COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Thursday, January 23, 2014
9:45 a.m.

PRESENT:
COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.
COUNCILMAN BILL GREEN
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN JAMES KENNEY
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

RESOLUTION 130958 - Resolution approving the appointment of Asia Coney as a member of the Board of Commissioners of the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

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COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning, everyone. This is the hearing on the Committee of the Whole. We have established a quorum. This is the public hearing on the Committee of the Whole to hear the testimony on Resolution 130958 nominating Ms. Asia Coney to the Board of the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

Mr. Christmas, please read the title of the resolution.

THE CLERK: Resolution 130958, approving the appointment of Asia Coney as a member of the Board of Commissioners of the Philadelphia Housing Authority.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Mr. Christmas.

Ms. Coney, would you please come forward and take a seat at the witness table.

(Witness approached witness table.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning.

MS. CONEY: Good morning.

1/23/14 - WHOLE - RES. 130958

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good morning. Would you please present your testimony.

MS. CONEY: Thank you, sir.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And pre-congratulations.

MS. CONEY: Good morning, Council President and members of City Council. Let me begin my comments by thanking Mayor Michael Nutter for this nomination that would appoint me to the Board of the Philadelphia Housing Authority to complete the term of the outgoing appointed Resident Commissioner. I also would like to thank this body, members of City Council, for the opportunity of seeking your consideration and approval.

My name is Asia Coney, and I'm a product of my upbringing. To use the slogan from the Million Woman March, my great-grandmother taught my grandmother, who taught my mother, who then taught me, and made it my responsibility to teach,

teach about the responsibility to the community and the people who live there.

I am the matriarch of my immediate family, a sister, a mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, aunt, great-aunt, cousin, associate, and so on.

Born and raised in the City of Philadelphia, while not growing up in public housing, I grew up in close proximity and remember vividly the pride and community spirit that existed within and outside of the projects, as they were called at that time.

I have witnessed the loss of hundreds and thousands of units locally and nationally and the elimination of basic services. I have watched the Philadelphia Housing Authority evolve from a troubled Housing Authority to a high performer and then troubled again.

While during and in between and after the turbulent times and numerous restructurings, I and the resident leadership remain optimistic, willing

partners, and sometimes adversaries, but always ready to contribute our knowledge and skills as we work towards the collective goal of affordable and decent housing for those in need.

I have been a community leader and activist for over 30 years, training, consulting, providing technical assistance, hosting and participating in forums locally and nationally to examine and discuss federal regulations, strategies, identification of tools, organizing, and empowering residents and individuals of our collective communities to participate, provide input, and be accountable for the behavior and outcomes that contribute to our neighborhoods - good, bad or ugly.

I am currently the President of the citywide jurisdiction agency Resident Advisory Board, where I provide technical assistance to the resident councils, some of which are here sitting behind me, that encourages and increases resident

participation, and we monitor the implementation while providing input into the Housing Authority's policy/programming as it relates to public and assisted housing.

I'm formerly the Director of Tenant Support Services, a non-profit that created partnerships with government and private entities that improve the quality of lives for residents.

I am the recipient of the PHM certification, which is Public Housing Manager, from the National Association of NAHRO.

Prior to TSSI, I co-chaired the Million Woman March, which was a national and international celebration to reflect on the work being done and to be done in our communities. It attracted more than 2.5 million women to the City of Philadelphia on October 25th, 1997, filling up hotels and boosting the economics in the tri-state area.

I'm past President of the

Resident Council known as the Tasker Tenant Improvement Council, at a development once named Tasker Homes that had 1,097 units built in the early 1930s. As a community organizer and volunteer, I held two additional offices while living at Tasker, the vice presidency and the secretary.

We successfully and through the collective efforts of the residents at Tasker, I was encouraged to attend Temple University and earn a Construction Management Certificate, which was very useful when the redevelopment of the site renamed and now known as Greater Grays Ferry Estates.

If my nomination is approved, I commit to the continual representation of the residents of public and assisted housing, a mission that was given me many years ago. I will commit to serve with integrity, to be a vehicle for the voice of the residents, to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of this position of

Commissioner, while working to ensure an efficient and effective Philadelphia Housing Authority.

