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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

3

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

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Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, October 19, 2010
1:50 p.m.

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PRESENT:

10

COUNCILWOMAN DONNA REED MILLER, CHAIR

11

COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL

12

COUNCILMAN DARRELL CLARKE

13

COUNCILMAN FRANK DiCICCO

14

COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE

15

COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.

16

COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL

17

COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO, JR.

18

19

RESOLUTION 100560- Resolution calling for the
City Council Committee on Public Safety to
Conduct Public Hearings to Investigate the
Implementation and Consequences of the City's
Brown-Out Policy of Taking Fire Department
Engine and Ladder Companies Out of Service.

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COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good

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afternoon. The Committee on Public

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Safety is now in session. Let the record

5

reflect that in attendance Committee

6

members are Councilman Frank Rizzo,

7

Councilman Bill Greenlee, and to my right

8

Councilman Frank DiCicco, and I am

9

Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller, Chair of

10

the Committee. And also in attendance is

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Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell.

12

Would the Clerk please read the

13

title of the resolution.

14

THE CLERK: Resolution 100560,

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resolution calling for the City Council

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Committee on Public Safety to conduct

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public hearings to investigate the

18

implementation and consequences of the

19

City's brown-out policies of taking Fire

20

Department engine and ladder companies

21

out of service.

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COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank

23

you.

24

I'd like to begin by thanking

25

you for your attendance and interest in

1 10/19/10 - PUBLIC SAFETY - RES. 100560
2 this very important issue, and I'm going
3 to call on Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell
4 for an opening statement.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
6 you.

7 Good afternoon, and thank all
8 of you for being here for today's hearing
9 on the Administration's policy of closing
10 neighborhood fire stations on a rotating
11 basis, more commonly known as the,
12 quote/unquote, brown-out policy.

13 In June of this year, the
14 Administration announced that starting
15 July 1st, Fiscal Year 2011, certain
16 neighborhood fire stations would be taken
17 out of service on a rotating basis in an
18 effort to save \$3.8 million in overtime
19 costs.

20 Under the brown-out policy,
21 firefighters assigned to fire stations
22 that have been taken out of service are
23 reassigned to other fire stations in
24 neighborhoods around the City that are in
25 service.

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2 Under brown-out, neighboring
3 fire stations respond to emergencies in
4 the neighborhood where the fire station
5 is closed. Therefore, the brown-out
6 policy can result in increased response
7 time, as firefighters travel greater
8 distances responding to emergencies in
9 neighborhoods where fire stations are
10 closed.

11 Increased response times place
12 the public at greater risk of personal
13 injury and property damage, because
14 minutes rather -- minutes matter in the
15 event of a fire emergency. According to
16 Fire Department officials, a fire can
17 double in size every 60 seconds. So one
18 or two minutes added to the response time
19 can mean the difference between life and
20 death.

21 Recent fires in the City,
22 including the fatal fire that took the
23 life of 12-year-old Frank Marasco, an
24 autistic child, on August 7th, 2010, in
25 my district, in West Philadelphia, have

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2 caused residents to rightfully question
3 whether closing fire stations is a
4 responsible way for the City to cut
5 costs.

6 As a result, on September 16th,
7 2010, City Council passed Resolution
8 100560 calling for hearings to
9 investigate the implementation and
10 consequences of the Administration's
11 policy of closing neighborhood fire
12 stations under brown-outs.

13 At the outset of these
14 hearings, let me say I am totally opposed
15 to the continuation of the brown-out
16 policy, and I am absolutely thoroughly
17 convinced that the closing of fire
18 stations is not a responsible way to save
19 money. Therefore, I am committed that
20 all our fire stations, and believe that,
21 should stay open.

22 Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
24 you, Councilwoman.

25 This is an important issue and

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2 the City, like almost all cities in the
3 country, have been faced with some very
4 terrible financial shortfalls. This,
5 coupled with other issues, has forced the
6 City to make hard financial decisions.

7 We're here today to see if we
8 can safely afford to make these
9 decisions, and if we cannot, then the
10 Fire Department must not continue with
11 the brown-outs.

12 With that, we're going to see a
13 short video.

14 Any other Councilmembers want
15 to make any comments?

16 (No response.)

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

18 Thank you.

19 (Video played.)

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
21 you. Thank you, Councilwoman Blackwell,
22 for the video.

23 I'd also like to recognize that
24 Councilman Brian O'Neill is also in
25 attendance at this hearing.

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2 We're going to start with the
3 public witnesses first, and we have Greg
4 Spearman, Marvin Wilson. Please come up
5 to the witness table and identify
6 yourself, and make sure you pull the mike
7 close to you and speak into the mike so
8 we can hear you, and proceed with your
9 testimony.

10 (Witnesses approached witness
11 table.)

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Good
13 afternoon.

14 MR. SPEARMAN: How you doing?
15 I'm Greg Spearman, 60th Ward Leader, Ward
16 Leader in the 60th Ward, which is the
17 ward that the Engine 57 resides in.

18 MR. WILSON: Good afternoon.
19 I'm Marvin Wilson, Senior Block Captain
20 for this district.

21 One of the blocks south --

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER:
23 Mr. Wilson, can you pull the mike closer
24 to you? Thank you.

25 MR. WILSON: Good afternoon.

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2 I'm Marvin Wilson, Block Captain for the
3 100 block of South 55th Street, West
4 Philly.

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: You can
6 proceed with your testimony or with your
7 remarks.

8 MR. WILSON: Thank you. The
9 evening of August 2010 between the hours
10 of 6:00 and 7:00 an autistic young man in
11 my area lost his life due to fire, a fire
12 that we are convinced could have been
13 prevented had the fire station, not even
14 a good minute away, was available and was
15 not open to respond to this -- to the
16 call.

17 My community was not, as block
18 captain or community members, were not
19 prior warned about this fire district
20 being closed, and the fire station that
21 did respond, I'm confident they responded
22 as soon as they could, but it was too
23 late. Had the fire station at 56th and
24 Chestnut been open, I doubt very
25 seriously that we would have lost the

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2 life of 12-year-old Frank Marasco.

3 I have here over 1,500
4 signatures from neighbors and community
5 members that took the time to come out
6 with City Councilperson Jannie Blackwell
7 and Mr. Spearman, Ms. Virginia DeShields
8 and some other community members.

9 We were told that the fire
10 station -- this is after the fact -- that
11 the fire station was closed for some
12 brown-out reasons. That's the first time
13 I ever heard the term. And our community
14 does not understand why our Mayor chooses
15 to attack those two entities that our
16 City needs the most. He has chosen to
17 attack the Fire Department and the Police
18 Department and take them away from us for
19 whatever reasons he decides is
20 justifiable.

21 Our sisters cannot afford to
22 lose lives due to lack of response from
23 the Fire or Police. We feel like leave
24 these people alone and attack those parts
25 of City Hall, City Council that the

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2 public doesn't depend on so directly. I
3 mean, this is not rational to me or the
4 people I come here to represent. This is
5 totally irrational, irresponsible and
6 non-caring, as far as I'm concerned.

7 Like I said, along with Greg
8 Spearman, Councilwoman Blackwell and
9 myself, we sat out in the rain for days
10 and nights, the people stopping they cars
11 coming in inclement weather to give their
12 name and time and interest.

13 Frank Marasco was an autistic
14 child, but he was a very loving kid, and
15 this boy would never see his 13th
16 birthday because the people that are
17 trained and prepared to preserve such
18 life as this were not available. And his
19 mother would never know why or understand
20 why or accept the reasons that she was
21 given why her son is not with us today.

22 Our Mayor has never, not even
23 to this day, he has not yet come forward
24 to acknowledge this young man's death.
25 He has not even offered a condolence

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2 message to this young family, and we
3 perceive this to be as a totally uncaring
4 City official.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
7 you, Mr. Wilson.

8 Mr. Spearman, do you have any
9 remarks or comments?

10 MR. SPEARMAN: Yes. You know,
11 as I said, I'm Ward Leader in the ward,
12 and I'd like to speak as though I'm
13 speaking for the ward, because everybody
14 that I have spoken to, barring none, feel
15 the same way as Mr. Marvin spoke, same
16 exact way.

17 It's never no problem getting
18 somebody to sign a petition. What I
19 expect is those from the Department that
20 believe that it would have happened
21 regardless, I think they on the wrong
22 side of the issue. I think they need to
23 adjust themselves. But I'm asking the
24 City Council members up there just to use
25 plain common sense as we evaluate all

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2 that happened, because when we look at
3 it, 56th and Chestnut and 55th and Sansom
4 is one block away.

5 I talked to many firefighters.

6 As we talked to the firefighters, the
7 average time of getting out of the
8 firehouse is less than a minute, less
9 than one minute, that they suited up and
10 that truck is rolling outside the doors,
11 and it will take less than -- and we can
12 evaluate this. I expect them to give
13 some all this, you know, double jargon,
14 false interpretations to justify why our
15 stationhouse was browned out. And we
16 know that in a fire, the number one enemy
17 to the firefighters is time. So we
18 talking about that we can understand, the
19 laymans, we're talking about less than
20 two minutes. And we got a firehouse
21 that's over a mile away that they going
22 to say and they say to us, like we're
23 idiots, that time didn't matter. That's
24 ridiculous. I don't know who they think
25 they talking to, but we can add up, and

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2 for them to continually say that, that's
3 an insult to us all.

4 We have watched our Mayor
5 taking target recreation centers,
6 swimming pools, libraries, and the number
7 one job of our government is the health
8 and welfare of its constituents. That's
9 the number one job, is our safety. And
10 then to go toward that and try to cut
11 costs based on the lives of the
12 community, I think with the same
13 evaluation, we all will come up with that
14 that there firehouse on 52nd and Florence
15 did contribute or at least, at the least,
16 in which I haven't heard any of them say,
17 that the percentage would have been
18 better if 56th and Chestnut was open, if
19 Engine 57 was open.

20 It's ridiculous. They want to
21 stand starch with this budgetary analogy
22 or what happened and try to stick firm to
23 that. Well, while we watch over and over
24 again -- we had a fire on the 5300 block
25 of Spruce Street during the brown-out,

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2 and we lost two houses in that fire. I
3 guarantee you if Engine 57 was open, the
4 most it would have been was one house. I
5 mean, the most it would have been. They
6 keep on telling us about it makes no
7 difference, like we're idiots.

8 Now, I ask you to sit there and
9 evaluate it, 56th and Chestnut, one block
10 away from the fire, one block away.
11 That's all it is, one block away. It
12 takes them less than a minute to get out
13 the firehouse, less than a minute to get
14 to the fire, and they going to say it
15 didn't make no difference. I can hold my
16 breath that long. And I ask City
17 Council, please do all that you can for
18 the citizens, because we're crying out
19 and see the families that are hurt. The
20 communities that's being disenfranchised
21 by this disrespectful attempt to save
22 money on the backs of our citizens is
23 ridiculous. And that's who I come here
24 to speak for specifically, is the
25 community residents, my family.

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2 One of the things we watched
3 the Mayor when he was campaigning for
4 Mayor, he put up 55th and Larchwood as
5 his community. Engine 57 would have
6 serviced 55th and Larchwood if something
7 would have caught on fire. So -- and
8 this is just a message to all the
9 citizens: If he do it to his own
10 neighborhood, think of what he do to your
11 neighborhood.

12 I'd like to thank you for your
13 time.

14 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I'd also
15 like to thank you and Mr. Wilson for
16 coming in to testify today.

