

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE ON PARKS, RECREATION AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, June 8, 2016
10:35 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS, CHAIR
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

160301, 160304, 160458, 160473, 160529,
160557, and 160388

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1
2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
3 morning, everyone. This hearing is
4 called to order. This is a public
5 hearing of the City Council Committee on
6 Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs.
7 The purpose of this public hearing is to
8 hear testimony on Bills No. 160301,
9 160458, 160473, 160529, 160557, and
10 160304, and also the Committee is
11 prepared to report out its
12 recommendations pursuant to Resolution
13 No. 160388.

14 I do want to recognize the
15 presence of a quorum of Committee
16 members, and we have joining us
17 Councilman Al Taubenberger, Councilman
18 David Oh, Councilwoman Cherelle Parker,
19 and Councilman Bobby Henon.

20 I want to ask the Committee
21 members before we begin testimony if
22 there are any opening remarks from the
23 Committee.

24 (No response.)

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No? Okay.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 So we can now have the Clerk read the
3 title of Resolution No. 160388.

4 THE CLERK: Resolution 160388,
5 authorizing Council's Committee on Parks,
6 Recreation and Cultural Affairs to hold
7 public hearings for applicants seeking
8 nomination to serve on the Commission on
9 Parks and Recreation, and further
10 authorizing the Committee to recommend
11 for Council's consideration nominations
12 to be forwarded to the Mayor.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And
14 today it's my pleasure to commence this
15 hearing by announcing the Committee's
16 recommendation to the City Council and to
17 the Mayor for the new Commission on Parks
18 and Recreation. This record should
19 reflect that the pool of applicants was
20 once again fantastic. More than 60
21 individuals took the time to submit very
22 detailed applications, and the
23 overwhelming majority also appeared
24 before this Council Committee in one of
25 two public hearings where they had an

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 opportunity to present their credentials
3 face to face. The quality and quantity
4 of candidates was extraordinarily
5 impressive, and we witnessed firsthand
6 their true passion for our parks and
7 recreation centers and their deep desire
8 to serve this city.

9 You should also know that the
10 pool was quite diverse, as we had hoped,
11 and that all of the skill sets set forth
12 in the Charter will be reflected in the
13 25 nominees we are announcing today.

14 I've been honored, along with
15 my colleagues, to be a part of this
16 process.

17 And that being said, I'd like
18 to announce the 25 names selected by this
19 Committee. And the names are: Gregory
20 J. Allen; Rebecca (Rudi) Byron; Michael
21 J. Cappon; Phoebe Coles; Susan
22 Dannenberg; Akeem J. Dixon; Eric Edi;
23 Michael R. Froehlich; Debra Wolf
24 Goldstein; Jeffrey L. Hackett; Charlie
25 Hills; Jean-Marie Kouassi; Darren

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 Lipscomb; M. Richard Nalbandian; Raed
3 (Ray) Nasser; Felicia Parker-Cox; Matthew
4 Perks; Brenda Reavis; Frank Robinson;
5 Dana Russikoff; Noreen Shanfelter;
6 Kristine Soffa; Joy D. Soto; A.J.
7 Thomson; Janice M. Woodcock.

8 You should know that the next
9 step in this process is that at
10 tomorrow's session of City Council, we
11 will introduce a resolution for Council's
12 consideration to be voted on at Council's
13 June 16th session. If Council adopts our
14 recommendations in that resolution, they
15 will then be forwarded to the Mayor, who
16 is authorized by the Charter to appoint
17 nine members of the Commission from the
18 list provided by City Council.

19 We are delighted with the
20 caliber of the applicants and encouraged
21 by their impassioned testimony. And so
22 we are especially pleased to move this
23 process to the next step, which is to
24 introduce -- which is the introduction of
25 the resolution on Thursday, June 9th.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 And now if the Clerk will read
3 the title of Bill No. 160301.

4 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160301,
5 naming and designating an addition to the
6 Marian Anderson Recreation Center,
7 located at the corner of 17th and
8 Fitzwater Streets, "The Ryan Howard
9 Training Center."

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Can the
11 Clerk call the first panel to testify.

12 THE CLERK: Katherine Ott
13 Lovell, Parks and Recreation
14 Commissioner.

15 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Good
16 morning, folks.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
18 morning, Commissioner. Please state your
19 name for the record and begin your
20 testimony.

21 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Sure.
22 My name is Kathryn Ott Lovell. I'm the
23 Commissioner for Philadelphia Parks and
24 Recreation.

25 Good morning, Chairwoman Bass

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 and Committee members. My name is
3 Kathryn Ott Lovell. I'm the Commissioner
4 for Parks and Recreation. I appear
5 before you today on behalf of the
6 Department of Parks and Recreation
7 concerning Council Bill No. 160301 naming
8 and designating an addition to the Marian
9 Anderson Recreation Center, located at
10 the corner of 17th and Fitzwater Streets,
11 "The Ryan Howard Training Center."

