

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA  
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Tuesday, April 22, 2014  
10:20 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE  
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS  
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL  
COUNCILMAN W. WILSON GOODE, JR.  
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE  
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON  
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON  
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.  
COUNCILMAN JAMES KENNEY  
COUNCILMAN DENNIS O'BRIEN  
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH  
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL  
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ  
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN  
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA  
COUNCILWOMAN MARIAN B. TASCO

BILLS 130489, 140140, 140144, 140145, 140146,  
140147, and 140148  
RESOLUTION 140159

- - -

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COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good

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morning, everyone. This is the public

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hearing of the Committee of the Whole

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regarding Bill Nos. 130489, 140140,

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140144, 140145, 140146, 140147, and

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140148 and Resolution 140159.

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I would ask Ms. Lewis to please

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read the titles of the bills and

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resolution.

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MS. LEWIS: Bill No. 130489, an

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ordinance amending Chapter 19-2500 of The

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Philadelphia Code, entitled "Real Estate

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Non-Utilization Tax," by changing certain

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tax rates; all under certain terms and

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conditions.

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Bill No. 140140, an ordinance

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amending Chapter 19-1500 of The

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Philadelphia Code, entitled "Wage and Net

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Profits Tax," by decreasing the rate or

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rates of tax imposed upon certain low

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income persons, providing for refunds of

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excess taxes paid, directing the Revenue

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Department to develop procedures and

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forms whereby eligible taxpayers can

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           obtain such refunds, and requiring  
3           employers to provide refund forms to  
4           employees; all under certain terms and  
5           conditions.

6                     Bill No. 140144, an ordinance  
7           to adopt a Capital Program for the six  
8           Fiscal Years 2015 through 2020 inclusive.

9                     Bill No. 140145, an ordinance  
10          to adopt a Fiscal 2015 Capital Budget.

11                    Bill No. 140146, an ordinance  
12          adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal  
13          Year 2015.

14                    Bill No. 140147, an ordinance  
15          amending Section 19-1806 of The  
16          Philadelphia Code, entitled  
17          "Authorization of Realty Use and  
18          Occupancy Tax," to further authorize the  
19          Board of Education of the School District  
20          of Philadelphia to impose a tax on the  
21          use or occupancy of real estate within  
22          the School District of Philadelphia,  
23          under certain terms and conditions.

24                    Bill No. 140148, an ordinance  
25          amending Section 19-1801 of The

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2 Philadelphia Code, entitled  
3 "Authorization of Tax," to further  
4 authorize the Board of Education of the  
5 School District of Philadelphia to impose  
6 a tax on real estate within the City of  
7 Philadelphia, under certain terms and  
8 conditions.

9                         Resolution No. 140159,  
10 providing for the approval by the Council  
11 of the City of Philadelphia of a Revised  
12 Five Year Financial Plan for the City of  
13 Philadelphia covering Fiscal Years 2015  
14 through 2019, and incorporating proposed  
15 changes with respect to Fiscal Year 2014,  
16 which is to be submitted by the Mayor to  
17 the Pennsylvania Intergovernmental  
18 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority")  
19 pursuant to the Intergovernmental  
20 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an  
21 Ordinance of this Council approved by the  
22 Mayor on January 3rd, 1992 (Bill No.  
23 1563-A), by and between the City and the  
24 Authority.

25                                 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You did

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           that all in one breath? Thank you,  
3           Ms. Lewis.

4                       Today we continue the public  
5           hearing of the Committee of the Whole to  
6           consider various bills read by Ms. Lewis  
7           that constitute proposed operating and  
8           capital spending measures for Fiscal Year  
9           2015, a Capital Program, and a  
10          forward-looking Capital Plan for Fiscal  
11          Year 2015 through Fiscal Year 2020.

12                      This morning before we hear  
13          testimony from the City departments, I  
14          would like to note for the record two  
15          items. First, please note that Bill No.  
16          140140, the low-income tax credit, and  
17          130489, real estate non-utilization tax,  
18          will not be considered today at the  
19          request of the sponsor and will be rolled  
20          over and recessed along with all other  
21          bills being considered in this budget  
22          hearing.

23                      At this time, I want to go into  
24          a public meeting very briefly so that we  
25          can offer three amendments to the Capital

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Program and Capital Budget. The three  
3           amendments are to provide capital funding  
4           to the Betsy Ross House, the Philadelphia  
5           History Museum, formerly known as the  
6           Atwater Kent, and the Free Library of  
7           Philadelphia. I'd like to explain the  
8           reason for offering these amendments at  
9           this time.

10                       As submitted to Council, the  
11           proposed Capital Program and Capital  
12           Budget for Fiscal Year '15 authorizes no  
13           funding for the Betsy Ross House,  
14           Philadelphia History Museum, and Free  
15           Library of Philadelphia. The amendments  
16           in question will add 2.9 million in new  
17           dollars to the FY15 Capital Program and  
18           Capital Budget and allocated in the  
19           following manner:

20                       \$250,000 to the Betsy Ross  
21           House, a City-owned historic landmark by,  
22           among other things, replacing the chiller  
23           and air conditioning unit, upgrading the  
24           fire security system, installing new  
25           emergency lighting, renovating public

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           restrooms, and making improvements to the  
3           handicap accessibility areas at the main  
4           building and its annex;

5                     \$250,000 to the Philadelphia  
6           History Museum, a City-owned historic  
7           landmark by, among other things,  
8           preserving the historic building  
9           exterior, which dates back to 1826,  
10          increasing exterior security, and  
11          repurposing the Museum's garden to a  
12          multi-purpose education and performance  
13          space; and

14                    \$2.4 million to the Free  
15          Library of Philadelphia to make a  
16          Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program  
17          grant that will launch the 21st Century  
18          Libraries initiative that will result in  
19          the renovation of every neighborhood  
20          library. The funding will allow for  
21          construction that will begin  
22          simultaneously on four branches,  
23          providing for handicap accessibility,  
24          mixed private and communal spaces that  
25          will allow patrons to take full advantage

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           of the library's healthcare, educational,  
3           and job search resources, and an improved  
4           children's space and newly designated  
5           teen areas.