17 Councilman Bill Greenlee.

18 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
19 you, Madam Chair.

20 Good afternoon, gentlemen.

21 Just a very quick question. Mr. Wilson,
22 were you on the block the day the fire
23 occurred? Were you there?

24 MR. WILSON: Yes, I was.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You were?

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2 MR. WILSON: Yes, sir.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

4 How long would you say roughly it was --

5 I know you weren't counting every

6 second -- until the first fire engine

7 responded, would you guess? Best of your

8 estimate.

9 MR. WILSON: Approximately

10 eight to ten minutes.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Eight to

12 ten minutes?

13 MR. WILSON: Yes.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

15 Thank you.

16 MR. WILSON: Thank you.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I'd also

18 like to recognize Councilman Curtis Jones

19 in attendance.

20 Do you have questions for them?

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: No.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: All

23 right. Thank you.

24 Our next two witnesses are

25 Rubye Weaver and Virginia DeShields.

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2 Please come up to the witness table.

3 (Witnesses approached witness
4 table.)

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And
6 please identify yourself for the record
7 and proceed with your testimony. And
8 don't forget to pull the mike close
9 enough so we can hear you. Whoever wants
10 to go first.

11 MS. WEAVER: Good afternoon.
12 My name is Ruby Weaver. I'm a resident
13 of the 100 block of South 55th Street,
14 141, which was damaged by the fire on
15 August the 7th, 2010. My family and I
16 are still displaced because of the fire.

17 The fire started three doors
18 away from my home. The Fire Department
19 did not reach our block for at least
20 eight to ten minutes after the fire had
21 started and calls had been given. The
22 neighbor in 135, their alarm company
23 called the Fire Department because their
24 alarm went off, and their call went into
25 the fire company about 6:46. That was

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2 the call from the alarm company of the
3 owners in 135.

4 I feel that the extent of the
5 damage to the other homes in that block
6 would not have been as extensive as it is
7 if 56th and Chestnut had been available.
8 56th and Chestnut had been closed. I
9 understand that they open up at 6
10 o'clock, but did not have their
11 equipment. They had to go to other
12 sections of the City to get their
13 equipment.

14 Being displaced is not a
15 pleasant thing to have to go through, and
16 what happened in the 100 block of South
17 55th Street could happen anywhere in the
18 City. And we are here this afternoon to
19 ask that City Council and the Mayor would
20 do whatever they can possible to
21 discontinue the brown-out.

22 Thank you.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
24 you.

25 Ms. DeShields.

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2 MS. DeSHIELDS: My name is
3 Virginia DeShields. I live at 143 South
4 55th Street.

5 At the time during the fire,
6 the man whose house was actually on fire
7 came to my house and he said, You got to
8 get out, because my house is on fire.

9 So I said, Well, you live two
10 doors down or three doors down.

11 So I came out and her house --
12 her roof was on fire. So I came out.
13 Then the police arrived before the Fire
14 Department. So we was worried about the
15 little boy that was in the house. So I
16 sent the police through my house to try
17 to save the little boy. It was about
18 three or four policemen. Now, they are
19 at Pine Street. So they actually beat
20 the Fire Department to the fire.

21 So then as I stood there and I
22 looked up -- her house was on fire when I
23 came out, then my house was catching on
24 fire. Still no Fire Department. And I
25 said, Well, when the Fire Department

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2 come? I said, Because my house is
3 getting ready to catch on fire now. Now
4 you got four or five houses on fire. And
5 when the Fire Department came, they were
6 unprepared. They didn't have the right
7 equipment, the right truck, the right
8 water pressure. I don't know what it
9 was, but they did not come in fighting
10 fire. They came in like they were
11 confused and unprepared. I guess because
12 this was a new thing, this brown-out, and
13 they hadn't worked out the kinks. So we
14 lost out. Our houses was burnt.

15 We lost a life in the
16 neighborhood. And the only thing that
17 they didn't lose is saving the City
18 money, but I think people lives is worth
19 more than money. And there has to be a
20 better way for people to save money than
21 to take the people who save lives, the
22 lifesavers. That's where they cut at.
23 They didn't cut at the Water Department
24 or the gas company. They're cutting
25 where we need help to save our lives.

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2 And thank you very much, and I
3 hope they do something with this
4 brown-out, because the next time, you
5 know, it could be somebody else's child
6 that dies in the fire.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: How many
8 houses were burnt?

9 MS. DeSHIELDS: It was five
10 houses.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: And that
12 includes the one where the little boy
13 lived, correct?

14 MS. DeSHIELDS: Right. My
15 house is on the other side of hers. My
16 house had started to burn, my roof and
17 everything, and I actually came out and I
18 was saying, Do something, my house
19 catching on fire. Because, I mean, when
20 you see your house on fire, you think
21 everything you own is in this house,
22 things you can't replace. And then you
23 look down the street and I said, Oh, my
24 goodness. I called my daughter. I said,
25 The whole block on fire. And no Fire

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2 Department.

3 Now, they say they came in
4 three minutes. The policemen beat them
5 there. They at Pine Street. I know if
6 the policemen can get there in a minute
7 or two, if the Fire Department around the
8 corner, they could have got there, that
9 boy might have been saved. I don't know,
10 but I do know he would have had more of a
11 chance and our houses would have had more
12 of a chance.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Are you
14 also displaced? Are you back in your
15 home?

16 MS. DeSHIELDS: Pardon me? No,
17 I'm not displaced. My porch and
18 everything, I have no roof up there, but
19 I'm in my home. I was the last house
20 where the fire stopped. Well, my house
21 caught on fire, but it stopped there.
22 But their houses, her bedroom, the
23 neighbor to that, her whole upstairs was
24 on fire. The neighbor to that, her house
25 was totaled. The neighbor to that, his

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2 house was totaled. So, I mean, all these
3 houses from one house?

4 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

5 MS. WEAVER: There is nine
6 houses in that particular block. Every
7 house in that block was affected by the
8 fire, except the end houses. They either
9 got smoke damage, even some burned.

10 MS. DeSHIELDS: And then they
11 said something about the smoke detector.
12 The man was standing outside when the
13 lady told him the house was on fire. So
14 it wasn't the fact that it wasn't no
15 smoke detectors. They didn't go off
16 right away anyway, because all the smoke
17 went against going north and the fire was
18 going south. Because we could stand out
19 there and watch that fire and nobody's
20 eye is burnt. We stood there and watched
21 that fire, and the smoke, it was all
22 going towards 52nd Street. And a lot of
23 the alarms -- I don't even think my alarm
24 went off. If somebody hadn't came and
25 gotten me, I might have got trapped in

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2 the house, but the man whose house was on
3 fire, he was nice enough to come and tell
4 me to get out.

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

6 Thank you.

7 Any other questions, Committee
8 members?

9 (No response.)

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
11 you. Thank you very much for coming in.

12 Next we'll have Bill Gault,
13 President of Local 22.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Madam
15 Chair, may I while he's coming forward?

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Sure.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I was
18 on the block that night. I got a call,
19 and I can concur with everything they've
20 said. I got a call from a former aide
21 calling screaming. I'm like, What's
22 wrong? What's wrong?

23 He said, Oh, my God, my God,
24 there's houses fire and there's nobody
25 here. I was talking on the phone, rushed

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2 to the location, and I heard the same
3 thing, that the police were there first.
4 They were knocking on doors, and that
5 this little child was attached to some
6 toy, and as an autistic child had an
7 attachment, he went back to get this toy
8 and that his mother was on the roof.

9 And, you know, certainly later -- I heard
10 the exact same thing, it was eight to ten
11 minutes. And certainly fire companies
12 from every place were there, maybe five.
13 Mr. Gault will know. They all came to
14 try to help and to try to protect the
15 fellow firefighters, but, of course, by
16 then it was too late.

17 But we were there, and I
18 believe what has been said by everybody,
19 it wasn't two or three minutes. It
20 really wasn't.

21 (Witnesses approached witness
22 table.)

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you, Madam Chair. They're here now.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank

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2 you. Thank you, Councilwoman.

3 Mr. Gault.

4 MR. GAULT: Hi. Bill Gault,
5 President of Philadelphia Firefighters
6 Union.

7 We can sit here and argue about
8 time. First, thank you very much for
9 having these hearings. They're very
10 important, and thank the citizens. I'm
11 very sorry for all their losses. Can any
12 of us imagine losing our home? Losing a
13 child? For \$3.8 million?

14 How dare the Mayor not inform
15 the citizens that their firehouse isn't
16 going to be open tonight. Your firehouse
17 isn't -- they gave no warning to the
18 citizens. Three point eight, 3.4, 3.6,
19 depending on who you're talking to, it's
20 all about money? I don't think they're
21 going to save any money when the lawsuits
22 start coming in. This is a crazy plan.

23 The packets I prepared for each
24 and every one of you's is a letter from
25 three former fire commissioners, and in

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2 there is their exact wording. Even our
3 own fire commissioner told you's in your
4 own hearings a year and a half ago that
5 we are cut to the bone. You can't keep
6 cutting the Fire Department.

7 You's control the purse
8 strings. You's have to find them the
9 money. Right now bean counters are
10 running the Fire Department, and it's
11 just not right.

12 What good is a city that you
13 can't protect the citizens?

14 I'll answer any questions you
15 have. You've heard all my statements
16 before. Nothing has changed. This is a
17 game of smoke and mirrors. One day
18 you're protected, the next day you're
19 not.

20 Right now, the men and women of
21 the Philadelphia Fire Department are
22 running into burning buildings without
23 the aid of a hose line, because we have
24 single ladder companies. Engine
25 companies are the little ones that carry

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2 the water. They carry 500 gallons of
3 water. Ladder companies are the long
4 ones with the guy that drives on the
5 back. Their main function is rescue.
6 Without water their job becomes extremely
7 perilous, extremely dangerous, and
8 they're doing it daily anymore without
9 the aid of a hose line. It's happening
10 especially in the Frankford section where
11 they closed Engine 14. We have ladder
12 guys running into a building without the
13 aid of a hose line. Not only does the
14 water put out a fire, it also gives them
15 a mean of egress, a way out they can
16 follow if they have to escape. I mean,
17 there's a lot of variables that were not
18 considered in this plan, the plan we've
19 never seen, but from what I hear, they're
20 currently working on one to throw at
21 you's.

22 Right now we're talking a
23 minuscule amount of money in a \$4 billion
24 budget. Please, for the safety of the
25 Philadelphia Fire Department, just find

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2 them their money so this stops. We know
3 this Mayor has a vendetta against us. We
4 do not know why. But it has to stop.

5 That little kid didn't have to
6 die. Five houses didn't have to burn,
7 two houses around the corner. Fire
8 doubles exponentially, and as long as it
9 has fuel, it's going to keep going.
10 Sooner or later they're all going to go
11 out. We're surrounded by rivers. Is
12 that what we want?

13 These were put strategically.
14 It's a team game with an engine and
15 ladder. You just can't cut some here and
16 cut some here and expect it to work. And
17 then the citizens don't even know if
18 they're there or not.

19 Any questions?

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER:

21 Councilman Greenlee.

22 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
23 you, Madam Chair.

24 Good afternoon.

25 MR. GAULT: Good afternoon,

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2 sir.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I know
4 you answered this at different times, but
5 just maybe now for the record. When the
6 Administration first announced this
7 policy, they talked about firehouses
8 already being periodically closed for
9 training.

10 MR. GAULT: Right.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Again, I
12 know you've told me personally your
13 feeling on this, but maybe for the record
14 could you just say what you feel is the
15 difference in this.