12 Ryan Howard made a significant
13 contribution to the center and to many
14 other locations throughout the park
15 system. This center is located at the
16 corner of 17th and Fitzwater Streets.
17 Additions to the center include new
18 indoor batting cages and classroom space.

19 I am here today to offer my
20 support of this bill introduced by
21 Councilman Kenyatta Johnson.

22 Thank you, and I'd be glad to
23 answer any questions you might have.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
25 very much.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 May you please state your name
3 for the record and begin your testimony.

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PALANTINO:
5 Good morning, Council. Perna Palantino
6 (ph), Deputy Commissioner of Parks and
7 Recreation.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Did you
9 have testimony to offer today?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PALANTINO:
11 No. I'm just in support of the
12 Commissioner.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Very good.
14 Are there any questions from
15 the Committee?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.
18 Well, thank you very much for your
19 testimony on that matter.

20 And can we have the Clerk
21 please call the title of the next bill.

22 THE CLERK: Bill 160458,
23 authorizing the Commissioner of Public
24 Property, on behalf of the City, to
25 accept title to all or a portion of the

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 parcels of land in the area bounded by
3 North Street, North 18th Street, Wallace
4 Street, and North 19th Street; and
5 amending Chapter 15-200 of The
6 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Fairmount
7 Park System," to include such properties
8 among the areas designated as part of the
9 Fairmount Park System; all under certain
10 terms and conditions.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

12 And good morning again,
13 Commissioner. Please state your name and
14 title for the record and please begin
15 your testimony.

16 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Sure.
17 Kathryn Ott Lovell, Commissioner,
18 Philadelphia Parks and Recreation.

19 Good morning, Chairwoman Bass
20 and Committee members. My name is
21 Kathryn Ott Lovell, Commissioner for
22 Parks and Recreation. I appear before
23 you today on behalf of the Department of
24 Parks and Recreation concerning Council
25 Bill No. 160458, which authorizes the

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 Commissioner of Public Property, on
3 behalf of the City, to accept title to
4 all or a portion of the parcels of land
5 in the area bounded by North Street,
6 North 18th Street, Wallace Street, and
7 North 19th Street; and amending Chapter
8 15-200 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled
9 "Fairmount Park System," to include such
10 properties among the areas designated as
11 part of the Fairmount Park System; all
12 under certain terms and conditions. I am
13 here today to support this bill.

14 In 2014, the Spring Garden
15 Community, the Spring Garden Community
16 Development Corporation, and Council
17 President Darrell Clarke's office began
18 working with the Philadelphia
19 Redevelopment Authority and the
20 Philadelphia Department of Parks and
21 Recreation to transfer PRA-owned parcels
22 into our inventory for preservation.

23 This garden was founded in
24 1995. There are 180 garden plots and
25 over 350 gardeners. The garden grows and

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 donates 1,500 pounds of food, which is
3 distributed to neighborhood food
4 cupboards. The Spring Garden Community
5 supports broader neighborhood greening
6 initiatives through tree plantings and
7 neighborhood beautification projects.
8 Once the land is transferred into my
9 department's inventory, we will enter
10 into a five-year lease agreement with the
11 Spring Garden Community Development
12 Corporation, who has supported the garden
13 since its inception.

14 Thank you, and I'd be glad to
15 answer any questions you have.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
17 very much for your testimony.

18 Any questions from the panel?

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All right.
20 Well, thank you.

21 And can we have the Clerk
22 please call up the next bill.

23 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160473,
24 authorizing the Parks and Recreation
25 Commissioner to enter into an agreement

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 to release and indemnify the Southeastern
3 Pennsylvania Transportation Authority in
4 connection with access provided by SEPTA
5 to carry out a project for improvements
6 to JFK Plaza, aka "Love Park," at 15th
7 and JFK Boulevard, all under certain
8 terms and conditions.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
10 Good morning again,
11 Commissioner. Please state your name for
12 the record and begin your testimony.

13 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Good
14 morning, Chairwoman Bass and Committee
15 members. My name is Kathryn Ott Lovell.
16 I'm the Commissioner for Parks and
17 Recreation. I appear before you today on
18 behalf of the Department of Parks and
19 Recreation concerning Council Bill No.
20 160473, which authorizes my department to
21 enter into an agreement to release and
22 indemnify the Southeastern Pennsylvania
23 Transportation Authority in connection
24 with access provided by them to carry out
25 a project for improvements to JFK Plaza,

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 also known as "Love Park," which is
3 located at 15th and JFK Boulevard. I am
4 here today to offer support for this
5 bill.

6 SEPTA owns and leases property
7 directly under the City's construction
8 project for JFK Plaza. The City's 2014
9 lease/leaseback with SEPTA did not
10 contemplate the construction of Love
11 Park. The City provides only a very
12 limited indemnity to SEPTA under the
13 lease/leaseback. The City is only
14 permitted to access SEPTA's property to
15 inspect or maintain or repair its
16 utilities.