6                        We are taking this action now  
7           because of a requirement in the Home Rule  
8           Charter concerning amendments to the  
9           Capital Program. Before Council can  
10          enact an amendment to the Capital Program  
11          of this nature, we must first request  
12          through the Mayor the recommendations of  
13          the City Planning Commission. The  
14          Commission has 30 days in which to  
15          respond with its recommendations. So we  
16          want to start the clock running now.

17                       Do the Councilmembers present  
18          have copies of the proposed amendments?  
19          I believe they were just given to you.  
20          Thank you.

21                       Councilman Goode will offer  
22          these amendments. We will not be  
23          requesting a vote on the amendments. Our  
24          intent is to get these amendments in the  
25          record.



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2                   We will now briefly recess, as  
3 I said before, our public hearing and go  
4 into a public meeting for the purpose of  
5 introducing these amendments into the  
6 official record.

7                   The Chair recognizes Councilman  
8 Goode.

9                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,  
10 Mr. Chairman. I offer the proposed  
11 amendments to Bills No. 140144 and 140145  
12 and request that no vote be taken on them  
13 at this time.

14                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
15 you, Councilman.

16                   We'll see that the stenographer  
17 receives a copy of both amendments so  
18 that they may be part of the record.

19                   We will now go back into our  
20 public hearing, and today we'll hear  
21 testimony from City departments, the  
22 Revenue Department, Board of Revision of  
23 Taxes, and on the revenue tax bills, and  
24 later today we will have public  
25 testimony.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Our first department is the  
3 Department of Revenue. Commissioner and  
4 whoever else.

5 (Witnesses approached witness  
6 table.)

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good  
8 morning.

9 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good  
10 morning, Councilman.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please  
12 proceed with what I know will be your  
13 summarized testimony and then we'll have  
14 questions.

15 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good  
16 morning to our Chair, Councilman  
17 Greenlee, and members of City Council. I  
18 am Clarena Tolson, Chief Collection  
19 Officer and Revenue Commissioner. The  
20 following testimony provides an overview  
21 of the Department of Revenue's Fiscal '15  
22 Operating Budget and our strategies and  
23 goals.

24 The mission of the Revenue  
25 Department is to optimize the collection

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           of revenue to provide funding for schools  
3           and services, assuring that everyone pays  
4           their fair share while assisting those in  
5           need of financial assistance. Our goal  
6           is to create a culture of compliance by  
7           sending strong, clear messages that the  
8           City cannot subsidize businesses and  
9           individuals at the expense of children  
10          and citizens.

11                        The major strategies we have  
12          employed to support our efforts in  
13          meeting our mission include: improved  
14          customer service, supporting those in  
15          financial need, creating stronger  
16          consequences for non-compliance, building  
17          partnerships to enhance collection  
18          activities, providing early action on  
19          delinquency, providing greater education  
20          to the public and business community,  
21          integrating technology to improve  
22          efficiencies and effectiveness.

23                        Over the last year, we have  
24          seen progress on many fronts. I offer a  
25          few highlights, not to say where they are

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           where they should be, but that we're  
3           making great strides in making that very  
4           quickly.

5                        To highlight several key  
6           collection results as compared to last  
7           fiscal year, total school income tax is  
8           up 104 percent. Delinquent school income  
9           tax collections have increased by 275  
10          percent. Total liquor tax is up 23  
11          percent. Delinquent liquor collection  
12          has increased by 200 percent. Delinquent  
13          use and occupancy collections have  
14          increased by 29 percent. There's been a  
15          38 percent increase in total delinquent  
16          collections for the School District.  
17          Delinquent real estate collections are up  
18          22 percent. And last year for the  
19          Calendar Year '13, we achieved a rate  
20          that is our highest in a couple decades,  
21          which is a 94 percent collection rate for  
22          our real estate.

23                       The Department continues to  
24          meet organizational goals such as MBE  
25          participation and promoting diversity in

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           our workplace, with an executive staff of  
3           one half minority and close to the same  
4           for women. We are proud of our workplace  
5           inclusion. Our M/W/DBE participation is  
6           also expected to exceed 50 percent.

7                         Relative to some of our  
8           initiatives, both past and current, a  
9           centerpiece of our collection activity is  
10          the revocation of the Commercial Activity  
11          Licenses for those businesses that have  
12          been delinquent in their business taxes.  
13          Though we certainly never want to have to  
14          close a business, it ultimately is the  
15          only leverage that we may have to use for  
16          some businesses who will not become  
17          compliant in any other way. In less than  
18          one year, we have collected over \$20  
19          million in cash through this program. An  
20          additional \$7.5 million is committed to  
21          payment agreements also through this  
22          program.

23                         Included in those funds are \$6  
24          and a half million for liquor, \$6.3  
25          million for BIRT, and \$2.3 million for

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           the wage tax. You'll note that that 6.5  
3           is dedicated to the School District  
4           funding.

5                     The other significant program  
6           that we have for collections is the  
7           innovation with regard to sequestration  
8           or receivership. This is a program that  
9           existed some 30 years ago, but has been  
10          revived in a slightly different manner  
11          where we have court-appointed receivers  
12          to collect rental income and to operate  
13          delinquent businesses or properties until  
14          the taxes are paid. We presently have  
15          244 active petitions filed with the  
16          court, and since October when this  
17          program first started -- so it is very  
18          much in its infancy -- \$4.1 million has  
19          been collected for the program.