16 MR. GAULT: Well, the
17 Commissioner said that we had five closed
18 daily for different types of training.
19 They didn't do training at night. And
20 the training during the day, these were
21 fully operational companies staffed with
22 firemen who at the minute could drop that
23 training and go back to their quarters or
24 go back to their local, which is our
25 procedure in the Fire Department.

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2 Whenever a second alarm kicks
3 in, everybody stops fire prevention,
4 stops training, stops whatever we're
5 doing on the outside and returns to the
6 firehouse for orders or for coverage in
7 the other areas. That was what the
8 redundancy in the grid was. When they
9 removed the seven companies a year and a
10 half ago, they removed redundancy. Now
11 when we have a fire in one neighborhood,
12 they take so much out of the other
13 neighborhoods that neighborhoods are
14 uncovered completely. There might be one
15 fire engine there and one ladder company.

16 So we're taking extreme risks
17 here. We've been playing Russian
18 roulette here and we've been Biblically
19 lucky, but something is going to happen
20 and it's going to happen and everybody is
21 going to be sorry and all and it's going
22 to be like Detroit, the guy is going to
23 say it's God's will.

24 We have the power to straighten
25 this out right now. You's just have to

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2 find the money. The Mayor is not going
3 to. He's against us. This is not a lot
4 of money. They have enough money to put
5 \$35 million for a skating rink outside,
6 but they don't have enough money to
7 protect a 12-year-old autistic kid?
8 Something is wrong with our priorities
9 here, and I need you, we need you's to
10 straighten this out.

11 Any other questions?

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I have a
13 question.

14 MR. GAULT: Yes, ma'am.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Two of
16 the witnesses testified that the Fire
17 Department seemed confused when the fire
18 persons arrived on the scene. What
19 would --

20 MR. GAULT: They weren't
21 confused, ma'am. What arrived on the
22 scene first was a battalion chief and his
23 aide in the little Suburban car. Their
24 job is command control, accountability
25 and taking care of the equipment that's

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2 coming in. They give the orders to the
3 engine and ladders. That's a battalion
4 chief in that car. All he has, radios
5 and intelligence. He runs the operation.
6 That's the general.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

8 MR. GAULT: What happened is,
9 they can get there quick because it's not
10 like navigating a truck around the City.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

12 Thank you.

13 I just want to state that
14 Councilman Darrell Clarke, who is a
15 member of this Committee, is now apart of
16 this hearing, has arrived.

17 And Councilman Frank Rizzo, you
18 have a question?

19 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Yes, ma'am.

20 Thank you.

21 You brought up something else
22 that was near and dear to my heart, and
23 congratulations, the idea to eliminate
24 the chief's aides I think was a very bad
25 suggestion that was being pushed by this

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2 Administration, and I understand

3 arbitration has overruled that.

4 MR. GAULT: Yes.

5 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So

6 congratulations on that, because I

7 thought that was a pretty bad management

8 decision to even suggest to eliminate the

9 chief's aides.

10 You know, I come from the

11 utility industry, and I don't know who

12 gave this program the name brown-outs,

13 but in the utility industry, it is the

14 bottom of the reliability chart. When

15 you talk about a brown-out, you're

16 talking about voltage that is low, that

17 destroys in some cases equipment, you

18 talk about some sections of a community

19 that have no electricity at all. And,

20 again, it is the most unreliable but

21 worst service that a utility company can

22 provide when they are in a brown-out

23 mode. So whoever named it gave it a

24 great name.

25 MR. GAULT: It's a lovely word

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2 for the media.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: But it's a
4 good name, because it describes probably
5 the worst service that an organization
6 can provide.

7 MR. GAULT: Yes.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.

9 MR. GAULT: Thank you for that
10 analogy, sir.

11 MR. PAULSON: Councilwoman
12 Miller, may I also respond to the
13 Councilman's question?

14 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Sure. Do
15 you want to identify yourself.

16 MR. PAULSON: Yes, ma'am. My
17 name is Richard Paulson and I am legal
18 counsel to the Firefighters and
19 Paramedics Union.

20 Councilman Rizzo asked about
21 the battalion chief aides issue and noted
22 correctly that the Administration had
23 attempted to eliminate, against the
24 better judgment of many people, the chief
25 aide position, which is a critically

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2 important safety position on fire
3 grounds, and that was an issue that was
4 addressed in our most recent contract
5 arbitration. The most recent arbitration
6 award, which was issued last week, did
7 have language that prevents the City, the
8 Nutter Administration, from eliminating
9 that position. I will note, however,
10 that the Administration has already
11 identified that provision as a provision
12 that violates its inherent managerial
13 rights and the Administration intends to
14 appeal that provision. And I think that
15 gets to the challenge that we face on our
16 side of the table and oftentimes Council
17 faces with respect to its critically
18 important role, and that's the question
19 of were Council to allocate the money,
20 what would the Administration do? Would
21 they spend it appropriately? And,
22 unfortunately, what we have been dealing
23 with with this Administration for the
24 last two years is an unwillingness to
25 spend appropriately and to put

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2 appropriately safe services in motion.

3 So in a sense, we share many of
4 the same frustrations, and I don't know
5 exactly what we can do to make them do
6 the right thing, but when you hear
7 articulate citizens like Mr. Wilson and
8 Mr. Spearman and Ms. Weaver and
9 Ms. DeShields and you see real people who
10 are affected in meaningful ways by what I
11 see as a misuse of their managerial
12 authority, I certainly hope that we can
13 come together in ways that fund this
14 department appropriately and make them
15 staff the Department appropriately,
16 because it means something.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
19 you. How many -- are there any
20 vacancies, firefighter vacancies? How
21 many would that be?

22 MR. GAULT: Probably a couple
23 hundred. We haven't hired a new fire
24 class in over two years, ma'am.

25 MR. PAULSON: The

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2 Administration has eliminated, I think,
3 180 positions over the last year and a
4 half. A very significant reduction.

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So the
6 vacancy number is based on old numbers of
7 firefighters or that also includes the
8 180 eliminated positions?

9 MR. GAULT: If we totaled them,
10 it's probably 300 vacancies, which they
11 keep saying in the media it's all about
12 overtime, but that's because they haven't
13 hired any fire classes.

14 MR. PAULSON: One of the
15 problems that we faced is that there
16 aren't enough men and women on the job to
17 fill the positions that are needed to
18 appropriately protect the City. What the
19 Fire Department did was, they didn't lay
20 anybody off, but they didn't fill
21 vacancies, so they gradually reduced the
22 Department through attrition. What that
23 enabled the Administration to do is, I
24 think inappropriately and quite frankly
25 offensively, was say that the

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2 firefighters are complaining because
3 they're missing out on overtime. Well,
4 it's not our fault that people were
5 working overtime to fill those positions.
6 We wished that they had enough
7 firefighters.

8 So I think that's an important
9 fact that I know that many Council folks
10 are aware of, but it's important to note.

11 MR. GAULT: It was very
12 offensive to us.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Any other
14 questions?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
17 you. Please hang around.

18 MR. GAULT: Thank you very much
19 for your time.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Can you
21 stay here during --

22 MR. GAULT: Certainly.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. PAULSON: Thank you.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Everett
3 Gillison, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety,
4 and Commissioner Ayers, Fire Department.

5 (Witnesses approached witness
6 table.)

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER:
8 Councilwoman Blackwell.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
10 you very much.

11 Thank you both for coming as
12 well. And I'll get right to the heart of
13 some of the questions -- well, one of
14 them -- that I get all the time, but
15 during discussions in the past where you
16 talk about temporary closing fire
17 stations for training during the day,
18 which has been mentioned, and you've also
19 said that under the current brown-out
20 policy, rather than attending training,
21 the firefighters from three of those
22 stations are reassigned to stations where
23 firefighters are on leave. Doesn't this
24 result in the stations being closed more
25 than in the past because firefighters

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2 eventually have to close their station to
3 attend training that they missed or when
4 they were reassigned?

5 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON:
6 Councilwoman, Everett Gillison, Deputy
7 Mayor for Public Safety.

8 I think that if you would allow
9 me, the first answer and the short answer
10 to your question is no, but I think that
11 we will cover that as we, both the
12 Commissioner and I, present the
13 testimony. So with your permission and
14 with the Chair's permission, I'd like the
15 Commissioner to be able to read his
16 testimony, and then we'll be glad to
17 answer the specific questions.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
19 you.

20 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Thank
21 you very much.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: That's
23 fine.

24 Commissioner Ayers.

25 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Thank you,

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2 Councilwoman, and thank you to the
3 Committee. I'd like to say that I'm Fire
4 Commissioner Lloyd Ayers. With me is
5 Deputy Mayor Everett Gillison, and from
6 the Fire Department I have Ernest
7 Hargett, Deputy Commissioner for
8 Operations; John Devlin, Deputy
9 Commissioner for Technical Services; and
10 David Beatrice, Deputy Commissioner for
11 Administrative Services.

12 Our focus in the Fire
13 Department is on safety. Collectively,
14 we have served as professional
15 firefighters for over 109 years, and we
16 are proud of the service to this
17 department. We and the men and women of
18 the Philadelphia Fire Department are
19 committed to providing the highest
20 quality of service to the citizens of
21 Philadelphia.

22 There are a number of
23 components to improving safety, some of
24 which involve the manner in which we
25 respond to incidents and some of which

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2 involve reducing the number of incidents
3 that occur in the first place. I am
4 proud of the hard work and dedication of
5 our members in educating our public and
6 updating our fire code standards to help
7 reduce the calls for fire service and
8 demands on fire service personnel.

9 We can't always plan when
10 incidents will happen or when people will
11 need us. Our partnerships with the
12 community has proven that the cumulative
13 results of educating the public about
14 fire prevention and the heroic efforts of
15 the men and women of the Department have
16 resulted in recent years in positive
17 trends, including fewer fires and fewer
18 fire-related deaths.

19 Since the beginning of this
20 decade, we have seen a steady reduction
21 in structural fires, and we continue this
22 year to receive fewer and fewer calls
23 related to structural fires. Currently,
24 there are approximately 60 percent fewer
25 fires per year in the City of

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2 Philadelphia than there were in 1990.

3 Because of our efforts, the
4 City has seen a reduction in fire
5 fatalities. There were 30 fire-related
6 deaths in 2009, which is the lowest
7 number in Philadelphia history. By
8 comparison, there were 52 fire-related
9 deaths in both 2005 and 2006. This year
10 the Fire Department is down almost 15
11 percent in fire-related fatalities
12 compared to 2009. That's 23 compared to
13 27 this time last year. However, we
14 remain vigilant, as one significant fire,
15 one significant fire can change the
16 trajectory of this number.

17 Also important to note is that
18 despite the installation of over 18,000
19 smoke alarms in 2009, it is still the
20 case that 65 to 70 percent of fire
21 fatalities occur in homes with no working
22 smoke alarms. We must continue to focus
23 on fire prevention and risk reduction to
24 continue to improve the safety of our
25 citizens. We hope the members of the

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2 Public Safety Committee and City Council
3 generally will continue to work with us
4 to get accurate information and services
5 to our communities to help prevent an
6 incident from occurring in the first
7 place.

8 These results have been
9 achieved against a backdrop of fewer
10 resources. As you know, over the past
11 two years, the nation has suffered a
12 deliberating (sic) economic recession
13 from which the City of Philadelphia has
14 not escaped. The economic situation has
15 required the City to reshape the budgets
16 of all City departments. Because we have
17 fewer fires, we have been able to look at
18 savings in the Fire Department budget
19 with minimal impact on the critical
20 service.