17 As a condition of SEPTA's
18 agreement to allow access to InterPark's
19 and City's contractors for the park
20 project and the Welcome Center project,
21 the City has agreed to enter into an
22 agreement by which the City indemnifies
23 and releases SEPTA from any claims
24 related to the improvements of JFK Plaza
25 and the park itself. The SEPTA lease

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 signed June 2014 has a 30-year term,
3 ending on June 30th, 2044, with two
4 15-year automatic renewals, with a final
5 end term of June 30, 2074.

6 As consideration for the City's
7 agreeing to indemnify SEPTA, SEPTA agrees
8 to negotiate with third-party contractors
9 and City contractors in good faith for
10 the right of any entry agreements for the
11 park project and the Welcome Center.

12 Thank you. I'd be glad to
13 answer any question you may have.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
15 questions from the Committee?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
18 none, is there anyone else here to
19 testify on this bill?

20 (No response.)

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And if not,
22 we'll have the Clerk read the title of
23 Bill No. 160529.

24 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160548,
25 authorizing the Commissioner of Public

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 Property, on behalf of the City, to
3 accept title to all or a portion of the
4 parcels of land in the area bounded by
5 North Street, North 18th Street, Wallace
6 Street, and North 19th Street; and
7 amending Chapter 5-200 of The
8 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Fairmount
9 Park System," to include such properties
10 among the areas designated as part of the
11 Fairmount Park System; all under certain
12 terms and conditions.

13 The first witness is the
14 Commissioner, followed by Justino
15 Navarro, Spring Garden Community
16 Development Corporation.

17 (Witness approached witness
18 table.)

19 MR. NAVARRO: Good morning.
20 I've submitted written testimony, so I
21 will select some of the key factors in my
22 written submission to present here today.

23 Good morning, Chairwoman Bass
24 and members of the Committee on Parks and
25 Recreation and Cultural Affairs. My name

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 is Justino Navarro and I am the Vice
3 President of the Spring Garden Community
4 Development Corporation and Chair of the
5 Government and Neighborhood Relations
6 Committee of the Spring Gardens Community
7 Garden. I am also President of the
8 Spring Garden Civic Association. I am
9 accompanied this morning by supporters in
10 the audience and also here present is the
11 Co-Chair of the City Harvest Fresh Food
12 initiative at the Community Garden,
13 Marcia Connolly. I am here today to
14 offer testimony in strong support of Bill
15 No. 160458, which, if adopted, will
16 transfer certain parcels of land
17 comprising the Spring Gardens to the City
18 of Philadelphia's part of the Fairmount
19 Park System under the care and
20 jurisdiction of the Department of Parks
21 and Recreation.

22 The garden was founded in 1995
23 and transformed into a force for good and
24 unity, a previously vacant, blighted, and
25 drug-infested entire City block. The

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 garden is located in the heart of the
3 community and, as we intended at its
4 founding, bridges a physical divide that
5 existed in the neighborhood until 1995
6 between the more affluent western end
7 portion of the community, west of 20th
8 Street that is, and the east end of the
9 Spring Garden community, east of 20th
10 Street. The Spring Gardens provides a
11 venue for the community's diverse
12 residents to come together irrespective
13 of background, race, religion, occupation
14 or income in a shared project of
15 beautification and camaraderie. The
16 garden also serves as an open-air
17 classroom and provides educational,
18 environmental stewardship opportunities
19 for students at all grade levels,
20 including the pre-K students at Mi
21 Casita, which is Philadelphia's first
22 Spanish immersion school, located at
23 Project HOME's JBJ Soul Homes on
24 Fairmount Avenue, the Laura Wheeler
25 Waring neighborhood elementary public

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 school, the Roberto Clemente Playground's
3 after-school and summer programs, Ben
4 Franklin High School and their
5 photography class, the Masterman School,
6 and Community College of Philadelphia's
7 Environmental Conservation and Geography
8 classes also partake in the garden.

9 As we enter our 21st season of
10 growing the garden, we look forward to
11 continuing our mission at the Spring
12 Gardens on a permanent basis, and we are
13 excited as well with the new
14 opportunities and partnerships with the
15 City and Parks and Recreation this bill
16 represents.

17 I would also like to take the
18 opportunity to publicly and on the record
19 thank our District Councilman, Council
20 President Darrell Clarke, and his staff
21 for their unwavering support of the
22 Spring Gardens over the course of many,
23 many years. Thank you as well, Madam
24 Chair and members of the Committee, for
25 the opportunity to testify before you in

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 strong support of Bill No. 160458.

3 That concludes my testimony.

4 I'll be happy to answer any questions you
5 may have.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
7 for your testimony.

8 Are there any questions from
9 the panel?

10 (No response.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
12 none, thank you very much for your
13 testimony and for being here today.

14 MR. NAVARRO: Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is there
16 anyone else to testify on Bill No.
17 160458?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
20 none, we'll have the Clerk to call up the
21 next bill.