20                    Another tool that you're quite  
21          familiar with on collections is Sheriff  
22          Sales. That continues to be an effective  
23          tool. Our average number of all  
24          properties placed in the Sheriff Sale  
25          process by our legal unit, our law unit,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           and co-counsel has increased from 354 per  
3           month in Fiscals '11 and '12 to 1,065 per  
4           month for Fiscals '13 and '14.

5                     The Department continues to  
6           build strong partnerships, and over the  
7           last several months, we've built a closer  
8           relationship with the state, and we have  
9           received information from them that will  
10          enable us to identify taxpayers that  
11          could owe significant school income tax  
12          as well as other taxes as we continue to  
13          do our audits and discovery. This will  
14          only add to our success that we've seen  
15          in some of our other initiatives and  
16          increase our collection rates.

17                    In terms of new initiatives,  
18          our cashiering and remittance system and  
19          our comprehensive data warehouse is still  
20          underway. We're well into the  
21          implementation of the cashiering system  
22          and the final stages of selecting a  
23          vendor -- or starting with a vendor to  
24          develop the integrated data warehouse.  
25          We have selected a vendor.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2                   We are developing a more  
3           integrated outreach and communication  
4           strategy additionally. That will  
5           increase our presence in the community  
6           meetings. In fact, we are regularly now  
7           going out to meet with community groups,  
8           certainly at the request sometimes of  
9           elected officials, but also upon our own  
10          pursuit of opportunities to discuss  
11          assistance programs and also filing  
12          requirements. We are happy to provide  
13          clearer and more informative hand  
14          products, brochures and pamphlets, as  
15          well as continue to improve our website  
16          and use of technology such as the virtual  
17          town hall meetings, branding, and other  
18          technological improvements.

19                   There will be a new water bill  
20          design that's going to be in effect in  
21          another two months, which will make it  
22          easier for customers to interpret  
23          information that has been provided to  
24          them.

25                   The budget proposed here allows



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           the Department to engage its mission of  
3           revenues for schools and services.  
4           Therefore, we request your favorable  
5           consideration of the budget and state  
6           that I am available for any questions  
7           that you may have at this time.

8                        COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
9           you, Commissioner. Thank you for all the  
10          work you do in your second stint as a  
11          Commissioner after the Streets  
12          Department, and I think it's fair to say  
13          that we've seen a tremendous improvement  
14          in the collection since you've been the  
15          Commissioner, so you certainly deserve a  
16          lot of credit for that, because as you  
17          pointed out, all this money, besides  
18          being due, goes to either one of the City  
19          departments to make the City run better  
20          or to the School District, and we  
21          obviously all know how much the School  
22          District needs additional funding.

23                        But on that note, as you talk  
24          about collection rates up in all those  
25          various taxes, how much more than the

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           budgeted revenue is expected to be  
3           received by the City and the School  
4           District in FY14 due to this collection  
5           increase? Do you have such a figure?

6                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: I don't  
7           know that we can say that -- I can say at  
8           this time how much more we expect to pass  
9           what has been budgeted. Our budget goals  
10          are very challenging. We have with our  
11          real estate taxes, which is a significant  
12          elephant in the room, we're still working  
13          through the process with regard to final  
14          billing for people as they go through  
15          appeals. We are seeing very strong  
16          performances on many of our taxes, but  
17          I'm not prepared as yet to estimate where  
18          we will wind up ultimately.

19                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. So  
20          it's still all being calculated, I guess.

21                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: All being  
22          calculated and some very strong  
23          performances, but also some challenges.

24                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. I  
25          got you. And speaking of the elephant in

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           the room, the real estate taxes, in  
3           talking to the Council President, we've  
4           heard a lot of examples in his district  
5           and I'm sure in others where people have  
6           paid the LOOP payment, they're eligible  
7           for it, they paid it, but the record is  
8           still showing delinquency costs even  
9           though they paid the amount they're  
10          supposed to pay. Is that just kind of a  
11          computer glitch or are you still catching  
12          up with that?

13                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We are in  
14          collaboration with OPA. We are  
15          finalizing the certifications for all of  
16          our properties that have applied for  
17          LOOP, and we expect that over the next  
18          three to four weeks, that that will be  
19          finalized so people's records will  
20          accurately reflect their involvement in  
21          the process.

22                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay. So  
23          you're saying as soon as it's verified  
24          that they were eligible, then that cost  
25          will be -- the interest will be taken

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 off?

3 COMMISSIONER TOLSON:

4 Absolutely. Their participation is  
5 clear. However, the records, our  
6 computer records and files that may be  
7 viewed on the web, are not up to date as  
8 yet. So we are still in the process of  
9 doing the formal, I'll say, programming  
10 to provide those accurate certifications,  
11 and once that is done, everyone's record  
12 will be clear.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

14 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: And any  
15 interest and penalties that will be added  
16 will be automatically deducted.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: That's  
18 important, because obviously our real  
19 estate tax, particularly the people who  
20 were eligible for LOOP, it's a  
21 significant savings for them, and then  
22 when they see they're being charged  
23 interest, they get a little upset.

24 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: They call

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 folks like us. No. I appreciate that.

3 And, again, timeframe, what was that?

4 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: It should  
5 be within three to four weeks.

6 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Three to  
7 four weeks. Great. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: I should  
9 say, Councilman, I think that -- this is  
10 in tandem with the earlier comment about  
11 how we are performing -- that we have a  
12 team of folks who are taking to heart the  
13 need to have a legitimate and credible  
14 and fair system, and they appreciate and  
15 understand their role in government to  
16 support our citizens in a fair process.  
17 Fair doesn't always feel good, but we try  
18 to make it fair. And certainly with the  
19 spirit of cooperation with Council, but  
20 also in the spirit of cooperation with  
21 our citizens, we will try to alleviate as  
22 many problems that we may cause, such as  
23 not being able to maybe in a more timely  
24 manner adjust our computer records, but  
25 we are catching up with that process.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2                   It's the first time doing this  
3 with LOOP, and the staff that is working  
4 on it has been working on all cylinders,  
5 in addition to working on other programs  
6 as well. But it's important to us, and  
7 we will adjust it. I don't want anyone  
8 to feel that they will not get the credit  
9 that they deserve.

