

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

Museum of the American Revolution
101 South 3rd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Monday, April 14, 2025
1:10 p.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY LOZADA
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.

ALSO PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD

RESOLUTION: 240701

1 - - -

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
3 afternoon, everybody. We are
4 looking to get started with today's
5 hearing. Have we gone live yet?
6 Can we start live, Channel 64
7 folks, or -- okay. All right.
8 Good morning. Good afternoon.

9 Before we get started
10 today with officially opening
11 today's hearing, I want to give a
12 moment to the President and CEO of
13 this phenomenal space that we're
14 in, Dr. Scott Stephenson, to give a
15 few remarks before we get started.

16 DR. STEPHENSON: Well,
17 50 years ago I was a 9-year-old
18 growing up in another great sports
19 town called Pittsburgh.

20 (Boo.)

21 DR. STEPHENSON: Oh,
22 come on. And I'm just here to tell
23 you that what I'm excited about,
24 and for those of you who came up to

1 the museum, it is spring break
2 week. It is great to see hundreds
3 of families here with your children
4 and they are visiting from around
5 the country.

6 If you had been here
7 last week or you come next week,
8 it's when our student-rich
9 environment comes. We have about
10 50,000 school children, not just
11 from the city, not just from the
12 region, around the country who come
13 here to the museum every year to
14 learn about these crucial founding
15 decades that created our
16 constitutional democracy.

17 And I can tell you that
18 the opportunity we have is so
19 exciting to ignite in them a
20 passion and an interest in history,
21 for critical thinking, for
22 literacy, to spark their interest
23 in reading and learning about the
24 roots of our democracy that can

1 sometimes feel a little bit thin
2 and fragile. And so, this is a
3 great opportunity that we have.

4 We are so grateful to be
5 part of this great campus of the
6 University of America, which
7 includes great places like the
8 National Constitution Center, the
9 Weitzman Independence Hall, and
10 we're really a place where people
11 from around the nation should
12 continue to come and hopefully in
13 greater numbers will come here as
14 we celebrate the Semiquincentennial
15 of the Declaration of Independence.
16 So thanks to all of you for being
17 here. Thanks for the opportunity
18 to host you all today.

19 (Applause.)

20 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

21 Thank you. It's important that
22 we're in this space today, and we
23 will talk about that throughout the
24 course of our hearing. So with

1 that being said, good afternoon.

2 This is the Committee on
3 Legislative Oversight. Today is
4 Monday, April 14, 2025.

5 Before we start, I just
6 want to take a moment of personal
7 privilege just to acknowledge that
8 today would have been my mother's
9 birthday. So it's really touching
10 for me to be here in this moment.
11 My mother died two years ago and
12 today is her birthday. So I'm
13 excited that we're having this
14 conversation about the history of
15 Philadelphia on a day that is the
16 birthday of somebody who means so
17 much to me.

18 Good afternoon,
19 everybody. Welcome to Philadelphia
20 City Council and the Committee on
21 Legislative Oversight. I now note
22 that the hour has come.

23 Mr. Clerk, will you
24 please call the roll and take

1 attendance of the witnesses here
2 today.

3 THE CLERK: Member
4 Lozada.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
6 Present.

7 THE CLERK: Member
8 Phillips.

9 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
10 Present.

11 THE CLERK: Member
12 Squilla.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:
14 Present.

15 THE CLERK: Member
16 Young.

17 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:
18 Present.

19 THE CLERK: Chair
20 Thomas.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
22 Present. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. A
23 quorum of the Committee is present
24 and this hearing is now called to

1 order.

2 I would like to take a
3 moment of privilege to recognize
4 that, although not on the
5 Committee, Dr. Nina Ahmad is here
6 with us today as well too. Thank
7 you, Dr. Ahmad. We appreciate you
8 being here for such an important
9 conversation. And I would also
10 like to recognize that
11 Councilmember Jamie Gauthier was
12 here earlier as it relates to
13 supporting the advocacy of press-
14 based initiatives.

15 With that being said,
16 this is the continuation of a
17 public hearing of the Committee of
18 the Legislative Oversight Committee
19 on Resolution No. 240701.

20 Mr. Maynard, will you
21 please read the title of the
22 hearing resolution to be heard here
23 today.

24 THE CLERK: Resolution

1 240701, authorizing the Committee
2 on Legislative Oversight to hold
3 hearings to assess the current
4 state of Philadelphia's
5 preparations with a multitude of
6 events being held across the City
7 throughout 2026 as we celebrate
8 America's 250th birthday and
9 Philadelphia's central role in
10 America's founding.

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

12 Thank you, Mr. Maynard.

13 Before we call the first
14 panel, I would like to open it up
15 for any members of the Committee
16 who might have any brief remarks.

17 (No response.)

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

19 Seeing none, I would like to ask
20 that all of the people who are here
21 in attendance today who are not in
22 government, right, who's in the
23 private sector and who's here
24 because you care about this city,

1 maybe you run some type of event,
2 some type of business, any type of
3 activity, everybody who's here
4 today because you care about 2026
5 and you care about Philadelphia and
6 you do not work for any government
7 level, can you please stand up for
8 us?

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Look
11 at this, folks. Isn't this
12 beautiful? I want to say thank you
13 all. I want to say thank you all
14 for coming out. I want to say
15 thank you for making Philadelphia
16 the amazing city it is. And I want
17 to say thank you because even when
18 government was behind, you still
19 were laser-sharp focused on the
20 goal of making sure 2026 was at the
21 forefront of the work that we do.
22 And we can see, based on where we
23 are today, that we would not be
24 here without you all.

1 So I just wanted
2 everybody to understand the people
3 that are in the audience, because
4 sometimes we come to these spaces
5 and far too often people are coming
6 to testify or they're coming
7 because they're staffing us. Today
8 is the day where people are coming
9 because they care about our great
10 city and they want to make sure
11 that we do the best that we
12 possibly do as it relates to 2026.
13 Give yourselves a round of applause
14 please.

15 (Applause.)

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
17 Mr. Maynard, will you please call
18 the first panel to testify here
19 today.

20 THE CLERK: Our first
21 panel this afternoon is Michael
22 Newmuis, 2026 Director for the City
23 of Philadelphia, and Jazelle Jones.

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Can

1 we give them a round of applause
2 please.

3 (Applause.)

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I
5 know that's not normal at hearings.

6 (Witnesses approached
7 witness table.)

8 COUNCILMAN YOUNG:
9 Again, it isn't normal at hearings,
10 but nothing today has been normal
11 so that's okay. But we really do
12 want to recognize the two people
13 who've been leading the charge for
14 the executive branch of government.
15 And if you are ready, please state
16 your name for the record and you
17 may begin with your testimony.

18 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you.
19 For the record, my name is Michael
20 Newmuis, 2026 Director for the City
21 of Philadelphia, and it's an honor
22 to be here with you today. Happy
23 birthday to Mrs. Thomas.

24 And it was really

1 encouraging to see everyone stand
2 up because I think it really
3 punctuates a key message, that for
4 Philadelphia to succeed and
5 leverage this catalytic
6 opportunity, it really will take
7 all of us working together. And
8 I'm so pleased that we have been
9 driving forward incredible
10 partnerships and collaboration.
11 And I want to thank City Council
12 and the Office of Thomas for being
13 a major part of that.

14 Good afternoon, Chair
15 Thomas and members of the Committee
16 on Legislative Oversight.

17 MS. JONES: (Inaudible).

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: We
19 work for y'all. State your name
20 for the record and you may begin
21 with your testimony.

22 MS. JONES: My name is
23 Jazelle Jones. Good afternoon,
24 Chairperson Thomas and members of

1 the Committee on Legislative
2 Oversight. I am Jazelle --

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Can
4 you move the mic a little closer?

5 MS. JONES: Sure. Of
6 course.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
8 Sorry about that.

9 MS. JONES: No worries.
10 I am the City Representative and
11 the Director of Operations for
12 Special Events in the Office of
13 Special Events. Philadelphia
14 stands at a pivotal moment in
15 history. As we look ahead to 2026,
16 we have a once-in-a-lifetime
17 generational opportunity not just
18 to showcase our city to the world,
19 but to ensure that this moment
20 leaves a lasting legacy in our
21 neighborhoods for our businesses
22 and across every community.
23 Our journey to 2026
24 didn't just start this year or even

1 last year. It began back in 2017
2 when the City of Philadelphia
3 alongside the Host Committee and
4 the Philadelphia Convention and
5 Visitors Bureau submitted a bid to
6 join the United 2026 Campaign to
7 bring the FIFA World Cup back to
8 North America for the first time
9 since 1994.

10 We know that
11 Philadelphia is no stranger to
12 being a City of First. And in
13 2026, we will help make history
14 once again. For the first time
15 ever, the FIFA World Cup will be
16 hosted jointly by the United
17 States, by Mexico and Canada. And
18 Philadelphia will be front and
19 center.

20 When we were selected as
21 a host city in 2022, we knew that
22 we had work to do. But we also
23 knew that we were ready to showcase
24 Philadelphia on the global stage

1 yet again. From the 2015 Papal
2 visit and the World Meeting of
3 Families to the 2016 Democratic
4 National Convention, to the 2017
5 NFL Draft, the 2024 WrestleMania
6 and two very unforgettable Eagles
7 Super Bowl Parades in 2018 and
8 2025, Philadelphia has proven time
9 and time again that we can rise to
10 the occasion of hosting large
11 celebrations.

12 Today you will hear
13 about some of the major events
14 coming our way, including America
15 250, Homecoming 250, Navy Marine
16 Birthday Celebration, the 2026 FIFA
17 World Cup and FanFest, the MLB
18 All-Star Weekend and much more.
19 Each event requires meticulous
20 coordination and expertise, and
21 that is where the Office of the
22 City Representative and Special
23 Events come in.

24 Our team is responsible

1 for the behind-the-scenes work that
2 ensures these events are
3 successful, seamless and, most
4 importantly, safe for all residents
5 and attendants. I am here before
6 you today to say Philadelphia is
7 ready. In fact, we've been
8 preparing for this for years.

9 Planning committees have
10 been established across a wide
11 range of subject area expertise,
12 including, but not limited to,
13 public safety, transportation and
14 infrastructure, communications,
15 finance and sustainability. Each
16 committee has been charged with a
17 critical mission to develop, refine
18 and finalize comprehensive
19 operational plans with an overall
20 goal that each and every visitor
21 and every resident feels safe,
22 supported and connected.

23 Our committee leads have
24 been coordinating with host

1 organizations, mutual aid partners
2 and a myriad of local, state and
3 federal agencies to develop these
4 plans and will continue to work
5 tirelessly to ensure that every
6 potential issue is addressed.

7 These committees have
8 also been proactive in considering
9 unforeseen contingencies and
10 emergency scenarios, ensuring that
11 plans remain flexible and adaptable
12 in the face of changing
13 circumstances. Our committee leads
14 have engaged in a series of indepth
15 discussions to anticipate possible
16 obstacles and formulate effective
17 responses. This collaborative
18 effort, through a series of
19 meetings, has hyperfocus on
20 identifying and troubleshooting
21 potential challenges, along with
22 data- and information-sharing in
23 coordination with a wide array of
24 experts across multiple sectors.

1 The work is not only
2 aimed at creating a smooth
3 operational club, but also at
4 fostering a sense of community. As
5 plans near completion, they will be
6 thoroughly tested and refined to
7 guarantee effectiveness, ensuring a
8 seamless experience for all who
9 visit Philadelphia to participate
10 in these tremendous events. Public
11 safety is and will continue to be
12 our top priority.

13 Comprehensive public
14 safety planning for events is
15 critical to ensure that large
16 patterns are safe and well-managed.
17 Proper planning helps identify and
18 mitigate risk and greatly enhances
19 experience for attendees, staff,
20 residents and emergency response.
21 We're working closely with our
22 public safety partners, police,
23 fire, emergency management, public
24 health to make sure we're prepared

1 with the right people, the right
2 equipment and plans in place to
3 support the full schedule of events
4 while simultaneously delivering a
5 high standard of services to
6 Philadelphia's residents and
7 existing business community.

8 From a transportation
9 perspective, we are uniquely
10 positioned. We are nestled between
11 New York, Boston, Washington, D.C.,
12 and we take that responsibility
13 really seriously. We understand
14 that coordination and collaboration
15 with our neighboring cities is not
16 just helpful, but it is essential.

17 We can expect that some
18 international visitors will use
19 this opportunity to maximize their
20 visit to the United States and
21 traverse up and down the Northeast
22 corridor. And thanks to the strong
23 partnerships we built with regional
24 and national agencies we are

1 working to ensure that those
2 journeys are smooth, secure and
3 seamless. But beyond operations
4 and logistics, transportation and
5 safety, our focus is also on
6 legacy. A city worthy of a global
7 celebration must first be a city
8 that works for its people.

9 The Mayor is extremely
10 committed to assuring that every
11 neighborhood and every community
12 are part of the celebration, and
13 that is why we're working
14 diligently to drive investments
15 into every Council District, also
16 into our small businesses,
17 commercial corridors and community
18 events so the benefits of 2026
19 extend far beyond Center City and
20 well beyond the event dates.

21 As it relates to FIFA
22 FanFest, our team is working with
23 partner agencies and stakeholders
24 to enhance accessibility and

1 infrastructure at Lemon Hill ahead
2 of the event and is engaging
3 directly with the community members
4 and the park to gain insight into
5 what sort of legacy enhancement and
6 improvements that should be made
7 post-event.

8 It is important to note
9 that many of the upcoming large-
10 scale sporting events, including
11 FIFA World Cup, MLB All-Star
12 Weekend, they offer free and
13 low-cost fan experiences for those
14 without game tickets. FIFA FanFest
15 at Lemon Hill will be free to enter
16 with no ticket required.

17 Major League Baseball
18 All-Star Weekend offers a number of
19 free and low-cost fan experiences
20 outside of ticket games and stadium
21 events. Not only will FIFA and MLB
22 All-Star Weekend have free or
23 low-ticket event options, but most
24 of the Welcome America events being

1 planned in conjunction with Welcome
2 America 250 celebrations will also
3 be free to attend.

4 On the homefront, even
5 as we prepare for the world stage,
6 we are not stepping away from our
7 daily responsibilities. Our office
8 processes more than 1800 special
9 event applications throughout every
10 year, including over 500 city-
11 sponsored events hosted by our
12 Councilmembers and our city
13 departments that uplift and
14 celebrate our communities.

15 In 2026, we'll continue
16 to support those events and look
17 for ways to tie them to the larger
18 250th celebration, because a
19 celebration in Philadelphia is a
20 celebration for every community.
21 And we do believe that every
22 neighborhood deserves to feel a
23 part of this historic moment.

24 This is why we are so

1 committed to being a part of the
2 solution that makes doing business
3 in Philadelphia easier, especially
4 as we approach the landmark events
5 of 2026. We're actively working to
6 streamline the event-permitting
7 process so that individuals,
8 organizations and neighborhoods
9 that have always dreamed of hosting
10 a celebration can now do so with
11 confidence and with the support of
12 our office.

13 To help make that vision
14 a reality, we've created a special
15 event guidebook designed to walk
16 you through every step. Whether
17 you're a first-time organizer or a
18 seasoned planner, we want you to
19 feel empowered to contribute to
20 this historic moment and celebrate
21 Philadelphia in your own meaningful
22 way.

23 Philadelphia holds a
24 unique place in America's story.

1 As the nation's birthplace and its
2 first world heritage city, we are
3 uniquely positioned to lead this
4 milestone moment with pride,
5 purpose and unity. So, yes, the
6 world is coming to Philadelphia,
7 but more importantly, Philadelphia
8 is rising to meet the world. And
9 together, we'll make sure that we
10 rebuild for 2026 and that build is
11 felt for generations. Thank you
12 for the opportunity to testify
13 today.

14 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
15 Thank you for your testimony. If I
16 heard you correctly, I thought I
17 heard you say 500 city-sponsored
18 events hosted by city departments
19 and Councilmembers, so --

20 MS. JONES: I did say
21 that.

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: --
23 the words by our phenomenal Council
24 President, we be working. So --

1 MS. JONES: Yes, you do.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
3 before Michael goes, I would like
4 to acknowledge the presence of
5 Council President Kenyatta Johnson.
6 Council President --

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
9 Please state your name for the
10 record. Begin with your testimony.
11 After your testimony, we'll open it
12 up for questions from members of
13 the Committee.

14 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you.
15 My name is Michael Newmuis, 2026
16 Director for the City of
17 Philadelphia. Good afternoon,
18 Council President, Chair Thomas and
19 members of the Committee on
20 Legislative Oversight.

21 Thank you for the
22 opportunity to discuss the critical
23 work that is under way to prepare
24 Philadelphia to shine on a global

1 stage as we host America's 250th
2 anniversary in 2026. Since my last
3 testimony, we have achieved an
4 unprecedented collaboration across
5 government, community leaders and
6 institutions to leverage the
7 (inaudible) to create a lasting
8 citywide impact for Philadelphia.
9 Together we are making 2026 a
10 moment of celebration, investment
11 and pride that will positively
12 impact the residents of
13 Philadelphia for years to come.

14 Let's jump right into
15 it. With the FY26 budget proposal,
16 we are ensuring that the spirit of
17 the celebration extends to all
18 Philadelphians, by enhancing our
19 commercial corridors and empowering
20 all neighborhoods to be a part of
21 the experience. We are
22 collaborating with each and every
23 City Council District office to
24 ensure that the Parker

1 Administration can identify key
2 corridors for investments based on
3 City Council's recommendations and
4 the Philadelphia Department of
5 Commerce and in partnership with
6 trusted community partners to
7 collaboratively enhance the
8 lifeblood of our neighborhoods.

9 This initiative is aimed
10 at beautifying public spaces,
11 increasing tours of fueled economic
12 activity for small businesses and
13 bolstering civic pride among
14 residents. Just imagine going out
15 to the corridors and there are
16 beautiful, beautiful, large
17 planters in areas where they
18 weren't, commemorative 250
19 (inaudible), neighborhood banners,
20 all of the things that are going to
21 drive civic pride and also place-
22 making tools to help drive economic
23 activity to these places.

24 But we're also proposing

1 the funding of the Neighborhood
2 Centers Grant Program to provide
3 support for individuals and
4 community institutions and
5 organizations who are seeking to
6 co-create programs to host events
7 in the communities. This
8 application process would
9 prioritize events that demonstrate
10 a potential to really boost the
11 economic activity to support the
12 jobs and businesses along corridors
13 with engaging our residents across
14 Philadelphia.

15 And as with the corridor
16 revitalization proposal, no
17 District across Philadelphia will
18 be left behind. We are committed
19 to working with each District
20 office through that process. I
21 want to also thank Philadelphia250
22 for their support with executing
23 that particular program.