Thank you. Again, I thank you for your consideration, and I make myself available for any questions that you may have.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you very much for your testimony, Ms. Coney, and, again, thank you for your years of service. You are a person I've known for a long, long time and you've always been consistent in your advocacy for public housing residents, but also for the City at large, because you've been very diversified in your approach to making sure that the right thing is done for the citizens. I just want to thank you so much for not only the great work that you've done, but for your friendship for all these years.

Are there any questions --

MS. CONEY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --

by members of the Committee?

The Chair recognizes Councilman Jones.

COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to echo your comments about Ms. Coney's long-term service to public housing, and it does my heart good to see an activist ascend to the Board. Not that there weren't any before, but this is another one in a line of them.

I want to also say that when it comes to public housing and whether it's a new program or an old program like Hope VI, I always, always call her up to find out what the intended and unintended consequences of a new program are, and I've yet to not get good advice from her as it relates to my constituents who live in public housing.

So we look forward to working with you in the future.

MS. CONEY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

Thank you, Councilman.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Henon.

COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you, Council President, Mr. Chair. And I too just as my colleagues have made their public statements acknowledging your commitment to Philadelphia and public housing, your commitment to community, and your just devotion to the activism of Philadelphia and the residents of this city for many, many years, in which I'm glad that I have known you for quite some time now and have witnessed your participation. So it is an honor for me today to witness you ascending to the Board and being able to affirm that in a vote from this committee. So thank you for all your years of service.

MS. CONEY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Councilman.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

1/23/14 - WHOLE - RES. 130958

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. President. Certainly I agree with all that has been said by my colleagues and note that having worked with Asia almost as long as she's been working there herself and as a former member of the PHA Board and one who visited all the sites and worked with Asia across the board on all the issues she mentioned, it is an honor for us to say we are very, very happy that she'll be a part of the Board. And as a non-member who goes to every meeting, we say that we look forward to continuing the wonderful relationship and trying to serve the PHA residents as they certainly deserve.

Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you, Councilwoman.

The Chair recognizes Councilman Johnson.

COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I just want to echo the sentiments of my

colleagues. Growing up in South Philadelphia all my life, I had a chance to watch the transformation of my community and had a chance as a young man to observe the advocacy of Ms. Asia Coney as it relates to transforming which we call Tasker Homes and which is now called the Greater Grays Ferry Estates, and I've always respected her passion, her dedication, and her advocacy for those who certainly need a voice. And as we watch the transformation of PHA and the new establishment of the Board members, I think it's only fitting to have someone with her background and experience to serve as the linchpin between those residents and management.

And so I commend you, and I fully support your appointment, and any way I can be of support to you as you move forward, as usual, feel free to touch base. But congratulations.

MS. CONEY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

Thank you, Councilman.

The Chair recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Good morning. Thank you.

Good morning. How are you, Ms. Coney? I will echo all of the wonderful comments that have been made thus far. Although I have not worked with you, but I have worked with you in a distant way. I've watched you as you have led the people who are in public housing to protect their rights and be a voice for them, and I appreciate that. So I am pleased to be able to vote for you and wish you well and hope you keep up the good work and keep the issues that are important to the folk who live in public housing on the table and don't let them get lost, and stronger voices, because we're voices here to be supportive of you.

MS. CONEY: Thank you.

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

Thank you, Councilwoman. Thank you.

Is there anyone else to testify on this resolution?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: There being none, Ms. Coney, I want to thank you very much for your testimony today.

And this concludes the public hearing on the Committee of the Whole. We will now go into our public meeting, and the Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell for a motion on the resolution.

COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I move that Resolution No. 130958 be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation.

(Duly seconded.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank you. It has been moved and properly seconded that the Resolution 130958 be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation.

1/23/14 - WHOLE - RES. 130958

All those in favor?

(Aye.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Those opposed?

(No response.)

COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: The ayes have it and the motion carries. Resolution 130958 will be reported from this committee with a favorable recommendation.

Thank you. This concludes the business of the Committee for this morning. I want to thank you all very much, and thank you all for coming down in support of Ms. Coney.

Thank you.

(Committee of the Whole concluded at 10:00 a.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, and that this is a true and correct transcript of same.