22 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160529,
23 authorizing the Commissioner of Public
24 Property, on behalf of the City, to
25 accept all or a portion of the parcels of

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 land commonly known as 1035 to 37 South
3 6th Street and 1028 to 32 South Fairhill
4 Street; and amending Chapter 15-200 of
5 The Philadelphia Code, entitled
6 "Fairmount Park System," to include such
7 properties among the areas designated as
8 part of the Fairmount Park System; all
9 under certain terms and conditions.

10 And Commissioner Ott will be
11 testifying on that.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
13 Commissioner. Please begin your
14 testimony.

15 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Good
16 morning, Chairwoman Bass and Committee
17 members. My name is Kathryn Ott Lovell,
18 Commissioner for Parks and Recreation. I
19 appear before you today on behalf of the
20 Department of Parks and Recreation
21 concerning Bill No. 160529 sponsored by
22 Councilman Squilla, which authorizes the
23 City to accept title to all or a portion
24 of the parcels of land commonly known as
25 1035 to 37 South 6th Street and 1028 to

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 32 South Fairhill Street; and amends
3 Chapter 15-200 of The Philadelphia Code,
4 entitled "Fairmount Park System," to
5 include such properties among the areas
6 designated as part of the Fairmount Park
7 System; all under certain terms and
8 conditions. I am here today to support
9 this bill.

10 The South 6th Street Garden was
11 previously a trash-strewn lot that was
12 cultivated by neighbors into the
13 beautiful garden it is today. The
14 garden, which consists of community
15 garden plots, was established in 1994.
16 The community fundraised and invested
17 many thousands of dollars into this
18 garden and has strong local ties to civic
19 associations.

20 If the land is transferred to
21 the Department, we will enter into a
22 five-year lease with the Neighborhood
23 Gardens Trust, a local land trust that
24 has supported the garden for many years.
25 The Neighborhood Gardens Trust will

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 provide insurance and technical support.
3 They will also partner with my department
4 to continue preserving, protecting, and
5 promoting the garden.

6 Thank you. I'd be glad to
7 answer any questions you may have.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

9 Any questions from the
10 Committee?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
13 none, thank you very much for your
14 testimony.

15 And I do want to acknowledge
16 that we've been joined by Councilman
17 Curtis Jones, Jr.

18 And can we have the Clerk read
19 the title of the next resolution.

20 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160557,
21 authorizing the Commissioner of Public
22 Property and the Parks and Recreation
23 Commissioner to sublease from the
24 Philadelphia Municipal Authority certain
25 land and improvements known as McArdle

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 Playground, owned by the School District
3 of Philadelphia, all under certain terms
4 and conditions.

5 And, again, Commissioner.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
7 very much. Please begin your testimony.

8 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Good
9 morning, Chairwoman Bass and Committee
10 members. My name is Kathryn Ott Lovell.
11 I'm the Commissioner for Parks and
12 Recreation. I appear before you today on
13 behalf of the Department of Parks and
14 Recreation concerning Council Bill No.
15 160557 sponsored by Councilman Henon,
16 which authorizes the Commissioner of
17 Public Property and my department to
18 sublease from the Philadelphia Municipal
19 Authority the McArdle Playground, owned
20 by the School District of Philadelphia.
21 I am here today in support of this bill.

22 Through the long-term lease
23 agreement, the Philadelphia Department of
24 Parks and Recreation will perform
25 improvements to this playground, which

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 will benefit the public.

3 Thank you. I'd be glad to
4 answer any questions you may have.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
6 very much for your testimony.

7 Are there any questions from
8 the Committee?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
11 none, can we have the Clerk now read the
12 title of the last bill.

13 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160304 --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: One moment.
15 I'm sorry, Shoshana.

16 Is there anyone else here to
17 testify on that previous bill, 160557?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
20 none, if you'll read the title of the
21 next bill.

22 THE CLERK: Bill No. 160304,
23 amending Chapter 15-600 of The
24 Philadelphia Code, entitled "Parks and
25 Playgrounds," by adding a new section

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 requiring that all parks or playgrounds
3 owned or controlled by the City to be
4 more inclusive, inter-generational and
5 family-friendly and provide equipment and
6 play or fitness opportunities to
7 accommodate children and adults with
8 special needs, all under certain terms
9 and conditions.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
11 very much.

12 Before you begin your
13 testimony, I do want to make an opening
14 statement since this was my bill. And
15 one of the things that we are really
16 attempting to address here is that our
17 playgrounds have not been traditionally
18 sort of the intergenerational spaces that
19 we would like for them to be, and also
20 addressing the needs of those who may
21 have physical disabilities that may make
22 traditional playground equipment for some
23 children daunting, unfamiliar, and
24 uncomfortable.

25 And so one of the things that I

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 did -- and I believe you were with me.
3 Several years ago we went out and did a
4 tour of a playground that was rebuilt in
5 Councilman O'Neill's district in
6 Northeast Philadelphia, which had special
7 swings for children who may have been in
8 wheelchairs. It had playground equipment
9 that specifically spoke to children with
10 autism and other developmental delays
11 that made them feel comfortable based on
12 the textures and the colors, which would
13 give them a different comfort level.