24 I want to especially

1 acknowledge the leadership of
2 Councilmember Lozada for her hands-
3 on leadership as we work through
4 opportunities in Kensington and her
5 commitment to working alongside us
6 to find a solution that's not just
7 handed to the community, it's
8 really to co-create with community
9 partnership and it is benefiting
10 from her subject matter expertise.

11 While there's still much
12 work to do, I'm confident that
13 through our collaboration we're
14 going to deliver a meaningful
15 initiative that can benefit the
16 good people of Kensington and
17 deliver impactful activation
18 together.

19 Our goal is to make 2026
20 activities accessible, inclusive
21 and inspiring with opportunities
22 for every Philadelphian to take
23 part in the celebration. We're
24 supporting initiatives like the

1 German Arts District, Kristen Clark
2 from that group is here today. You
3 may know them as GTown250 or
4 Germantown250, but they are
5 amplifying Germantown's role in
6 history through arts and business,
7 and their program is pretty
8 exceptional.

9 By offering these
10 grassroots efforts across
11 neighborhoods, we're giving our
12 local communities the tools to tell
13 their meaningful stories and
14 attract participation. But, you
15 know, as we approach 250 years
16 since our nation was founded, there
17 is no city that embodies the
18 essence of America more than
19 Philadelphia does. From our Quaker
20 roots and our indigenous path to
21 the visionaries who understood that
22 1776 was just the beginning in the
23 fight for our rights and democracy,
24 Philadelphia will once again remind

1 the world why we are the keystone
2 celebrating the nation's history
3 and the pathway for so many dreams
4 that are still to come.

5 The American spirit
6 thrives in many stories and
7 experiences that shape us, and the
8 proposed FY26 budget extends a
9 welcome to all. These plans honor
10 the traditions that make our city
11 shine, including Stonewall and Art
12 Fest honoring our sacred LGBT
13 community, the Pennsylvania
14 Juneteenth Parade or Festival, not
15 to mention Odunde, Bumi Fernandez,
16 their head is here today, the
17 largest African American street
18 festival in the world that takes
19 place right here in our hometown.

20 It champions community
21 cornerstones like the Welcoming
22 Center, Esperanza, Asian Arts
23 Initiative and Philly Truce, which
24 is bringing a year of brotherly

1 action initiative to life,
2 fostering renewed bonds among Black
3 men. And I believe Mazzie? is here
4 today from Philly Truce, which is
5 remarkable. They're doing
6 incredible work.

7 We want to also
8 acknowledge the support of
9 Councilmember Young's office, who
10 has fostered connections to ensure
11 that we're elevating indigenous
12 voices in the celebration of
13 America's 250th. The proposed
14 budget proudly supports initiatives
15 hosted by We Are the Seeds, a
16 Native indigenous organization,
17 ensuring these underrepresented
18 indigenous voices resonate during
19 this historic milestone.

20 Additionally, through
21 funding from the FY25 midyear
22 transfer, we are launching a
23 Philadelphia tour series that will
24 share the rich stories of our

1 neighborhoods while supporting
2 local economies. We'll include
3 tours like those through Germantown
4 with the legacy of the Underground
5 Railroad comes alive and through
6 Chinatown and the Gayborhood that
7 highlight the trailblazing history
8 made by these communities right
9 here in Philadelphia.

10 The importance of youth
11 cannot be understated as we talk
12 about redefining of the future,
13 what the next 250 years look like,
14 and recognizing that high demand
15 for tickets for major events won't
16 be a thing in 2026. We want to
17 ensure that our residents,
18 particularly our youth, can still
19 access fun, entertainment and
20 activities.

21 The proposed budget
22 includes programs like Mont Brown's
23 Let's Win Together, which offered
24 through kickbacks and packs, will

1 allow youth to both meet and
2 playfully compete with real-life
3 sports leaders through
4 transformative free programming.

5 Additionally, Victory in
6 Philly offers basketball and life
7 skills education throughout
8 Philadelphia, reaching over 15,000
9 youth across 80% of Philadelphia
10 zip codes through schools, rec
11 centers and community
12 organizations.

13 The FY26 budget also
14 supports programming and
15 activations hosted by community
16 cultural hubs through Philadelphia,
17 including the Paul Robeson House
18 and First Person Arts as well as
19 major museum exhibitions hosted by
20 the Franklin Institute, The Barnes,
21 the Museum of the American
22 Revolution, that we've seen today,
23 and the African American Museum's
24 50th Anniversary program. This

1 balanced approach ensures that both
2 residents across our neighborhoods
3 and visitors can enjoy offerings
4 that further position Philadelphia
5 as the lead in 2026.

6 While we celebrate the
7 future, we are deeply committed to
8 preserving the landmarks that
9 define our city's past. Included
10 in the Administration's proposed
11 FY26 budget, our supplemental
12 capital allocations for
13 institutions like the Mann Center,
14 the Please Touch Museum and
15 importantly, the Philadelphia
16 Museum of Art.

17 I also work quietly
18 behind the scenes with partners to
19 come to an agreement on the
20 prioritization of federal funding
21 for the physical restoration of
22 Independence Hall, a treasured
23 UNESCO world heritage site that
24 remains our nation's most enduring

1 symbol of democracy. The
2 Administration is appreciative for
3 the accelerated efforts steered by
4 the Department of the Interior.
5 I'm thrilled that this historic
6 asset can be preserved for future
7 generations with work commencing
8 within this month.

9 Legacy is not just about
10 building anew. It's about taking
11 treasures we inherit and leaving
12 them in better condition for the
13 generation that will follow us.
14 It's about honoring the past while
15 preparing for the future, ensuring
16 that the foundation you lay today
17 supports the aspirations of our
18 city far into tomorrow.

19 I'm proud to say that
20 this proposed budget reflects that
21 ideal, advancing projects that will
22 solidify Philadelphia's enduring
23 legacy. We've already explored
24 some of those efforts that embody

1 this philosophy, including
2 transforming 20 commercial
3 corridors and neighborhoods that
4 historically were not invited to
5 the table to be part of these
6 incredible celebrations, giving our
7 youth across those streets the
8 physical site that we care about
9 and that we invested in, also the
10 preservation of our cultural and
11 historic assets like the
12 Philadelphia Museum of Art and
13 Independence Hall. These efforts
14 are designed not only to elevate
15 our neighborhoods and preserve our
16 history, but to ensure
17 Philadelphia's stories are told for
18 centuries to come.

19 Legacy takes many forms
20 and the Parker Administration has
21 far more in store as part of a
22 larger construct. The full package
23 of projects will be unveiled in the
24 coming weeks. And I'm excited to

1 just tease that they involve some
2 incredible national collaborations
3 with America250 and the Library of
4 Congress.

5 Business has to be the
6 heart of the celebration, and the
7 Parker Administration is committed
8 to ensuring those proposed
9 investments deliver a return for
10 the business community. The
11 Philadelphia Department of Commerce
12 and the efforts they drive are
13 essential to the success of
14 America's 250.

15 Not all small businesses
16 are ready to handle the anticipated
17 influx of visitors that we expect
18 in 2026. That's why the Mayor's
19 Business Action Team is actively
20 engaging small businesses across
21 commercial corridors to help them
22 enhance their physical
23 infrastructure, including
24 storefront improvements, outside

1 beautification and security camera
2 solutions. These efforts aim to
3 help businesses prepare and scale
4 operations to handle the uptick of
5 tourism anticipated in the next 14
6 months.

7 This work is not just
8 because companies are coming. It's
9 part of our ongoing efforts to help
10 local small businesses scale by
11 improving their marketing plans,
12 pricing models, customer service
13 and other growth factors to ensure
14 that our corridors can thrive, not
15 just in 2026 but for the years that
16 will follow.

17 MBAT will also be
18 delivering additional engagement
19 opportunities for the 250
20 commercial corridors, receiving
21 targeted enhancements to
22 commemorate the 250. We're
23 preparing to communicate additional
24 resources to help businesses get

1 involved, including a matchmaking
2 tool to connect service providers
3 like food trucks, collateral
4 companies, transportation services
5 with events that will be hosted
6 seeking to procure locally.

7 We'll also be announcing
8 workshops to help businesses
9 prepare for upcoming opportunities.
10 By identifying and promoting local
11 procurement opportunities, we're
12 ensuring that local businesses
13 within the city can actively
14 participate and benefit in this
15 historic celebration. While
16 today's remarks focus on our
17 efforts really at the local level,
18 we assure that we are concurrently
19 working to capitalize on the global
20 opportunities that 2026 presents.

21 The world is coming and
22 these proposed investments will
23 help ensure Philadelphia is ready.
24 I can't give you the full

1 information. I'm really excited to
2 say that even just this past
3 weekend working closely with former
4 Treasury Secretary Rosa Rios,
5 Philadelphia just led an incredible
6 national partnership that's going
7 to really elevate that position.

8 So thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify today and
10 share all these exciting
11 investments and highlights that
12 will make Philadelphia the place to
13 be in 2026. My colleague and I are
14 happy to answer questions.

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
16 Thank you. Colleagues, before we
17 open it up for questions I just
18 want to be mindful that we have a
19 packed agenda today. We have a lot
20 of different panels and we really
21 want to make sure we can get to all
22 of them, especially our fourth
23 panel on SEPTA and the Airport.

24 With that being said,

1 just a couple of questions. First,
2 I want to commend you for your
3 testimony today. Michael, I'm
4 listening to the organizations you
5 named and it seems like the
6 partnership has been a good thing
7 thus far.

8 There are a lot of
9 people in the audience here today
10 who are curious about how do we
11 plan on making sure communities,
12 neighborhoods, entrepreneurs can
13 benefit from the moment that we're
14 in. As I look around the room, I
15 see David Simms, who's an
16 entrepreneur in the city of
17 Philadelphia. I see Nicodemus in
18 the back who's a gaming
19 entrepreneur. I see Christina,
20 she's a filming entrepreneur. And
21 you talked about Kristen and the
22 work that she does with the
23 Germantown Arts District. All of
24 these people, who are representing

1 different professional sectors, all
2 have a similar objective as Black
3 entrepreneurs looking to advance
4 their bottom line in 2026.

5 We all know that Black
6 businesses make up less than 5% of
7 the businesses in the city of
8 Philadelphia, while simultaneously
9 Black people make up the largest
10 percent of the population in the
11 city. Help us understand through
12 the lens of the Administration, and
13 either one of you can answer this
14 question, how are we making sure
15 that these entrepreneurs who showed
16 up here today as well as those who
17 didn't have an opportunity to be
18 beneficial -- to benefit from the
19 work that's happening in 2026?

20 MR. NEWMUIS: Sure. And
21 thank you for that question.
22 That's something that's been top of
23 mind for the Administration as
24 well, not just for this but for

1 past celebrations. We've always
2 looked at them through the lens how
3 can you benefit our local and
4 members' businesses, and to your
5 question specifically Black and
6 Brown businesses.

7 One thing we're doing is
8 serving every single individual
9 that is receiving a dollar from the
10 city or that will be submitting
11 permits for the city to identify,
12 capture what are the opportunities
13 that you're going to be needing,
14 whether that's a procurement hiring
15 or whether that's a space that
16 you're looking to activate around
17 your space, so we can share that
18 information with our entrepreneurs
19 and our business class. Because if
20 you got the information to actually
21 know what's happening, then you can
22 mobilize and get resources in order
23 to drive that opportunity forward.

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: What

1 pipeline specifically are we
2 creating so when somebody like FIFA
3 or Major League Baseball wants to
4 put out an RFP, right, because I'm
5 hearing what you're saying about
6 city government and city funding,
7 and I commend the organizations
8 that you have talked about that the
9 Mayor intends to fund.

10 This list is very
11 different than the list that we
12 talked about through Councilmember
13 Squilla's Committee a couple months
14 ago, so we definitely see progress.
15 But what systems specifically are
16 in place for these entrepreneurs so
17 when they leave here today if I
18 don't have Councilman Thomas' cell
19 phone number or Michael's cell
20 phone number, what platforms exist
21 so I can get up-to-date information
22 as it relates to opportunities to
23 partner with the private sector to
24 move the needle for Philadelphia-

1 based businesses specifically?

2 MR. NEWMUIS: Sure.

3 I'll mention two things. One, you
4 mentioned FIFA specifically. I
5 know Philadelphia Soccer 2026 has
6 engaged Tiffany (inaudible), who
7 runs an incredible procurement
8 business. She's a young Black
9 woman that does incredible work.
10 Ned (inaudible) is here. We can
11 provide specific information about
12 how to get in touch during her
13 testimony.

14 And then the City of
15 Philadelphia is going to be
16 launching phila.gov/2026 --

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
18 When? When are we going to launch
19 that?

20 MR. NEWMUIS: I don't
21 have a specific date, but I can
22 follow up in writing with a
23 specific date of when that will be
24 launched.

1 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Can
2 we make sure that the people who
3 have been aggressively trying to be
4 a part of this process gets access
5 to that information?

6 MR. NEWMUIS:
7 Absolutely.

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
9 Because we have people who attended
10 a number of hearings who provided
11 public comment who met with you,
12 who met with my office, and I just
13 would hate for us to put this
14 information out there and a lot of
15 the people who've been at the
16 forefront of this work get left
17 behind.

18 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you
19 for your partnership and your
20 commitment to show that we can
21 leverage all of your networks and
22 resources to make sure that we're
23 reaching the right people.

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I'm

1 sitting next to Councilmember
2 Lozada. So because I'm sitting
3 next to Councilmember Lozada, I
4 vividly remember being next to her
5 in another hearing and she asked
6 for specific initiatives around
7 Kensington to prepare Philadelphia
8 for all of the tourists that come.

9 I remember her words.

10 Her words where, When people come
11 to visit Philadelphia, I don't want
12 them to come to Kensington and get
13 these viral moments, I think you
14 talked about it as. Where are we
15 from the last time we spoke to
16 where we are now as it relates to
17 what Councilmember Lozada requested
18 as a plan specifically for
19 Kensington in preparation for 2026?

20 MR. NEWMUIS: We're all
21 handling that. And I'm so excited
22 that even this Thursday we'll be
23 taking a tour side-by-side with
24 Councilmember Lozada to walk the

1 streets and identify specifically
2 what the vision is with various
3 event planners and other resources.

4 The conversations we've
5 had have been over the past few
6 months and they've evolved. And
7 it's really important from my
8 perspective, and I'm sure, although
9 I won't speak for the
10 Councilmember, but that we're
11 working with the community and that
12 we're not just handing the plan but
13 that we're being really intentional
14 about co-creating experiences and
15 opportunities for the folks that
16 we're looking to positively help.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
18 Councilmember Lozada would like to
19 provide a point of information.

20 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

21 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22 I sat here in our first
23 meeting and expressed deep concern
24 and lots of frustration, and I just

1 want to publicly say thank you.

2 Thank you, Michael and his team and
3 many others here, for understanding
4 my frustration, for understanding
5 my deep concern and focus-finding
6 the way that you all have.

7 I am hopeful that after
8 our tour, right, we talk a lot
9 about seeing, feeling and touching
10 things and I think it's important
11 that Michael has committed to
12 walking and riding the train with
13 me and my team to feel what
14 community residents feel as they
15 travel through neighborhoods on our
16 public transportation. So I'm
17 looking forward to that.

18 And I'm looking forward
19 to continue to work together to
20 ensure that when visitors come to
21 our city and they visit Kensington
22 and they walk away with a
23 completely different experience
24 than what the Internet has said

1 Kensington is.

2 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you,
3 Councilmember.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
5 Thank you, Councilmember Lozada,
6 for your leadership on that issue.
7 Greatly appreciated.

8 Two more questions and
9 then I'm going to turn it over to
10 Councilmember Phillips for a few
11 questions. I see -- oh, Council
12 President, would you like to be
13 recognized?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
15 JOHNSON: No, you can continue.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
17 Okay. A lot of us elected
18 officials wear a number of hats. I
19 seen Dr. Ashley Jordan here. I sit
20 on the Board of the African
21 American Museum. It was just an
22 honor to have Bumi from the Odunde
23 Festival as one of our panelists
24 today.

1 When I think about
2 festivals and institutions that
3 traditionally do not get funded,
4 how are we prioritizing events like
5 Odunde, initiatives like the
6 Germantown Arts Festival,
7 institutions like the African
8 American Museum to make sure -- and
9 I heard you mention the celebration
10 for the African American Museum
11 specifically as one of the
12 initiatives. But how are we doing
13 a deep dive as it relates to our
14 finances, to make sure that we're
15 funding diverse initiatives but
16 also to encourage the private
17 sector to partner with these
18 institutions, these cultural events
19 of these initiatives, to make sure
20 that they have the same opportunity
21 to thrive as a lot of our historic
22 places on East Market Street as
23 well as in other parts of the city?

24 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you.

1 When I first got in this role, my
2 very second week, Bumi was the
3 first person I met with in terms of
4 doing the external stakeholder
5 outreach. We've been in constant
6 communication since. But that's
7 not isolated to Odunde. It's
8 across the board. I am a person
9 who cares deeply about our
10 communities and that you're seeing
11 it in this proposed budget
12 proposal.

13 Councilmember, the
14 second part of your question was?

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
16 we talked about cultural
17 institutions and events. So we
18 talked about events like Odunde,
19 we'll do a deeper dive there, but
20 specifically looking at the African
21 American Museum and other
22 institutions in the city of
23 Philadelphia, smaller institutions,
24 African American Museum is the

1 biggest one, but I think about a
2 number of others, specifically in
3 the 8th District, that have these
4 type of cultural institutions.
5 What are we doing to ensure that
6 they can have the same opportunity
7 for success, the Paul Robeson
8 House?

9 Council President just
10 had an institution, Marian Anderson
11 I believe in his District, I can
12 think of a few others. Are we
13 making sure that those institutions
14 are able to have some level of
15 success? And what are we doing to
16 encourage tourism to participate in
17 these initiatives outside of just
18 the traditional Market Street?

19 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you
20 for that question. It's something
21 that we are also all in on. You'll
22 find included in my remarks and in
23 the proposed budget that we've
24 prioritized with AAMP, who've I've

1 met with quite a few times and
2 other institutions that you've just
3 mentioned that are included in the
4 proposed budget, but we're also
5 working to make sure that with our
6 marketing partner in Visit
7 Philadelphia, that we're not just
8 shining a light on the major
9 tourism hubs.

10 When I was at Visit
11 Philadelphia, I started an
12 initiative called Shop Black
13 Business Friday and then
14 Councilmember Parker decided to
15 introduce it, and it has remained
16 an incredible program since. It
17 shines a light on our businesses
18 throughout, and that philosophy
19 carries forward with the proposal
20 for your consideration.

21 We really are working
22 intentionally across both the small
23 community hubs as well as larger
24 institutions that you're looking at

1 so that there's a balance and that
2 everyone can be supported.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Last
4 question for me from this panel:
5 When I think about public safety
6 and I listen to some things you've
7 talked about with public safety,
8 through Chairman Squilla's
9 leadership through the
10 Appropriations Committee, we know
11 that we've allocated a lot of money
12 to be able to address issues
13 related to public safety.