21 In Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010,
22 the Fire Department committed to a
23 budgetary savings of \$10.5 million
24 through the deactivation of five engine
25 companies and two ladder companies.

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2 Factors that were considered in making
3 the deactivation decisions included the
4 geographic location of the designated
5 companies, the physical size of the local
6 area that were served, company workload,
7 the abundance of surrounding companies,
8 and the intention of not closing any fire
9 facility.

10 In Fiscal Year 2011, after the
11 adoption of the City budget in June, the
12 Fire Department committed to a further
13 budget reduction of \$3.8 million. Our
14 goal was to find a way to achieve the
15 budget reduction without deactivating any
16 additional companies, permanently closing
17 any firehouses or critically reducing the
18 service to the community, while
19 preserving every firefighter and
20 paramedic position in the Department.

21 The \$3.8 million reduction was
22 realized through an overtime reduction
23 strategy. The Fire Department now takes
24 three of the five companies per shift
25 that are temporarily deactivated and used

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2 the personnel to fill in for firefighters
3 that were using leave time.

4 Due to the minimum staffing
5 requirements, the Fire Department is
6 required to ensure a designated number of
7 firefighters are always staffing the
8 company. In the past, when scheduled
9 firefighters used their leave time, we
10 filled their positions by paying overtime
11 to off-duty firefighters to fill in.
12 Additionally, we were temporarily
13 deactivating five companies for training
14 during the day shift and occasionally on
15 the night shift for short periods of
16 time. Now, rather than sending all five
17 temporarily deactivated companies to
18 training, the members staffing three of
19 those companies are redistributed to fill
20 in where other firefighters are using
21 leave time, which is how we reduce the
22 overtime budget on each shift. The other
23 two companies are sent to training during
24 the day shift.

25 The Department is using the

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2 temporary deactivations on a rolling
3 basis, which means we rotate which
4 companies will be out of service for
5 training or filling in for firefighters
6 using leave time. This way, no company
7 is temporarily deactivated for an
8 extended period of time.

9 The Philadelphia Fire
10 Department has been using temporary
11 deactivations for over 30 years and it
12 has been an established way of training
13 firefighters and maintaining minimum
14 staffing. Many other departments around
15 the country; for example, Los Angeles and
16 Boston, use this as a tool as well for
17 training and filling in positions at
18 other company locations and also have
19 used it during these hard economic times
20 to preserve jobs by significantly
21 reducing overtime costs.

22 Prior to implementing any plan,
23 meetings were held with senior chiefs of
24 the Philadelphia Fire Department. Of the
25 choices available, after analysis and

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2 review of the data, the overtime

3 reduction plan was selected.

4 Companies were chosen on

5 information and data related to the size

6 of the service area and capability of the

7 perimeter companies to respond; response

8 times; workload based on the number of

9 runs for fire and EMS incidents; unit

10 hour utilization, how often a company is

11 responding to other incidents; and

12 facility security.

13 The schedule is for three

14 engine companies to temporarily

15 deactivate during the day shift and for

16 two engine companies and one ladder

17 company to temporarily deactivate during

18 the night shift.

19 A surrounding engine or ladder

20 company that is fully staffed responds to

21 any emergency in the temporarily

22 deactivated area. The Department is

23 continuously reviewing any fluctuations

24 in response times based on personnel and

25 equipment deployment to ensure that we

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2 are appropriately responding to the needs
3 of our citizens 24 hours a day, seven
4 days a week, 365 days a year.

5 I want to thank you for your
6 time, and I will take any questions.

7 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER:
8 Councilwoman Blackwell.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
10 Certainly. Thank you, Commissioner, and
11 we appreciate all that you do. Our issue
12 is not with you, not with the Deputy
13 Mayor and certainly not with any of the
14 firemen who sacrifice their lives every
15 day. It is with this heinous policy that
16 we believe the Administration has put
17 into effect, and as Mr. Spearman said,
18 common sense dictates. Ten minutes from
19 a minute, it's just common sense, it
20 dictates that you can't expect the same
21 results.

22 Do you know how long, Deputy
23 Mayor, the Administration plans to
24 continue this policy?

25 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes,

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2 Councilwoman.

3 Everett Gillison, Deputy Mayor
4 for Public Safety.

5 The plan is for this to go
6 through the fiscal year in order to
7 achieve the savings necessitated by the
8 budget. So it will stop as of June 30 of
9 2011, going into the new fiscal year,
10 2012.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Do you
12 have the measured response times from
13 brown-out versus non-brown-out?

14 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: We can
15 provide that to the Chair. The answer is
16 yes. As the Commissioner has indicated,
17 we have followed not only the areas that
18 have been deactivated but also have
19 looked at the utilization rates that have
20 been in the surrounding companies. So we
21 have that information. I'll be glad to
22 provide it to the Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
24 you.

25 And have you considered that

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2 during the winter months when people use
3 more kerosene and space heaters, have you
4 considered that this may cause even more
5 issues?

6 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.
7 As a matter of fact, the reason why we
8 were trying to make sure that we did a
9 lot of these matters is that the rough
10 time for fires, unfortunately, as you
11 know, as we're all aware of, is in the
12 winter months.

13 I want to state one thing to be
14 clear. We are committed to doing this
15 because we have to live within the budget
16 that we have. The Commissioner, however,
17 always knows that if he ever needs
18 anything from me in order to make sure if
19 something should happen, that he doesn't
20 see like the trends -- because we do
21 trend analysis now to make sure we see
22 what's going on and how it's going on. I
23 know that he deploys people for
24 educational purposes not only before --
25 not only after a fire but before a fire.

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2 It is when we look at our maps, we can
3 see what the communities that are most
4 affected by this kind of -- when they
5 don't have the smoke detectors, to get
6 them in.

7 So he has the flexibility and
8 he has the full support of this
9 Administration, so that if he comes to me
10 and says, Deputy Mayor, we need to look
11 at this trend that is coming on and we
12 need to deploy, I would not and the Mayor
13 would not countenance just in the name
14 of, quote/unquote, saving dollars, that
15 we would not say put people out there to
16 make sure that we avoid this tragedy that
17 you see that might be coming up.

18 However, I want to separate
19 what I constantly hear, which is that
20 this particular policy is something that
21 is dangerous. This policy has gone on
22 for 30 years. The only thing that is
23 different about the way the Fire
24 Department runs today as opposed to the
25 way the Fire Department has run for 30

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2 years is that we have removed the
3 opportunity at making overtime. That's
4 it. There's nothing else that is
5 different. So the Department is run the
6 exact same way. It is just a matter of
7 us making sure that we have to control
8 for a particular budget amount that we
9 have to live within in order to go
10 forward.

11 So safety is always primary.
12 This man would not sit next to me and I'm
13 sure he would not want me to sit next to
14 him if that wasn't our number one goal.
15 So we are doing that, and we're trying to
16 make that happen, Councilwoman.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
18 right. I have one last question and then
19 I'll defer to my colleagues. As we said,
20 our issue is not with you or certainly
21 with Commissioner Ayers. I've been with
22 him on many accounts. We've been out.
23 I've been there when he personally as
24 well as his team have gone in homes and
25 put in smoke detectors. We've been all

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2 over, and from that engine company, that
3 very engine company. So that's not our
4 issue.

5 Our issue is that these
6 stations are closed. I don't ever
7 remember living through anything like
8 this before. You say it's happened 30
9 years, but this is the first time -- and
10 I've been in politics since 1971 -- that
11 we've ever lived through this.

12 The other thing I want to --
13 finally, before I turn the mike over, how
14 do you consider which neighborhoods have
15 to suffer this brown-out? Not all
16 stations do it. Some.

17 Do you consider the population?
18 Do you consider whether seniors, low
19 income? What are the criteria that you
20 use, and do you consider which
21 neighborhoods are less likely to have
22 working smoke detectors?

23 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I
24 believe that if you looked at the latter
25 part of the Commissioner's testimony, he

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2 actually gave the primary criteria with
3 size of service area, response times,
4 workload, unit hour utilization and
5 facility security. Those were the
6 primary factors that were used in order
7 to make sure that we chose with care. So
8 those were the criteria that was used.
9 The other criteria that you mentioned
10 were not the primary. These were the
11 primaries.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Well,
13 I did see that, but it doesn't break it
14 down in any way that I can relate to. I
15 would like --

16 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I'll
17 try to get something else to you, then,
18 Councilwoman, and I'll provide it to the
19 Chair.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
23 you.

24 So I looked at that. I saw the
25 companies that were chosen based on the

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2 information and data. So does the data
3 say is there any neighborhood that does
4 not have a station that's a brown-out?

5 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.
6 Throughout the entire City, depending on
7 the -- let's say if you're in one section
8 of the City and there is literally no
9 company that could actually meet the
10 response times based on the geography,
11 then that particular company is not -- is
12 eliminated as a source of being able to
13 be included in this particular policy.
14 So the answer to your question is yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.
16 Plus I think in the 8th Council District,
17 I believe that -- and I don't know the
18 stations by numbers and whatever, however
19 you categorize them. I just know where
20 they are.

21 I believe that the station at
22 Baynton and Chelton is not included in
23 the brown-out because Carpenter Lane is
24 closed. That's correct?

25 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That is

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2 correct, Councilwoman.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

4 All right. Just in terms of response

5 time, I would assume that's why?

6 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes, that
7 is why. Nineteenth is not being included
8 in that situation while 9's floor is
9 being corrected.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

11 And there were some issues regarding
12 response time that the citizens brought
13 up in West Philadelphia. What is the
14 response time that you expect from a
15 station when the closest station is
16 browned out, as in their case?

17 COMMISSIONER AYERS: We expect
18 that in any case they will respond within
19 five minutes and 20 seconds. That's the
20 maximum. But that was not the case in
21 the situation on 55th Street.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: What was
23 the response time?

24 COMMISSIONER AYERS: The
25 response in the case of 55th Street was

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2 three minutes and 13 seconds.

3 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Well --

4 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That's
5 from the time that the alarm was received
6 at the Fire Communications Center. They
7 were dispatched -- actually, they were
8 dispatched in CAD almost 17 seconds
9 earlier, which was if we counted from
10 when the CAD, when the call taker
11 actually transferred the call and the
12 dispatcher dispatched the call, it was
13 actually two minutes and 57 seconds.

14 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So that
15 does not include when they actually
16 arrived on the scene.

17 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes, it
18 does.

19 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

20 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Point of
21 information.

22 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: All
23 right. Councilman Rizzo.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Does that
25 mean the battalion chief?

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2 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That is
3 the battalion chief.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: We're
5 talking about somebody, Commissioner, who
6 can fight a fire. What can a battalion
7 chief do other than have a fire
8 extinguisher in a vehicle to prevent loss
9 of life at that fire?

10 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, we
11 wouldn't dispatch a battalion chief by
12 themselves, sir.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Who was
14 there?

15 COMMISSIONER AYERS: The
16 battalion chief, the engine and the
17 ladder, Engine 68 and Ladder 13, sir.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: They were
19 all there simultaneously? I understand
20 the battalion chief was the first on the
21 scene.

22 COMMISSIONER AYERS: They were
23 the first on the scene, and he started to
24 give orders. The next response that we
25 had from Ladder 13, they were saying that

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2 they were actually making rescues, and
3 that was the lady that was on the roof.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: For the
5 record, Commissioner, could you tell us
6 the time that the battalion chief got on
7 location and can you tell us -- all the
8 direction in the world, unless you're at
9 the scene, can't put out a fire. Then
10 I'd like to know how much time after the
11 battalion chief's arrival did a
12 firefighter that could put out the fire
13 or rescue people arrive on the scene.