14 We've worked in the 8th
15 District to incorporate all of those
16 things into every playground that we've
17 touched and renovated since I saw that
18 model many years ago, but this really is
19 something that should be citywide. And
20 so that's why we're asking the Department
21 of Parks and Recreation to make it an
22 effort, because it doesn't make as much
23 of a difference if we make everything ADA
24 compliant if you have a physical
25 disability and you go into a playground

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 if there's nothing for you to do, if
3 there's nothing for you to partake in.
4 So that's really one of the things that
5 we're trying to address.

6 Also, one of the things that we
7 have in my district that we'd like to see
8 and have worked with Parks and Recreation
9 to foster throughout the City of
10 Philadelphia is adult exercise equipment,
11 because it will be great that we could
12 have children and parents, that we could
13 have families, whether it's seniors,
14 grand-mom, grand-dad, and children having
15 the opportunity to participate, to play,
16 to work out, that these spaces would
17 really be family-friendly spaces.

18 And so I just really thank you
19 for all of your work and your support and
20 everything that you all have done so far,
21 and look forward to working with you to
22 make this a reality.

23 Thank you. Please begin your
24 testimony.

25 COMMISSIONER OTT LOVELL: Sure.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 Good morning, Chairwoman Bass and
3 Committee members. My name is Kathryn
4 Ott Lovell. I'm the Commissioner for
5 Parks and Recreation. I appear before
6 you today on behalf of the Department of
7 Parks and Recreation concerning Council
8 Bill No. 160304 sponsored by Chairwoman
9 Bass, which adds a new section to The
10 Philadelphia Code requiring that all
11 parks and playgrounds owned or controlled
12 by the City be more inclusive,
13 inter-generational and family-friendly
14 and provide equipment and play or fitness
15 opportunities to accommodate children and
16 adults with special needs, all under
17 certain terms and conditions. I am here
18 today to offer testimony of my support of
19 this bill.

20 Currently we offer three types
21 of programming for children and adults
22 with special needs. The first type of
23 programming is inclusion, where children
24 and adults with disabilities participate
25 in organized recreation programs with

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 their peers. This is throughout our
3 system, and it's most prevalent in day
4 camps and after-school programs.

5 The second type of programming
6 is conducted at Carousel House Recreation
7 Center for People with Disabilities.
8 This facility is dedicated to programming
9 for special needs children through
10 adults. We offer a variety of
11 programming there, including a day camp,
12 wheelchair basketball, quad rugby,
13 Tai-chi, and many other programs.

14 The third type of programming
15 we offer is for groups of individuals in
16 a recreation center or playground.
17 Through parks and playgrounds, we conduct
18 soccer and softball for children with
19 various disabilities ages 3 and up. We
20 also host Special Olympics sports where
21 trained volunteers conduct sports
22 training. We conduct basketball programs
23 specifically designed for children with
24 autism and behavioral issues, and we
25 offer other forms of social and

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 recreational programs for adults with
3 developmental delays.

4 Our Departmental Americans with
5 Disabilities Compliance Administrator,
6 Keith Freeman, advises our staff on
7 structural ADA requirements. Going
8 forward and with the support of City
9 Council, we ensure our department
10 continues providing accessible,
11 intergenerational, family-friendly
12 fitness and play spaces for children and
13 adults, specifically those with
14 disabilities or special needs.

15 Thank you, and I'd be glad to
16 answer any questions you may have.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
18 for your testimony.

19 Are there any questions from
20 the Committee?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: One of the
23 things that I would just like to mention
24 also is that we would like to work with
25 the Department of Parks and Recreation to

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 make this a reality, and I would hope
3 that there might be an opportunity to
4 involve the community also, that there
5 would be some sort of a community-driven
6 design panel that would talk about what
7 the needs are, what the demographics of a
8 particular neighborhood are, are there a
9 lot of seniors, are there a lot of
10 millennials, are there a lot of young
11 families, so that there is an opportunity
12 to help design what's actually going into
13 the space and that there's significant
14 community input. So we look forward to
15 working with you on that.

16 Councilman Jones.

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
18 Madam Chair, and thank you for the bill
19 that makes us plan better.

20 Neighborhoods change
21 demographically, sometimes income,
22 sometimes age, sometimes -- and we as
23 Councilpeople have to be in tune with you
24 to know how to plan that. A skateboard
25 park may not be as popular as it once was

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 in some of my communities where if you
3 slip and fall and break a hip, it could
4 be a problem. So they're looking for
5 passive walking parks. They're looking
6 for Tai-chi areas and things like that,
7 and your direction and working with the
8 District Councilpeople is so essential to
9 improve the quality of life, walkability,
10 and things that create, as the Council
11 Chair said, intergenerational activity so
12 that a grandmother can watch a grandchild
13 or even walk around a track, and we want
14 to incorporate that. In Shepard, we put
15 a walking track around the roller-skating
16 park, because, you know, I'm not doing
17 that. No roller derby for me. We'll
18 walk around that track to watch my kids,
19 grand-kids do that. So that kind of
20 thought process I think is essential, so
21 thank you for the legislation.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
23 We have a new idea, City Council Roller
24 Derby. Councilman Jones is going to set
25 it up.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 Well, thank you so much for
3 your testimony.