14 But what are we doing?
15 And is there an appetite -- I heard
16 you mention it, but is there truly
17 an appetite to partner with
18 organizations like Philly Truce and
19 other boots-on-the-ground
20 organizations that I know work
21 closely with Council President's
22 office as well as the Public Safety
23 Committee to be able to bring them
24 in to be a part of the public

1 safety initiative, right?

2 We can't just rely on
3 police and sheriff, right. That's
4 not enough. We're already
5 understaffed right now. So what
6 creative things are you looking to
7 do to address issues surrounding
8 public safety to make sure that all
9 events across the city of
10 Philadelphia are executed in a way
11 that's safe and also equitable,
12 right, because the RFP process is
13 an important part of this process?

14 MR. NEWMUIS: I would
15 need to get back to you with this
16 question specific to public safety
17 and steps are being taken. I will
18 say you mentioned Philly Truce.
19 I've known Mazzie since my last
20 role and I've been supportive of
21 his work in the past and remain
22 supportive even now.

23 In addition to public
24 safety, he has also played an

1 incredible song that we want to
2 incorporate for a lot of our
3 community events. It's called
4 Can't Say Love Enough. The work in
5 that organization is really
6 important. But in terms of a
7 specific ask of how we would
8 incorporate that specific
9 organization into a public safety
10 plan, I can't speak to that but one
11 of my colleagues will follow up.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
13 We'll follow up. Thank you for
14 your candidness.

15 Chair recognizes Council
16 President Johnson and then
17 Councilmember Phillips.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
19 JOHNSON: Good afternoon, everyone.
20 (Good afternoon.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT
22 JOHNSON: Good afternoon, everyone.
23 (Good afternoon.)

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

1 JOHNSON: I'm going to be real
2 brief, but I just want to start off
3 by just thanking our colleague
4 Majority Whip Councilman Isaiah
5 Thomas. Give him a round of
6 applause.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: On behalf of your
10 leadership and your vision of
11 making sure this is a critical
12 priority in City Council to make
13 sure we are expanding the 250th
14 celebration here in the city of
15 Philadelphia.

16 I also want to say and
17 acknowledge our (inaudible) and our
18 Mayor. Give them a round of
19 applause as well.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

22 JOHNSON: Working in partnership in
23 City Council to allocate the last
24 midyear transfer and currently this

1 upcoming budget, \$100 million
2 focusing on the birthplace of our
3 celebration. And I also want to
4 take a moment to acknowledge
5 Kathryn Ott-Lovell and working in
6 partnership with --

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: -- working in partnership
10 with Michael Newmuis, who I think
11 has done an incredible job as far
12 as we talk day-to-day just about
13 this particular process. And for
14 me, I'm very interested as we
15 celebrate the birthplace of our
16 nation, but just making sure the
17 process is diverse and inclusive,
18 so if we're going to spend \$100
19 million, that money should
20 represent what the city of
21 Philadelphia looks like.

22 So I do thank you for
23 just being patient with us and
24 doing your due diligence as we make

1 sure this process is diverse and
2 inclusive. And I have different
3 meetings with different
4 stakeholders throughout the city of
5 Philadelphia in my position as the
6 City Council President. And some
7 folks say, are we ready, are we
8 ready to take on the world. And
9 so, our response is that sure
10 enough we will be ready.

11 The reason why I say
12 that with the utmost confidence is
13 because we have a young lady who
14 will be leading the helm of this
15 particular initiative on behalf of
16 the Mayor of the City of
17 Philadelphia. She's the City
18 Representative. She also does work
19 in terms of making sure that any
20 key initiative that comes to the
21 city of Philadelphia, whether it's
22 hosting the Pope, whether that's
23 hosting the NFL Draft, whether
24 that's making sure 1,000

1 individuals every year get a chance
2 to participate in the Broad Street
3 Run, it's the incomparable Jazelle
4 Jones. Let's give her a round of
5 applause.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

8 JOHNSON: And knowing that she's
9 going to be at the helm of making
10 sure that we have an outstanding
11 event. And last but not least, I
12 just want to echo the sentiments of
13 my majority members of City
14 Council, we just want to make sure
15 that this celebration represents
16 the city of Philadelphia.

17 The same way we're here
18 celebrating and having this hearing
19 inside the American Revolution
20 Museum, right, we also want to
21 celebrate the Underground Railroad
22 up at the Belmont Mansion, the same
23 we're celebrating the Betsy Ross
24 House, we're going to celebrate

1 Paul Robeson House. The same we're
2 going to celebrate the July 4th
3 celebration we do every year, we're
4 also going to celebrate the 50th
5 anniversary of Odunde here in the
6 city of Philadelphia.

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: That's my mission, right,
10 to make sure we celebrate the city
11 of Philadelphia in the most diverse
12 way we can as we honor the 250
13 celebration of the birthplace of
14 our country. So again, I say hats
15 off because this young man has been
16 working on this issue day-in and
17 day-out.

18 I just wanted to stop
19 and take time out of my schedule
20 and want to support you. But we do
21 not do this work alone as well.
22 And so, when we say we have
23 Appropriations meetings and folks
24 come to us and say, well, we want

1 to make sure this \$45 million is
2 supportive, we have members of the
3 Appropriations Committee who are
4 sitting on that Committee having
5 the conversation.

6 And our Chair is Mark
7 Squilla. Give him a round of
8 applause.

9 (Applause.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

11 JOHNSON: And before the bill is
12 passed out of Appropriations, you
13 also have other members of City
14 Council that say, well, hold up,
15 before we vote on this bill, we
16 want to make sure our interests are
17 a part of it because we all want
18 diversity here in the city of
19 Philadelphia. And you will see the
20 members who are here, including
21 Councilmember Jeffrey Jay Young,
22 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada,
23 Dr. Anthony Phillips and Dr. Nina
24 Ahmad, so you got a group of

1 members that are working day-in and
2 day-out under the leadership of
3 this particular initiative,
4 Councilmember Isaiah Thomas. So I
5 thank you young man for your hard
6 work and your dedication to --

7 (Applause.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT

9 JOHNSON: I have four other events
10 but wanted to stop past to be
11 supportive of your initiative.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: We
13 know, Prez. Can we give our
14 Council President a round of
15 applause.

16 (Applause.)

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And
18 I just want to commend Council
19 President, John and the entire team
20 for encouraging us to do remote
21 hearings. Traditionally, things
22 like this is done at City Hall in
23 Council chambers, but Council
24 President has pushed us to go into

1 the community and do things that's
2 relevant to the theme, so that's
3 how we got here today.

4 Council President, thank
5 you and thank you for your team.

6 (Applause.)

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

8 Chair recognizes Councilmember
9 Phillips.

10 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

11 Thank you so much. I just want to
12 also thank Council President for
13 always pushing us to do even more
14 each and every day. He's doing a
15 great job as our leader in City
16 Council. Thank you, Council
17 President.

18 Chairman Thomas, you are
19 doing one amazing job with focusing
20 our city and bringing the facility
21 to bring people together around
22 2026. So I would like to echo and
23 thank you as well, Chairman.

24 Two quick questions so

1 we can move ahead. Thank you also,
2 Jazelle and also Michael Newmuis,
3 for the work that you're doing. It
4 seems a lot of great work is coming
5 from it. Just some things I want
6 to ask questions for our neighbors
7 and a lot of our Districts.

8 The normal business of
9 the City of Philadelphia during the
10 spring and summer months, there are
11 a lot of community festivals, block
12 parties and so forth. What is the
13 plan to communicate with neighbors
14 about potential interruptions or
15 disruptions to some of their
16 community programs such as their
17 block parties or this festival that
18 they want to have locally? Are we
19 planning for disruptions and
20 interruptions?

21 If so, is there a way
22 that we're going to communicate to
23 them way in advance so we don't
24 feel like we're getting a hit from

1 that in our District offices?

2 MS. JONES: Thank you
3 for your question, Doctor. We are
4 planning a very robust
5 communications tool, which actually
6 Michael is spearheading. However,
7 in our new normal special events
8 quadre of things that we do, we
9 have a mechanism that we push out
10 through various mechanisms as it
11 relates to street closures,
12 demonstrations and the like.

13 And in addition,
14 typically if we end up at a
15 community meeting we give
16 information to residents about
17 what's coming. We are working with
18 the Lemon Hill, maybe 15
19 associations there. So we meet
20 with them regularly and we make it
21 our business to let them know
22 what's going to happen in their
23 neighborhood.

24 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

1 And I just want to mention that I'm
2 assuming that even beyond the
3 spaces that are going to be
4 immediately impacted, which is West
5 Philadelphia and Center City areas,
6 sometimes if you're having a block
7 party all the way in Northeast or
8 Northwest Philadelphia, police, you
9 know, may have to be present for a
10 community program.

11 So we didn't want
12 residents to feel -- some people
13 don't want residents to feel like
14 we just found out last minute that
15 we can't have our event because all
16 the police officers have to be down
17 at Lemon Hill or downtown
18 somewhere. So how do we get people
19 aware of lockout dates essentially
20 because it may not get enough
21 security presence for certain
22 events?

23 MS. JONES: All of that
24 is true and we are working on a

1 plan to address just that.

2 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

3 Okay. Thank you. That's awesome.

4 We'll follow up on that, continue
5 to work on that.

6 So last question I had I
7 mentioned that there -- you
8 mentioned in your testimony,
9 Michael, that you're preparing
10 commercial corridors for 2026. I
11 just want to get a better sense of
12 maybe a list of the commercial
13 corridors that you are hitting and
14 whether or not the timeline for
15 completion for those commercial
16 corridors and small businesses so
17 they can understand the impact.

18 Are you doing every
19 commercial corridor in all 10
20 Districts or just the ones that are
21 going to be surrounding the
22 impacted areas of the festival?

23 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you
24 for that question. I'm happy to

1 follow up with regard to a list.
2 This is not every single commercial
3 corridor. But throughout
4 Philadelphia, there were so many
5 corridors that historically didn't
6 necessarily benefit from the use of
7 tourism, and they were on the cusp
8 of being tourism-ready, right.
9 We've made a lot of investments
10 over the years.

11 So we said what if we
12 were to select every single Council
13 District with two corridors that we
14 could pour in to target investments
15 to help get them just there, and
16 then lay on top of that some
17 marketing to really drive forward
18 working with partners in the
19 community. You're already there to
20 make sure that, one, that they want
21 the tourism and, two, that they are
22 ready.

23 So I'm happy to provide
24 you that list. It's not every

1 single corridor, all of
2 Philadelphia. But it's two per
3 Council District that'll be part of
4 a strategy of driving economic
5 equity throughout Philadelphia
6 County.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

8 Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

10 Thank you.

11 Chair recognizes
12 Councilmember Squilla.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA:

14 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

15 And thank you for your
16 leadership on this. It's really
17 important to really work with our
18 community stakeholders and all our
19 partners here as well as the
20 Administration. And you know
21 you're really important when you
22 can go by one name like Jazelle and
23 everybody knows who it is. But,
24 Michael, you'll get there too.

1 Thank you for all your work.

2 (Laughter.)

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: No,
4 but thank you all. And this is
5 important. And we talked about
6 things about the communities and
7 legacy projects. And I know one
8 that's been discussed and has been
9 working with the National Park
10 Services, the project that we
11 talked to (inaudible) projects
12 needs approval and as it has a
13 legacy project where it may be
14 possible to install a 250-year time
15 capsule. What is the -- I guess
16 where is that now, as are we still
17 raising money to try to get that
18 finally built? And do we see that
19 giving us enough time to get that
20 in there so that this is something
21 that could be realized?

22 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you
23 for that question. About six weeks
24 ago, former Treasury Secretary Rosa

1 Rios who chairs America250 issued a
2 memorandum of information that
3 changed some language in the
4 Congressional bill that allowed for
5 the national time capsule, that is,
6 the time capsule commemorating for
7 the entire country for 250 to be
8 installed above ground.

9 The statute that you
10 referenced is the place that's
11 being targeted for that. Included
12 in this proposed budget is the
13 funds that they would need from the
14 City's portion to have that
15 completed. And although per
16 ethics, we cannot fundraise on
17 behalf of a third party, we are at
18 least making folks aware of what
19 the opportunity is and making a
20 connection.

21 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I
22 was going to say because it's
23 always important that everybody
24 says is the City involved in this,

1 right. So we know we have the City
2 resources that are involved now,
3 and hopefully that'll help push
4 that with the approval process to
5 be able to get that done. And
6 thank you so much for all your work
7 on that. Appreciate it.

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

9 Before I move on to Councilmember
10 Lozada, I do want to recognize
11 Councilmember Squilla who's the
12 Chair of our Appropriations
13 Committee for the great work that
14 he did leading the effort to help
15 get a few more pennies in the
16 midyear transfer.

17 I know for a lot of
18 people they don't know what we're
19 talking about. But if you know,
20 you know. That's what the young
21 people say. So thank you,
22 Councilmember Squilla. We
23 appreciate you, sir. Absolutely.

24 (Applause.)

1 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

2 Another member of the
3 Appropriations Committee, Chair
4 recognizes Councilmember Lozada.

5 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

6 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 I'm looking at your
8 testimony and I started to think
9 about a follow-up to Chairman
10 Thomas' question about small
11 businesses and how to connect them
12 now. My question would also be how
13 do we connect some of these groups,
14 these sports teams, these youth
15 teams, group activities set up in
16 our Districts that are really
17 interested in showing the world
18 what they do in their neighborhood?
19 How do we connect them now to be a
20 part of the conversation?

21 MR. NEWMUIS: That's a
22 really good question. I'd love to
23 start having that conversation.
24 Specifically, you asked about youth

1 groups who are in communities of
2 what we can do right now to tie
3 those specific groups into 2026?

4 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
5 (Nodded affirmatively).

6 MR. NEWMUIS: They're
7 having to make some connections.
8 We got a lot of folks that are
9 already through Philadelphia250 and
10 (inaudible), but we can bring folks
11 together and we would love to work
12 with you to that end and even have
13 conversations with the (inaudible)
14 to see what ideas we can come up
15 with.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Did
17 you want to add to that?

18 MS. JONES: I was just
19 going to add that we work very
20 closely with the Commerce
21 Department who could be very
22 helpful with this initiative.

23 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
24 Are we working with PPA to be able

1 to have conversations about what
2 are some of the (inaudible) that
3 we're giving to some of these youth
4 communities that we know. I have a
5 bunch of soccer teams that have
6 started to plan their workforce in
7 the last five years in the District
8 and they want to be a part of the
9 conversation too. They want to put
10 games on. They want to show the
11 world what their young people are
12 all about. They're our future
13 athletes, right, so they want to be
14 a part of this conversation. So
15 I'm just wondering what can I do to
16 make sure that those teams are
17 connected and brought to the table
18 now, so looking forward to figure
19 out how we do that.

20 And then you also
21 mentioned that you are doing tours.
22 How are we making sure that every
23 neighborhood is represented in
24 these tours? How can we connect

1 people like Esperanza who has an
2 art museum and (inaudible) who is a
3 cultural hub, how are we ensuring
4 that all of the neighborhoods who
5 have something to offer are a part
6 of the conversation?

7 MR. NEWMUIS: We're
8 really excited about the tours and
9 I appreciate you adding that. The
10 funds worked through the midyear
11 transfer we're partnering with the
12 Visitor Center and Kathryn
13 Ott-Lovell. We are actively
14 working to reach as far as
15 possible, and the tours are
16 actually organized by neighborhoods
17 so that we can emphasize not just
18 the cultural assets and the history
19 but really organized by our
20 neighborhoods and across
21 neighborhoods. Obviously, each of
22 those touch base with the different
23 Council District.

24 We deal with the

1 commercial corridors of actively
2 soliciting folks and organizations
3 that you'd like to be sure that
4 we're engaged with and we're
5 following the same approach with
6 our tours.

7 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

10 Chair recognizes Councilmember
11 Phillips -- I'm sorry. That's my
12 Councilman. Chair recognizes my
13 brother Councilmember Young. And
14 then after that, we'll close out
15 with Dr. Nina Ahmad and then we'll
16 get ready for our second panel.

17 Councilmember Young.

18 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
19 you, Mr. Chair. And I also want to
20 commend you for your efforts around
21 2026.

22 Just going out into the
23 communities and talking to the
24 residents and trying to explain the

1 magnitude of what is happening in
2 our city in 2026, not just with
3 FIFA but just with everything
4 that's going on and I try to
5 explain to the residents of North
6 Philadelphia and beyond who don't
7 understand the magnitude of soccer,
8 right, it's the world's most
9 popular sport. And we have to let
10 our residents know that it's going
11 to be literally people from all
12 over the world here in
13 Philadelphia. No matter if their
14 home country is here or not, those
15 folks will still be here because
16 it's a place to celebrate the most
17 popular sport in the world.

18 I just want to make sure
19 that our communities have the
20 opportunity to join in on that
21 celebration. We want to make sure
22 that our blocks on the 4th of July
23 who is celebrating the country's
24 250th but also we have a FIFA match

1 that day, how can our blocks
2 participate in that celebration
3 that the city is going to have on
4 that particular day?

5 I do know that there are
6 grants that are out there for
7 community organizations, and I
8 would love if some of those
9 fundings can trickle down directly
10 to some of these blocks to support
11 some of these celebrations, some of
12 these block parties that make them
13 feel like they're included as well,
14 to make sure that those communities
15 don't feel isolated from this
16 celebration. So whatever we can do
17 in that regard I think that will be
18 very helpful to the spirit of the
19 residents of the city of
20 Philadelphia to make sure that they
21 are having -- to increase their
22 civic pride and their civic
23 engagement along with some of the
24 guests that we will have coming

1 into our city. So I hope that's
2 something that we can work on
3 together.

4 And I also want to echo
5 the sentiments of the Council
6 President. The person that we have
7 being the helm of our city, I
8 worked with from Live Aid when I
9 was an intern, on the draft, NFL
10 Draft when I was a staffer, now as
11 a Councilmember working together on
12 the 2026 initiatives, Jazelle Jones
13 is someone who is very thoroughly
14 prepared for this opportunity.

15 There's no one in this
16 country that I don't think is
17 better prepared than what Jazelle
18 Jones is prepared for 2026 because
19 she has been at the forefront of
20 every major event in this city for
21 a long time. I won't say how long,
22 but for a long time. Thank you,
23 Jazelle.

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

1 Thank you. Give her a round of
2 applause.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. JONES: And I'll
5 take one point of privilege. I do
6 have wind beneath my wings and four
7 of them are sitting here today.
8 While we're very quiet, you know,
9 we kind of do everything behind the
10 scenes to make it all work and get
11 it all done. But I would like to
12 acknowledge Natalie Faragalli,
13 who's our Director of
14 Communications.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. JONES: James Allen
17 who is our Director of Operations.
18 Kyra Harris, Deputy City
19 Representative and Margaret Hughes
20 who is the First Deputy City Rep.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
23 Stand up. Please everybody stand
24 up. Let's give you the proper ado.

