. We think that they'll go a long way towards assisting low- to moderate-income communities like Olney. We just think that the City should take -- should encourage some circuit breaker measures that would allow some of the -- pardon me. We encourage the City to make the circuit breaker measures in place for low-income residents that are impacted by the new assessments. That will allow the City to avoid burdensome tax increases on a broader range of low-income owners.

In particular, we believe allowing qualifying owners to defer increased taxes over a certain amount of time until sale of property is an important tool to strike the proper balance.

We're grateful for the City

Council for passing the local ordinance expanding dedicated funding for the Housing Trust Fund two years ago and that the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed the Philadelphia Housing Trust Fund bill. We think it works. More than 4,000 families and individuals have leveraged more than $281 million in additional funding to support the development of many new homes and improve existing new homes and assisted more than 1,500 families to stay in their homes through foreclosure and homelessness prevention.

We know that the Housing Trust Fund is successful. However, declining revenues have severely impacted the current demand for new homes, home repair and homeless prevention. Without additional revenue from the General Fund, scores of worthy affordable housing projects will remain stuck in the pipeline for many years, while hundreds of low- and moderate-income families struggle to find homes. Again, we urge

the City to strike a balance.

We think that the City can recycle revenue collected from the City's Blight Court to provide housing counseling services for low- and moderate-income homeowners and affordable rental properties. This will be a good investment, I think, for the City in the long run.

And, finally, we encourage the City to continue to facilitate strong neighborhood commercial corridors. We think that the City must continue to invest CDBG funding and to support neighborhood commercial corridor revitalization. Priorities for these scarce federal resources should focus on direct assistance to businesses to make physical improvements, again fit-out grants, rent rebates, direct assistance to CDCs to cover staffing to implement their commercial corridor revitalization strategies and the CDC Tax Credit program, and financing to support

commercial and mixed-use real estate development. Because of constraints on CDBG funds, the City must follow the precedent of previous Administrations and provide more flexible resources from the City's General Fund to support these goals.

In conclusion, we look forward to working with the City Council, the Mayor and his Administration to strike a smart balance between use of its available resources and its short-term needs against the long-term well-being of neighborhoods, which ultimately creates a strong city.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Kenyatta Cooper.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. COOPER: Good evening. Good to see you, Maria. Good to see you,

Kenyatta. I'm the real Kenyatta.

No. In all seriousness, President Clarke, this is my first time here. I do appreciate the opportunity.

Councilwoman Tasco, thank you for hosting this. I really appreciate the opportunity.

What I want to speak about -- I talked to City Council about this and Jannie Blackwell, the thing she is into is passionate to my heart -- is about feeding the homeless. What are we doing to support the homeless?

I belong to a non-profit organization. It's called Open Arms Ministries. It's a Christian-based organization. We don't just feed people, but we talk to them about the word of God. We encourage them. We try to empower them for them not to stay stuck in their situation.

People believe that it's just people who are mentally ill or on drugs. I'm on the ground. We're going this

Saturday, and I invite people to come down. I'm on the ground. People who have jobs, they are coming down to get meals just to get by. It's people who, just like me and you, Average Joe's who had jobs, but lost their jobs, couldn't pay their mortgage, couldn't pay their rent and have fallen on hard times.

This is the City of Brotherly Love. We should show some type of compassion towards people, not just be just about us. Now since the economy done went, it's all about me.

When I got into this as a committeeman on the 42nd Ward, 7th Division, I got into it to serve. We're here to serve people. We cannot lose sight that we must have some humbleness with humility and understand we're here to serve in any capacity humanly possible.

And I just want to close -- I got this from State Representative Bobby Rush. I want to come from Luke the 4th

Chapter, Verse 18, if I may, President, Mr. President.

The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he have anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He have sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach the deliverance to the captives and recovery of the sight to the blind and to set at liberty them that are bruised.

We've all at some point in our lives have fallen on hard times.

I have a petition that I'm putting together.

And I'm about to close this out, because I want to have respect for other people to talk.

And I made my City Councilwoman, Maria Quinones-Sanchez, is doing an awesome job. That I'm putting together a petition to let the Mayor know he cannot get too high on himself and not understand that everybody is in need in this hard economic time, the school systems, the crime in the City, and that

is your top agenda, to disvalue people from eating. We're feeding people. We're not getting help from the City. We're a non-profit, other organizations and churches, money donated out of our own pockets.

So I want City Council to look into the budget and say what can we do, set up a facility, what type of funding can we have to support an organization. When visitors come, they can see Philadelphia in supporting the homeless and those who are in need, disabled veterans who fought for this country. You know, we need to show some compassion and love.