4 Can we have the Clerk call the
5 next panel.

6 THE CLERK: Dennis O'Brien and
7 George Matysik.

8 (Witnesses approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
11 morning.

12 MR. O'BRIEN: Good morning,
13 Madam Chair, members of the Committee.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: We all know
15 who you are, but please state your name
16 just for the record and begin your
17 testimony.

18 MR. O'BRIEN: My name is Dennis
19 O'Brien, and I plan to speak about the
20 importance of requiring all City parks
21 and playgrounds to be more inclusive,
22 intergenerational, family-friendly and
23 provide equipment and play or fitness
24 opportunities to accommodate children and
25 adults with special needs.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 In my experience as an advocate
3 for individuals with autism and their
4 families and creating programming through
5 the Philadelphia Autism Project and
6 beyond, I have seen firsthand the
7 importance of creating accommodations and
8 supports for children and adults with
9 special needs.

10 The Philadelphia Autism Project
11 was designed as an inclusive process that
12 relied upon a citywide task force of key
13 stakeholders to examine the quality of
14 and access to services and supports for
15 individuals with autism and their
16 families living in Philadelphia.

17 Just to bullet point my
18 testimony, the Center for Disease Control
19 and Prevention found that 1 in 68
20 children meet the criteria for autism.
21 The 2014 Pennsylvania Census Update found
22 that the number of Philadelphians with
23 autism receiving services increased 116
24 percent to 4,617 individuals from 2,142
25 in the 2009 report. In Pennsylvania, the

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 number increased from nearly 20,000 to
3 over 55,000 children and adults. By the
4 year 2030, it's going to be 73,000
5 adults.

6 It is important to note that
7 autism impacts individuals of all racial,
8 ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds,
9 and the diversity of the population in
10 Philadelphia warrants the identification
11 and creation of the services and
12 programming to support these individuals.
13 Although Philadelphia is recognized as
14 one of the top ten cities to live in if
15 you are diagnosed with autism, we
16 realized that there continues to be gaps
17 in services and supports, as well as
18 unmet needs that must be addressed.

19 According to the 2011
20 Pennsylvania Autism Needs Assessment,
21 over 77 percent of individuals with
22 autism in Philadelphia reported that they
23 do not participate in community
24 activities. By encouraging all parks or
25 playgrounds owned or controlled by the

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 City to be more inclusive,
3 intergenerational, and family-friendly
4 and provide equipment and play or fitness
5 opportunities to accommodate children and
6 adults with special needs, these
7 individuals may have an increased
8 opportunity to participate in community
9 activities, including leisure and
10 recreational activities.

11 Recreational and leisure
12 activities are central to many
13 individuals, including individuals with
14 disabilities, to feeling connected to the
15 community life and helping individuals to
16 build confidence and connect to others.
17 Research has consistently indicated that
18 physically and socially active recreation
19 and leisure activities are related to a
20 higher quality of life in the general
21 population as well as in people with
22 various disabilities. This is especially
23 true of activities that help people feel
24 a part of neighborhood life.

25 Research has also found strong

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 relationships between physical activity
3 and physical health, as well as between
4 physical activity and mental health.
5 Physical and social recreation are
6 important to helping all individuals lead
7 healthier lives.

8 Research has shown that
9 participation in recreation activities
10 positively influence the stress and
11 quality of life with adults with ASD. A
12 study on the impact of designing a
13 playground for children with ASD found
14 that frequency of group play and overall
15 social initiations increased
16 significantly in the new setting, and
17 playgrounds with appropriate levels of
18 physical challenge and support for both
19 structured, imaginative play and solitary
20 observation may support peer interactions
21 in children with ASD.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
23 very much for your testimony.

24 Any questions from the
25 Committee?

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 Councilwoman Parker.

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
4 you, Madam Chair.

5 No question, but can never
6 allow you to testify in a formal setting
7 without saying on the record that
8 particularly in the area of autism, you
9 and I having been members of the
10 Pennsylvania General Assembly, I watched
11 your very committed efforts, the passion
12 with which you, along with Estelle
13 Richman, worked extremely hard to build
14 the consensus in a very large legislative
15 body to get the support we needed to make
16 sure that Pennsylvania and then during
17 your tenure here as a member of Council
18 were in the forefront of making sure that
19 those who learn differently with autism
20 were in the forefront of our legislative
21 agenda.

22 So, Mr. Speaker, Councilman
23 O'Brien, Advocate O'Brien, I just wanted
24 to again say thank you very much for your
25 advocacy, and it was not lost on me and

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 many others.

3 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you,
4 Councilwoman. That's most generous.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
6 Councilman Henon.