1 Please stand up. Thank you all.

2 Thank you, thank you, thank you.

3 MS. JONES: So we're
4 getting it done, sir.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: In
6 listening to some of the things
7 that has been said thus far, I want
8 to go back to a challenge that we
9 had in the last hearing. And the
10 challenge that we had and I have
11 not done it yet, and I'm hoping
12 that you still have an appetite for
13 it, we talked about the fact that
14 we would partner with every
15 District Councilperson across the
16 city of Philadelphia to bring
17 education, awareness and
18 information so every community is
19 prepared for 2026.

20 I'm wondering if you
21 still have an appetite to partner
22 with my office and our District
23 Councilmembers to be able to make
24 sure that we're bringing this stuff

1 to the community because it's great
2 for us here, but I'm sure a lot of
3 people who are in the audience
4 right now can help us identify who
5 the right people are in
6 neighborhoods so that we can make
7 sure that information trickle down
8 to those blocks that the
9 Councilmembers just talked about.

10 MR. NEWMUIS: Yeah, put
11 me in, coach. We're all in. We'd
12 love to partner with you.
13 Obviously, we're starting that
14 process early on with the Mayor's
15 budget town halls and including
16 2026. We're going to be extending
17 it with a very thorough
18 communications plan, where
19 beginning next month we're going to
20 see a slow steady ramp-up, starting
21 with the city resources, city
22 preparedness as we build up the
23 momentum. So happy to partner with
24 you too.

1 MS. JONES: We'll
2 schedule meetings with all of you.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
4 Sounds amazing.

5 Chair recognizes
6 Dr. Ahmad.

7 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
8 Thank you, Chairman. And I echo
9 everything that's been said about
10 all these stars here. We're going
11 to make Philadelphia shine. But I
12 just want to make a special mention
13 of Chair of this Committee, my
14 colleague Councilmember Isaiah
15 Thomas, our City Councilmembers
16 At-large.

17 And so, we listen to all
18 our District Councilpeople and I
19 also like to have a global
20 perspective. And on that note, I
21 am the Chair of the Global
22 Opportunities and Creative Economy.
23 So in that light, my question is
24 about Philadelphia is the sixth

1 largest city in the country. That
2 status teeters, right. We need to
3 really grow. Philadelphia has been
4 2 million people and we are 1.6
5 barely now.

6 So this is a unique
7 opportunity to showcase our state,
8 to invite people. And I wonder how
9 intentional we are being around
10 trade and business in inviting
11 people to consider Philadelphia to
12 not only do business, but to live
13 here, to grow our population. How
14 do we do that and make sure they
15 understand it has to be done in an
16 equitable fashion, right.

17 So I just wondered what
18 intention I think we have around
19 sort of a more global perspective
20 of using this time to be on the
21 world stage?

22 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you
23 for that question. Yeah, the
24 headline is our Commerce Department

1 has outlines and we can follow up
2 specifically from the Commerce
3 team, but we are including
4 incredible leaders like Thomas Shaw
5 whose World Trade Center, Business
6 Expo who bring in 500 international
7 businesses, and his organization is
8 working and committed to working
9 with the diverse Chambers to create
10 trade opportunities.

11 Just as I mentioned
12 earlier, what we're doing with
13 matchmaking, connecting together
14 our local diverse businesses with
15 global trade opportunities. So I
16 can't speak for Thomas and I won't,
17 but that's definitely part of the
18 lens of his initiative. And I'd
19 love for our Commerce teams to be
20 able to provide more detail for
21 you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:
23 Thank you. And please use us as
24 partners to be ambassadors for our

1 city and to encourage whatever
2 strategy that Commerce has so we
3 can really work together. And the
4 work (inaudible) that we see that's
5 really important, to have pride in
6 our city to stand up and shine and
7 make sure that (inaudible).

8 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you.

9 COUNCILWOMAN AHMAD:

10 Thank you, Chair.

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

12 Thank you. Thank you.

13 One last question from
14 Councilmember Lozada and then we
15 will move on to our next panel.

16 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:

17 Very quickly, jobs, jobs, jobs,
18 jobs, jobs, right. I want to make
19 sure that in all of these events
20 you're hiring Philadelphians. What
21 do we do to prioritize these
22 employment opportunities for
23 Philadelphia residents?

24 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you

1 for that question. Again, I won't
2 speak for the Commerce Department.
3 But just so you know in my role,
4 even in reviewing requests for
5 funding, of having conversations
6 with each group, recently there was
7 a request that included travel, and
8 I asked, why is that travel needed
9 when we have the talent right here,
10 right.

11 So when we're going
12 through and holding accountable,
13 every corridor is requesting funds,
14 but in terms of the strategy for
15 ensuring that Philadelphia jobs are
16 first, that is a question I think
17 for the Commerce Department and I'd
18 love to follow.

19 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: We
20 have career (inaudible) here.
21 People apply at those centers every
22 single day. I was at Esperanza
23 this morning where they had a job
24 fair. There were over 500 people

1 at that job fair hungry to work.
2 Let us take advantage of the
3 CareerLinks, right. There are
4 people from here saying they're
5 ready, so we need to make sure that
6 we provide those Philadelphians
7 with opportunities.

8 MR. NEWMUIS: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

10 Thank you. Can we give this panel
11 a round of applause.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: For
14 those of you who don't normally
15 come to City Council hearings, this
16 is not normal, right. This is not
17 normal. But we greatly appreciate
18 the work that's being done as well
19 as the partnership.

20 Mr. Clerk, will you
21 please call the next panel to
22 testify today.

23 THE CLERK: The
24 Committee will next hear from

1 Angela Val, President and CEO of
2 Visit Philadelphia, Kathryn
3 Ott-Lovell, President and CEO of
4 Philadelphia250 and Philadelphia
5 Visitor Center Corporation.

6 (Witnesses approached
7 witness table.)

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: All
9 right. Time for some fun. For
10 those of you who are here who are
11 looking to network and build and
12 you do need to step out to have a
13 conversation, it's fine. We're
14 just going to ask that you kind of
15 keep your voices down.

16 Thank you all for being
17 here. Please state your name for
18 the record and you may begin your
19 testimony.

20 MS. VAL: Thank you for
21 the record. My name is Angela Val.
22 I'm the President and CEO of Visit
23 Philadelphia. Thank you for having
24 me this afternoon. Good afternoon,

1 Chairman Thomas and members of
2 Council.

3 On behalf of Visit
4 Philadelphia and our entire tourism
5 community, I want to first express
6 our sincere gratitude to Mayor
7 Parker and her administration for
8 proposing the 2026 funding on a
9 recently passed transfer ordinance
10 and proposed Fiscal Year 2026
11 budget. Thank you also, Chairman
12 Thomas, the Appropriations
13 Committee Chairman Squilla and
14 Council President Johnson who
15 worked to pass the transfer
16 proposal to ensure Philadelphia
17 shines brightly on the global stage
18 in 2026.

19 Your vital support has
20 reinvigorated everyone who has
21 dedicated so much time and energy
22 as part of our 2026 coalition.
23 It's given us all hope. Together
24 with the City's backing and the

1 support of the funders
2 collaborative, we can confidently
3 position Philadelphia to seize this
4 once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

5 We are a mere eight
6 months away from 2026 and we feel
7 the pressure every day to position
8 Philadelphia as the leading
9 destination to visit in 2026.
10 Here's what we are doing with the
11 funding to get more visitors to
12 Philadelphia:

13 We are developing a
14 comprehensive integrated campaign
15 targeting key markets, including
16 New York City, Washington, D.C.,
17 Baltimore, Chicago, Boston, Miami
18 and Atlanta. For TV and radio
19 spots, billboards and social media,
20 this campaign will deliver positive
21 Philadelphia messages into homes,
22 cars and electronic devices
23 throughout these cities.

24 We are currently

1 undergoing consumer campaign and
2 messaging testing to ensure our
3 messaging in advertising and media
4 is highly effective and targeted.
5 A core tenet of our marketing
6 strategy is messaging that reflects
7 the rich diversity of Philadelphia.
8 We are specifically developing
9 content to feature and highlight
10 Black- and Brown-owned businesses
11 across the city.

12 Our website already
13 delivers roughly 1 million web
14 referrals annually to individual
15 Black- and Brown-owned businesses
16 websites directly from
17 visitphilly.com. Through this
18 campaign, we will first establish
19 Philadelphia as a center of 2026
20 celebrations and invite people to
21 visit us. Second, encourage these
22 visitors to explore all the
23 neighborhoods throughout the city
24 while they're here.

1 And lastly, support
2 small businesses by featuring them
3 in our social media channels and
4 advertising. We're also committed
5 to keeping our stakeholders
6 informed and engaged every step of
7 the way. Visit Philadelphia is
8 working with our partners to
9 provide stakeholders updates on our
10 progress, share opportunities for
11 involvement and foster a unified
12 approach to 2026.

13 We also developed a
14 dedicated 2026 newsletter that
15 provides timely updates on
16 planning, milestones, event
17 announcements and opportunities for
18 collaboration. As mentioned, our
19 dedicated 2026 landing page on
20 visitphilly.com is now live,
21 serving as a central information
22 hub for potential visitors and our
23 local community, featuring a
24 growing list of confirmed events.

1 The City has already
2 demonstrated its commitment to
3 making 2026 a success, but it will
4 continue to take all of us, Visit
5 Philadelphia and other partners,
6 for actively engaging in state
7 funding advocacy effort. This
8 month destination marketing
9 organizations throughout the
10 Commonwealth are sending a joint
11 letter of support for robust 2026
12 state funding and we are traveling
13 to Harrisburg in May to advocate as
14 a group for the General Assembly.

15 Governor Josh Shapiro
16 has included 64 million in his
17 proposed budget for 2026 events,
18 legacy projects and small
19 infrastructure projects and
20 marketing. We're advocating for an
21 additional 36 million in state
22 funding to truly maximize the
23 economic impact of 2026, as we are
24 advocating for 100 million in state

1 funding, which matches the City's
2 \$100 million investment.

3 The Mayor's proposed
4 Fiscal Year 2026 City budget
5 includes funds for 2026, the City
6 budget is the last chance for a
7 strategic investment that submits
8 Philadelphia's position as the
9 official destination for the
10 Semiquincentennial and expands our
11 messaging to (inaudible).

12 In closing, there are
13 few moments we feel like to get to
14 be a part of history, especially a
15 positive piece of history. As I've
16 done this work planning for the
17 250th, I've heard snapshots from
18 people who remember the
19 Bicentennial and to tell you what
20 it felt like to be part of such a
21 historic moment, how the City
22 felt -- how they felt that day.

23 Right now we have a
24 chance to break that moment, ensure

1 kids of Philadelphia today feel
2 that same feeling. The only way we
3 can do this is by investing in
4 bringing people to Philadelphia and
5 making an amazing celebration. My
6 colleagues and I remain committed
7 to the work ahead. We will
8 continue to attract even their
9 visitors, generate significant
10 economic benefits for our city and
11 showcase Philadelphia's pivot role
12 in American history so that 2026 is
13 just the beginning of a prosperous
14 future for this city.

15 Thank you for your
16 continued support and I'm happy to
17 answer any questions you may have.
18 Thank you for your time.

19 MS. OTT-LOVELL: Good
20 afternoon, Chair Thomas and members
21 of the Committee on Legislative
22 Oversight. My name is Kathryn
23 Ott-Lovell, the President and CEO
24 of Philadelphia Visitor Center and

1 also Philadelphia250. I very much
2 appreciate the opportunity to speak
3 to you today regarding preparations
4 for 2026.

5 I would like to send a
6 sincere thank you to Mayor Parker,
7 Councilman Isaiah Thomas and all
8 the members of City Council for
9 your support regarding the FY2026
10 budget and the midyear transfer
11 ordinance. Philadelphia250 is
12 pleased to be the recipient of
13 funding from the midyear transfer,
14 which we will rewrite in grants to
15 neighborhood organizations to
16 support their 2026 efforts and
17 initiatives.

18 2026 will bring many
19 exciting events across our city.
20 Let me be clear on this: We are
21 100% committed and focused on
22 ensuring that the excitement and
23 operation spills out to every
24 neighborhood and every resident has

1 the opportunity to be engaged. In
2 support of this, we are working
3 lockstep with Michael Newmuis, with
4 the Mayor's office, with the
5 Commerce Department, the Office of
6 Clean and Green to actively
7 beautify neighborhoods and
8 commercial corridors throughout the
9 city. We'll also need residents in
10 supporting local businesses.

11 Next and finally, we
12 received the midyear transfer
13 ordinance. We're also developing a
14 citywide neighborhood (inaudible)
15 in addition to driving more
16 visitors and increasing businesses
17 in neighborhood, this initiative
18 will tap into local knowledge and
19 (inaudible) in our communities. It
20 will result in a cohort of trained
21 and (inaudible) who will continue
22 to share their stories and choice
23 of their own communities well
24 beyond 2026.

1 Our (inaudible) stories
2 will evaluate stories that define
3 our city and foster a deeper
4 appreciation of what makes
5 Philadelphia most special, its
6 residents. At the Philadelphia
7 Visitor's Center, we are excited to
8 launch the newest mission this
9 spring, which will bring together
10 passionate Philadelphians in a
11 collective effort to celebrate and
12 elevate and showcase what makes our
13 city (inaudible).

14 It is designed to tap
15 into and provide a vehicle for the
16 unconditional love and pride that
17 Philadelphians have for their city
18 in the lead up to 2026 and beyond.
19 While we're eager to share more,
20 the official launch of this program
21 will take place on Tuesday, April
22 29th at 11:00 a.m. in LOVE Park.
23 At that time, we would like
24 Philadelphians to join us as we

1 build engagement, leadership,
2 capacity citywide and drive
3 tourism.

4 I want to thank all of
5 you again for your incredible
6 leadership and support for our 2026
7 initiatives. And we give a very
8 special shout-out to Michael
9 Newmuis, who has been working so
10 tirelessly in support of all of us
11 to make this amazing opportunity
12 happen. I also want to give a
13 shout-out to Max Weisman.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. OTT-LOVELL: He's
16 the unofficial 2026 mascot. While
17 he needs no (inaudible), rest
18 assured Max is on the phone call
19 for so many people throughout our
20 city who are here to learn more
21 about what's happening, and he's
22 been so such a great advocate on so
23 many levels. Thank you so much,
24 Max.

1 And lastly, I want to
2 say thank you to all organizations,
3 their leaders, their staff members
4 who are sitting here in this room
5 today and those who could not be in
6 this room today because they're
7 busy running their nonprofit
8 organizations. There's such an
9 incredible community of people who
10 are working tirelessly beyond their
11 everyday missions, right.

12 Everybody has work to do
13 in their own organizations, in
14 their own nonprofits, in their own
15 communities. They are working
16 above and beyond that for years now
17 and will work tirelessly for the
18 next 12 months to help make
19 something really truly special for
20 them in 2026.

21 And we are so grateful
22 to them because this is not
23 something that's being recognized
24 every day, right, to thank these

1 people from the bottom of our
2 hearts for everything you're doing
3 to lift up your community, your
4 mission and the people you
5 represent, the constituencies you
6 represent in advance of 2026. It's
7 a huge opportunity to help your
8 organization and your mission
9 forward. We're so grateful to each
10 and every one of you. Thank you
11 very much.

12 (Applause.)

13 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

14 Thank you. And thank you both for
15 your leadership as well too,
16 because at the end of the day we
17 would not be where we are as it
18 relates to 2026 without your
19 vision, your foresight, your
20 advocacy and your teams, right.
21 Because I know that you have a team
22 that works in collaboration with
23 you to help put us in a position to
24 make sure that we're not behind.

1 Couple questions. Help
2 us out with numbers. All right.
3 How many people are we expecting to
4 come to Philadelphia next year,
5 over what time periods and how much
6 revenue should the City expect to
7 run through Philadelphia?

8 Clearly, you don't have
9 accurate numbers. That's fine, but
10 from the seats you sit in what do
11 you estimate?

12 MS. VAL: Angela Val. I
13 don't have numbers that are
14 specific to the 250 events. Many
15 of those events are new, so it's
16 hard to say how many people would
17 attend. I think Meg Kane is going
18 to be testifying in an upcoming
19 panel. She'll be able to speak to
20 how many people we anticipate,
21 particularly for the World Cup.

22 We have specifically --
23 although there'll be events that
24 happen throughout the year of 2026,

1 a lot of them are concentrated in
2 that June-July time period for two
3 reasons: One, that is the time of
4 America's birthday. But two, to
5 make sure that the folks that are
6 coming specifically for World Cup
7 have an opportunity in between
8 matches to see Philadelphia and to
9 get into some of these
10 neighborhoods.

11 We did have an economic
12 impact study done that looked at
13 all of the events over 2026. We
14 believe that there will be
15 additional revenue somewhere
16 between 1.3 billion to 2.5 billion
17 coming in because of the events for
18 2026. That number does include the
19 World Cup matches that Meg will be
20 able to give you that detail.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
22 Thank you. For someone looking to
23 increase their visibility, advance
24 their business or take advantage of

1 this moment, I asked the question
2 earlier to the Admin, looking at a
3 lot of the entrepreneurs who are
4 not just here today but are all
5 over the city of Philadelphia, I
6 think about institutions like the
7 African American Museum and events
8 like Odunde, what is it that folks
9 should know about the work that
10 you're doing on your side and how
11 you can be beneficial to the
12 agendas that they're trying to
13 push?

14 Now, I want you to
15 specifically talk about the
16 visitors side and the marketing
17 side. And then I have two
18 questions for 250 and then I'll
19 pass it to Councilmember Lozada.

20 MS. VAL: I'm going to
21 break this up into three areas:
22 One, our attractions, some of our
23 smaller attractions, right. I'm
24 then going to talk about businesses

1 that are B2B and then B2C. Let's
2 start with the attractions and
3 festivals. Odunde, any museum,
4 size does not matter, in regards to
5 what they might be doing for an
6 exhibit or a special event that
7 they are having, Philadelphia will
8 do what they normally do, which is
9 take this information and market it
10 in a theme, and for 2026 places
11 people can go, things that they can
12 experience throughout the year
13 2026. We are taking that
14 information now.

15 I'm happy to send a link
16 out where you are able to submit
17 your organization's event or
18 exhibit or festival that's
19 happening so it could make it onto
20 the 2026 calendar. If you're doing
21 something different of what you
22 normally do year-to-year, that's
23 what we really want to know about
24 too.