Thank you for your time, President.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Carl Gerhart.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. GERHART: Good evening. My name is Carl Gerhart. I've been a

resident here for 62 years. I'm also the President of Lawncrest Town Watch.

My understanding is that in the past couple years, the Town Watch budget, which is through the Managing Director's Office, has been cut by about 75 percent.

Town Watch is basically a volunteer group. We go out in cars or whatever we have to use for transportation, and we pay for it ourselves. We used to have a lot of workshops where we could get together with other Town Watches throughout the City and find out what's happening, what can work for our area, our neighborhood, and that's all been stopped. I would appreciate it if you would look into that to maybe increasing the budget a little bit for the Town Watch group. It's through the Managing Director's Office.

As another note, that we've had -- the Managing Director's Office has a program that's called Philly Rising, with Manny Citron back here, and he has

been the top man as far as contacting as far as Town Watch, the community and everybody. I don't know if the Council knows about this. There's only a couple areas that this Philly Rising, but it seems to be working. It seems to be working, because we have a contact, either with you or with the other people in the departments, either Police, Streets, whatever. It seems to be working. So I don't want any of that to stop, if that's part of a budget looking into where they want to think about cutting. I would not appreciate that.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Reverend James Wright, Sr.

REVEREND WRIGHT: Good evening. Like the other gentleman, I didn't have anything written, but I just came to highlight just a couple of real quick points, and I promise that I won't preach. But if you give me a minute or

two, I might.

I'm the -- first of all, it's a pleasure and honor to be here this evening standing before you, City Council and all of you great people here this evening.

Very quickly, my wife and I are the block captains for the 63 -- 1400 block of Newtown Avenue for the past couple of years, and we are concerned that when we have street cleaning announcements and we put up the signs, that our neighbors are not really joining in and helping us to clean the area. They don't move the cars.

And another concern is that we're having problems with getting the water truck to come out and wash the street down and removing of the trash. And we want to know, is there any way that when we had these street cleanups, that it can be enforced that people actually move their cars so that we can do that?

The other concern, my property runs from Newtown Avenue back to the railroad, the rail tracks, SEPTA station here at Lawndale Station, and one of the concerns I have is an increasing number of wild animals. Maybe not wild animals, but I guess they're near wild animals, the raccoons, groundhogs, possums. It seems like there's an increase of squirrels, and they're running in and out, turning over our trash and making havoc, and we all are concerned about the possibility of rabies and these kinds of things that these animals carry, mosquitoes, and we're wondering what can be done in that regard.

The other thing is, that same area between the track and the golf course, there are teens that constantly in the summer come with kegs and kegs of beer, and I see lots of young ladies, young teenagers with a lot of the males, going back, partying, trashing the area, leaving their beer cans, setting fires.

And, of course, as I said, my yard borders that track, and I'm concerned about the wind blowing and possibly a fire hazard and our houses catching on fire.

The other night my son was walking our dog. He was physically attacked by two people. He wasn't able to get a good description. And I'm concerned about the increased robberies, break-ins. I've had my neighbor's cars broken in, stole some of his equipment. And we want to have an increased presence of the Police and Town Watch and whatever we can do to help increase the safety of our children, because that could have been a bad scene. I only have one son. And my neighbor on the side of me, her son was killed. Just a couple weeks ago we had his funeral. I'm sure some of you know about that. And we're concerned about the safety.

And, finally, I'm President of the PTA Association at the Truebright

Science Academy Charter School. Senator Shirley Kitchen is our Senator and she's working with us from the School Reform Commission.

Truebright is one of the schools that's been cited for non-renewal of the charter. And I don't know if you all know, but it's being run by a gentleman from Turkey and they have a whole Turkish Board, a whole Turkish -- practically a whole Turkish staff. And you may have read some of the articles in the newspaper about that. My daughter attends that school, and we're trying to keep the school open. And I know tonight might not be the exact forum, but with all the schools that are cited for closing, non-renewal of the charters, we want to keep these schools open, because we think that they do better open than closed. And I've heard a lot going on about the public school closings, but what alternatives have been presented that would satisfy us when you close

these schools? Where are our children going? What type of education will they receive?

So thank you very much.

(Applause.)

REVEREND WRIGHT: I'm sorry I have to go. I have another meeting.

MS. LEWIS: Balone Fields.

(No response.)