10                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.  
11 Thank you. And I can say -- I think a  
12 lot of us feel this way -- we have  
13 confidence in the job you're doing there,  
14 Commissioner.

15                   The Chair recognizes Councilman  
16 Goode.

17                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,  
18 Mr. Chairman.

19                   Good morning, Commissioner.

20                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good  
21 morning.

22                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: First,  
23 congratulations on the increases in  
24 collections. Otherwise, I'm just  
25 actually looking for an update on the CDC

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Tax Credit Program. Recently, there were  
3           open slots and I'm wondering how many  
4           were filled.

5                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: The CDC  
6           Tax Credit Program? One second, sir.

7                    One second, sir. We'll give  
8           you that data.

9                    (Witness approached witness  
10          table.)

11                   MR. AFESSA: The question is  
12          how many --

13                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: There were  
14          recently open slots. How many of those  
15          slots were filled?

16                   MR. AFESSA: Five new slots are  
17          open because of expiration of the first  
18          ten years.

19                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sir,  
20          before you go further, could you just  
21          identify yourself for the record.

22                   MR. AFESSA: Oh, I'm sorry. My  
23          name is Tilahun Afessa. I'm the Director  
24          of Policy in the Revenue Department.

25                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 you.

3 MR. AFESSA: Five new slots are  
4 open, and we have received seven new  
5 applications for the five new slots.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So there's  
7 seven new applications for the five  
8 slots, but those slots are not filled  
9 yet.

10 MR. AFESSA: Not yet. So what  
11 happened is, out of the seven, six were  
12 received timely, because it is first  
13 come, first-served basis. So the six are  
14 going to be considered, and out of the  
15 six, four of them are CDCs and two of  
16 them are intermediaries. So basically  
17 the four are already in it without any  
18 lottery pick. So the two intermediaries  
19 are received in the same day, so --

20 COUNCILMAN GOODE: You're  
21 deciding between them.

22 MR. AFESSA: Yes. So one of  
23 the two will be in based on -- the first  
24 thing is review of the application. If  
25 both of them qualify under the



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           intermediary qualification, then one will  
3           be picked based on the lottery system.

4           COUNCILMAN GOODE: Are there  
5           any other open slots at this time other  
6           than the five?

7           MR. AFESSA: Not yet.

8           COUNCILMAN GOODE: When will  
9           new slots open up and how many?

10          MR. AFESSA: I don't have the  
11          numbers at this point, but there are more  
12          or less on a yearly basis the ones which  
13          have been there for the last ten years  
14          will expire and then we'll have the same  
15          process. We open it up for new  
16          applicants and then we will go through  
17          that process when the time comes.

18          COUNCILMAN GOODE: So do we  
19          know how many total partnerships there  
20          are at this time?

21          MR. AFESSA: Forty-two,  
22          including the two HELs initiative  
23          credits, the HELs credit. So we have 42  
24          in that credit program.

25          COUNCILMAN GOODE: So in terms

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           of pending applications, there will be  
3           one application that was late?

4                   MR. AFESSA:  There is one  
5           application which has some problems.  
6           We're trying to resolve it.  Once that is  
7           done, maybe that particular  
8           participant -- if that participant is  
9           out, then we'll advertise it again for  
10          one slot, and then that will --

11                   COUNCILMAN GOODE:  And there's  
12          one non-profit intermediary that will  
13          lose out.

14                   MR. AFESSA:  Yes.

15                   COUNCILMAN GOODE:  So there are  
16          potentially two applicants that won't  
17          have slots.

18                   MR. AFESSA:  Yes.

19                   COUNCILMAN GOODE:  Thank you.

20                   Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

21                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:  Thank  
22          you, Councilman.

23                   In the detail there's an  
24          appropriation for about \$32,000 for a  
25          parking tax study.  Can you detail a

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           little bit of what the purpose of that  
3           study is.

4                        COMMISSIONER TOLSON:  Yes,  
5           Councilman.  A couple of years ago we  
6           were in collaboration with -- I'm not  
7           sure of the exact name, but Parking  
8           Association.  They shared with us a study  
9           that had been done on their behalf which  
10          included a lot of parking lots or garages  
11          where they had concerns about whether or  
12          not these locations were paying taxes.  
13          We did an investigation of each and every  
14          one of those to find out where the  
15          problem was, and unfortunately a lot of  
16          it was there was -- I shouldn't say  
17          unfortunately.  From their perspective.  
18          The garages were in compliance, so --

19                      COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:  They were  
20          in compliance?

21                      COMMISSIONER TOLSON:  Most of  
22          them were in compliance.

23                      As followup to that, though, we  
24          had a separate study done or we're having  
25          a separate study done that is evaluating

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           our parking lots to try to do some audits  
3           for us to tell us where might it be best  
4           for us to allocate our resources for  
5           additional audits and assessments of  
6           activity. So there's a private firm  
7           that's going to go through and do some  
8           work for us in that stead.

9                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: It is  
10           interesting because I remember sitting  
11           here and hearing that testimony, that  
12           there was all these parking lots not  
13           paying money, but you found that, for the  
14           most part, was not accurate.

15                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: That's  
16           correct. It was not accurate.

17                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

18                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: But we  
19           did investigate each and every one.

20                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
21           you.

22                   Just one other thing. In  
23           talking about staff and vacancies, you  
24           say in your written testimony 96 staff --  
25           out of the current 96 budgeted staff and

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           vacancies, 74 will be filled by the end  
3           of the fiscal year?

4                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: That's  
5           correct.

6                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Are there  
7           plans on hiring the other additional?

8                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes, sir.  
9           Yes, sir. But we are absolutely certain  
10          that those will happen in short order,  
11          probably within the next few weeks, and  
12          the others are important and critical.