1 We take a lot of this
2 information, look at it, you know,
3 big board, kind of high 30-foot
4 view to say where are the themes,
5 how many of these are events are
6 around food, how much of them are
7 around history, how many of them
8 are around arts and culture, so
9 that we can give that information
10 back to the visitor because people
11 make a decision about what they
12 want to see and do depending on
13 where their interest lies, right.
14 So they're not looking at county
15 lines, neighborhood lines, looking
16 at what they want to experience.
17 So that's what I would say for our
18 attraction partners and festival
19 partners.

20 When we look at
21 businesses that are B2C, so
22 businesses that are direct to
23 consumers, so think of somebody who
24 might be selling coffee, right.

1 Those folks are the people that we
2 want to also promote and make sure
3 that in between these great
4 experiences, you get a chance to go
5 shopping, you get a chance to go
6 grab a drink at a bar or have a
7 fantastic meal. So we're working
8 with the (inaudible) DMO program to
9 make sure that people can find
10 these places. Because what is that
11 we all do when you land in another
12 place?

13 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

14 Google.

15 MS. VAL: Get out your
16 phone and Google what you want to
17 do, where you want to eat, where
18 you want to go, what music you want
19 to listen to. If they can't find
20 you, you can forget about it.
21 Okay. Nobody is looking up
22 anymore, oh, let me go to a website
23 and see what I can find. They want
24 to put in the best hamburger and

1 your company needs to be coming up
2 on that list.

3 So we're working with a
4 lot of these small organizations to
5 make sure that happens. Because
6 during COVID, we changed our hours,
7 we had a different menu, it was
8 takeout, maybe the location is
9 different, and we just didn't all
10 get back to putting that
11 information out the way we need to.

12 That information is also
13 going to be needed when you have a
14 group that is coming in, what they
15 want to do. So we're working
16 really hard to make sure that
17 happens with these smaller
18 businesses.

19 My last bucket is our
20 B2B. These are businesses that
21 really have a service of products
22 that help another business, right.
23 So you might think of somebody who
24 might be a printer, right, that

1 would print collateral. That kind
2 of work, a lot of these 250 events
3 you might see some of that where
4 people might need signage printed
5 or might need catering for an
6 event. You're going to see the
7 bulk of those types of class come
8 through larger events, such as
9 World Cup and MLB All Star. That's
10 where they're going to put out
11 these large margins. You're not
12 really going -- just realistically
13 they're not really going to get an
14 RFP from, say, the Art Museum, for
15 instance, for an event that they
16 would really typically do, except
17 they have a different direction for
18 this one particular exhibit that
19 they're doing.

20 So the large marquee
21 events, large conventions that come
22 in, those are the folks that really
23 need that kind of B2B service where
24 you have a large business that

1 services another business.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: That
3 was a very thorough answer. Thank
4 you for that. I think a lot of the
5 people who are here, not just the
6 people who are here but the people
7 who will view this later, I think
8 that you can listen to some of the
9 information that you just gave
10 right there and you can put the
11 entrepreneur in a position to
12 understand exactly how to work with
13 both of your organizations.

14 And Councilmember Lozada
15 just said you answered her
16 questions, right. So in the midst
17 of doing that, that was some
18 excellent content. Kathryn, I
19 don't know if you want to add
20 anything.

21 MS. OTT-LOVELL: Yeah,
22 just on the coordination front. So
23 Visit is --

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Can

1 everyone hear Kathryn?

2 MS. OTT-LOVELL: Sorry.

3 So Visit Philadelphia is the
4 marketing organization. So they
5 are managing how these events,
6 exhibits, activities, are being
7 (inaudible), right. So all of that
8 good information that the Angela
9 just gave is really focused on
10 that.

11 What we're hoping to do
12 as well at PHL250, the Visitor
13 Center is the (inaudible)
14 coordination. As I mentioned, I'd
15 like to say Michael has a team, but
16 it's a mighty team, you know, to do
17 all the coordination that a lot of
18 people don't see that's happening
19 around 2026. So we have a
20 (inaudible) call that we have every
21 two weeks to look at, you know, the
22 whole picture of 2026 and to really
23 look at that calendar both
24 chronologically, right, what's

1 happening January through December,
2 but also geographically, right, to
3 really ensure that again these
4 celebrations are happening in every
5 facet of the city. And as we know
6 to your point that there will be a
7 lot of activity down here, right.
8 This is where it all will be
9 happening, so we know that that box
10 is checked. But a lot of our focus
11 is really looking at all of those
12 other neighborhoods, Council
13 Districts, to ensure that we have
14 celebrations that are happening all
15 throughout the city. And that's
16 going to be the big focus.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

18 Another thorough answer. Thank
19 you. I'm assuming both
20 organizations have some type of
21 plan in place to maximize impact,
22 participation numbers and ensure
23 diversity, equity and inclusion on
24 all of the work that you do to make

1 sure that you're pushing a variety
2 of type of businesses. Amazing.

3 For 250, recently we
4 have -- well, recently 250 had some
5 leadership changes and we know that
6 you might not be able to answer
7 some of these questions, but the
8 City of Philadelphia, specifically,
9 City Council working with the
10 Mayor's team has I guess you could
11 say volunteered 250 to be the
12 passthrough organization.

13 MS. OTT-LOVELL:
14 (Inaudible). But, yes, we are
15 thrilled.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: To
17 be the passthrough organization for
18 us to be able to disperse dollars
19 to different initiatives across the
20 city of Philadelphia. What is your
21 plan as it relates to connecting
22 with those different neighborhoods
23 to disperse dollars? And what
24 opportunities do you have for both

1 employment and RFPs on the
2 Philly250 side?

3 MS. OTT-LOVELL: Sure.

4 So thankfully we're -- because
5 Philly 250 is part of the Visitor
6 Center and the Visitor Center has
7 experience in being a fiscal
8 sponsor at this level, we are the
9 fiscal sponsor for American250PA,
10 which is a state commission that
11 has (inaudible) runs as the
12 Executive Director, so we've been
13 managing American250PA, their back
14 office for a few years now.

15 So really happy to serve
16 in this purpose as the funds are
17 directed to us through City
18 Council, through the Mayor's
19 office, we're happy to get those
20 funds back out to those
21 organizations that are doing really
22 important work. And just really
23 need to work many as possible,
24 which we can do, right, to make

1 sure that these funds get out as
2 quickly as possible.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
4 I'll pass it to Councilmember Young
5 and that will be the last questions
6 for this panel. So the next panel
7 can kind of mentally prepare
8 yourself.

9 But before -- I know,
10 I'm asking a lot. But before I
11 pass it to Councilmember Young, if
12 I am in the audience right now or
13 if I'm listening to this at a later
14 time, how can someone get in
15 contact with your organizations all
16 three that you represent here
17 today?

18 MS. OTT-LOVELL: Yeah.
19 So feel free to reach out to me
20 personally and I can recite my
21 email. It's
22 kottlovell@phlvisitorcenter.com.
23 So please feel free to reach out to
24 me or call Visitor Center or stop

1 by at 6th and Market.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

3 Thank you.

4 MS. VAL: And you can
5 reach out to me too. It's Angela
6 at visitphilly.com. And if I could
7 just have one thing?

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

9 We're not going to tell you not to.

10 MS. VAL: We are
11 beginning to partner with WURD on a
12 series called Let's Get Ready For
13 2026, which will be really directed
14 to businesses to talk about like
15 what they can do to get ready for
16 2026, encourage volunteers.

17 And the second part that
18 I want to just really emphasize,
19 there always seems to sometimes be
20 a little bit of tension between
21 what people consider smaller events
22 and marquee events. When I say the
23 marquee event, I'm talking about
24 the World Cups and the NFL Drafts

1 of the event world. And then we
2 have sometimes these smaller events
3 that might be like a neighborhood
4 festival or an exhibit in a museum.
5 We need both to make this work.

6 So although it seems
7 often times that the marquee event
8 is getting all the attention, that
9 marquee event is how we get the
10 people here. It is fish that, you
11 know, it's really the worm on the
12 fishing line that attracts the
13 visitor to us. And then once the
14 visitor is here, Visit Philly's job
15 is to push that visitor out to as
16 many things to do as possible so
17 that they spend their money. And
18 that's when they find these smaller
19 exhibits and the street festival
20 and this cute little restaurant at
21 the end of this little cobblestone
22 street that they didn't know about.
23 That's the thing that pulls people
24 back to Philadelphia. So we need

1 all of these things together to
2 make this work.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

4 Thank you.

5 MS. OTT-LOVELL: If I
6 can add one more --

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

8 Please.

9 MS. OTT-LOVELL:

10 Certainly, folks can also reach out
11 to their City Councilperson. And
12 we would encourage them to do that
13 (inaudible) Councilpeople as well
14 because we are close in touch with
15 your office as well as others and
16 we're always funneling information
17 and ideas.

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

19 Thank you.

20 Chair recognizes

21 Councilmember Young.

22 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
23 you, Mr. Chair.

24 And thank you for your

1 testimony. This insight is
2 something that's very needed as we
3 look forward to showcase our city.
4 One question I have is regarding --
5 it was mentioned that when we go
6 somewhere we Google, right, so we
7 want to make sure that we get to
8 the top of that search.

9 So can you tell us what
10 type of opportunities exist for
11 some of our smaller organizations
12 regarding this discreet opportunity
13 and how about direct support can
14 they get to do some of the
15 marketing on their own? We know
16 they can go to -- your organization
17 said, hey, go to our website, but
18 what support is there for a direct
19 market for those organizations to
20 get themselves up where they can
21 be?

22 MS. VAL: So for us,
23 this was a two-phase approach for
24 us, for this Google DMO program.

1 The first was to identify what
2 small businesses were out there
3 that needed this type of help and
4 then to do an assessment. So, for
5 instance, if you had a restaurant
6 you weren't appearing, say, on the
7 first page of the Google search,
8 right, not even on the top above
9 the fold. We were looking at
10 things like how many pictures do
11 you have that people can search,
12 right.

13 You have to have 42
14 pictures of your food or restaurant
15 or people in your restaurant to
16 even start to show up. So if you
17 have 22, you aren't going to make
18 it to the first page. So we're
19 doing these individual assessments
20 and pairing people with someone
21 (inaudible) and Google who could
22 talk to them about their specific
23 needs for their listing and how
24 they need to improve it.

1 The second part of what
2 we're doing is if you don't have
3 pictures that you can put up, we
4 have a photographer on staff and
5 have a slew of freelance
6 photographers. We will send
7 someone to help you with this. We
8 know most small businesses maybe
9 have two or three people that work
10 there and they just simply do not
11 have time or may not have that
12 expertise. So we will send someone
13 there to help you get the number of
14 pictures that you need. We also
15 want access to these pictures as
16 well so we use them for the
17 website.

18 And secondly, how do you
19 write your description, how are you
20 presenting yourself and positioning
21 yourself. It's one thing to really
22 describe the food that you might
23 have. It's another to really talk
24 about the environment or the

1 culture or whatever is happening in
2 that neighborhood where they might
3 want to come for that restaurant.

4 We're taking it case-by-
5 case. There is no actual grant
6 funds that we regrant out for this
7 program. This is something you
8 sign up for and then we work with
9 you basically in giving you the
10 services of Visit Philly to make
11 sure that you show up on search.

12 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
13 you. So I guess I can direct that
14 more toward Kathryn with the
15 regrants that your organization
16 will be doing. I'm thinking of
17 organizations like the Strawberry
18 Mansion CDC that operates the Yard
19 on John Coltrane Street. It's a
20 nice little homage to John Coltrane
21 that folks who are interested in
22 jazz may want to go see. So how do
23 we provide that organization with
24 the funding to market that

1 particular part of their portfolio
2 to the work essentially for 2026?

3 MS. OTT-LOVELL: Sure.

4 So the regranteeing program that --
5 when we received the grants, those
6 were grants from organizations that
7 were directed (inaudible). We
8 weren't choosing those
9 organizations. We're just directed
10 where to grant those organizations.

11 With that said, there
12 are some grant opportunities that
13 exist for organizations. There is
14 an amazing collaborative funders
15 that have come together to support
16 initiatives. It's called the
17 Funders Collaborative for 2026.
18 Some of the members are here with
19 us today, and they have been
20 providing resources for nonprofit
21 organizations, large and small,
22 hundreds of grants. They have
23 already granted to these
24 organizations to support their

1 efforts around 2026. So I would
2 highly encourage organizations to
3 apply for that and we can provide
4 links to that information.

5 And then there's also a
6 grant program through America250PA,
7 the Semiquincentennial grant
8 program. It's not a large grant,
9 but for some of these organizations
10 I think it may be really
11 substantial. They're making grants
12 specifically for 2026 initiatives
13 as well. So happy to provide those
14 links, follow up with that.

15 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
16 you. I appreciate that. And I'm
17 talking about some of the smaller
18 orgs where a \$2,000 grant changes
19 their whole connection. So I would
20 love to work with you on that.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
22 Thank you, Councilman. He's
23 exactly right.

24 Before I close out, film

1 industry, anything happening next
2 year that's attracting folks who
3 make movies, folks who make
4 documentaries? It's a historical
5 moment. What are you doing for
6 that industry?

7 MS. VAL: Not as far as
8 I know there is not. And I'm happy
9 to reach out to the Philadelphia
10 Film Office to see if they have
11 anything specific, but nothing that
12 has come across our table.

13 MS. OTT-LOVELL: There
14 are a few films, documentaries that
15 are happening as part of 2026 that
16 I'm aware of. You know, people
17 that are raising money now to do
18 some films.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: You
20 can take the mic if you want.

21 MS. JONES: I was just
22 going to offer as a Board member
23 for the Film Office (inaudible) --
24 I apologize. I was offering as a

1 Film Office Board member to provide
2 a list of all the things that the
3 Film Office is doing for 2026.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
5 We'll definitely take you up on
6 that offer.

7 What about gaming?
8 Anything gaming, attracting
9 anything gaming? Nothing around
10 gaming?

11 MS. VAL: Not that I
12 know of.

13 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
14 Nicodemus, you got work to do. All
15 right. You hear me?

16 So that's why we asked
17 you for your contact information.
18 Thank you all. Can we give them a
19 round of applause.

20 (Applause.)

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
22 Mr. Clerk, if you could please call
23 the next panel to come testify
24 before us today. The fun

1 continues.

2 THE CLERK: And the fun
3 continues in the form of Gregg
4 Caren from Philadelphia
5 Convention --

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: We
7 can't hear you, sir.

8 THE CLERK: The fun
9 continues with Gregg Caren from the
10 Philadelphia Convention and
11 Visitors Bureau; Megan Kane, Host
12 City Executive/CEO of the
13 Philadelphia Soccer 2026; and Bumi
14 Fernandez-West, CEO of Odunde, will
15 you please come to the table.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
17 afternoon. As this panel is
18 transitioning, anybody who wants to
19 go outside and network, we
20 encourage it. Just ask you to try
21 your best to remain silent while
22 you're in here so we can give all
23 of our witnesses who came to
24 testify the same respect.

1 (Witnesses approached
2 witness table.)

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
4 afternoon. Thank you all for being
5 here. So excited to see you. I
6 know this is going to be an
7 energetic panel.

8 So whatever order you
9 want, please state your name for
10 the record. You may begin with
11 your testimony. After all three of
12 you testify, the Committee will
13 then open it up for questions.

14 MR. CAREN: Well, thank
15 you, Mr. Chairman. And I'll give
16 the same shout-out to everybody
17 else here but more broadly. Thank
18 you to Council, thank you to our
19 Administration, thank you to staff.
20 It's an extraordinary team that's
21 in place for our city and our
22 Commonwealth as we continue to do
23 the collective good work that we
24 do.

1 Formally for the record
2 I'm Gregg Caren. I'm President and
3 CEO of the Philadelphia Convention
4 and Visitors Bureau. You often see
5 us abbreviated as PHLCVB. I always
6 like to simplify -- I'll step aside
7 from my preparedness remarks for a
8 second. If you ever want to see
9 the results of what we do, when you
10 see people walking down Market
11 Street wearing name tags, when you
12 see these tall, amazing young women
13 that are in town right now in these
14 next few weekends playing
15 volleyball, when you see the great
16 colors of our Divine Nine, when you
17 see the World Cup, WrestleMania,
18 the RNC, the DNC or the Pope or the
19 260 other events that our team
20 helps bring to the city every year,
21 those are the results of what we
22 do. So it's a broad, broad
23 tapestry. And thank you, Madam
24 Rep, if she's still here, it is

1 incredible.

2 We do take a long view
3 on this. The first conversation
4 about the World Cup was an RFP that
5 hit our conference room in 2017 the
6 week after the NFL Draft. We were
7 looking at a piece of paper that
8 says, Can the City of Philadelphia
9 book, win and post something like
10 the World Cup. And here we are
11 some years later on the precipice
12 of doing that.

13 But that long view also
14 puts the perspective of why we do
15 what we do. And Councilmember
16 Lozada, you mentioned jobs, jobs,
17 jobs. So when I think about what
18 the work that we do impacts, it's
19 about 80,000 people in and around
20 our city that work at hospitality,
21 tourism, attractions, retail
22 operations. And it's about
23 hundreds of investors, large and
24 small. Whether it's a small shop

1 on South Street or it's a big
2 hotel, we've got hundreds of maybe
3 thousands of people investing
4 hundreds of millions of dollars in
5 businesses that are not built for
6 one day, one week or one year.

7 So when people ask about
8 my perspective on 2026, I remind
9 them that our perspective is on
10 '24, '25, '26, '27 and beyond. And
11 just like when we book the World
12 Cup world events right now, it's a
13 2030, 2035 and that's the long game
14 that we play in our world.

15 But the measure of
16 success of how we prepare is not
17 just going to be on how we
18 spotlight for 2026, but it is going
19 to be about every day leading up
20 and the end. It is a pivotal
21 moment for us to build a
22 Philadelphia that shines long at
23 these events leave town.

24 And before we welcome

1 our next round of mega, there's a
2 sustained investment for the long-
3 term impact that I mentioned both
4 for the City and the private
5 sector. Philadelphia's story is
6 one of historical significance and
7 modern innovation. To deliver a
8 world class experience for visitors
9 and residents alike, it's critical
10 that we invest in our
11 infrastructure, investor
12 infrastructure, services and
13 communications not just for '26 but
14 for the City's entire future.

15 The PHLCVB acts as an
16 economic engine for the City and
17 the county, creating jobs, fueling
18 our economy through business
19 events, sporting events and
20 international tourism. We measure
21 success by the economic impact
22 generated, hotel room nights booked
23 and dates filled at our state-owned
24 Philadelphia Pennsylvania

1 Convention Center and our amazing
2 sports complex. All of these major
3 venues ripple out to support our
4 hotels, restaurants, museums,
5 cultural attractions and small
6 businesses.

7 As we discussed at the
8 last hearing -- and, Councilmember
9 Thomas, thank you again for calling
10 both of these -- the impact of 2026
11 will be long-lasting, from the
12 creation of thousands of new jobs
13 to the impressions we'll leave
14 global event planners and
15 international visitors.