MS. LEWIS: Bill Sauermann.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. SAUERMANN: Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I wanted to talk, I guess, briefly. I was reading in the Inquirer that our various municipal organizations invested heavily in interest rate swaps, and the Inquirer stated that, in effect, tens of millions of dollars have been lost in a time when every dollar counts. And I was wondering, in effect, who is minding the store? Who is setting the policy that where does the City invest its money?

It would seem like -- and I'm an accountant, and I tried to read about interest rate swaps and I had a very difficult time understanding what they were. They're highly sophisticated high-risk investments that one wonders why the City ever invested in them in the first place. But, in effect, we have all lost tens of millions of dollars by that investment.

And, second, I read with some concern an organization like the Sheriff's Department apparently had no financial controls. They had $50 million, and they didn't know where it came from. And this was a City organization. And, again, we're looking for every dollar, and they had $50 million and did not know where it came from. It would seem like we should as taxpayers expect these organizations to have basic accounting controls. And I understand now that this problem is being addressed, but I certainly hope that the

City and perhaps the Controller, or whoever does this, is making sure that we know where our money is, where it came from and what we're doing with it. And, again, this isn't in terms of expenditures. It's perhaps loss avoidance. And I hope that in the future we won't be hearing anything more about organizations with no financial controls.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: James Jones.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MR. JONES: Thank you for this opportunity. I really do appreciate it.

I come here and I was just thinking about my journey in Philadelphia. I'm a product of the Philadelphia School District. I went away to college on a full scholarship. I came back at 22 and bought a house in the

neighborhood in which I grew up in, and I've been there for the past five years. And my worry is that as I get older and I want to start a family, where is my family going to live and how is that community going to look?

I'm for raising my property taxes, my taxes, if I know where the money is going to and those entities are being responsible with that money and we can see the result of which -- if it's a good or bad result. But it seems as if we give our -- raise our taxes, we increase our parking fines. It seems that we're giving more money and more money and problems aren't being solved.

We give our money, and people, kids, are still getting killed. The graduation rates are still low as compared to other places. And it's disheartening to me, because I can't see myself raising a family saying, Okay, we're going to stay here, I'm going to send my kids to these schools, I'm going

to pay this extra 5 percent in wages to stay in the City, when there's no accountability to where our money is going.

So I just want there to be possibly innovation of what we do. I mean, it seems like every answer is to raise taxes and give more money, and the question is, where is the innovation of thought to solve problems and not raise taxes every time? Because if you look at the resources when people were getting educated in the '50s and '60s, we have so much more now than we did back then, but we're doing so much less with so much more.

So the question is, where is the disconnect? Where is that at, and how can we fix that? Not how can we raise revenue to give to inefficient entities within our government. So we can say where the money went to, what it did, was this program effective, we can have something to go for. But it just

seems like it's just an endless money pit, and they use the kids and use crime as something to make us feel we have to give more money. But we've been giving more money and been getting horrible results. That's a bad investment.

So when you say what this money is going to go for, this is how it's being used and whether it worked or didn't work, that's all we want. But it seems like it's just -- that's what we're going for. We're just giving money to give money, and I don't think anybody here is for that.

And I thank you for your time and -- also, can we just find a way to communicate more, a better communication pattern for young people? Because, I mean, a lot of times, a lot of people have ideas and they want to get them out, but it's just hard for us to get this information. And I don't know what that format will look like, whether it will be like a Twitter page, an interactive

website, but get young people involved. If you look around the room, I love getting wisdom, I love hearing stuff, but we have ideas.

And I thank you guys for your time.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you. Thank you.

Real quick, with respect to the ability to communicate, as an old guy, I'm not used to a lot of the technology, but we have a lot of younger members of our staff and actually younger Councilmembers. We have one of our youngest Councilmembers here tonight. They've suggested that we go beyond the traditional just simply send out a mailer or a flyer. And so we are actually now, I understand, pretty much all of the offices are in fact on Twitter. We're actually expanding our website to have an interactive website. We will probably -- my understanding -- and our

Communications Director is here. I hope I don't give out wrong information. But we're going to expand it considerably to be able to communicate with people who are more well versed in technology.

So I understand. You're absolutely correct. So we will be expanding our ability to interact with a much younger crowd and a much more technology-savvy individual crowd.

Speaking about young people, we're going to introduce our youngest member of Council, Councilman Johnson.

COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yeah. I just wanted to also follow up on what the Council President said. There's also something called a Philadelphia Youth Commission, and that's also a vehicle for young people to come and get involved and express their issues, their concerns, their ideas and their solutions to some of the City problems as it relates to specifically young adults. And they played a major role during the flash

mobs, some of the solutions that took place with some of the flash mobs this past summer and a variety of other issues in general. So I just wanted to follow up on that.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

Ms. Lewis.