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
8 Madam Chair.

9 And I just want to echo what my
10 colleague and friend Councilwoman Parker
11 had just stated. Your commitment to this
12 certain community, children with
13 disabilities, adults with disabilities,
14 autism, has been nothing but spectacular
15 and your efforts through policies you're
16 championing, the Special Olympics, and
17 having the inclusion opportunities for a
18 community to feel part of the community,
19 for people to feel part of the community
20 and make up all our communities across
21 the City is unparalleled.

22 So I just want to thank you for
23 your lifelong commitment and your
24 continued commitment to making sure that
25 people feel a part of the fabric of

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 Philadelphia in all levels and aspects,
3 where they feel safe, and where program
4 is available. So it's good to see you
5 back in these Chambers as a colleague and
6 a friend. So thank you.

7 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you,
8 Councilman. And I have to confess very
9 briefly that my relationship with
10 individuals with disabilities is
11 wonderfully reciprocal. I've been so
12 enriched by my relationship with
13 individuals with special needs, and I
14 really do believe that that is the reason
15 that I became the Speaker of the House,
16 and I will continue to celebrate that
17 relationship going forward. And I really
18 applaud you for doing this important
19 thing. My dream was always to make
20 Philadelphia the first autism-friendly
21 city on the planet, and that transfers to
22 all disabilities, and this is a wonderful
23 first step.

24 And, Councilwoman, Council
25 Chair, making this an inclusive process

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 with families is how you learn how to do
3 it right. So I know that you're all
4 tuned into that, and I am very grateful
5 for this opportunity.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Absolutely.
7 Well, thank you so much for being here
8 today. We really do appreciate you and
9 look forward to working with Parks and
10 Recreation to make sure that families and
11 folks who have an interest and a stake in
12 these particular designs are included and
13 at the table. So thank you very much.

14 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you so
15 much.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sir -- I'm
17 sorry. Councilman Taubenberger.

18 COUNCILMAN TAUBENBERGER: Yes.
19 Madam Chair, thank you very much.

20 And Speaker and Councilman
21 O'Brien, from a neighborhood perspective
22 and a lifelong friendship with you, I
23 can't thank you enough for your hours and
24 hours of dedication, because it really
25 makes a difference. Also, as a father of

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 a teacher of disabled children, I know
3 personally what you've done as well. So
4 very, very much thank you, thank you, and
5 thank you again.

6 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you,
7 Councilman.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
9 And thank you for your testimony.

10 MR. O'BRIEN: Thank you so
11 much.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Sir, would
13 you please state your name for the record
14 and begin your testimony.

15 MR. MATYSIK: Good morning,
16 members of Council. My name is George
17 Matysik, Executive Director of the
18 Philadelphia Parks Alliance and brother
19 to a young woman with special needs who
20 spent countless hours at Houseman Rec
21 Center and Playground in Summerdale. On
22 behalf of the Parks Alliance, we
23 wholeheartedly support this measure and
24 thank Councilwoman Bass for her
25 unwavering efforts to make Philadelphia a

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 more open and inclusive place to live and
3 play.

4 Our city is fighting this
5 battle every day. Every Philadelphian
6 regardless of race, income, age or
7 ability deserves access to quality public
8 spaces, and we must show our commitment
9 to starting this at a young age.

10 As a city, Philadelphia has
11 shown a great commitment to building our
12 public spaces for individuals with
13 disabilities such as the Carousel House
14 and the Free Library for the Blind and
15 Physically Handicapped. While these
16 spaces serve to provide specialized
17 services, the rest of the system should
18 not appear to segregate services. Every
19 Philadelphia public space should consider
20 100 percent of its citizenry before the
21 first shovel hits the ground.

22 While the ADA does mandate
23 access to equipment, it does not mandate
24 that the equipment itself is accessible.
25 To Councilwoman Bass's point, essentially

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 we often build ramps to roadblocks.

3 As such, we fully endorse
4 projects such as sensory play equipment
5 designed with special consideration for
6 those living with autism; adaptations for
7 the blind and visually impaired,
8 including tactile elements and
9 multi-sensory guides; and fully
10 accessible play equipment that allow
11 those in wheelchairs to fully engage with
12 play equipment.

13 We also believe greater access
14 to fitness equipment and instruction
15 throughout the Philadelphia Parks and
16 Recreation system will help promote
17 healthier living for our residents who
18 cannot afford costly gym memberships. As
19 we continue to discuss ways to improve
20 the health of our residents, particularly
21 in lower income communities, it is vital
22 we secure the resources to expand our
23 offerings.

24 Finally, to fully support the
25 goals articulated in this legislation, it

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 is necessary to adequately fund Parks and
3 Recreation's capital needs, and we
4 request full support of the Rebuild
5 Philadelphia initiative to move these
6 projects forward.

7 I thank Council for your time,
8 and I'm happy to respond to any
9 questions.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
11 very much for your testimony.