14 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, due
15 to a technological blacking that we have,
16 we don't know exactly what moment in time
17 that the engine company got there, and
18 that's because they did not go into
19 voice, they didn't say that they were
20 there. They went directly following the
21 chief's orders into service, stretching
22 hose lines and rescuing the lady from the
23 roof.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: If we
25 re-continue this hearing, could we have

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2 the battalion chief here to let us know
3 what his recollection is on when the fire
4 engine arrived at the scene after the
5 arrival of the battalion chief?

6 You're telling me that you have
7 no idea how long the first piece of fire
8 apparatus was on the scene after the
9 battalion chief's arrival?

10 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes, sir.
11 I questioned the battalion chief that
12 night myself, and he said, The engine was
13 right behind me.

14 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: If I
15 may, Councilman, the question that we
16 have, because obviously we can provide --
17 and we can provide all this to the Chair
18 and we can provide the Chair what our
19 automated systems have shown us.

20 Literally what we have, because
21 I've heard it also, we have the voice of
22 the battalion chief giving the orders on
23 the scene as to how to fight this fire.
24 We have the testimony -- not the
25 testimony. We have the statement to the

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2 Fire Commissioner from the battalion
3 chief that says that the person and the
4 engine was right behind him. So even if
5 you grant that it is a 20-second delay,
6 that means that within three minutes and
7 45 seconds you had battalion answering
8 within 2:47, and within another minute,
9 you have -- even if you gave it another
10 minute, which we have listened to and
11 have found not to be the case -- the
12 battalion chief said he's right there and
13 he's giving orders. At that moment, the
14 person is engaged with the fire.

15 Now, they did not push the
16 button, as you are well aware of, saying
17 to the CAD that they're on the scene. So
18 there's nothing that we have there. All
19 we have is the voice and we have the
20 professionals that have said that they're
21 there and they're fighting the fire.

22 The standards, which don't mean
23 anything, but the standards that say that
24 when we end up having to get to a fire,
25 say that up to 5:20. We know that these

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2 people and the professionals were
3 fighting this fire well within three
4 minutes and 45 seconds. Now, that's just
5 the fact. And I understand, and believe
6 me, I understand the entire feeling,
7 because when you have a community that is
8 out there, what I've always wanted to
9 know is if we could have a better way for
10 an automatic response, which is why this
11 Administration tries to put sprinklers in
12 everyone's houses, not only just smoke
13 detectors, that's the easiest way to do
14 it if we can get that done. But we have
15 a way to know that well within our
16 standards, that we have put this entire
17 plan together.

18 We know that we had apparatus
19 on the scene fighting the fire and making
20 a rescue of a woman who was on the roof.
21 That we know. We know it, and we can
22 provide what we have to you, but you're
23 not going to get a timeline from the CAD,
24 because they didn't hit the button. All
25 I know is what the battalion chief told

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2 me and told the Commissioner.

3 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: If I were --

4 and, again, I'm not. If I were part of

5 that interrogation or that meeting with

6 the battalion chief, I don't think I

7 would have accepted -- the next question

8 to that response that they're right

9 behind me, Excuse me, Chief, what does

10 "right behind me" mean? Is it one

11 minute? Is it two minutes? I mean, I've

12 got guys in Valley Forge in the

13 expressway that are right behind me and

14 I'm on Vine Street.

15 So it just doesn't make any

16 sense that that would be a question that

17 would be -- an answer to a question that

18 would be accepted. Right behind me? I

19 don't beat my wife. You know, it's...

20 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I'm not

21 going to get into that. I understand

22 your point, but my point to you is that

23 the person is responding and they are

24 responding to the direction of the

25 battalion chief. And so your question to

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2 the Commissioner was, Show me a dot on a
3 line. I'm saying that we don't have the
4 ability to do that, but I do know that we
5 are in communication and he is directing
6 them well within the timeframes that we
7 have. So --

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Okay.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Point
10 of order.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: So
12 we're not -- that's all we're doing.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Point
14 of order. My point is this: When I got
15 there and we saw the police interacting
16 with the residents -- I know 18th is very
17 close, but when we got there, police were
18 still -- the officers were still knocking
19 on doors and all of that. So it was
20 obvious to me that the officers had been
21 there first. And so we do have some
22 question about this whole issue of
23 timing. And I said that to say, can't
24 you contact the Philadelphia Police
25 Department at 55th and Pine? They got to

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2 have records too about when their people
3 were there and what those times were, and
4 that would help to certainly deal with
5 this issue.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: We can
7 provide you any of that. Obviously I
8 have access to all of that. I have seen
9 all of that. I'll be glad to provide
10 that to the Chair.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I think
12 that that's important, because the people
13 that live right on the block are saying a
14 different time, which is much more than
15 just two minutes or three minutes that
16 you said, three minutes and 45 seconds.

17 I was wondering -- and I guess
18 for each fire it's different. Five
19 structures were impacted by this fire,
20 and is there -- I know it depends on -- I
21 would think it depends on the size of the
22 structure and maybe some other factors,
23 but it sounds like when the young lady
24 was testifying that her house was burning
25 and the Fire Department still was not

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2 there.

3 Am I correct?

4 MS. DeSHIELDS: Yes.

5 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: So that

6 was like the fourth house or the fifth

7 house. Does it normally happen that

8 suddenly --

9 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes.

10 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: -- that

11 the fire starts and then spreads just

12 that quick?

13 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes. But

14 before I continue, I'd like to say to

15 those residents and offer again to them,

16 I am sorry for what happened to you and

17 offer my condolences again to the family,

18 as I did when I came out that night. And

19 I understand how they feel, and those

20 feelings that they expressed as far as

21 the hurt, the pain, we see that at every

22 fire. We see that all the time, and it

23 resonates even more when there's a life

24 lost. And we are not non-caring. We do

25 care.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: I think
3 that --

4 COMMISSIONER AYERS: But what I
5 would like to say is that it is a
6 tragedy, and we feel that. And we do
7 understand what their point is with time
8 and all of those other things, and we
9 will continue to do as well as we can in
10 the Fire Department to help the citizens
11 that need our help.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: We know
13 that you guys do a good job, but I think
14 right now response time is so important
15 with this brown-out.

16 COMMISSIONER AYERS: The
17 specific question that you asked is how
18 could that type of damage happen in that
19 period of time. When we stopped and we
20 talked --

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: You're
22 saying, what, three minutes five houses
23 started burning? If they got there --

24 COMMISSIONER AYERS: I'm not
25 sure. I can't say that, but I can say --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: If they
3 got there in three minutes and 45 seconds
4 and that house was already burning, the
5 fourth and fifth house was already on
6 fire.

7 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, what
8 I'm saying is, in understanding fire
9 behavior, because that's what we do, we
10 try to understand fire behavior, and from
11 the investigation that I had -- that I
12 received from my fire marshals, the fire
13 that broke out in that living room in
14 that sofa area enveloped that entire
15 living room. It broke out of the window,
16 which the fire will do. It broke out of
17 the front window, came out and mushroomed
18 along those porch roofs and took those
19 other porch roofs.

20 Fire goes inside every little
21 area that it's in, and it travels up
22 areas that you would -- small orifices
23 and cracks that you wouldn't think about.
24 But it did that and it did damage those
25 homes, and it can do that in a short

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2 period of time.

3 We don't know exactly how long
4 the fire was burning before it broke out.
5 The fire marshal was real clear on where
6 the origin of the fire was, on how the
7 fire started and what happens as far as
8 before it was contained by the
9 firefighters. And that can happen and it
10 happens often in row houses with porch
11 roofs, very often.

12 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay.

13 Thank you.

14 Councilman Greenlee.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
16 you, Madam Chair.

17 Good afternoon, gentlemen. I
18 just want to get on a question, the same
19 kind of question I asked Mr. Gault, and I
20 think Councilwoman Blackwell brought it
21 up. I don't think we quite addressed it.
22 The issue of the taking the firefighters
23 off for training as opposed to the
24 brown-outs. You heard Mr. Gault's
25 explanation that he feels that there is,

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2 I think he would call, a significant
3 difference, because they can be called
4 right back to the scene reasonably
5 quickly, where right now the firefighters
6 are not there at all. Do you have a
7 reaction to that?

8 COMMISSIONER AYERS: No. That
9 was correct. Those companies are out of
10 service. They are temporarily
11 deactivated. If they were at the Academy
12 for a second alarm, they would have been
13 called back to quarters. They would not
14 necessarily have been called to the scene
15 of the fire, because we have other
16 resources. We wouldn't send a company
17 that's going to take 20 minutes to get
18 there to a second alarm unless they were
19 in the area and we saw that the response
20 time for that company was comparable to
21 what was needed at that alarm.

22 So that is true. They are out
23 of service, and we have made some
24 adjustments for that. It's difficult to
25 manage, but we are managing that.

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2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

3 And I appreciate that. And as far as --
4 and I certainly want to concur with
5 Councilwoman Blackwell on what you said.
6 You yourself and your department have
7 worked really hard on fire prevention,
8 and you've come to some events I've had,
9 and you certainly have made a tremendous
10 impact on that. But I know you and your
11 other officials always say that in fire,
12 seconds count. That's why you need smoke
13 detectors, that kind of thing. And with
14 the brown-out policy, I know you still
15 feel that people are safe, you're
16 responding within what you call the
17 required time, but I guess is it accurate
18 or fair to say that even if people
19 feel -- if you feel people are safe,
20 they're not as safe with the brown-out
21 policy in place?

22 COMMISSIONER AYERS: No. I
23 think that people are as safe as they are
24 in their environments. I believe that
25 with a longer period of time, 20 seconds

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2 or whatever, that the risk level does
3 increase. Does it increase greatly? It
4 does not.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
6 And, again, I'm not trying to be in any
7 way confrontational on this question. I
8 guess I just, getting back to
9 Mr. Spearman's testimony, obviously if a
10 fire station is a block away, that
11 obviously has to make a difference in
12 response time if that fire -- now, I
13 don't know if it would have saved the
14 young man's life. Obviously we'll never
15 know that. I don't know how much more it
16 would have saved of the properties, but
17 clearly it's, let's call it, highly
18 likely that there would have been a fire
19 engine there more quickly, right? I
20 mean, isn't that fair to say?

21 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, one
22 of the things that I will say is that if
23 Engine 57 was in their station responding
24 from that location, that they would have
25 responded in less time. Would they have

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2 saved the young man's life? I can't

3 play --

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Nobody

5 can say that.

6 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Exactly.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I

8 understand.

9 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: One

10 thing that I would like to add is that

11 understand that -- and, of course, when

12 we look back and the tragedy that

13 happened always is what we're -- is the

14 context upon what we're dealing with

15 here, but let's be clear that at least to

16 the extent as possible, fire engines are

17 moving around this city every day for a

18 lot of different reasons, and whenever an

19 engine leaves its company area, it is

20 covered by another engine. So if you see

21 an engine that is basically going

22 someplace, you don't know where it's

23 going, but it's not running to a fire,

24 once they leave their quarters, they're

25 being covered. Their local is now

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2 alerting the other surrounding companies
3 to make sure that they have coverage.