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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A

able 10:18 13:16
accountable 5:17
accurately 16:5
acknowledging 10:8
activism 10:11
activist 5:8 9:9
additional 7:7
adversaries 5:2
advice 9:19
Advisory 5:22
advocacy 8:14 12:6,11
affirm 10:18
affordable 5:5
agency 5:21
ago 7:22
agree 11:3
and/or 16:22
apply 16:20
appoint 3:12
appointed 3:15
appointment 1:17 2:13 12:20
appreciate 13:15
approach 8:17
approached 2:21
approval 3:19
approved 7:18
approving 1:17 2:13
area 6:24
ascend 9:9
ascending 10:17
Asia 1:17 2:8,13 3:20 11:6,10 12:6
assistance 5:10,23
assisted 6:6 7:20
associate 4:7
Association 6:14
attend 7:12
attracted 6:20
aunt 4:6
Authority 1:18 2:9,15 3:14 4:19 4:20 8:4
Authority's 6:4
available 8:7
Aye 15:3
ayes 15:8
a.m 1:7 15:19

B

B 1:15
background 12:16
bad 5:19
base 12:23
basic 4:18
behavior 5:17
BILL 1:11
Blackwell 1:10 10:25 11:2 14:14,15
board 1:18 2:8,14 3:13 5:22 9:10 10:18 11:8,10 11:13 12:14
BOBBY 1:12
body 3:16
boosting 6:23
Born 4:8
built 7:5
business 15:13

C

call 9:16 12:8
called 4:14 12:8
carries 15:8
celebration 6:18
certainly 11:3,17 12:12
Certificate 7:14 16:2
certification 6:13 16:19
CERTIFY 16:3
certifying 16:23
Chair 9:3 10:3,6 10:24 11:22 13:3 14:13
chance 12:3,5
Christmas 2:10 2:17
citizens 8:19
city 1:2,6 3:9,17 4:8 6:21 8:16 10:13
citywide 5:21
CLARKE 1:10 2:2,16,23 3:2,6 8:9,25 9:25 10:22 11:20 12:25 13:25 14:6,21 15:4,7
CLERK 2:12
close 4:10
colleagues 10:7 11:5 12:2
collective 5:5,15 7:11
come 2:19
comes 9:14
coming 15:15
commend 12:19
comments 3:10 9:7 13:9
Commissioner 3:15 8:2
Commissioners 1:18 2:14
commit 7:19,22
commitment 10:9 10:10
committee 1:3 2:4 2:6 9:2 10:19 14:11,18,24 15:10,13,18
communities 5:15 6:20
community 4:3 4:12 5:7 7:6 10:10 12:5
complete 3:14
concluded 15:19
concludes 14:10 15:12
Coney 1:17 2:8,13 2:18,25 3:5,8,20 8:11,24 9:24 10:21 12:6,24 13:8,24 14:7 15:16
Coney's 9:7
congratulations 12:23
consequences 9:18
consideration 3:18 8:6
consistent 8:14
constituents 9:20
Construction 7:13
consulting 5:9
contained 16:5
continual 7:19
continuing 11:15
contribute 5:3,18
control 16:22
correct 16:8
Council 1:2,10 2:2,16,23 3:2,6 3:9,10,17 7:2,3 8:9,25 9:25 10:6 10:22 11:20 12:25 13:25 14:6,21 15:4,7
Councilman 1:11 1:11,12,12,13 1:13,14,14,15 9:3,5 10:2,3,5 10:23 11:22,24 13:2
councils 5:23
Councilwoman 1:10,15 10:25 11:2,21 13:4,5 14:2,13,15
cousin 4:7
co-chaired 6:16
created 6:9
currently 5:20
CURTIS 1:13

D

DARRELL 1:10
DAVID 1:15
decent 5:5
dedication 12:11
DENNIS 1:14
deserve 11:18
development 7:4
devotion 10:11
direct 16:22
Director 6:7
discuss 5:12
distant 13:12
diversified 8:17
Duly 14:20
duties 7:24

E

early 7:5
earn 7:13
echo 9:6 11:25 13:8
economics 6:24
effective 8:3
efficient 8:3
efforts 7:11
elimination 4:17
empowering 5:14
encouraged 7:12
encourages 5:25
ensure 8:2
entities 6:10
established 2:5
establishment 12:14
Estates 7:17 12:9
evidence 16:4
evolve 4:19
examine 5:11
existed 4:12
experience 12:16

F

family 4:5
far 13:10
favor 15:2
favorable 14:18 14:25 15:10
federal 5:12
feel 12:22

Ferry 7:17 12:9
filling 6:23
find 9:16
fitting 12:15
folk 13:19
foregoing 16:7,19
former 11:7
formerly 6:7
forums 5:11
forward 2:19 9:22 11:15 12:22
free 12:22
friendship 8:21
fulfill 7:24
fully 12:20 16:5
future 9:23