13                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: On the  
14          plan, okay. Thank you.

15                    Councilwoman Bass.

16                    COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.  
17          Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18                    Good morning.

19                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good  
20          morning.

21                    COUNCILWOMAN BASS: How are  
22          you?

23                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Very  
24          good. Thank you.

25                    COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           I have a question for you about  
3           the Conservatorship Act and the fact that  
4           it was developed to be a tool to be  
5           helpful to our communities to address  
6           properties that are blighted, that are  
7           neglected, that people seemingly have  
8           pretty much walked away from. And so  
9           we've had a great success with some  
10          properties and then we've had -- for  
11          example, OARC in the West Oak Lane  
12          section has done great work through the  
13          conservatorship laws, but we have some  
14          situations now where other non-profits  
15          that are trying to duplicate that to  
16          improve their community and to get rid of  
17          these blighted properties through  
18          rehabbing them, getting them back on the  
19          market, and getting a family into the  
20          neighborhood. One of the problems we've  
21          had is that we've seen a push from  
22          Revenue to push those properties into  
23          Sheriff Sale.

24                   And so I wanted to see what we  
25          could do or what your thoughts were about

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           that and is there a way that we could  
3           avoid that from happening, because it  
4           basically holds up the process of keeping  
5           this property -- getting this property  
6           into the hands of a family, someone in  
7           the neighborhood, a property improved,  
8           greatly improved, improvement for the  
9           entire community.

10                         COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.  
11           Thank you, Councilwoman. I think that as  
12           a department, we are refining our  
13           perspective with regard to our  
14           involvement with not just collections,  
15           but with other public policy issues, and  
16           certainly this one with regard to how  
17           vacant property is used, we understand  
18           that we have a role in that and to  
19           support it.

20                         In particular, I think that the  
21           use of the Sheriff Sale is a process to  
22           force a property to hopefully viable use  
23           is one that we use when all else fails  
24           with regard to property owner or payment  
25           of taxes.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           I think that our need is to  
3 work closely with Council and with others  
4 to make sure that we're properly managing  
5 some of the properties so that we can  
6 avoid Sheriff Sales, but not instead  
7 allow even community groups to hold  
8 property that's vacant --

9           COUNCILWOMAN BASS: I agree.

10          COMMISSIONER TOLSON: -- or  
11 blighted. So sometimes I think that  
12 we've got to be clear maybe to Council, a  
13 little clearer to Council about how we  
14 are scheduling things, but maybe they  
15 will not be as fast-tracked as others  
16 will be fast-tracked, but at the same  
17 hand, they're on the schedule such that  
18 if a group falls down or does not do what  
19 they need to do to a property, we will be  
20 in position to move on it.

21          COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That will  
22 be great. If there was some way to have  
23 some checks in place so that before  
24 Revenue decided to move on a particular  
25 piece of property, maybe checking in with



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           the Council office who would know if  
3           there's something going on with it or  
4           there are different ways to find out, if  
5           there's been conservatorship applied to  
6           this particular property, I'm sure. So  
7           whatever ways that we can do that, it  
8           really would help us speed up the process  
9           and make sure that we get this property  
10          addressed, which many times has been  
11          vacant for a very long, long time and  
12          people want to see something done and it  
13          really could spur some economic  
14          development in the neighborhood. So I'm  
15          really glad to hear that your office is  
16          willing to work on that.

17                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

18                    COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

19                    Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
21          you, Councilwoman.

22                    Councilwoman Tasco.

23                    COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

24                    Very briefly. Thank you very  
25          much for the work you're doing, and I

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           really appreciate your office and your  
3           concern about what happens in the  
4           neighborhoods, and I just want to  
5           piggyback on what Councilwoman Bass said  
6           about the conservatorship program.

7                        I have the famous Lakeys on  
8           Stenton Avenue. We couldn't -- very  
9           difficult dealing with that property. It  
10          went to Sheriff Sale and they're still  
11          not -- it's just still sitting there. So  
12          they may be paying the taxes, but if we  
13          could have gotten it under the  
14          conservatorship, then OARC could have  
15          done something with it, as we did with  
16          the old Arties on Ogontz Avenue.

17                       So it's important, and I  
18          appreciate the fact that you want to  
19          collaborate with us, because we're there  
20          every day in the neighborhood, we know  
21          what's going on, we know the groups, and  
22          then we can develop a plan, an action  
23          plan, that would at the end of the day  
24          get rid of the blighted property and  
25          benefit the neighborhood. So that's very

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           important. The tax collection just can't  
3           be the end all or be all what is going to  
4           happen to the building or the house or  
5           whatever and what impact will the action  
6           taken will impact on the neighborhood.  
7           So I appreciate your willingness to work  
8           with us, because it's very important.

9                           COMMISSIONER TOLSON:

10          Certainly.

11                          COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

12                          COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Thank  
13          you.

14                          COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
15          you, Councilwoman.

16                          Seeing no further questions,  
17          thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for  
18          all you've done.

19                          COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Thank  
20          you.

21                          COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Our next  
22          department is the Board of Revision of  
23          Taxes.

24                          (Witness approached witness  
25          table.)

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good  
3 morning.

4 MS. PAGAN: Good morning.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please  
6 identify yourself for the record and  
7 proceed.

8 MS. PAGAN: My name is Carla  
9 Pagan, Executive Director of the Board of  
10 Revision of Taxes. I'm here today to  
11 testify on the 2015 fiscal year Operating  
12 Budget.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Good  
14 morning.

15 MS. PAGAN: And I know you all  
16 have our summary, so I'd like to address  
17 questions, but before I go into  
18 questions, I just want to share with you  
19 our main accomplishments of the year.