4 So at any time right now an
5 engine that is leaving -- and I'm close
6 to Engine 57 in West Philly. I'm
7 close -- or Engine 54. Either one, when
8 they leave to go do something, another
9 local is actually covering their area.
10 If a fire breaks out and they are
11 someplace else trying to get back, much
12 like it was this night, that engine was
13 open. They were doing something else
14 just because, and they were trying to get
15 back because they were trying to get
16 maintenance basically on a particular
17 engine. That was the reason for them not
18 being there. At least for that
19 particular moment, they just happened to
20 be someplace else. That can happen at
21 any time.

22 I keep thinking that while we
23 look at this as looking at it through the
24 tragedy lens, I'm looking at it as a way
25 for looking at the professionalism of the

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2 Department. When that engine left, they
3 were covered by another local, as per the
4 regulations of the Department, and they
5 got there well within the time and we
6 still lost someone. I can't fault the
7 firefighters. I can't fault anything. I
8 can only say that that's what happened.
9 And we end up working with them to
10 provide what they need to go forward.

11 So that's what I think -- we
12 don't want to lose sight of the fact that
13 they ended up doing their jobs in the
14 best way and it just happened that
15 someone lost their life.

16 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER:

17 Councilman Rizzo.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO:

19 Commissioner, Deputy Mayor, you reflected
20 back 30 years and you said this policy
21 has been going on a long time, but
22 fortunately I have a pretty good memory
23 and I recollect -- and, Commissioner
24 Ayers, you probably have a recollection
25 of this. I think you really need to talk

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2 about why that fire company, even though
3 it was not in the brown-out mode at the
4 moment when this fire occurred, what it
5 was doing. And I recollect that they
6 were going to pick up a piece of
7 equipment, pick up a piece of equipment
8 that was maintained; in other words,
9 swapping a loaner for their assigned
10 equipment.

11 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: That's
12 correct.

13 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: I
14 recollect --

15 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: They
16 had had it for about a week.

17 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Right. But
18 I recollect the day when Fleet Management
19 used to bring the equipment to the
20 firehouse and do the change-out. Again,
21 we've changed the way we do business to
22 the point where we are possibly creating
23 these problems.

24 I understand that through a
25 retired firefighter that that policy

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2 worked fairly well when the Fleet
3 Management would bring the repaired piece
4 of equipment, the firefighters would
5 change out their personal equipment, and
6 that fire engine got back in service
7 almost immediately.

8 So that firehouse was not in
9 brown-out. It was in a mode that was
10 going to Front and Hunting Park, which is
11 a long distance --

12 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Long
13 distance.

14 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: -- from
15 where they are to pick up a piece of
16 equipment. Maybe you need to reconsider
17 the fact that that equipment should not
18 have to be picked up by an on-duty fire
19 company when somebody could drive it from
20 Front and Hunting Park to the firehouse,
21 change out the equipment, a run comes,
22 they use the equipment that -- the loaner
23 equipment to go do the run and come back
24 and tell the Fleet Management guy to have
25 a cup of coffee until we get back.

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2 But my point is, to send a
3 whole company to pick up a piece of
4 equipment at Front and Hunting Park may
5 be part of the problem.

6 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Many
7 changes. And indeed, I do remember when
8 that was the case. There's been
9 reductions in personnel with Fleet.
10 There's been reduction in personnel with
11 Fire, as well as some contractual issues
12 that prevent us from doing that. We used
13 to put in a task force, and what we would
14 do is, we would take one or two
15 firefighters from that task force, send
16 them up, and they would pick up the
17 piece.

18 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Right. And
19 my last comment, since I'm taking only
20 another 30 seconds here, Deputy Mayor,
21 the departments that you're responsible
22 for public safety are Prisons?

23 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

24 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Police?

25 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Fire?

3 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Anything
5 else?

6 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I have
7 budgetary oversight of the courts, DA,
8 Public Defender. I also have the RISE
9 agency and the Mayor's Office of Faith
10 Initiatives that also report to me.

11 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: This is
12 probably the most drastic budget
13 reduction act that you've initiated. I
14 can't -- I don't see anything like this
15 in the Police Department. Maybe we just
16 don't see it.

17 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I don't
18 think you see it, but we've been
19 controlling overtime in the Police
20 Department. I'm down about \$6.7 million
21 last year and I'm looking to get about
22 another 8.6 million this year.

23 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: In Prisons?
24 That's a big one, I understand.

25 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON:

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2 Absolutely. We took \$15 million out of
3 the Prisons last year. I'm sure each of
4 you are aware of that, and we are looking
5 for another reduction out of the Prisons
6 of somewhere on the order of 6.7 million.

7 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: So the
8 reason this is so visible, it's because
9 it's a public -- it's outside the prison
10 wall, it's --

11 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Right.
12 Public safety -- let's be clear. My
13 departments make up about, depending on
14 how you count it, 1.1, 1.3 billion
15 dollars of the City's budget. I know
16 that there is -- we have done what we can
17 to protect and to realign public safety.
18 We've been very efficient in how we deal
19 with it. We are committed to public
20 safety being number one, but one of the
21 things that going through these budget
22 hearings and going through budget
23 reductions has taught me over the last
24 three years now is that I came in to kind
25 of build and rebuild the public safety

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2 network that was here in the City, and as
3 a result of the economy, I've had to
4 actually strategically try to maintain as
5 much as possible. I gave my word to
6 people that I would not cut and I would
7 not lay off any active firefighter, nor
8 any active police officer, nor any active
9 prison guard. I said I wanted to
10 maintain jobs at all costs, and I've kept
11 my word and the word of the Mayor to the
12 people that we made that pledge to. What
13 we are trying to do is manage within the
14 contracts that we have and to do it
15 fairly.

16 If public safety took no cuts,
17 we would be decimating the rest of City
18 government, literally. There would not
19 be a Commerce Department, there would not
20 be an economic development department.
21 So public safety has to take its
22 responsibility, and there is no part of
23 government that is run so efficiently
24 that it can't stand a little bit of cut.

25 What we are trying to do and

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2 what I've asked everyone that I work
3 with, whether it's union chief or
4 whatever, is that this is all I have in
5 front of me as my options. But I'm a guy
6 that thinks outside the box. I think
7 each of you, I've come to you in one way
8 or the other and I think I've
9 demonstrated that on a number of
10 different ways, and I'm willing to do
11 anything to make sure that this
12 Administration can achieve its goals
13 without harming where we are. And we do
14 that day by day. I got great
15 commissioners, Giorla, Ramsey and Ayers,
16 and they are managing what we have in
17 this environment, and we have kept our
18 word.

19 I agree with you that policies
20 always are being reevaluated. I am
21 flexible enough to try and do with what I
22 can, but I only have a limited amount of
23 money and I have to deal with it that
24 way, and overtime is my only way of
25 controlling costs.

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2 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: But, again,
3 just to end it, it has to be clear that
4 this engine company was in service but
5 not to fight a fire.

6 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: That's
7 true.

8 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: It wasn't in
9 a brown-out mode.

10 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: That's
11 true.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: And that
13 policy of going from that location or any
14 location to Front and Hunting Park to
15 pick up a piece of apparatus to me
16 doesn't make any sense.

17 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I
18 understand. Councilman, you know, as I
19 say, there are -- this was not -- that's
20 why -- this was not a result of the
21 brown-out at all. Your question is right
22 on point. It is correct that the policy
23 of swapping is really what kind of at
24 least precipitated one company being out
25 as opposed to being down.

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2 So we are looking at that
3 particular policy and we're seeing how we
4 can actually deal with it. I'd like to
5 get flexibility within all partners so we
6 can end up saying, You know what, maybe
7 if we could use labor in a different way,
8 we would not have to take the company
9 out. But we need to have reality, and
10 the reality is go to a task force for an
11 hour, go to -- can I have that kind of
12 flexibility? I'm willing to talk about
13 all of that, but I need partners to talk
14 with.

15 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: But if you
16 look back, it was the brown-out that kept
17 that piece of equipment from being picked
18 up and the firehouse was closed all day
19 and Fleet Management, even if they wanted
20 to bring it back, there was nobody to
21 bring it to.

22 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: But the
23 bottom line is that the fire equipment
24 itself -- one of the things that happened
25 is Fleet said that the equipment might

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2 have been ready. When the professionals
3 who actually depend on that piece of
4 equipment did the analysis, the equipment
5 was not ready.

6 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: If you're
7 willing to look at it and see if there's
8 a different way --

9 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON:
10 Absolutely. I'm willing to look at
11 everything.

12 COUNCILMAN RIZZO: Thank you.
13 Thank you, Madam Chair.

14 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
15 you, Councilman.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And
17 thank you, Councilman Clarke, for
18 allowing me to speak, because I heard the
19 same story. After they went there to
20 pick it up, it wasn't fixed. So that --

21 COMMISSIONER AYERS:
22 Councilwoman --

23 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: There
24 was actually another piece of it. If you
25 recall, we indicated there was another

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2 piece that was broken on the --

3 COMMISSIONER AYERS: It was
4 fixed. What it went up there for, it was
5 fixed. One of the issues was, it being
6 there for a period of time caused another
7 issue, and that was what was not
8 operating. So they had to fix that in
9 addition to what it originally went up
10 for. So it wasn't anybody's fault to
11 look at, like Fleet Management.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: But I
13 think the Committee can see there were a
14 million things that were going wrong. I
15 remember that on Inside Story, I remember
16 when this issue came up one Sunday
17 morning and Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky
18 said, Oh, the Mayor has got a new
19 policy -- of course, I'm paraphrasing --
20 for these fire stations. If it works,
21 boy, he's done a great thing, but if it
22 doesn't, if we have a big fire, God bless
23 us all, and certainly about two weeks
24 later, we had a fire.

25 And, finally, my last

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2 comment -- thank you again, Councilman
3 Clarke. And I'm recalling that --
4 because he and I have several fire
5 stations. You have some areas that have
6 two or three and you have some areas that
7 may have none. So certainly when you
8 give us your criteria for setting these
9 brown-outs up, we would certainly like
10 that addressed.

11 Thank you, Councilman, and
12 thank you, Madam Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
14 you, Councilwoman Blackwell.

15 Councilman Clarke.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you,
17 Madam Chair.

18 Good afternoon, gentlemen.

19 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER GILLISON:
20 Good afternoon.

21 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Good
22 afternoon, sir.

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Let me
24 start by saying that I'm not going to try
25 to be a firefighter and I don't want to

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2 ask you to be a politician. We do what
3 we do and hopefully at the very best for
4 the citizens. But I do have a couple of
5 questions. One is somewhat of a
6 technical nature, and I understand that
7 it was asked earlier about some of the
8 criteria associated with the selection
9 process. And, Deputy, I know you said
10 you don't have those specific answers,
11 but I do want to ask questions associated
12 with that and then the other
13 realignments, because this is not the
14 first time that we were in these Chambers
15 talking about changes in fire stations'
16 operation. I can recall going to a
17 meeting in Fishtown last year in part of
18 the district I represent and the guys
19 were outside with the signs and wanting
20 to know what was going on as it related
21 to fire station closures.

22 When you do your analysis for
23 making these determinations on what
24 changes in the fire station deployments
25 of ladders, the various apparatus, do you

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2 do them on an annual basis or you just do
3 them when you're ready to have some
4 budget reduction issue before you?

5 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: We're
6 constantly looking at data and we're
7 constantly looking at matters. I know
8 that we have been putting in the ability
9 to do things more in an automated way.
10 We've had to improve the CAD, or the
11 computer-assisted dispatch system. So we
12 have been able to accomplish that in the
13 last year. That will help the
14 Commissioner with his analysis tools.
15 But we're always looking at getting more
16 analysis tools so that he can have
17 another tool in his tool belt.