MS. LEWIS: Cynthia Masiejczyk.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. MASIEJCZYK: Thank you for giving me this opportunity, members of City Council. My name is Cindy Masiejczyk. I'm a member of the Friends of the Pennypack Park, and I'm here this evening to ask you to restore the $8 million promised to our park system through the parking tax increases.

My concern is the degradation of our special forested urban parks, and now as a resident in the Northeast, I speak for Pennypack. These types of parks are protectors of our drinking

water, air quality in the City and region, as well as offering many hours of relaxation and enjoyment to the families of Philadelphia.

Fishing and wonders of nature bring families to the park, and the joys of childhood are enriched beyond measure that continues into our senior years. Walking, running, biking, bird watching, picnics or just sitting on a bench and enjoying the beauty that the natural world offers is irreplaceable. Our forested parks are an attraction in this city and cannot be taken for granted. They keep people from moving out to the suburbs, because people can walk to their parks, they can walk in their parks and are doing so more often because they offer a place to exercise with the benefits of a beauty that cannot be replaced.

I have attended many invasive plant conferences over the years, and as a restoration volunteer since 2001, I

have -- these problems facing the parks have been brought to my attention. Invasive vines and noxious weeds contain seed banks that continue to sprout and multiply, especially with the warming climate. Years of cut budgets to the parks have caused problems to escalate. Vines now smother trees and banks are eroding with greater frequency and carry the soil layers into streams with further negative impact.

Many of the problems of our forested parks are not known and tend to be overshadowed because water and trees do not have a voice. We cannot take these parks for granted. The budget has to be increased to protect our greatest natural treasure, which are our Philadelphia parks.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Lisa Hogan.

(Witness approached microphone.)

MS. HOGAN: Good evening. My

name is Lisa Hogan. I am the wife of a Philadelphia firefighter, and I'm here to testify on behalf of the PFD Families Association.

Today we are here to discuss the budget, to talk about dollars and cents. So I ask you all to think about this one question: How much is a life worth?

Under the leadership of Mayor Michael Nutter and Fire Commissioner Lloyd Ayers, several firehouses have been permanently closed and the dangerous policy of temporary closures or brownouts has been instituted. The Mayor and Commissioner claim that these policies are necessary because of budget concerns, which brings us back to my original question: How much is a life worth?

Perhaps we should ask the family of the 12-year-old autistic child that died in a West Philadelphia fire in August of 2010, or the parents of the two young boys that were killed in February

of 2011 during a fire in Olney, or maybe we should ask the mother of the three teenage siblings that were killed in a fire in January of this year on Torresdale Avenue. All six of these victims were killed in fires while their local firehouses were browned out.

I'm sure the lives of these six victims are priceless to their families. Tonight, I am asking City Council to insist on ending the fatal brownout policy and to push to fully fund the Philadelphia Fire Department so that it has the greatest chance of saving as many lives as possible.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: Susan Guest.

MS. GUEST: City Council, thank you for allowing me this opportunity to speak today, and I agree with what the lady just said about the Fire Department. Thirty-eight is still not open.

We're still at war, the war

with terror, and we still have a lot of abandoned old factories and buildings, and it's a recipe for a disaster.

We also have tourism at an all-time high. So there is money. Right now, the Philadelphia Flyers playing tonight, many families home with their children. I think the Sixers are in the playoffs. Phillies play. They were in the playoffs previously. We have a lot of winning teams. People come to see the Philadelphia Eagles and other teams as well.

The Art Museum with, I think it's, Van Gogh right now. And we also have children with a war going on that need to be educated, this school supposedly going to close soon, and we need every school open.

Phase 4 at the Franklin Mills Mall, really who wants their child educated at a strip mall shopping center? I'm sure it gets federal, state and city money.

Every child needs an excellent education. I was educated in the Catholic school system, 1st through 12th grade, but I also was educated through that from my father working in a union in a public school, not the teachers.

Heating and engineering, now done. Right now Penny Nixon, I don't know if she's related to Richard Nixon, President that went out in disgrace, Chief Academic Officer under Mayor Nutter, who proclaims himself to be a democrat, has issued layoff notices to members of Local 32 BJ, District 1201, bus aides, cleaners, maintenance workers, building engineers and others, outsourced. For what? Five bucks an hour? For people that aren't Philadelphia citizens?

The District claims $33 million saved with closures and layoffs. There's been too many problems already with the charter schools. Many people I'd like to think made a mistake and don't know how

to do bookkeeping or accounting, and some are already in jail for it.