20 Since the Council bill passed  
21 last month, our appeal hearings have  
22 increased from about three to five  
23 sessions a week to 14 sessions a week.  
24 So that's good news to report. And we're  
25 hearing approximately 660 cases a week

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           that we were before at 150 a week. So  
3           that's good news. So I'm pleased to  
4           report that the appeal volume, we're  
5           moving it down much quicker than before.

6                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.  
7           That's very short and sweet. Thank you.

8                    MS. PAGAN: Yes.

9                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: On that  
10          same vein, in the written testimony you  
11          state the Department requests an  
12          additional 93,000 for FY15 to finish  
13          hearing the appeals caseload.

14                   MS. PAGAN: Yes.

15                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Is that  
16          increase expected to be sufficient to  
17          hear the increase of appeals?

18                   MS. PAGAN: Yes. Most of the  
19          increase that we got in the 2014 budget  
20          to hear the appeals we spent bulking up  
21          our supplies and getting some new  
22          equipment. It's the Class 100 funds that  
23          we may need additional money for Fiscal  
24          Year '15 just to help cover temporary  
25          staff employees.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

3 And what's the expected timetable to  
4 finish? I mean, do you have a target  
5 time?

6 MS. PAGAN: Now we hope to be  
7 finished residential appeals at least by  
8 Labor Day at the very latest and then go  
9 right -- we're hearing certain  
10 commercial, industrial cases now, but,  
11 yeah, the goal is to have all residential  
12 cases heard and decided at least by the  
13 end of September.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And could  
15 you tell us -- I'm just interested in  
16 this. The appeals that have been heard  
17 so far, are the people coming in with  
18 arguments based basically on the market  
19 value or is it kind of based on different  
20 things, like I've lived here so long and  
21 I shouldn't have to pay more taxes kind  
22 of thing? I'm just trying to feel out  
23 the basis of the appeals.

24 MS. PAGAN: And it really  
25 depends on what part of the City we're

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           hearing that day, but it seems that most  
3           are actually arguing about value, but not  
4           that they disagree that the sales on  
5           their block have been that value, but  
6           perhaps their argument that their house  
7           is not to the condition that the high  
8           sale houses are from. So they do want to  
9           be lowered, because they've been there 50  
10          years and they might not have the central  
11          air or the rehabbed kitchens and  
12          bathrooms.

13                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Well,  
14                    that certainly is a legitimate argument.

15                    MS. PAGAN: Yes. Right. It  
16                    is.

17                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.  
18                    That's the kind of thing I'm getting at.

19                    And you may have said this.  
20                    I'm sorry. How many appeals have been  
21                    heard to date; do you know?

22                    MS. PAGAN: So we've heard  
23                    about 6,000 to date.

24                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Six  
25                    thousand, really? Okay. And the average

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           daily caseload is how many? I'm sorry.  
3           You might have said this.

4                   MS. PAGAN: So with the  
5           increase in our hearing session now, two  
6           days a week we spend doing all non-oral  
7           cases where the Board has done the prep  
8           work and we're putting those decisions on  
9           record, and then three days of the week  
10          we're hearing a combination of oral cases  
11          and non-oral cases. So total it comes to  
12          14 sessions and about 600 cases a week.  
13          So that 600 is comprised of about 300  
14          oral and another 300 non-oral cases.

15                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And a lot  
16          of people are just putting in non-oral  
17          requests?

18                   MS. PAGAN: It seems that -- we  
19          had several thousand non-oral appeals,  
20          yes, and it seems that now that tax bills  
21          have gone out, the homestead, they can  
22          see the change, some people have even  
23          gotten LOOP applications granted, they  
24          don't want to come in or they just want  
25          the Board to review it for administrative



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 review and make a decision.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Or maybe  
4 even drop the appeal.

5 MS. PAGAN: Or even withdraw  
6 their appeal, yes.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
8 you.

9 Councilman Jones.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
11 Mr. Chairman.

12 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: You're  
13 welcome, sir.

14 COUNCILMAN JONES: A couple of  
15 quick questions, and thank you for the  
16 daunting task your department did with  
17 the whole AVI issue. One of the quick  
18 questions I would have is on tangled  
19 title issues, which in some of our older  
20 communities what happens is grand-mom had  
21 the house, one of the children inherited  
22 it, did not do the paperwork, and now  
23 they're in the third generation of  
24 ownership and that has caused a great  
25 deal of angst and also complications by

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           way of relief efforts and things like  
3           that.

4                     Have you experienced that, A,  
5           and what are some of the remedies for  
6           that for the public? And I kind of know,  
7           but I'd like you to put it out there.

8                     MS. PAGAN: Yes. We do  
9           experience that at the Board hearing  
10          level also, but since taxpayers come in  
11          and testify on the record who they are  
12          and what their relation is to the  
13          property, the Board is much more lenient  
14          to letting them testify. So we do go in  
15          detail on our website who can actually  
16          file an appeal. So all those issues of  
17          tangled title are included. So there's  
18          no restrictions to them filing an appeal  
19          or coming before the Board for an oral  
20          hearing session or a non-oral.

21                    So it's actually -- if you do  
22          have a tangled title situation, it's much  
23          easier to file an appeal than for maybe  
24          your homestead application.

25                    COUNCILMAN JONES: And so we're

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           now beginning to -- people kind of didn't  
3           believe AVI, whatever happened, and a lot  
4           of people did not receive, even though we  
5           did billboards, went door to door, did  
6           mailings, they still refused to believe  
7           that this would ever some day come to be.

8           MS. PAGAN: Yes.

9           COUNCILMAN JONES: Is your  
10          office still open to doing workshops,  
11          which you did in the beginning, going out  
12          and talking to the public about  
13          one-on-one issues dealing with individual  
14          households and individual appeals and  
15          individual assessments?