16 Our momentum will start
17 actually earlier in the year that
18 some of you think. In January of
19 2026, we will host an organization
20 called PCMA Convening Leaders. It
21 is arguably the World Cup of global
22 meeting and business planners.
23 They'll be here in the second week
24 in January, traditionally a very

1 slow week for our city, but the
2 impact of that event has 20-year
3 implications for us.

4 The last time that event
5 was in Philadelphia was in 2006.
6 Imagine a differentiation of our
7 city in 2006, in 2026, in the eyes
8 of the meeting planner seeing all
9 of our new hotels, restaurants,
10 museums like this one, and
11 everything that's been happening in
12 this city.

13 The impact on our sales
14 team, the people that actually book
15 these big conventions for future
16 years, is too big a game for us to
17 play around with. As much as what
18 World Cup will do for us for
19 tourism, international visitation
20 from around the world for this year
21 and in many years to come, the
22 people that will be in this city
23 have the potential, every one of
24 them, to go back home and book a

1 major citywide convention, more
2 people with (inaudible), more
3 people with volleyball uniforms,
4 more people with Divine Nine. You
5 will have 5000 people in this city
6 in January 2026 that can make or
7 break the next two decades of our
8 meetings, conventions, sporting
9 events industry.

10 Just by way of example,
11 that same event was in San Diego
12 just two years ago. And San Diego
13 projects booking over half a
14 million room nights just by virtue
15 of hosting that important group in
16 their city. They have presidents
17 as keynote speakers. They have
18 rock stars for closing events.
19 This city will be shining for the
20 (inaudible) industry the same as we
21 will for the World Cup come spring
22 and summer.

23 Our message of inclusive
24 growth is critical and has been

1 part of our DNA for decades. Our
2 successful hands-on ensuring that
3 local businesses, especially
4 diverse and family-owned
5 enterprises, are prepared to meet
6 this moment. We encourage these
7 businesses to actively engage with
8 the influx of visitors by enhancing
9 online visibility, offering
10 promotions and collaborating with
11 event organizers for a greater
12 experience.

13 Our PHLCVB Diversity
14 Division, some three decades old,
15 is a key connector in this area.
16 Through initiatives like our
17 Discovery and Diversity Guide --
18 Councilmember Thomas asked about
19 how do we connect with businesses,
20 small Black and Brown businesses --
21 we have a guide for our PHL CVB
22 Diversity Division that exists
23 every day all year long for our
24 meeting planners and our clients to

1 see how they can engage with our
2 local business community.

3 We feature our nine
4 prominent Black and Brown
5 neighborhoods throughout the city
6 and we actively market
7 Philadelphia's vibrant and diverse
8 communities to diverse visitors and
9 event attendees. With regard to
10 investment and preparedness, we are
11 deeply grateful for the City's
12 financial support of our industry
13 provided by the 2025 transfer.

14 Councilmember Thomas, I've got
15 (inaudible) and we appreciate your
16 support in 2025. And we
17 respectfully are still waiting and
18 we will be waiting with bated
19 breath. '26 will be the year to
20 make and break all of us, as I
21 said, for decades to come. And
22 we're respectfully looking forward
23 to hopefully a transfer 2026 as
24 well.

1 Our work consistently
2 brings millions of people to our
3 city every year. We exist to
4 ensure the safe and welcoming
5 environment. And we actually
6 invest ourselves in supporting the
7 PPD in Center City District, and we
8 often have an investment from the
9 PHLCVB to ensure that the
10 pedestrian experience for our
11 visitors and meeting delegates is a
12 positive one.

13 In closing, in looking
14 at the legacy of 2026 and beyond I
15 believe our two most critical areas
16 of focus should be, this is me
17 personally and my organization, we
18 need to support and hyperaccelerate
19 Mayor Parker's safe and green
20 initiatives to ensure a positive
21 visitor experience, not just for
22 six weeks, not just for six months,
23 but every day from today forward
24 and into the decades to come.

1 Secondly, we need to
2 support but will be (audible) for
3 any of us that has a voice and has
4 connections with Harrisburg, SEPTA
5 is at a critical point, as you'll
6 hear from them directly, and I
7 believe it's important for our
8 visitors, for our residents and for
9 our visiting community to make sure
10 people get in and around the city
11 safely and effectively.

12 With a coordinated
13 investment in planning and
14 community engagement, we can ensure
15 that all of these events will not
16 only be extraordinary for visitors
17 but truly transformative for our
18 residents, our businesses and
19 Philadelphia's long-term proximity.

20 Thank you, Council, for
21 standing with us to help shape a
22 stronger, more vibrant Philadelphia
23 for 2026 and beyond.

24 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

1 Thank you. Please state your name
2 for the record and you may begin
3 your testimony.

4 MS. FERNANDEZ-WEST:

5 Good afternoon, everyone. My name
6 is Oshunbumi Fernandez-West. I'm
7 so excited to be here. Thank you
8 so much, Chairman Thomas, for
9 allowing me to be here. Odunde is
10 the biggest festival in North
11 America.

12 So I'm going to give you
13 a brief history. I come here with
14 a lot of pride. Odunde was created
15 by my mother in 1975. I was
16 strapped to her back at the first
17 Odunde. And I was my mother's
18 shadow. Everywhere she went I
19 went, right.

20 And people used to laugh
21 at my mom, make fun of my mother
22 like, go ahead, they're not going
23 to let you march to the rhythm and
24 honor God, they're not going to let

1 you have people there and sell
2 their goods, sell their products.
3 And my mother said, Bumi, Odunde is
4 God. You and I are just vessels.

5 So as we stand here
6 today, as I sit here today, we are
7 celebrating 50 years of Odunde.

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. FERNANDEZ-WEST: I'm
10 so excited because Odunde was the
11 blueprint for community-based
12 festivals, it was. When people
13 came to Odunde knew that I think I
14 can go back to my city, to my state
15 and start my own festival, right.
16 I know my mom sacrificed. She
17 sacrificed her physical health for
18 Odunde and for the uplifting of her
19 people.

20 Odunde's mission is to
21 educate and inspire the public
22 about the African and African
23 American culture. So let's get
24 into some numbers, because people

1 think Odunde is to come and have a
2 good time and shimmy a little bit.

3 No, we do more than that. Okay.

4 We made it rain. We make it for
5 (inaudible) and make a deposit.

6 Businesses make deposits, yes, you
7 can feed your family. You can pay
8 that electrical, gas bill, right.

9 You can put money to it. We pay
10 tax revenue for the City of
11 Philadelphia. We pay tax revenue
12 for the state of Pennsylvania.

13 So let's get into the
14 numbers. So Odunde started 1975.
15 We are celebrating 50 years of
16 Odunde. I'm 51 so I've been to all
17 Odundes, all 50 of them. Okay.

18 Yes. Odunde covers 16 city blocks,
19 has over 150 arts and crafts and
20 food vendors, yes. Small
21 entrepreneurs, business owners come
22 to Odunde. They are the reason why
23 Odunde survived.

24 Funding fluctuates. We

1 don't know if we're going to get
2 funding from the City. We don't
3 know if we're going to get funding
4 from the state. It fluctuates. It
5 does. I'm going to be very honest
6 with you. But most importantly,
7 our business owners are the reason
8 why Odunde has survived. Okay.

9 We've created about over
10 \$30 million economic impact on the
11 state of Pennsylvania. No other
12 festival, no other street cultural
13 festival can do that. We produced
14 over 700,000 in tax revenue for the
15 state of Pennsylvania. We have a
16 \$28 million economic impact on the
17 city of Philadelphia in a 10-hour
18 period, putting over \$480,000 in
19 tax revenue. Times that by 50.
20 That's millions of dollars for the
21 City of Philadelphia.

22 It's very important that
23 people know that. I'm not making
24 these numbers up. They say, Bumi,

1 you making these numbers up? No,
2 I'm not. You can call Steve Mullin
3 at Econsult Solutions and he can
4 confirm everything that I'm saying
5 to you. His name is (inaudible).

6 But Odunde is more than
7 that. We provide year-round
8 programs. We are in the schools.
9 We're in community centers
10 providing African dance, African
11 drum, entrepreneurial programs.
12 Yes, we teach children beginning to
13 end and show them how to create
14 their own business. So we are
15 teaching generations here.

16 I was at Odunde last
17 year. I saw four generations, a
18 great-grandmother, a grandmother,
19 her daughter, her granddaughter.
20 It made me cry because I said, you
21 know what, Odunde is bigger than
22 me. I am just a vessel. We do
23 need support. We need financial
24 support, City Council, for Odunde

1 to last another 50 years.

2 I am so excited to have
3 my son, he is the new COO of
4 Odunde. This is what my mother
5 used to do with me. She used to
6 take me and say, Bumi, you have to
7 come and see, all people that smile
8 in your face don't mean they like
9 you so you have to see it for
10 yourself, right. So that's what I
11 do with my sons and my children. I
12 take them with me so they can be in
13 these meetings so that they can see
14 who's for us and who's against us.

15 But mostly we have
16 received support. Thank you to
17 (inaudible). They have supported
18 us and helping us with Odunde.
19 Thank you to Jazelle Jones and her
20 staff. They have helped us in
21 regards to all city agencies on
22 board to help us.

23 Odunde is a team effort.
24 I cannot do it by myself. I know

1 people think, Bumi does it by
2 herself. No, I cannot. So I thank
3 all the city agencies. Thank you
4 to Council President Kenyatta
5 Johnson. We take place in his
6 District. He has been ten toes
7 down for Odunde, do you hear me.
8 For those that don't know what that
9 means, that means he fully supports
10 Odunde.

11 (Laughter.)

12 MS. FERNANDEZ-WEST: Let
13 me translate that for you. Okay,
14 y'all. He supports Odunde, right.
15 Mayor Parker came to Odunde her
16 first time as Mayor. Go to our
17 Instagram. She said as long as I'm
18 Mayor, Odunde will not need
19 anything. I'm not making this up.
20 She said it, right. But thank you
21 to Mayor Parker and her
22 Administration for supporting
23 Odunde and we're looking for that
24 financial support from Mayor Parker

1 because we need it.

2 As we go through to 250
3 of America, Odunde has been there
4 for 20 percent of those years,
5 right. 50 divided by 250 is 20
6 percent. So Odunde has been there
7 for 20 percent of America's
8 celebration (inaudible) and I'm so
9 excited about that.

10 We want to create a
11 soccer (inaudible). I talked to
12 Councilman Thomas about it, he and
13 Max. Thank you, Max, for having us
14 here. We were talking about how
15 can we use Odunde's numbers. What
16 other festival in the city of
17 Philadelphia, cultural festival,
18 gives you a half a million people
19 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.? My
20 point exactly.

21 And I say that very
22 humble because how can we use
23 Odunde's numbers to spread the word
24 about the 250 (inaudible), how do

1 we reach the old demographics, all
2 nationalities. America is a
3 melting pot; am I correct? So a
4 melting pot should look like
5 everybody, not just a selected few.

6 We should get some of
7 that funding, that hundreds of
8 million dollars that they're
9 putting into the City of
10 Philadelphia, not just less than
11 1%. Are we less than 1% of the
12 voting population? Let that
13 funding reflect what Philadelphia
14 looks like, what it looks like for
15 all the different cultural
16 festivals, Italian, Irish. We are
17 all here and we all deserve a piece
18 of that pot to promote our
19 festivals, to promote our parades.
20 We deserve it. We have done the
21 work.

22 So I just want to say
23 thank you for having us. I look
24 forward to supporting, just

1 celebrate the 250 of America. Thank
2 you to Michael Newmuis. He has
3 come to Bumi, how can I help you,
4 how can Odunde play an intricate
5 part in celebrating America's
6 birthday. So excited to be here.
7 As you leave today, stop by. I got
8 bags. Bye now.

9 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

10 Thank you for that.

11 MS. FERNANDEZ-WEST:

12 Thank you everyone for supporting
13 Odunde. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

16 Please state your name for the
17 record and begin with your
18 testimony.

19 MS. KANE: Meg Kane. I
20 am the CEO for Philadelphia Soccer
21 2026. I would like to first echo
22 the thanks that everyone has
23 expressed to Chairman Thomas and
24 the committee as well as the Parker

1 Administration and the entire City
2 Council for the financial support
3 that has been put forth with your
4 transfer in proposed FY26 related
5 to our 2026 planning.

6 A point of privilege for
7 me, you asked who was in my office
8 in 2020 asking and talking about
9 2026, that was me, I'm sure, saying
10 I promise we're going to emerge
11 from this (inaudible) and the World
12 Cup, and we've done both.

13 I also would like to
14 take time to thank Council for
15 welcoming FIFA President Gianni
16 Infantino last Thursday, which is
17 the first time that the President
18 had visited Philadelphia. And so,
19 as always Philadelphia meets the
20 occasion (inaudible) so thank you
21 so much for your support.

22 FIFA World Cup 26 is a
23 generational opportunity to welcome
24 the world for extraordinary

1 celebration sport, while showcasing
2 the beauty of Philadelphia in its
3 diversity of people, history and
4 experiences. And Philadelphia
5 Soccer 2026 is committed to
6 celebrating that diversity and the
7 vibrancy derived from it from the
8 Far Northeast to deep Southwest and
9 then every neighborhood.

10 But that commitment
11 isn't just in activating soccer
12 fans across our city. It is in
13 delivering a sustained impact that
14 continues long after our six
15 matches and Fan Festival included
16 in July '26. It starts with our
17 Legacy vision for Lemon Hill Park,
18 extends to creating greater
19 accessibility to soccer (inaudible)
20 across the city and is rooted in
21 our commitment to working with
22 vendors who reflect the city of
23 Philadelphia.

24 To that end, 41% of our

1 organizational spend through
2 February 28, 2025 has been with
3 minority-owned business
4 enterprises. We also take in
5 Philadelphia and Pennsylvania first
6 approach in our procurement with
7 59% of our spending being with
8 Pennsylvania-based businesses and
9 40% specifically in Philadelphia.

10 We are encouraged, but
11 certainly not satisfied by those
12 figures. And as more opportunities
13 arise for services and vendor
14 contracts, Philadelphia Soccer 2026
15 is committed to make sure that they
16 succeeded to growing those
17 percentages whenever and wherever
18 possible.

19 We continue to build
20 momentum on this front with the
21 recently made (inaudible) 21 Safety
22 Solutions, which is owned by former
23 Philadelphia Police Commissioner
24 Charles Ramsey for our safety and

1 security plan in the City of
2 Philadelphia as well as with an
3 M/WBE stimulus for our procurement
4 management.

5 Jonathan Todd has also
6 joined us as our full-time Director
7 of Social Impact, who will oversee
8 our diversity, engagement and our
9 community efforts, including
10 community engagement. We are
11 actively collaborating with the
12 leadership of the Diverse Chambers
13 and the Greater Philadelphia
14 Chamber of Commerce's Diverse
15 Procurement Collaborative. We
16 continue to partner with the City's
17 Office of Economic Opportunity as
18 well as elected officials. And
19 we're working with advocacy
20 organizations, including
21 (inaudible) and the Women's
22 Business Enterprise Center, just to
23 name a few.

24 Success for FIFA World

1 Cup 26 will be defined in several
2 ways, but an area (inaudible) is
3 driving economic impact for our
4 city and region through the
5 engagement of diverse (inaudible).

6 Councilmember Thomas,
7 you asked about numbers. In the
8 39-day tournament we are expecting
9 500,000 fans just associated with
10 FIFA World Cup. We are
11 anticipating a projected economic
12 impact of 770 million related to
13 hosting the tournament with \$305
14 million in direct tourism spending,
15 6600 jobs, school jobs supported,
16 2200 jobs created.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
18 let me do everybody a favor. Just
19 repeat the numbers.

20 MS. KANE: Sure.
21 500,000 visitors to the city of
22 Philadelphia just for FIFA World
23 Cup. Projected economic impact,
24 total of \$770 million. We are

1 expecting \$305 million in direct
2 tourist spending. We are also
3 looking to support 6615 jobs with
4 approximately 2200 new jobs created
5 within that number.

6 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
7 (Inaudible).

8 MS. KANE: Created about
9 2200, a total is 6600. We can also
10 send a full economic impact report
11 to you. One other note, we are
12 also expecting to book more than
13 100,000 hotel rooms (inaudible).
14 And as we look across this from a
15 Commonwealth-wide perspective,
16 these numbers are focused just on
17 what we know to date, related to
18 number of matches, like duration of
19 tournament and (inaudible). There
20 are other aspects that may occur
21 that could increase that number.
22 But within that we're expecting \$50
23 million in tax revenue with 30
24 million directly to the City of

1 Philadelphia.

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: You
3 said how much?

4 MS. KANE: 50 million in
5 tax revenue with 30 million of that
6 directly to the City of
7 Philadelphia. So in addition to
8 those numbers and around that
9 economic impact, it is critically
10 important that we ensure that that
11 economic benefit is felt by as many
12 businesses and residents as
13 possible. And to that end,
14 Philadelphia Soccer 2026 is
15 (inaudible) with 423 days to go
16 until FIFA World Cup kicks off, but
17 who's counting, this is not only a
18 priority but very much partnership.
19 Thank you.

20 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
21 Question, I would like that number
22 to get above 30 million. So
23 please, I think that's a little bit
24 of homework for everybody to figure

1 out how can we get that number a
2 little higher. Not that 30 million
3 is bad, but we want to be
4 ambitious.

5 First question, so in
6 the midst of listening to your
7 testimony you said was 100,000
8 hotel rooms. Recently we passed
9 legislation to change the
10 requirements to have an Airbnb in
11 the city of Philadelphia. If you
12 don't know, in the city of
13 Philadelphia you need a CMX-5, did
14 I say that correctly?

15 Do you think that we
16 should be thinking about relaxing
17 the regulations for Airbnb and
18 other creative ways for people to
19 reside in the city of Philadelphia
20 in 2026 just for that year or do
21 you think we already have enough
22 beds with the hotels we have here?

23 MS. KANE: I would say
24 that I think it would be

1 contemplated, but I don't know that
2 that's necessarily the case. I
3 would probably recommend waiting
4 until after the FIFA Cup draw in
5 '25, December of '25 (inaudible)
6 could affect that type of travel.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: I
8 think our concern is that if we are
9 to relax any regulations around
10 Airbnbs and other creative ways for
11 people to book their stay in the
12 city of Philadelphia, would we have
13 enough time between when that FIFA
14 draft would take place and when
15 people will start coming to
16 Philadelphia for this? I think
17 it's about a seven-month time
18 period.

19 MS. KANE: Seven-month
20 time.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Is
22 that enough time, do you think?

23 MS. KANE: I believe it
24 would be enough time but

1 (inaudible).