G

given 7:21
glad 10:14
go 14:12
goal 5:5
goes 11:14
good 2:2,23,25 3:2,8 5:19 9:9 9:19 13:5,7,18
GOODE 1:11
government 6:9
grandmother 3:23 4:6
Grays 7:16 12:9
great 8:20
Greater 7:16 12:9
great-aunt 4:7
great-grandmo... 3:23 4:6
GREEN 1:11
GREENLEE 1:12
grew 4:10
growing 4:9 12:2

H

Hall 1:6
happy 11:12
hear 2:7
hearing 2:3,6 14:11
heart 9:9
held 7:7
Henon 1:12 10:4 10:5
high 4:21
Homes 7:4 12:8
honor 10:16 11:11
hope 9:15 13:17
hosting 5:10
hotels 6:23
housing 1:18 2:9 2:15 3:13 4:10 4:19,20 5:6 6:4 6:6,13 7:21 8:4 8:15 9:8,14,21 10:10 13:14,20
hundreds 4:16

I

identification 5:13
immediate 4:5
implementation 6:3
important 13:19
improve 6:10
Improvement 7:3
increases 5:25
individuals 5:15
input 5:16 6:3
integrity 7:23
intended 9:17
international 6:18
issues 11:10 13:18

J

JAMES 1:14
JANNIE 1:10
January 1:7
Johnson 1:13 11:23,24
Jones 1:13 9:4,5
JR 1:11,13
jurisdiction 5:21

K

K 1:12
keep 13:17,18
KENNEY 1:14
KENYATTA 1:13
knowledge 5:3
known 7:2,16 8:13 10:14

L

L 1:10 16:14
large 8:16
leader 5:7
leadership 4:25
led 13:13
life 12:3
linchpin 12:17
line 9:11
live 4:3 9:20 13:19
lives 6:11
living 7:7
locally 4:16 5:11
long 8:13,13 11:6
long-term 9:7
look 9:22 11:15
loss 4:15
lost 13:21

M

making 8:18
man 12:5
management 7:14 12:18
Manager 6:14
March 3:22 6:17
MARIAN 1:15
matriarch 4:4
matter 16:7
Mayor 3:11
means 16:21
meeting 11:14 14:12
member 1:17 2:14 11:8
members 3:9,17 9:2 12:14
mentioned 11:11
Michael 3:11
MICHELE 16:14
million 3:22 6:17 6:21
mission 7:21
monitor 6:2
morning 2:3,24 2:25 3:3,8 13:6 13:7 15:14
mother 3:24 4:5
motion 14:14 15:8
move 12:22 14:16
moved 14:22
MURPHY 16:14

N

NAHRO 6:15
name 3:20
named 7:4
national 6:14,17
nationally 4:17 5:11
need 5:6 12:12
neighborhoods 5:18
new 9:15,18 12:14
nominating 2:8
nomination 3:12 7:18
non-member 11:14
non-profit 6:8
note 11:5
notes 16:6
numerous 4:23
Nutter 3:11

O

objections 16:4
observe 12:6
October 6:22
offices 7:7
OH 1:15
old 9:15
once 7:4
opportunity 3:18
opposed 15:5
optimistic 4:25
organizer 7:6
organizing 5:14
outcomes 5:17
outgoing 3:15
outside 4:13
O'BRIEN 1:14

P

part 11:13
participate 5:16
participating 5:10
participation 6:2 10:16
partners 5:2
partnerships 6:9
passion 12:10
Pennsylvania 1:6
people 4:3 13:13
performer 4:21
person 8:12
PHA 11:8,17 12:13
Philadelphia 1:2 1:6,18 2:9,15 3:13 4:9,19 6:22 8:3 10:9,12 12:3
PHM 6:12
please 2:10,18 3:3
pleased 13:16
policy/program... 6:5
position 7:25
present 1:9 3:3
presidency 7:8
President 1:10 2:2,16,23 3:2,6 3:9 5:20 6:25 8:9,25 9:6,25 10:6,22 11:3,20 12:25 13:25 14:6,16,21 15:4 15:7
pre-congratulat... 3:7
pride 4:11
Prior 6:16

private 6:10
proceedings 16:4
product 3:21
program 9:15,15 9:18
projects 4:13
properly 14:23
protect 13:14
provide 5:16,22
providing 5:9 6:3
proximity 4:11
public 2:5 4:10 6:6,13 7:20 8:15 9:8,14,21 10:8,9 13:13,20 14:10 14:12 16:15