12 Any questions from the panel?
13 (No response.)

14 MR. MATYSIK: Thank you.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
16 very much for being here.

17 Is there anyone else to testify
18 on this bill?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Seeing
21 none, we will now convene into our public
22 meeting.

23 Councilmember Parker, could I
24 have a motion on Resolution No. 160388
25 reporting the Committee's recommendations

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 for the Parks and Recreation Commission.

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
4 you, Madam Chair. I move the adoption of
5 the report pursuant to Resolution No.
6 160388.

7 (Duly seconded.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The report
9 pursuant to Resolution No. 160388 has
10 been moved and properly seconded.

11 All those in favor say aye.

12 (Aye.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All
14 opposed?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No
17 response, okay. The report pursuant to
18 Resolution No. 160388 has been reported
19 out of this Committee with a favorable
20 recommendation.

21 I now recognize Councilmember
22 Parker for a motion on Bill No. 160301.

23 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
24 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
25 160301 be reported from this Committee

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 with a favorable recommendation and
3 further move that the rules of Council be
4 suspended to permit first reading of this
5 bill at the next session of Council.

6 (Duly seconded.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
8 moved and properly seconded.

9 All those in favor please say
10 aye.

11 (Aye.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
13 opposed?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: None, okay.
16 The ayes have it and the motion carries.
17 Bill No. 160301 will be reported from
18 this Committee with a favorable
19 recommendation, with a request that the
20 rules of Council be suspended to permit
21 first reading at the next session of
22 Council.

23 I now recognize Councilwoman
24 Parker for a motion on Bill No. 160458.

25 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
3 160458 be reported from this Committee
4 with a favorable recommendation and
5 further move that the rules of Council be
6 suspended to permit first reading of this
7 bill at the next session of Council.

8 (Duly seconded.)

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
10 moved and properly seconded.

11 All those in favor of the
12 motion will signify by saying aye.

13 (Aye.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
15 opposed?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: None, okay.
18 The ayes have it and the motion carries.
19 Bill No. 160458 will be reported from
20 this Committee with a favorable
21 recommendation, with a request that the
22 rules of Council be suspended to permit
23 first reading at the next session of
24 Council.

25 I now recognize Councilwoman

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 Parker for a motion on Bill No. 160473.

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
4 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
5 160473 be reported from this Committee
6 with a favorable recommendation and
7 further move that the rules of Council be
8 suspended to permit first reading of this
9 bill at the next session of Council.

10 (Duly seconded.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
12 moved and properly seconded.

13 All those in favor of this
14 motion will signify by saying aye.

15 (Aye.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
17 opposed?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The ayes
20 have it and the motion is carried.

21 And the Chair now recognizes
22 Councilmember Parker for a motion on Bill
23 No. 160529.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
25 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 160529 be reported from this Committee
3 with a favorable recommendation and
4 further move that the rules of Council be
5 suspended to permit first reading of this
6 bill at the next session of Council.

7 (Duly seconded.)

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
9 moved and properly seconded.

10 All those in favor signify by
11 saying aye.

12 (Aye.)

13 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
14 opposed?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. The
17 ayes have it and the motion carries, and
18 Bill No. 160529 will be reported from
19 this Committee with a favorable
20 recommendation, with a request that the
21 rules of Council be suspended to permit
22 first reading at the next session of
23 Council.

24 And I now recognize
25 Councilwoman Parker for a motion on Bill

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 No. 160557.

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
4 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
5 160557 be reported from this Committee
6 with a favorable recommendation and
7 further move that the rules of Council be
8 suspended to permit first reading of this
9 bill at the next session of Council.

10 (Duly seconded.)

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
12 moved and properly seconded.

13 All those in favor please
14 signify by saying aye.

15 (Aye.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
17 opposed?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: The ayes
20 have it and the motion carries, and Bill
21 No. 160557 will be reported from this
22 Committee with a favorable
23 recommendation, with a request that the
24 rules of Council be suspended to permit
25 first reading at the next session of

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.

2 Council.

3 And I now recognize
4 Councilwoman Parker for a motion on Bill
5 No. 160304.

6 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
7 you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill No.
8 160304 be reported from this Committee
9 with a favorable recommendation and
10 further move that the rules of Council be
11 suspended to permit first reading of this
12 bill at the next session of Council.

13 (Duly seconded.)

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's been
15 moved and properly seconded.

16 All those in favor of this
17 motion will signify by saying aye.

18 (Aye.)

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Any
20 opposed?

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: No, okay.
23 The ayes have it and the motion carries,
24 and Bill No. 160304 will be reported from
25 this Committee with a favorable

1 6/8/16 - PARKS - BILL 160301, etc.
2 recommendation, with a request that the
3 rules of Council be suspended to permit
4 first reading at the next session of
5 Council.

6 And this concludes the public
7 meeting for the Committee on Parks,
8 Recreation and Cultural Affairs, and we
9 are adjourned.

10 Thank you for being here.

11 (Committee on Parks, Recreation
12 and Cultural Affairs concluded at 11:20
13 a.m.)

14 - - -

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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