2 MR. CAREN: Yeah.

3 Actually I would defer -- is Ed
4 Grose still here? I'd actually
5 defer that to the Hotel
6 Association. It's not my goal to
7 speak on their behalf from a
8 business perspective how they
9 operate and help what's competitive
10 or appropriate within their space.
11 So I would defer to Ed Grose at
12 GPHA.

13 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
14 Chair recognizes Councilmember
15 Young. Do you want to go first,
16 Councilmember Young, or
17 Councilmember Lozada?

18 Ladies first.
19 Councilmember Lozada.

20 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: My
21 question was around the rooms as
22 well. But beyond the homes that
23 are available downtown, are we
24 taking into consideration some of

1 those smaller hotel spaces that are
2 in the neighborhood? I'm thinking
3 there's a level of art, right,
4 (inaudible). Are we thinking about
5 those types of spaces as well --

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Add
7 City Line Avenue to that.

8 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA:
9 And City Line Avenue, yes. And how
10 is the PHLCVB breaking up how we
11 measure economic success by
12 district? Are these measurements
13 public or accessible tasks?

14 MR. CAREN: So to answer
15 the first question, you should know
16 that we do collaborate across the
17 entire city and county of
18 Philadelphia. We actually
19 collaborate very effectively across
20 the entire Southeast region,
21 Southeast PA, across the river.

22 When we look at things
23 from our -- as I said, we have a
24 long lens. We also have a wide

1 lens. Because the impact of major
2 events coming to the city, whether
3 it's that volleyball tournament or
4 Divine Nine or a medical convention
5 or World Cup, the All Star game or
6 PGA tournaments, you're going to
7 have an impact one way or another.

8 There's an expression in
9 the hotel industry where there's a
10 word called compression.

11 Compression basically is what it
12 sounds like. When you're filling
13 rooms in the masses of what's
14 available within the city and the
15 region, it has an effect that goes
16 out to Montgomery County, to Camden
17 County, Northeast Philly, South
18 Philly, Airport. There will not be
19 a section of the city or the region
20 that won't be impacted.

21 Whether they're hosting
22 a convention delegate or a foreign
23 or international tourist coming on
24 holiday or to come to a World Cup

1 match, I won't say it's immaterial,
2 but the math is there. We can
3 actually show that in a more
4 intimate environment that shows
5 when big events are in Philadelphia
6 how it impacts the entirety of the
7 city.

8 The argument could be
9 made that some hotels and some
10 owners of whatever facilities they
11 rent out in some cases make out
12 better than the ones that are the
13 official hotels of those events,
14 because they're the ones who --
15 once that demand is created,
16 there's little to go after and
17 they're usually getting a higher
18 rate for that business.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
20 Chair recognizes Councilmember
21 Young.

22 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
23 you. So I'll send one question for
24 Megan. Can you tell us what are the

1 current RFP opportunities that are
2 out there for Philly Soccer 2026
3 and what are the future
4 opportunities that will be coming
5 up?

6 MS. KANE: Sure. So the
7 best way to talk about this is to
8 understand that FIFA, it serves as
9 a governing body. And so, often
10 there are going to be RFPs that
11 FIFA issues from central
12 headquarters down in Miami that go
13 out nationally. That is something
14 that we are provided with that we
15 then send out to the City of
16 Philadelphia, through the Chambers,
17 through Diverse Chambers and our
18 team has kind of shared the list to
19 Council and all Councilmembers'
20 offices.

21 So there are certain
22 RFPs that we at Philadelphia Soccer
23 2026 don't govern but we can
24 distribute. We don't provide a

1 timetable, we are free to let those
2 (inaudible). When we are looking
3 at what has to happen within the
4 city for FIFA World Cup, some of
5 the essential work that we're doing
6 with Director Jones and the City
7 and the Office of Special Events is
8 to look at what contracts will be
9 governed by the City of
10 Philadelphia and what contracts
11 will be governed by Philadelphia
12 Soccer 2026.

13 Currently, the only RFP
14 that we have issued at the moment
15 is related to the management
16 partner for FIFA Fan Festival.
17 That is available on our website
18 phillyfwc2026.com. It is posted to
19 all of our social media channels.
20 It has been distributed vis-à-vis
21 the Diverse Chambers, the Greater
22 Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce
23 and we can certainly redistribute
24 to all Council offices after this

1 hearing as well, so we are putting
2 those out.

3 And it will be a
4 significant number of
5 subcontracting that comes from
6 that, where as you can imagine
7 given the scale there are certain
8 larger scale RFPs that are coming
9 out now. And then once those
10 partners are identified to bid, we
11 will then have a significant number
12 of subcontractors coming out from
13 underneath. I would expect that
14 the final I would say in the fall
15 and the (inaudible) sense of RFPs
16 being issued from Philadelphia
17 Soccer 2026 as it relates to FIFA
18 Fan Festival. There are certain
19 things that the City of
20 Philadelphia will handle in terms
21 of contracting. We would be very
22 clear in terms of (inaudible).

23 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Could
24 you also talk about if there are

1 any requests for (inaudible) or
2 requests for information as well?

3 MS. KANE: Yes. We
4 previously earlier this year placed
5 a request for information for the
6 signature event planning. We
7 received more than 50 responses.
8 And I believe -- I don't want to
9 misspeak, but I believe that we had
10 a majority that were M/WBE
11 qualified, so we saw a significant
12 response from diverse business
13 owners into that RFI process. That
14 was both small, medium and large
15 scale event planners.

16 We have not yet did an
17 RFP for any of those events, per
18 se, but it could be some time in
19 the summer. Right now we're just
20 getting ourselves organized in
21 terms of ensuring for FIFA's
22 calendar and making sure we're
23 organized to be able to run RFP
24 processes (inaudible).

1 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
2 you.

3 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
4 Great questions, colleague.
5 Chair recognizes
6 Councilmember Phillips.

7 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
8 Thank you so much. I just thank
9 you all for your work. Looking
10 forward to working with you 2026.
11 I just wanted to bring up the 770
12 million that you mentioned that,
13 you know, sometimes people throw
14 numbers out there as pure
15 estimates. I just wanted a better
16 sense of how did you come up with
17 \$770 million as the estimate for
18 revenue as a result of 2026?

19 MS. KANE: We
20 commissioned Econsult Solutions to
21 run our economic impact report and
22 we actually (inaudible) with Visit
23 Philadelphia, which ran through the
24 (inaudible) 2026 with Econsult. We

1 (inaudible). We wanted to make
2 sure that we were measuring
3 (inaudible) in terms of our
4 economic impact and how that fit
5 into the overall 2026 narrative.
6 We looked at previous World Cups.
7 Obviously, this is a very different
8 World Cup. It is larger. It's
9 three countries, 16 cities. So we
10 have 104 matches instead of 64
11 matches, and then a (inaudible).

12 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
13 Did Econsult provide you with
14 details around particulars around
15 every area, food industry --

16 MS. KANE: Yes, all of
17 that detail. We're happy to
18 provide the economic impact report
19 following this, but it was very
20 detailed. I would also say what
21 gives us confidence in that number
22 is that FIFA has also conducted its
23 own economic impact through a
24 separate entity and their

1 projections for Philadelphia and
2 (inaudible).

3 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

4 Oh, wow. Is that on the lower end?
5 Is there anything --

6 MS. KANE: 770 million
7 is a conservative estimate.

8 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

9 Wow. Thank you so much.
10 Appreciate you.

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: And
12 notice out of that 770 million, we
13 only anticipate about 50 million in
14 tax revenue, which means the other
15 700-plus million will go where, to
16 the private sector, right?

17 MS. KANE: Right.

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
19 we need to make sure that those
20 Black and Brown businesses are able
21 to take advantage of that 770
22 million. I need to leave 2026 and
23 do a victory lap with my colleagues
24 because we've made some Black and

1 Brown millionaires next year who
2 weren't millionaires this year, so
3 thank you.

4 One homework assignment,
5 one home assignment, and I actually
6 have to read this. I try to
7 memorize stuff. But I'm told that
8 the Women's World Cup will be
9 coming to the U.S. in 2031. Are we
10 prepared to make a bid for that?

11 MS. KANE: I would defer
12 that question to our colleagues at
13 the PHLCVB and the City of
14 Philadelphia to respond to that.

15 MR. CAREN: So as I had
16 the pleasure of meeting the
17 President of FIFA, the one thing I
18 whispered in his ear was looking
19 forward to having you here in 2026
20 and we would wonderfully welcome
21 the Women's World Cup as well. All
22 we need is the same level of
23 support we had from the public
24 sector and hopefully the same level

1 of support from the private sector.
2 And companies like Comcast and
3 other corporate partners have
4 really helped us get where we are
5 today. It's not just a yeoman's
6 effort and time, but funding even
7 to go after the bid. But our PHL
8 Sports Division wants every major
9 sporting event, whether it's
10 WrestleMania, World Cup, PGA, MLB
11 All Star Game, we want them all.

12 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: All
13 right. Just want to make sure
14 we're on the same page so we all
15 got our homework assignment. We
16 don't want this to be a one-time
17 thing. Thank you so much.

18 Mr. Clerk -- please give
19 them a round of applause.
20 Absolutely.

21 (Applause.)

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
23 Mr. Clerk, will you please call the
24 final panel for today.

1 THE CLERK: Our final
2 panel today will be Atif Saeed from
3 the Philadelphia Airport and we a
4 brief change from the program you
5 see, Interim General Manager Scott
6 Sauer from SEPTA, if you're here,
7 sir.

8 (Witnesses approached
9 Witness table.)

10 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Oh,
11 we appreciate your patience. Thank
12 you so much.

13 While we're
14 transitioning panels, I just want
15 to give a special thank you to
16 Thomas Young, the President and CEO
17 of the World Trade Center in
18 Philadelphia. We know you're doing
19 great work to help bring a giant
20 business expo to Philadelphia next
21 year. So, Thomas, thank you.
22 Thank you and your team for being
23 here.

24 Also want to give a

1 shout-out to Nikki White. I saw
2 Nikki walk in. She's doing great
3 work with Welcome America, another
4 great initiative that's going to be
5 happening in 2026. So to the
6 Welcome America team, thank you for
7 being here. And to the World Trade
8 Center of Philadelphia team, thank
9 you for being here as well too. We
10 appreciate the great work you all
11 are doing and it's going to make
12 Philadelphia one of those
13 amazing -- well, the place to be in
14 2026.

15 For those who want to
16 network, we encourage you to do
17 that, if you can just do that
18 outside. When you come back in, if
19 you decide to come back in, please
20 enter quietly. We are about to
21 have probably our most intense
22 conversation of today as we talk to
23 our partners at SEPTA and the
24 Philadelphia Airport. There's no

1 way we can expect \$770 million in
2 revenue along with 500,000 people
3 over 39 days without these two
4 important institutions partnering
5 with us.

6 So first and foremost,
7 thank you for being here. Thank
8 you for your patience. Please
9 state your name for the record and
10 begin with your testimony.

11 MR. SAEED: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon
13 Chairman Thomas, and members of the
14 Committee on Legislative Oversight.
15 My name is Atif Saeed, Chief
16 Executive Officer for the
17 Department of Aviation which
18 manages both Philadelphia
19 International and Philadelphia
20 Northeast Airports. I am here
21 today to testify on Resolution No.
22 240701, which authorizes City
23 Council to hold hearings to assess
24 the current state of Philadelphia's

1 preparations for the multitude of
2 events being held across the City
3 throughout 2026.

4 This is truly an
5 exciting time for our city. The
6 team at the Department of Aviation
7 has been working diligently to
8 ensure we meet the moment and put
9 our best foot forward as PHL and
10 PNE are the gateways to our great
11 city.

12 Shortly after becoming
13 CEO in 2022, I tasked my team with
14 thoughtfully preparing a strategic
15 plan specifically designed to
16 establish a department-wide
17 strategy in advance of 2026. This
18 strategic plan has been our "north
19 star" for the past year and focuses
20 on the following elements:
21 improving conditions of current
22 facilities; elevating the airport
23 experience; enhancing business
24 opportunities; and building for the

1 future.

2 As a result of this
3 strategic plan, my team worked with
4 our airline partners to formulate a
5 \$500 million capital plan to
6 improve conditions of our
7 facilities through rehabilitating
8 public-facing aspects at both PHL
9 and PNE. Some of the upgrades
10 travelers will notice along their
11 journey include: A \$13 million
12 rehabilitation of our SEPTA
13 platforms allowing for safer,
14 easier transit between our
15 terminals and SEPTA's Airport Line.
16 Renovated and new restroom sets, a
17 \$20 million investment, designed to
18 improve quality and comfort,
19 accommodate more travelers, and
20 expand accessibility for persons
21 with disabilities. A \$16 million
22 terminal refresh which includes
23 upgrades to hold rooms, which
24 include but are not limited to

1 improved lighting, new tile and
2 carpet.

3 Additionally, we are
4 spending \$25 million to
5 rehabilitate one of our primary
6 runways, Runway 9R-27L, to ensure
7 our infrastructure is safely able
8 to accommodate the air traffic we
9 expect to see next spring and
10 summer. With these projects also
11 come local and federal goals that
12 assist in helping small, diverse
13 businesses engage in the economic
14 development occurring at -- my
15 apologies. I'm mixing some -- let
16 me finish that sentence. Occurring
17 at PHL --

18 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Take
19 your time. The bathrooms are clean
20 so we're good. Take your time.

21 MR. SAEED: Appreciate
22 it. Development occurring at PHL.
23 Elevating the experience isn't
24 entirely about capital investment

1 however, it's about providing
2 passengers with first-class
3 amenities, a world-class
4 experience, and the flavors of
5 Philadelphia. Our team has been
6 actively working with partners in
7 advance of 2026 to ensure our
8 terminal complex is alive with
9 locally recognized restaurants and
10 shops, helping to drive local
11 business growth and prosperity.
12 These "Founded in Philly" vendors
13 the travelers will recognize as
14 they pass through our facility
15 include: Sabrina's Café, Bud and
16 Marilyn's, Yard's Brewing, Elixir
17 Coffee, Geno's Steaks with
18 additional vendors arriving before
19 the end of the year that include:
20 Federal Donuts, Middle Child
21 Clubhouse, and Oyster House. As
22 with our capital program, PHL also
23 strives to ensure small, diverse
24 businesses are engaged in our

1 concessions program as well. As of
2 the end of 2024, 42% of
3 participation in our concessions
4 program has been from disadvantaged
5 businesses.

6 Travelers will also be
7 able to experience new lounge
8 spaces opening in multiple
9 locations in our terminal complex.
10 This past winter, PHL welcomed a
11 Chase Sapphire Lounge which is
12 located above the D/E checkpoint.
13 This 20,000 square foot space has
14 various amenities and is the
15 largest Chase Sapphire Lounge in
16 the United States. Also coming
17 later this year, American Airlines
18 will be opening their new flagship
19 lounge at PHL.

20 Extensive work is being
21 done by our nationally recognized
22 Airport Exhibitions Program to
23 beautify our facility and provide
24 passengers and employees with a

1 rich, lively experience in our
2 terminals. Founded in 1998, the
3 Exhibitions Program is responsible
4 for organizing and presenting
5 rotating exhibitions that are
6 located throughout the Airport. The
7 exhibits change throughout the year
8 to provide a variety of educational
9 and cultural programs - with an
10 emphasis on local art.

11 Future artwork to
12 celebrate the events in 2026
13 include: a Youth Art Gallery; a
14 celebration of Philly landmarks
15 piece; a historical exhibit focused
16 on the Philadelphia Union; and
17 student photography exhibit in
18 partnership with the Fleisher Art
19 Memorial.

20 In addition to creating,
21 our investment in infrastructure
22 improvements, technology upgrades,
23 and aesthetics, we are also
24 investing in our people. Within the

1 past year, PHL has established two
2 critical initiatives focused on
3 workforce development and employee
4 culture building. First, PHL's
5 Bridge Program, which was initiated
6 by the airport's Development Unit,
7 provides current employees with
8 information, tools and resources
9 needed to advance within the
10 organization while also attracting
11 new talent.

12 The second program, PHL
13 WORKS, was created by PHL's Guest
14 Experience Stakeholder Council to
15 address a unique challenge -
16 establishing a universal customer
17 service baseline for all employees,
18 tenants, contractors, and other
19 stakeholders within the PHL Airport
20 Community. With millions of
21 additional travelers potentially
22 coming through our terminals in
23 2026, PHL is committed to ensuring
24 airport-wide service excellence

1 amongst all 17,000+ badged
2 employees. It's our responsibility
3 to not only meet but exceed the
4 expectations of our passengers,
5 resulting in an unforgettable
6 experience from curb to cloud.

7 In summary, our team
8 continues the important preparation
9 work for 2026. As Philadelphia is
10 a host city for the World Cup, we
11 are actively coordinating with
12 FIFA, local travel and tourism
13 organizations, U.S. Travel, and
14 other key national airport
15 associations. This is most
16 certainly an "all hands-on deck"
17 moment with the eyes of the world
18 on our great city. Our team has
19 risen to the occasion numerous
20 times in the past for the Papal
21 visit in 2015, the Democratic
22 National Convention in 2016, and
23 most recently this past year for
24 WrestleMania. I feel confident

1 that by spring of next year our
2 facility will be ready to serve as
3 the welcome mat to the world and
4 help showcase Philadelphia.

5 I'd like to thank you
6 for the opportunity to present
7 testimony today. I look forward to
8 continuing our partnership and
9 would be happy to answer any
10 questions you may have.

11 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

12 Thank you.

13 MR. SAUER: Good
14 afternoon, Councilman Thomas and
15 members of Philadelphia City
16 Council. I am Scott Sauer. I'm
17 the Interim General Manager for
18 SEPTA. Thank you for the
19 opportunity to update you on the
20 progress that SEPTA's making to
21 prepare for the 2026 FIFA World
22 Cup, the Semiquincentennial and the
23 major events that will punctuate
24 the entire year.

1 SEPTA service was a
2 significant factor in helping to
3 secure Philadelphia as a World Cup
4 host city, so it is particularly
5 painful to appear today following
6 our budget announcement last week,
7 including the dire service cuts and
8 fare increases that SEPTA will need
9 to implement to balance our budget
10 without a permanent state funding
11 solution for transit.

12 The math is simple. If
13 Governor Shapiro's funding plan is
14 not enacted and the service cuts
15 that would take effect at the end
16 of August were to go into effect,
17 SEPTA will not be able to provide
18 additional service for special
19 events or support the
20 transportation needs demanded of
21 our world-class city next year.

22 Just as the city is
23 preparing to welcome the world,
24 SEPTA would go from driving its

1 economy to holding it back. While
2 SEPTA's budget realities certainly
3 cast a cloud over my testimony
4 today. However, I do not want to
5 take the focus away from my
6 colleagues here on the panel or
7 overshadow the exceptional efforts
8 of so many partners who we've heard
9 from today that are working to make
10 2026 a success.