16          MS. PAGAN: Yes, we are open.  
17          It does seem, though, as people -- that  
18          period since the appeal filing deadline  
19          is before the tax bill arrives at  
20          someone's home, that learning curve is  
21          mostly addressed either at the hearing or  
22          before it actually comes to a hearing.  
23          So before when the first AVI notices went  
24          out, you know, it's question marks and no  
25          one knows how to respond or what it

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           really means. So then as tax bills went  
3           out, people could see their homestead,  
4           LOOP applications came through, they were  
5           accepted and granted. By the time they  
6           get to the hearing, most people are  
7           informed, or if they were in denial, once  
8           they got their tax bill, there was a  
9           sudden realization.

10                        So we'll see a lot of those  
11           people in the hearing room between now  
12           and the end of the year. We do have a  
13           high number of what we call nunc pro tunc  
14           petitions where people filed late even  
15           after 30 days after they got their tax  
16           bill. So we will continue to hear those  
17           arguments from people even in the 2015,  
18           those late appeal filers. So a lot of  
19           their questions usually get answered  
20           during the appeal process.

21                        But, yes, we are open to  
22           community workshops too.

23                        COUNCILMAN JONES: The reason I  
24           mention that, particularly seniors who  
25           may be in a position where they can't get

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           far, don't want to go far, need to be, in  
3           my opinion, accommodated. Particularly  
4           in some of our older neighborhoods where  
5           you have a lot of growth activity going  
6           on, they're the ill-informed victims of  
7           that prosperity, and we really need to  
8           dig down. And I would say that we've  
9           done a good first brush of this, but  
10          there are pockets of people, pockets of  
11          communities that probably just didn't get  
12          the memo, and we really need to drill  
13          down to them. And I will be reaching out  
14          to my colleagues to figure out where we  
15          can do a second round of those types of  
16          outreaches, Mr. Chairman, to see if we  
17          can't save every taxpayer we can.

18                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

19           Absolutely.

20                   COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
21           Mr. Chairman.

22                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
23           you, Councilman.

24                   Councilwoman Bass.

25                   COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Hi, Carla. How are you?

3 MS. PAGAN: Good. Thank you.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good.

5 So I have a question for you in  
6 reference to a couple of calls that our  
7 office had received from properties that  
8 are sort of being taxed now that were  
9 not -- let me see, how should I say.  
10 Originally they were non-profits.  
11 Somehow along the way the City said  
12 you're no longer a non-profit, we can't  
13 find your paperwork or something  
14 happened, and then suddenly the City no  
15 longer recognized that they were a  
16 non-profit and sent them tax bills for  
17 the past two, three, four, five, ten  
18 years. And I notice that it's happened a  
19 number of times, and it seems as if we  
20 come to some sort of a settlement where  
21 we say, Okay, well, the City will take --  
22 just give us the tax bill for the last  
23 couple of years and we'll forget the  
24 rest. And so I wanted to see if you had  
25 any thoughts on that. I know that we've

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 communicated somewhat about it.

3 MS. PAGAN: Yes. We found that  
4 a lot of the appeal filings are from  
5 previously properties that have the  
6 non-profit exemption or there may be  
7 church parking lots or the tax bill may  
8 have been \$50 and no one cared about it  
9 and suddenly it's \$800 or \$1,800. So the  
10 assessment office has seen a rise of  
11 applications for non-profit real estate  
12 tax status.

13 So once those applications go  
14 to the OPA, get processed and approved,  
15 if that property owner also has previous  
16 years that need to be addressed, the  
17 Board does hear those cases that may  
18 address 2013, 2012, 2011. And if the  
19 Board grants that non-profit exemption  
20 from past years, then their tax bill will  
21 be wiped away.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: How does it  
23 happen, though, that -- let's say if I'm  
24 the Cindy Bass Foundation and have been  
25 for 20 years, and somewhere along the way

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           it may have come up that you no longer  
3           recognize this foundation. Can you talk  
4           a little bit about that?

5                   MS. PAGAN: Yes. We see it  
6           happen most commonly. So when there's  
7           deed changes, so maybe you were the Cindy  
8           Bass Foundation and in 2017 you get new  
9           partners and it becomes the Cindy Bass  
10          and John Allen Foundation. Once that new  
11          deed is recorded, that deed recording  
12          goes to the assessment office and they  
13          think, Oh, there's a new ownership, let's  
14          remove that tax exemption.

15                   COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So there's  
16          some changes in the formation or the  
17          recognition of the organization?

18                   MS. PAGAN: Yes. And even a  
19          lot of churches, they could add "worship"  
20          to the end of their name, do a new deed,  
21          and they lose their non-profit status.

22                   COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So any  
23          little change can trigger that sort of  
24          issue with the City?

25                   MS. PAGAN: Yes.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: All right.  
3 Okay. Thank you.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
5 you, Councilwoman.

6 Councilman Oh, please.

7 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very  
8 much, Mr. Chairman.

9 Good morning.

10 MS. PAGAN: Good morning.

11 COUNCILMAN OH: First question  
12 is that I see that you are -- you have  
13 two temporary masters and you're  
14 expecting two more; is that correct?

15 MS. PAGAN: Yes. So we have  
16 two masters that just came on board this  
17 month, and we actually have interviews  
18 for two more this week.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: And where do  
20 you draw your pool of interviewees from?

21 MS. PAGAN: You know, honestly,  
22 I don't know. The Board -- these are all  
23 referrals or recommendations that came to  
24 the Board. So they actually hired the  
25 masters, where I hired the other office

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 temporary staff.

3 COUNCILMAN OH: Do you know  
4 what that process is? I mean, in  
5 general, do you know what the process is.

6 MS. PAGAN: For temp staff or  
7 masters specifically?

8 COUNCILMAN OH: For masters in  
9 particular.

10 MS. PAGAN: So for masters, we  
11 did have to go -- two weeks ago I went to  
12 the Civil Service Commission to get  
13 approval to hire those masters since most  
14 of them are counsel, and once you get  
15 that Civil Service waiver, then they can  
16 come on board to the Department to work a  
17 temporary term. So our masters will be  
18 working a short term of six months each.