18 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: What does
19 that encompass, the analysis?

20 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Usually
21 it's the same kind of work -- it's
22 usually the utilization hour rates and we
23 look at what's the workload of the
24 particular departments, and we follow
25 that. I've been doing that now in

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2 PhillyStat for the last two years.

3 Whenever I would have the
4 Department come in to present, we do an
5 analysis of what are they doing, how are
6 they doing it, how many times are they
7 doing it, what's the response times,
8 where are we having problems. We usually
9 map out the data and put it up on the
10 screen so we can get a better handle of
11 where things need to be improved and is
12 there a way to economize within the
13 Department to meet that goal.

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So you're
15 always looking at possible realignments
16 or readjustments regardless of the
17 budget?

18 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: But in this
20 particular case, it was budget driven?

21 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: In terms of
23 the areas -- and the reason I'm asking
24 this question is about a particular
25 location in my district. Councilwoman

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2 said that we have a number of challenging
3 locations. At 19th and Oxford, I happen
4 to ride by there a lot, and it's this
5 sign sitting out there -- and it's
6 extremely troubling to me -- that
7 basically says, Well, you got a fire
8 today? Sorry, we're closed. And this is
9 right on the sidewalk of a number of
10 brand new homes, and I saw it most
11 recently last week. We were out with the
12 Mayor. We were cutting the ribbon for
13 the last of 300 houses that were built
14 over a period of years.

15 In your analysis, one of the
16 things you talked about is the geographic
17 area, and I don't know if you're just
18 talking about the travel time or the
19 demographics of the neighborhood as it
20 relates to structures and houses.

21 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Travel
22 time mostly.

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Is it
24 primarily travel time?

25 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Mostly,

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2 because we have to get there within a
3 certain period of time.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So do you
5 take into account that in that particular
6 neighborhood three years ago, there were
7 virtually no homes there? Now,
8 fortunately -- and I know Councilwoman
9 Blackwell is going to be taking a dig at
10 me about me getting all the housing money
11 after the hearing --

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: That's
13 right.

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: -- but
15 fortunately we're in a position we have
16 virtually a brand new neighborhood over
17 there.

18 Are those kind of analysis made
19 now that you have 300 new homes in the
20 area where you want to be in a position
21 to have fire coverage? Because I'm
22 assuming based on that sign saying that
23 we're closed -- and I actually don't know
24 if it's closed in its entirety or is it
25 as a result of brown-out. First tell me

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2 about your analysis associated with the
3 physical conditions within the
4 neighborhood and then talk to me, if you
5 can, about that specific location and
6 where the coverage comes from from there,
7 because I do believe that 28th and
8 Thompson also has some issues.

9 COMMISSIONER AYERS: 28th and
10 Thompson, as well as 19th and Oxford
11 where you're talking about, 27's and
12 34's.

13 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: And that's
14 like right -- that's pretty close in
15 proximity.

16 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That's
17 right. First of all, that's not our sign
18 and it's an unauthorized sign.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I know
20 that.

21 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: We
22 don't believe the sign as far as what --

23 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: When you
24 say "our sign," I'm assuming the City's
25 sign.

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2 COMMISSIONER AYERS: It's a
3 union sign, and it says something that --
4 we wouldn't put that up to try to scare
5 the neighbors for sure.

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: When I
7 asked the question, I didn't mean to
8 imply that the Philadelphia Fire
9 Department or the City of Philadelphia
10 put it up, but I just wanted to reference
11 the fact that it may be factual.

12 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, it's
13 not -- it's a temporary deactivation.
14 Engine 27 is one of those companies
15 that's on the list. It has a very small
16 local. It's surrounded in each direction
17 with other companies that come in and
18 support it, as the same with Engine 34.

19 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: When you
20 say a "very small local," you mean?

21 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON:
22 Geographically.

23 COMMISSIONER AYERS: It
24 probably has one of the smallest
25 footprints in the entire City, but we use

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2 that --

3 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: What's the
4 next -- what's the closest one?

5 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Engine 34.

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Which is
7 Thompson?

8 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That's
9 correct. And also you have Engine 13
10 that surrounds it.

11 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Does
12 Thompson have rolling brown-outs?

13 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes, it
14 does.

15 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: But
16 they don't go at the same time. They're
17 not put together -- I mean, obviously
18 what geographic location means is that
19 the closer that you have fire companies,
20 that we're able to take one out, leave
21 the other one --

22 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: So Thompson
23 responds to 19th and Oxford?

24 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Right.

25 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: What's the

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2 closest -- the next closest to those two?

3 COMMISSIONER AYERS: You have
4 Engine 13, Engine 50, Engine 34 all
5 surrounding that. Yeah, Engine 13,
6 that's correct.

7 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You can
8 tell me -- I'm not as familiar with
9 the --

10 COMMISSIONER AYERS: 16th and
11 Ridge.

12 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: 16th and
13 Ridge.

14 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That's
15 correct.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Parrish
17 Street.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL:
19 Fairmount.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right.
21 I just need it because this sign is
22 really --

23 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Those
24 things are considered.

25 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: The

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2 people -- matter of fact, the people in
3 the new houses are always asking me,
4 saying, Councilman --

5 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That good
6 housing, Councilman, I'm happy about that
7 housing, because that's state-of-the-art
8 housing. They have -- they may not have
9 the sprinklers that we're going after,
10 but they do have the interconnected smoke
11 alarms. The risk level is reduced
12 greatly. They have new wiring. They
13 have new heaters. They have new systems
14 that work. And, as you know, what was
15 replaced is the old knob-and-tube wiring,
16 old oil heaters, all of those things that
17 have been hazards to our community.

18 So every time I see a housing
19 project go up, I'm right there and I'm
20 clapping, because what it does is, it not
21 just helps the community and helps the
22 whole City, it helps what the burden is
23 on the Fire Department, on the
24 firefighters. Those are less houses that
25 our men and our women have to go into.

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2 Those are less houses that our men and
3 women have to knock on the door to go and
4 install a smoke alarm and a carbon
5 monoxide alarm. So that's the highest
6 level of safety that the Fire Department
7 looks at.

8 So we support you. We feel
9 that as you move through and continue to
10 rebuild, rehab, all of those things, that
11 takes the burden down, and those are the
12 things that allow us to take another look
13 at how we're actually servicing our
14 citizens, the efficiencies, the
15 effectiveness, the footprint, all of
16 those things, planning for 2035, if you
17 will, planning on the short term for
18 2015, our strategic plan, what are those
19 things as related to what's going on in
20 each individual fire safety and education
21 district. Those are the things that we
22 look at, and it's a very important part
23 of what we do.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Great. Two
25 things. One, I may need you because I'm

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2 asked a lot, because the new residents
3 moved in, about the sign and their
4 concern about it. So at some point, I
5 may need you to come out and just kind of
6 communicate to people exactly what's
7 going on.

8 COMMISSIONER AYERS:

9 Absolutely.

10 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Two, in
11 terms of what you just said about being
12 supportive of us continuing to build
13 higher quality standard that's less
14 likely to burn, I wish you could
15 communicate that to the Mayor so he can
16 be a little more aggressive in providing
17 some additional funding for us to build
18 more of that quality housing.

19 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes, sir.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right,
21 sir. Thank you.

22 Thank you, Madam Chair.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
24 you.

25 Councilwoman Blackwell.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
3 you.

4 I know, I've seen this Fire
5 Commissioner at PHA openings, I've seen
6 him at the announcements. I know
7 firsthand of the partnerships he's
8 created with his department and in
9 building new homes and new public
10 housing. So we commend him for that. I
11 just think, Mr. Gillison, that albeit you
12 have a budget, some things have to be
13 exempted from cuts due to money. It's
14 that simple. Some things have to be
15 exempted, and this is one area where
16 life -- where the difference of life or
17 death are -- where the devil meets the
18 road, we're right there. This is so
19 very, very important and can make a
20 difference between people living and
21 people dying, and I think this is an area
22 that should be exempt from cuts.

23 Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
25 you. And I agree.

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2 Can I ask this: How much money
3 does the EMS contribute to the Fire
4 Department's budget? Because when people
5 use the emergency, aren't their insurance
6 companies or their personal self, they're
7 billed to that. So how much revenue does
8 that generate?

9 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: We've
10 suggested that we raise the revenue. If
11 you recall, Council did go along with our
12 request to raise the amount of revenue
13 that we could possibly get out of the
14 response from EMS. I think we're
15 budgeted at \$37 million in revenue to
16 come in, up from about 23 million, if I
17 remember when I first started.

18 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That's
19 correct.

20 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: That's
21 per year?

22 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes.

23 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Okay. So
24 did you start the new rate?

25 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: We

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2 started the new rate last year and we
3 collected -- we budgeted this year for 37
4 million. I think that last year we ended
5 up coming in about 33 million.

6 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Thirty or
7 33, within that area, yes.

8 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Thirty
9 to 33 million is what we actually
10 collected. It was still up significantly
11 from the previous time. And we did use
12 that in order to help budget for the
13 deficits that we were anticipating. So
14 the additional revenue that was brought
15 in helped us not to have to cut even
16 more.

17 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: The Fire
18 Department?

19 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Across
20 the board.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Or just
22 citywide, the entire City budget?

23 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yeah.
24 I've been taking -- I mean, we've been
25 taking -- public safety has not been

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2 immune from this budget crisis. I mean,
3 it was -- as this Council knows, I mean,
4 you guys did the heavy lifting. You had
5 to bite the bullet and do some things
6 that I'm sure you did not necessarily
7 come into office to do, but you had to do
8 it in order to make sure the City was
9 safe. We have to do the same thing in
10 response.

11 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: We
12 understand that. I just really wanted to
13 know -- I was actually thinking that the
14 EMS revenue could offset the \$3 million
15 budget deficit.

16 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: That's
17 already been planned for in the budget
18 that you passed going into this year.

19 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Well,
20 we'll have to look at that at the next
21 budget, won't we?

22 Okay. Thank you.

23 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Thank
24 you.

25 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER:

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2 Councilman Jones.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

4 Madam Chair.

5 First of all, I absolutely know
6 you to be professionals, Deputy Mayor of
7 Public Safety and Commissioner of the
8 Fire Department. I know you to be
9 professionals. I am concerned deeply
10 about the safety of this city. This
11 hearing is not one of those "I gotcha"
12 kind of things. This is really trying to
13 understand the rationale, methodology,
14 cost savings of brown-outs, and I want to
15 start with asking, you said this has been
16 a 30-year-old policy, if I think that was
17 the quote. So somewhere in the 1980s
18 somebody decided. What was the rationale
19 in brown-outs? I don't understand why it
20 was created.

21 COMMISSIONER AYERS: The
22 temporary deactivations happen every day
23 in the Philadelphia Fire Department. For
24 the most part, they are for continuing
25 education for the firefighters,

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2 continuing training. We have to have
3 that training. We can't just run a fire
4 department without making sure that we
5 maintain our certifications as a
6 professional fire department, make sure
7 that those skill-sets for the paramedics
8 as well as the firefighters aren't kept
9 up. So in order to do that, across the
10 fire service, not just in Philadelphia,
11 those temporary deactivations have been
12 on a daily basis.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: So in the
14 '80s, my question is, somebody said the
15 only way to train our firefighting
16 professionals is to turn the lights out
17 in some of the stations? That was the
18 only way that they felt at that time this
19 could be achieved?