Every child deserves a decent education. We have an overabundance of children. If all our Catholic schools close and the Christian and Jewish schools don't get their aid and the charter schools close and public schools become hotels, we're going to have a problem. We're going to have wars in our schools like worse than already.

Also, I'd like to say that there is a blind library at 9th and Walnut up for sale. They want to distribute our books to Pittsburgh for the blind. They deserve a library as well. It's been around since the 1800's.

And Beneficial Mutual Savings Bank that I'm member of and a shareholder wants to close three offices, two in the suburbs, one 2037 South Broad Street, Philadelphia. They opened about three or five banks in New Jersey. Who is watching the shop?

This bank started in Philadelphia, not New Jersey. Too many people in New Jersey are running around Northeast Philly. I had to walk from the 84 stop over at -- over near State Road to get here tonight because I'm unemployed, and I do -- there is no brain drain. I have two college degrees.

We don't have enough hospitals. No City Councilmembers came out for Northeastern Hospital that employed people through the tri-state area, not Planned Parenthood, last OB/GYN department in Northeast Philadelphia.

We need to save our schools with teachers, teachers aides and maintenance workers that pay taxes, that are from Philadelphia.

We need to save our hospitals that employ people around the tri-state area. What good is an LPN, an RN or a CNA or a medical degree if there's no hospital?

If we're hit again like in New

York twice, not once, '93 and 2001, we have a major problem on our hands. We have too many people unemployed.

And when you look around, when I walked over here -- and all I had to do was look in the phone book -- how much city, state and federal aid was given to Dunkin Donuts, all over the place, all over? How many Dunkin Donuts? Why don't you count them in the Northeast alone. How much money was wasted on Dunkin Donuts? And I do like sweets and bakeries.

Create real jobs, not ones that pay 5 bucks an hour.

(Applause.)

MS. LEWIS: That concludes our speakers list, Mr. President.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Ms. Lewis.

Yes, sir.

MR. CYCLE: I got here late, Mrs. Tasco, which I apologize for.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: It's

no problem.

(Witness speaking without microphone.)

MR. CYCLE: Because you can ask people, I'm never late.

But I'm President of the (unintelligible). I'm a democrat committeeman in the 53rd Ward.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Just state your name, sir.

MR. CYCLE: Dan Cycle (ph).

I drove a truck for 30 years.

If you don't learn from your mistakes, you're a fool. I know that you have Michael's ear. If you go up the Boulevard, the red light before Southampton Road is Keystone Avenue and you make a left in there, there's 40 abandoned warehouses, and that's because they had a ten-year tax abatement. They stayed there for nine and a half years and left.

Now, if Michael is going to give companies a 10 percent tax

abatement, he'd better make sure that they sign a 20-year lease so the City can get their money back.

(Applause.)

MR. CYCLE: Because if he doesn't, that's not going to happen. And that's the name of that game.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Anyone else to testify?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: There being none, I want to thank you all very much for this evening. It's truly been enjoyable.

The Chair would like to recognize Councilwoman Tasco.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you, Mr. President.

First, I want to thank all of you for coming out this evening and for your interest, and the comments you've

given regarding the budget has been quite informative.

I'd just like to recognize -- he has left and I didn't see him in the back -- Reverend Brubaker from the Crescentville United Methodist Church. He's been very active in this community. And Jean Pleis, formerly of the Olney Times, is a member of that church, and they're doing some wonderful things in the community, and we thank them for coming.

And I'd like to recognize Bill -- the Els, Crystal and Brad El, who work with children with disabilities. They have a wonderful program at the Lawncrest Recreation Center.

I thank all of you. I wish I could call all of your names, but it wouldn't be appropriate, but you know that we work together and I enjoy serving you. And thank you for coming out to make this hearing very fruitful for the members of City Council. And we will be

back again hopefully next year again.

Thank you. Thank you to Bill Dolbow for his hospitality. He provided the sandwiches, which we all needed. And we thank him for his leadership in this community with his sidekick, Phil Grutzmacher.

Thank you all very much.

(Applause.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Councilwoman.

This concludes the neighborhood budget hearing for this evening. The Committee will stand in recess until Wednesday, May 9th, 2012 at 10:00 a.m., at which time we will reconvene in City Council Chambers, Room 400, City Hall.

Thank you so much.

(Committee of the Whole recessed at 8:20 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the proceedings, evidence and objections are contained fully and accurately in the stenographic notes taken by me upon the foregoing matter on May 8, 2012, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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