Q

quality 6:11
questions 8:7,23
quite 10:14
quorum 2:5

R

raised 4:8
read 2:10
ready 5:3
recipient 6:12
recognizes 9:3 10:3,24 11:22 13:3 14:13
recommendation 14:19,25 15:11
redevelopment 7:15
reflect 6:18
regulations 5:12
relates 6:5 9:20 12:7
relationship 11:16
remain 4:25
remember 4:11
renamed 7:16
reported 14:17,24 15:9
reporter 16:23
representation 7:19
reproduction 16:20
RES 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1
resident 3:15 4:24 5:21,23,25 7:2
residents 5:14 6:11 7:11,20,24 8:15 10:12 11:17 12:18
resolution 1:17,17 2:7,11,12 14:4 14:14,17,23 15:9
respected 12:10
response 14:5 15:6
responsibilities 7:25
responsibility 3:25 4:2
restructurings 4:24
right 8:18
rights 13:14
Room 1:6
RPR-Notary 16:15

S

seat 2:19
seconded 14:20 14:23
secretary 7:9
see 9:9
seeking 3:18
sentiments 11:25
serve 7:22 11:17 12:17
service 8:12 9:8 10:20
services 4:18 6:8
she'll 11:12
sir 3:5
sister 4:5
site 7:15
sites 11:9
sitting 5:24
skills 5:4
slogan 3:22
South 12:2
spirit 4:12
statements 10:8
stenographic 16:6
strategies 5:13
stronger 13:21
successfully 7:10
supervision 16:22
support 6:8 12:20 12:21 15:16
supportive 13:23
sure 8:18

T

table 2:20,22 13:20
take 2:19
taken 16:6
Tasco 1:15 13:4,5
Tasker 7:2,4,8,12 12:8
taught 3:23,24,24
teach 3:25 4:2
technical 5:9,22
Temple 7:12
Tenant 6:8 7:3
term 3:14
testify 14:3
testimony 2:7 3:4 8:10 14:8
thank 2:17 3:5,16 8:5,5,10,11,19 8:24 9:5,24 10:2 10:5,19,21,23 11:2,19,21 12:24 13:2,6,24 14:2,2,8,15,16 14:22 15:12,14 15:15,17
thanking 3:11
thing 8:18
think 12:15
thousands 4:16
Thursday 1:7
time 4:14 8:13 10:15
times 4:23
title 2:11
today 10:17 14:9
tools 5:13
touch 12:23
training 5:8
transcript 16:8,20
transformation 12:4,13
transforming 12:7
tri-state 6:24
troubled 4:20,21
true 16:7
trying 11:16
TSSI 6:16
turbulent 4:23
two 7:7

U

ugly 5:19
unintended 9:17
units 4:16 7:5
University 7:13
upbringing 3:21
use 3:21
useful 7:15
usual 12:22

V

vehicle 7:23
VI 9:16
vice 7:8
visited 11:9
vividly 4:11
voice 7:23 12:12 13:15
voices 13:21,22
volunteer 7:6
vote 10:19 13:16

W

W 1:11
want 8:19 9:6,13 11:25 14:7 15:14
watch 12:4,13
watched 4:18 13:12
way 12:21 13:12
weren't 9:10
we're 13:22
WILLIAM 1:12
willing 4:25
WILSON 1:11
wish 13:17
witness 2:20,21 2:21 10:17
witnessed 4:15 10:15
Woman 3:22 6:17
women 6:21
wonderful 11:16 13:9
work 5:4 6:19 8:20 13:18
worked 11:5,9 13:10,11
working 8:2 9:22 11:7

Y

years 5:8 7:22 8:12,22 10:13 10:20
young 12:5

1

1,097 7:5
1/23/14 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1 15:1
10:00 15:19
130958 1:17 2:7 2:12 3:1 4:1 5:1 6:1 7:1 8:1 9:1 10:1 11:1 12:1 13:1 14:1,17,24 15:1,9

1930s 7:5
1997 6:22

2

2.5 6:21
2014 1:7
23 1:7
25th 6:22

3

30 5:8

4

400 1:6

9

9:45 1:7