20 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, I
21 couldn't go back and hit that assumption
22 on the head on exactly what was said and
23 what was had at those meetings, but it
24 turned out to be that you take the fire
25 company, the fire company goes to the

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2 academy in whatever jurisdiction it is
3 and the surrounding companies now take up
4 the response area for the company that's
5 being trained. And that happens all over
6 the country.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So in the
8 Police Department, we don't have
9 brown-outs?

10 COMMISSIONER AYERS: I couldn't
11 speak for the --

12 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: No.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: We don't
14 have brown-outs?

15 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: No, we
16 don't, because we go through training,
17 and then training is done there --

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: How do they
19 do training?

20 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: They do
21 training at the beginning, and then there
22 is some training that is done during
23 their career. It is not as extensive and
24 continuous as the Fire Department,
25 although that's something we are

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2 considering in order to help retrain the
3 Police Department as well.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: So my
5 question becomes, what is the training
6 that they are receiving for an eight-hour
7 period that will warrant this kind of
8 course of action in order for them to
9 achieve it? What happens for eight hours
10 that can't happen at some other point
11 when we have a more systematic approach
12 to making sure that our professionals
13 that need this training get it? Why is
14 brown-out and why is that training at
15 that time? Because as I look at my
16 district, there are firehouses that close
17 every 12 days since August 1 in order to
18 achieve this. What is so paramount that
19 happens at that training that can't
20 happen at some other point in time to
21 prevent brown-outs?

22 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well, the
23 temporary deactivations, they happen, and
24 they happen so that we can take a company
25 and take those men and women up to the

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2 Fire Academy, and most often -- the
3 training is various, but most often what
4 that training components will be is,
5 you'll have some classroom time probably
6 in the morning and some hands-on
7 activities on the training tower or in
8 some other situation in the afternoons.
9 So they break that up and they'll have
10 training in the morning and the
11 afternoons. Sometimes there may only be
12 morning training for a particular
13 company, but most oftentimes when we have
14 a full day of training, that's what it
15 consists of.

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: So a week
17 during the summer is not as good as every
18 12 days or -- when a company is
19 deactivated, they are going to fill the
20 spot of other firefighters that are at
21 training. How long is the duration of
22 the training for those companies engaged
23 in training?

24 COMMISSIONER AYERS: The
25 training is usually from 9:00 a.m. --

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: One day?

3 COMMISSIONER AYERS: It depends
4 on what the training is. Sometimes we
5 have citywide training where we may
6 require two days of training per company,
7 but it's usually from 9:00 until 5:00.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: So is there
9 some thought process given to instead of
10 shutting down, opening up, shutting down,
11 opening up to say that a schedule that
12 says you're going to go up for a week,
13 we're going to take you to like what they
14 do in the Reserves where you go away on
15 maneuvers for two weeks just to sharpen
16 your skills. Has anyone done a study to
17 say that there might be a better
18 methodology than the onesies, twosies
19 that we do now?

20 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well,
21 that's something that we certainly will
22 look at as you bring it up. However, one
23 of the things that we have to keep in
24 mind, that the training, I say again, is
25 various. It's various certifications,

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2 refreshments as far as requirements for
3 the firefighters, some things that are
4 mandated by state, some things that are
5 federally mandated and some things that
6 are just common sensical type of things
7 that --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: I don't --
9 we are not -- I want a firefighter to be
10 on top of his professional game. We do
11 not --

12 COMMISSIONER AYERS: His or
13 her. Absolutely.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: We are not
15 at cross purposes at that, but is there a
16 better way of obtaining that training
17 that might be more cost effective and
18 less hazardous, whether that's real or
19 perception -- to some people it's real --
20 that we could deploy them in a contiguous
21 point of time that might relieve the need
22 for -- every 12 days I'm looking at this
23 Russian roulette, and I hear what you're
24 saying about it doesn't jeopardize us,
25 but just the mental concept that this --

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2 61st and Thompson is closed today and I
3 have family that live -- matter of fact,
4 you live within that area --

5 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I know.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- Deputy
7 Mayor, which is interesting. But I just
8 want to know if we spent a couple of
9 dollars to look at how we deliver
10 training that might be a way that is less
11 intrusive by way of shutting down
12 stations. And if you by the time we do
13 the budget can give this Chair that
14 answer, that would be helpful to me.

15 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Not a
16 problem. We have looked at different
17 ways of providing training, and we will
18 have an answer and can provide it at that
19 time.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: Now, the
21 second piece that I would have is that
22 all of this is over about \$3 million,
23 give or take a couple hundred thousand.

24 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes;
25 3.8 million.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: So how many
3 Fire Department personnel would it take
4 to create a unit that just dealt with
5 brown-outs or coverage, meaning how many
6 people are in the average fire company?

7 COMMISSIONER AYERS: An engine
8 company?

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: Engine
10 company.

11 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Four
12 members. A ladder company, five members.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we're
14 talking about a total of about a dozen
15 firefighters?

16 COMMISSIONER AYERS: We use 25
17 firefighters per day.

18 COUNCILMAN JONES: At a
19 particular -- if I were to cover two
20 shifts.

21 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we're
23 talking about 25 firefighters.

24 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: And what

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2 does that come to on average salary
3 annually, 25? If you were to divide the
4 average firefighter's salary, how much is
5 that?

6 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Well,
7 that's going to come up to \$3.8 million
8 or close to it when we finish for a year.
9 So if you divide it by 25 -- I think my
10 Deputy for Administrative Services is
11 working on that right now.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: Is he close
13 to accurate? A nod will do.

14 Okay. The boss is always
15 accurate, you said? Okay. All right.

16 Is it true or do you disagree
17 that there are 300 vacancies?

18 COMMISSIONER AYERS: I
19 disagree.

20 COUNCILMAN JONES: And what is
21 that disagreement?

22 COMMISSIONER AYERS: The
23 disagreement is, our budget -- our count
24 for members in the fire service has
25 decreased with the budget reductions.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: So how many
3 vacancies do we have?

4 COMMISSIONER AYERS: We're
5 somewhere around 60 or 70 vacancies, 80
6 firefighters.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So currently
8 we have the capacity to hire those
9 firefighters within the appropriated
10 budget?

11 COMMISSIONER AYERS: There's a
12 hiring freeze on, but if we were allowed
13 to, yes, we could.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: This Council
15 appropriated enough money for 80 more
16 positions; is that accurate?

17 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Yes,
18 that's accurate.

19 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Yes,
20 that's correct.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: And to solve
22 this problem, we wouldn't even have to go
23 to the full 80, but just about 25?

24 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: No,
25 that's not correct.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Enlighten
3 me.

4 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: The
5 reason -- if you ended up -- you have to
6 remember, we have a budget that we are
7 trying to hit that actually requires \$3.8
8 million less. If we hired 80
9 firefighters, we would actually be above
10 the budget, not out of Class 100, but out
11 of the other attenuated classes. So, I
12 mean, you know how we end up making up
13 the difference. We have budgeted
14 somewhere on the order of \$28 million in
15 overtime. This strategy saves us 3
16 million of the 28. So the Class 100
17 dollars is -- and I don't know what it is
18 right now offhand, but it's X. We have
19 \$25 million available for overtime, and
20 the only way to hit the dollars that we
21 need to hit is to take the 3 million --
22 originally we came to you and we asked
23 for 28. We can't provide 28. We can
24 only do 25. So that's what the delta is,
25 it's the \$3.8 million. If we end up

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2 trying to hire 80 additional
3 firefighters, we would spend more money
4 than we would have than less.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: So question.
6 Simple math for me. If through a
7 transfer ordinance we were to find you
8 \$3.5 million, would it be spent on hiring
9 those 25 firefighters?

10 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: I would
11 welcome the opportunity to talk with both
12 the Chair and you about that. Because I
13 look at the budget not just -- and even
14 though -- and a lot of my other deputy
15 mayors tell me I'm rather possessive
16 about public safety, and I do believe
17 public safety is number one, but
18 obviously it would depend on how you
19 would impact the other things that we are
20 trying to get done in the City and you
21 have that same issue.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Okay.
23 That's fair. But if we were not to
24 disturb your sensibilities about where it
25 came from and we could find 3.4, 3.5

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2 million dollars, would it be used for
3 hiring that, quote, round about 25
4 firefighters so that we could eliminate
5 blackouts forever?

6 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: Well, I
7 don't know whether it would be forever,
8 but I would suggest that before I would
9 give an answer yay or nay, that I would
10 have to exactly go back and take a look
11 at that. But I would like to have that
12 conversation. I'm open to that
13 conversation, as you know.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: Have
15 there -- and final question. Have there
16 been any other deaths in the areas where
17 there were blackouts, fire fatalities?

18 COMMISSIONER AYERS: We don't
19 have any deaths in those areas where we
20 have the temporary deactivations.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: There's
22 never been --

23 COMMISSIONER AYERS: If you're
24 talking about 55th Street, why we're
25 here --

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: No, no. I'm
3 talking about where you have the
4 blackouts, citywide, has there ever been
5 an occasion where there was a fire
6 fatality during a blackout period?

7 COMMISSIONER AYERS: No.

8 DEPUTY MAYOR GILLISON: No.
9 And this one wasn't one either.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Let me say
11 it again. There was one -- I'm not
12 saying caused. I didn't say what caused
13 it. That's for us to argue at another
14 point. What I asked you specifically
15 was, is there a time in a geographic area
16 where there was an engine blackout or a
17 ladder blackout where there was at the
18 same time of the blackout a fire
19 fatality?

20 COMMISSIONER AYERS: I would
21 say that researching the data, you would
22 be able to say yes. And you're talking
23 about some training or something where a
24 first-in company was not in their
25 location and other companies came. I

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2 will say if you researched the data
3 historically, I will say that that's a
4 yes.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Do you think
6 it's worth researching?

7 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Oh,
8 absolutely it is. Yes, it's worth it.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: You're going
10 to get the Chair that information?

11 COMMISSIONER AYERS:
12 Absolutely.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
14 Madam Chair.

15 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Since we
16 have started in August 1, outside of the
17 discussions that we're having about 55th
18 Street, the answer would be no.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
20 Madam Chair.

21 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
22 you, Councilman Jones.

23 Councilman Greenlee.

24 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
25 you, Madam Chair.

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2 Just one question, and I'm
3 sorry. This may have been asked before
4 and I missed it. In your testimony,
5 Commissioner, you say due to minimum
6 staffing requirements, the Fire
7 Department is required to ensure a
8 designated number of firefighters always
9 staffing a company. What is that number?
10 How is it determined?

11 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That
12 number is determined by the number of
13 companies covering 11 battalions in the
14 City, and that is per shift. So that
15 number hovers somewhere around 455 to
16 somewhere in that area, 476.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's
18 total? Okay.

19 COMMISSIONER AYERS: That's
20 correct.

21 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
22 you.

23 Thank you, Madam Chair.

24 COUNCILWOMAN MILLER: Thank
25 you, Councilman Greenlee.

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2 I want to thank everyone for
3 coming out today. We appreciate your
4 time. We all agree that -- we all concur
5 that the Fire Department does a really
6 good job, and this hearing, as Councilman
7 Jones said, is not about who to blame.
8 We just are nervous about the brown-outs
9 and we would like to do whatever we can
10 to help.

11 So we want to recess this
12 hearing to the call of the Chair. Thank
13 you again for coming out.

14 COMMISSIONER AYERS: Thank you
15 very much, Chairwoman. You've always
16 supported us and we do appreciate
17 everything.

18 Thank you.

19 (Committee on Public Safety
20 adjourned at 3:50 p.m.)

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