11 The scale of events
12 planned throughout 2026 requires
13 intense preparation and SEPTA will
14 continue to do just that, until
15 funding dictates otherwise. With a
16 fully balanced budget, supported by
17 a permanent state funding plan,
18 SEPTA has committed more than \$50
19 million to support 2026 events.
20 Operations, staffing, safety and
21 security and marketing obligations
22 are estimated to cost approximately
23 \$21 million.

24 While \$30 million in

1 facility and infrastructure
2 upgrades are planned for key
3 stations, including platform
4 resurfacing, variable message
5 displays and camera upgrades at NRG
6 station, fare gate re-alignment,
7 platform resurfacing, painting, new
8 LED lighting and upgraded cameras
9 at City Hall Station, reconstructed
10 and modernized headhouses at 2nd
11 Street Station and new LED lighting
12 and painting at Fern Rock
13 Transportation Center.

14 Managing this enormous
15 task behind me is Shakira Smith.
16 Shakira is the program manager
17 leading our 2026 special events
18 department. Shakira is a 20-year
19 SEPTA employee who started her
20 career as a bus operator back in
21 2005. Her deep --

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. SAUER: Shakira's
24 deep and diverse background with

1 experience at high levels of
2 management, managing both city and
3 suburban bus and rail operations,
4 makes her uniquely suited to
5 coordinate SEPTA service plan.

6 As it is for games and
7 concerts nearly every day of the
8 year, the Broad Street Line will be
9 the workhorse to the sports
10 complex. At full capacity, the
11 Line can carry 25,000 to 30,000
12 passengers per hour to and from NRG
13 station with six- to eight-minute
14 headways.

15 SEPTA will also be
16 standing up dedicated bus service
17 from Center City to FIFA's FanFest
18 at Lemon Hill. We're currently
19 planning to provide service roughly
20 every 10 minutes from late morning
21 to evening and can carry over 1800
22 people per hour. On match days
23 alone, we project moving as many as
24 100,000 to 110,000 fans to and from

1 the stadium complex and Lemon Hill.

2 Our budget and planning
3 also include added capacity on the
4 El and Regional Rail Lines, as
5 conditions dictate. This will be
6 an all-hands-on-deck event for
7 SEPTA. SEPTA's ambassadors and
8 operations personnel will be
9 deployed at major transportation
10 hubs to help with customer service,
11 crowd control, line queuing and
12 information.

13 Other recent initiatives
14 that will also improve the customer
15 experience include the Metro
16 Wayfinding program using new route
17 names, terminology and signage
18 designed to make travel easier
19 regardless of familiarity, language
20 or disability. The SEPTA website
21 is now optimized for mobile
22 viewing.

23 The upgraded SEPTA app
24 now includes SEPTA key and transit

1 watch functionality. And
2 contactless payment is available on
3 all SEPTA modes. Visitors and
4 daily riders can now simply tap a
5 credit or debit card or mobile
6 wallet. Visitors will see safer
7 and cleaner stations and vehicles.

8 SEPTA's Transit Police
9 Department is partnering with law
10 enforcement at all levels to help
11 coordinate city and regional
12 preparedness. Safety is SEPTA's
13 highest value. And over the past
14 three years, we've more than
15 doubled spending on cleaning,
16 safety and security priorities,
17 investments that have SEPTA well-
18 positioned to support 2026.

19 Last year the SEPTA
20 Transit Police Department achieved
21 its largest ever one-year drop in
22 serious crime, equating to 350
23 fewer incidents or 33% decrease.
24 Over the past year, SEPTA has

1 performed a top-to-bottom
2 restructuring of cleaning
3 operations under a new Deputy Chief
4 Operating Officer for Cleaning.

5 With added cleaners and
6 maintenance personnel, we have
7 increased station deep cleans,
8 pressure washing, 50 station
9 passenger areas and 160 station
10 entrances and exits every month,
11 while track cleaners are working at
12 all hours and conditions to remove
13 debris from the track areas. The
14 results of these efforts are
15 already starting to be reflected in
16 improved customer satisfaction
17 scores.

18 If I could just divert
19 from the script just for a second,
20 I'd also like to just say how
21 deeply concerning the budget is
22 that we've put forward and we
23 understand the stress that this
24 puts our customers under. And

1 certainly, it's added stress for
2 the thousands of employees that
3 serve our riders every single day.

4 And I would like to
5 thank City Council, the Mayor's
6 Administration, our Southeast and
7 Philadelphia Delegations for the
8 effort that was made Friday in the
9 rain to call attention to this
10 crisis and to help fund SEPTA.
11 It's very important, not just for
12 2026, but to just help this city
13 and this region grow and continue
14 to grow.

15 So thank you again for
16 inviting me to appear before you
17 today. We know this is a historic
18 opportunity for our city, and
19 success in 2026 will resonate for
20 decades to come. We're hopeful
21 that a permanent state transit
22 funding plan will be enacted
23 quickly so that SEPTA can continue
24 to fulfill its commitments to this

1 important undertaking. We're
2 grateful for Council's support of
3 our funding efforts in Harrisburg
4 and ask that those here today and
5 those that have been here, and
6 Chair Thomas acknowledged the
7 nongovernment people that were in
8 attendance today.

9 And I want to
10 acknowledge those same people
11 because they have also stepped up
12 to advocate for transit funding,
13 and I want to acknowledge that
14 effort as well. Thank you again
15 and I look forward to taking
16 questions.

17 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
18 Thank you. We appreciate your
19 patience. We appreciate you being
20 here today. And I think for most
21 of us up here we really want you --
22 we want Philadelphia to know the
23 great work that you have done to
24 prepare our city for 2026, but we

1 also want you to know that we have
2 your back.

3 I've met with the
4 leadership at the Airport multiple
5 times in preparation for 2026 and I
6 appreciate the fact that you've
7 been open to every idea, every
8 suggestion, every recommendation,
9 and you've implemented most of
10 those things so we want to say
11 thank you.

12 But specifically to the
13 issue around SEPTA, and I know a
14 couple of my colleagues are going
15 to want to speak to this, I want to
16 first start by thanking Governor
17 Josh Shapiro for his continued
18 advocacy for public transportation
19 as well as the legislative branch
20 of government who are in leadership
21 in Harrisburg that's been fighting
22 for funding for SEPTA and for
23 public transit.

24 It's unfortunate in the

1 political climate that we live in
2 that something like SEPTA, which a
3 long time ago wouldn't be
4 considered as controversial as it
5 is, is now that thing. It's
6 unfortunate that something like
7 SEPTA that doesn't have a political
8 affiliation or doesn't have a
9 political party, Democrats,
10 Republicans, Independents, I don't
11 think when you get on SEPTA, they
12 ask your affiliation, right.

13 But somehow, someway,
14 this has turned into an issue that
15 unfortunately is dividing the
16 region, dividing Southeastern
17 Pennsylvania and dividing the
18 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. You
19 talked about the rally that took
20 place this past weekend, and I was
21 excited to see so much energy
22 around the rally. But I can tell
23 you that a big part of the reason
24 why we wanted SEPTA to be here

1 today was because we wanted our own
2 platform, another platform, as it
3 relates to members of City Council
4 to tell our colleagues in
5 Harrisburg that if they do not fund
6 SEPTA in the way that's being
7 recommended by Governor Shapiro, we
8 can see more damage than the
9 pandemic ever caused here in the
10 city of Philadelphia.

11 I think about the
12 workers at TWU and the people at
13 SEPTA, the phenomenal people at
14 SEPTA, who during the pandemic when
15 they were called essential
16 workers -- I don't know if they're
17 essential anymore, maybe they lost
18 that title, but they're still
19 essential to us -- I think about
20 how people involved in SEPTA had to
21 do more than just provide public
22 transportation.

23 You had to support the
24 homeless. You had to provide help

1 to the mentally ill. You had to
2 put yourself in a position to
3 really put your life on the line.
4 And when I decided to be a worker
5 for SEPTA, I didn't decide to put
6 my life on the line. I decided to
7 help people get from one place to
8 another, but members of TWU and
9 people at SEPTA, they didn't waver.
10 They stepped up to the plate during
11 the pandemic in the most difficult
12 time in the entire region and they
13 had our back. They made sure
14 people could get to work. They
15 made sure people could get to
16 school. They made sure people
17 could see their loved ones.

18 And for us to be in a
19 position some five years later, for
20 SEPTA to be here begging for money,
21 to make announcements talking about
22 what would have to get cut if we
23 don't pass Governor Shapiro's
24 budget, I find it appalling. I

1 think it's disgusting and it's
2 really, in all Philly words, just
3 corny when elected officials decide
4 to turn something like SEPTA into a
5 partisan issue.

6 So I don't have any
7 questions for you, sir. I commend
8 you for stepping up to the plate,
9 the entire leadership team at
10 SEPTA. I thank you for riding this
11 ride with us because it's been
12 nothing but a roller coaster.

13 And I also want to give
14 a special shout-out to Wendy who
15 comes down to City Council every
16 Thursday and fights for SEPTA in
17 ways that only Wendy can. We
18 appreciate you all and know that as
19 legislators we're not going to stop
20 the work that we need to do to
21 fight and to advocate and to make
22 sure that you get the funding that
23 you need to support the citizens of
24 Philadelphia.

1 Chair recognizes
2 Councilmember Phillips, and then
3 we'll go down the line and
4 Councilmember Lozada and
5 Councilmember Young.

6 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:
7 Just a quick comment. I echo
8 Chairman Thomas's sentiments, great
9 job that you all are doing to try
10 to improve our region.

11 I just want to say that
12 when I was at the Eagles game I so
13 happened to try to get on SEPTA
14 that day, I don't know why but
15 there was a mistake, actually, you
16 know, the Regional Rail was only
17 working, but the one time I tried
18 to get on there it wasn't working.
19 But anyway long story short, I just
20 wanted to think about ways to
21 communicate with people, maybe
22 through large banners or something
23 letting them know what subway lines
24 are open, what subway lines are

1 closed. And then also, how do we
2 reduce -- figure out ways to reduce
3 the lines that we saw at the
4 Regional Rail space. I mean,
5 that's going to be more than
6 important to make them feel like
7 we're welcoming.

8 So I just think that all
9 the people that are going to be
10 handling those lines are going to
11 be extremely well-trained and
12 they're going to have to have
13 really strong systems different
14 from what happened at the Eagles
15 parade. Thank you.

16 MR. SAUER: I appreciate
17 that, Councilmember. Unlike the
18 Eagles parade, this will be a
19 little bit different of a service
20 event for us. The Eagles parade
21 was everybody in at the same time
22 and everybody out at the same time.
23 This will look a lot different
24 because it's going to be all day

1 travel. So thank you for those
2 comments and those are the things
3 that we definitely want to work on.

4 COUNCILMAN PHILLIPS:

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

7 Thank you, Councilman.

8 Chair recognizes

9 Councilmember Lozada.

10 COUNCILWOMAN LOZADA: I

11 don't have any questions either,
12 but I also want to express my
13 gratitude for Wendy and for all of
14 the work that SEPTA is doing to
15 ensure that things get better,
16 right. I don't think that any of
17 us can say that we are where we
18 need to be. But as it relates to
19 responding and continuing to be
20 present and consistent in
21 responding to the needs, not just
22 of us as legislators, but community
23 is extremely important.

24 And so, I commend you

1 for your work and for your
2 responsiveness. Thank you so much
3 for all that you're doing.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

5 Thank you, colleague.

6 Chair recognizes
7 Councilmember Young.

8 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
9 you, Mr. Chair.

10 And I'm the Vice-Chair
11 of City Council's Transportation
12 Committee, and this issue has been
13 something that my office has been
14 paying close attention to. How do
15 we show the world who Philly is in
16 2026. And transportation and
17 getting around is a way that every
18 single visitor in our city will get
19 to know our city, right, whether
20 it's on SEPTA, whether it's flying
21 in from the airport.

22 But also another issue
23 is our innercity bus terminals,
24 right. How are we going to get

1 those visitors in and around from
2 city to city given Philadelphia's
3 location. It's very easy to hop on
4 a bus to go to New York, to go to
5 D.C., to go to Boston. It's very
6 easy to hop on Amtrak, right, to go
7 to those particular places as well
8 as we're showcasing the world,
9 showcasing America rather to the
10 world.

11 So I just want to make
12 sure that when we provide the
13 significant level of support that
14 you all need to make sure that the
15 passengers have the best experience
16 they possibly can while using our
17 transportation systems here in
18 Philadelphia.

19 MR. SAUER: Thank you
20 very much.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
22 Thank you. With that being said, I
23 want to say thank you both for the
24 great work that you're doing. The

1 conditions at the airport are
2 completely different from the last
3 time we had this conversation to
4 where we are now. And again,
5 without your leadership we would
6 not be as prepared as we are for
7 2026.

8 So with that being said,
9 for anybody who got a chance to
10 listen to today's hearing, to be a
11 part of the conversation today you
12 can tell that Philadelphia is ready
13 for 2026. When I think about all
14 of the cities all across the
15 country who are going to be hosting
16 events, activities and initiatives,
17 there's no better city to come
18 visit than the city of
19 Philadelphia.

20 We have the sports team
21 and amazing sports events. We have
22 the nightlife and the amazing
23 entertaining events. And most
24 importantly, we have the history.

1 This is the place that's the
2 birthplace of our nation. This is
3 the place that's filled with
4 phenomenal arts and culture. This
5 is the place that has so many
6 amazing museums, so many amazing
7 tourist attractions.

8 But at the same time, we
9 know we still have work to do. We
10 have work to do to figure out what
11 do we do around gaming. We have
12 work to do to figure out what do we
13 do around the film industry, and we
14 have work to do to make sure that
15 every district across the city of
16 Philadelphia has an opportunity to
17 take advantage of some of the most
18 amazing initiatives and events that
19 we'll ever see in our lifetime. 50
20 years from now people will look
21 back at 2026 and say, what did we
22 do, how did we do it and how can
23 Philadelphia be even better.

24 So with that being said,

1 are there any other questions or
2 comments from members of the
3 Committee?

4 (No response.)

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Are
6 there any other questions or
7 comments from members of the
8 public?

9 60 seconds, sir.

10 Somebody give him the mic. State
11 your -- hold. Go to the Clerk.
12 State your name for the record. 60
13 seconds.

14 MR. ROUSE: Ernest
15 Rouse, guide of Philadelphia. We
16 don't have enough restrooms for our
17 visitors. We don't have enough
18 coach bus space for these people
19 that are coming to our city. That
20 is our two major problems that we
21 tour guys are having with the
22 people that are coming to this
23 city. We are not a coach bus
24 friendly city yet anymore and we

1 are not a public facility-friendly
2 city.

3 After 6 o'clock I don't
4 know where you're going to go to
5 bathroom. You have to go to a
6 restaurant or something. So there
7 is a good porta potty that they did
8 invent, the Philly Phlush or
9 something like that. Maybe that
10 can be expanded throughout the city
11 of Philadelphia, especially
12 downtown.

13 We're going to do Lemon
14 Hill. I guess there's going to be
15 a lot of porta potties for Lemon
16 Hill out there and a lot of porta
17 potties for other different big
18 celebrations that we're having.
19 But our primary problem we tour
20 guides are having is that there are
21 no restrooms for our guests that
22 are coming into this city.

23 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

24 What's your name, sir?

1 MR. ROUSE: Ernest Rouse
2 of APT, Association of Philadelphia
3 Tour Guides.

4 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
5 Ernest, thank you for that comment.
6 I want to let Councilmember Young
7 respond to that before we close out
8 today because Councilmember Young
9 has been championing that issue.

10 Chair recognizes
11 Councilmember Young.

12 COUNCILMAN YOUNG: Thank
13 you so much. And so, we have two of
14 these Philly Phlush toilets in the
15 5th Council District, one at
16 Federal Square Park, and then at
17 15th and Arch as well, and that has
18 been a huge success for our city.
19 There was some issues folks thought
20 that it maybe limited the quality
21 of life, but those Philly Phlushed
22 toilets have actually been great
23 for our city like you mentioned,
24 and we are looking to expand those

1 throughout the city, not just in
2 the core of our city but they're
3 going to University City and other
4 places as well.

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:

6 Thank you. Last comment.

7 MS. CLARK: Hi. My name
8 is Kristen Clark with the
9 Germantown Arts District. I just
10 had one question for Council and
11 mainly for you guys. One, thank
12 you so very much for all the work
13 that you have been doing,
14 especially for transportation in
15 the city while everything is, you
16 know, what it is.

17 I wanted to know if
18 there's an opportunity for both PHL
19 Airport and SEPTA to start
20 advertising small businesses? Is
21 there opportunity for small
22 businesses, local businesses, to
23 advertise within these wonderful
24 spaces just to get folks to

1 neighborhoods?

2 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: So
3 because of Council protocol, you
4 technically cannot ask them a
5 question. That panel is no longer
6 there. But your comment --

7 MS. CLARK: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: --
9 was perfect and on point. And when
10 we close out this hearing, I'm
11 hoping Kristen can talk to some of
12 the appropriate people about that
13 particular comment because we want
14 to make sure that that comment gets
15 addressed, if that's okay.

16 MS. CLARK: Oh, I
17 thought we were doing things off
18 book.

19 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: No,
20 no, no, no. I still got to follow
21 the law. I got legislative people
22 looking at me like Councilman
23 Thomas is crazy. So thank you.
24 Two very important comments. We

1 appreciate it. And please make
2 sure that we can address both
3 comments.

4 There being no further
5 questions or comments from members
6 of the Committee and no other
7 witnesses to testify, I will ask
8 that if there is anyone else
9 present in the hearing whose name
10 we failed to call that wishes to
11 offer any testimony on the
12 resolution be considered today?

13 (No response.)

14 COUNCILMAN THOMAS:
15 Seeing none, hearing none, I want
16 to thank you all and all the panels
17 of witnesses and members of the
18 Committee for your participation
19 today. We value your opinion.

20 This concludes the
21 business of the Committee and we
22 will recess this hearing to the
23 call of the Chair, which means we
24 will be back in the fall before

1 2026 starts to have our last
2 conversation. Thank you all and
3 have a great rest of your day.

4 (Committee on
5 Legislative Oversight concluded at
6 3:50 p.m.)

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1 C E R T I F I C A T I O N

2 I, hereby certify that the proceedings
3 and evidence noted are contained fully and
4 accurately in the stenographic notes taken by
5 me in the foregoing matter, and that this is a
6 correct transcript of the same.
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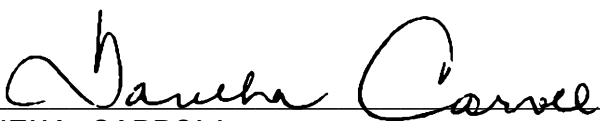
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TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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\$100	1	15,000	20-year	13:15,	16,18
60:1,18	96:13	34:8	139:2	23	102:24
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