19 COUNCILMAN OH: And must they  
20 be licensed attorneys?

21 MS. PAGAN: They don't have to  
22 be. The Board did consider looking at  
23 attorneys, even some real estate  
24 professionals. What they found is that  
25 the attorneys were able to negotiate with

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           the taxpayers better and offer answers to  
3           those other questions that weren't  
4           necessarily real estate driven.

5                    COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I wonder  
6           are there any employees that are, for  
7           example, Latino or Asian American and has  
8           your office reached out to those sources?

9                    MS. PAGAN: Yeah. We only had  
10          one -- our normal staff is so small, and  
11          the temp staff that came this year was a  
12          combination minority, non-minority. We  
13          had one Hispanic employee. We've never  
14          had an Asian employee actually.

15                   COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. The  
16          other thing is in the course of reviewing  
17          the appeals, have you found any patterns  
18          of neighborhoods that seem to have a lot  
19          of challenges or where it looks like they  
20          were overassessed?

21                   MS. PAGAN: Yes. Every year  
22          you can clearly see a pattern of the  
23          appeal filers based on their location in  
24          the City. I haven't seen an area that's  
25          particularly overassessed, because the

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           assessments do match the recent sales  
3           prices, but like Councilmember Jones was  
4           saying, if that area is comprised of a  
5           lot of senior citizens or long-term  
6           homeowners, they could be feeling the  
7           shock more, and perhaps their houses are  
8           overassessed, not because the  
9           neighborhood sales don't drive it, but  
10          because the condition of their properties  
11          are not where the highest sales in the  
12          neighborhood are. So, yeah, you do see  
13          trends in different parts of the City.

14                    COUNCILMAN OH: Could you give  
15          us some examples where there may be high  
16          property values based on sales, but the  
17          condition of the homes are actually  
18          rather poor and don't appear to match the  
19          values? Do you have areas specifically  
20          that you have come across?

21                    MS. PAGAN: Sure. Perhaps in  
22          the Temple University area, there's a lot  
23          of long-term owner-occupants that have  
24          been there, raised their grandchildren  
25          there, and then they're living next door

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           to perhaps an owner or a landlord or  
3           investor that's bought 20 properties in  
4           the neighborhood at very low value,  
5           rehabbed 20 of them, and then experience  
6           very high rental incomes from Temple  
7           students. So you have to make an  
8           adjustment for that long-term  
9           owner-occupant and the person that's  
10          generating the heavy rent roll. And  
11          sometimes you know that. If the  
12          investors took out permits, then you can  
13          spot it very easily, and then sometimes  
14          you can't tell one homeowner from the  
15          other. So you do want people to appeal  
16          to come out and share that with us.

17                   COUNCILMAN OH: So is it  
18                   possible for your office to share with  
19                   Council, and I'm sure the District  
20                   Councilpeople in particular, any  
21                   particular neighborhoods where that may  
22                   be the case so that we're aware of it as  
23                   it develops?

24                   MS. PAGAN: Sure. Sure.

25                   COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Thank you very much.

3 Thank you, Chairman.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
5 you, Councilman.

6 I would think just off the top  
7 of my head an area like Point Breeze  
8 would be an area. I'm familiar with the  
9 area of Francisville, which is near me.  
10 I would think they would also be areas  
11 that would kind of be what Councilman Oh  
12 is talking about there.

13 MS. PAGAN: Well, yes. All the  
14 parts of the City that experienced the  
15 gentrification and the housing boom, yes.  
16 They're hit pretty hard.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sure.  
18 Thank you.

19 Councilman Henon.

20 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,  
21 Mr. Chair.

22 Good morning.

23 MS. PAGAN: Good morning.

24 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you  
25 for coming in. I just wanted to follow

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           up on the trend, the question of trends.  
3                    Could you provide to the Chair  
4           a list of all the trends that you've  
5           discovered through the process of your  
6           appeals, whether a certain neighborhood,  
7           the type of properties, the years of the  
8           property, is it a certain characteristic  
9           of the property that would be noticeably  
10          trending for the -- an increase or a  
11          decrease in the property values.

12                   MS. PAGAN: Sure. Just keep in  
13          mind, it's our opinion, because we do  
14          find that the arguments are similar in  
15          some neighborhoods, and that's how we  
16          come up with these trends. But sure.

17                   COUNCILMAN HENON: That's fine.  
18          I mean, I think my colleagues have asked  
19          the question succinctly. So I appreciate  
20          that.

21                   Are you keeping -- obviously  
22          you're keeping records of the outcomes of  
23          all the appeals?

24                   MS. PAGAN: Yes, we do have  
25          that record.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           COUNCILMAN HENON: And as this  
3 process goes along, when you get caught  
4 up to date, would they be available?

5           MS. PAGAN: Sure. Yes.

6           COUNCILMAN HENON: You had  
7 mentioned the nunc pro tunc petitions.

8           MS. PAGAN: Yes.

9           COUNCILMAN HENON: How many of  
10 them? And I understand why so many, but  
11 what is the reasoning why they are  
12 petitioning in that fashion?

13          MS. PAGAN: So usually we might  
14 see a couple hundred nunc pro tunc  
15 petitions yearly just for the people that  
16 may have ignored their assessment notice  
17 and don't even respond until their tax  
18 bill comes. So those people have filed  
19 again. And that number is probably  
20 amplified because their bill is going up  
21 much higher this year than in previous  
22 years. So a lot of people are saying  
23 that maybe they didn't get their mail  
24 when that AVI mailing went out. And I  
25 don't know how much returned mail the OPA



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           had this year, but most people say they  
3           didn't get a copy of that notice, so  
4           they're responding based on their tax  
5           bill and nothing else.

6                    COUNCILMAN HENON:   And you  
7           obviously see a more than average --

8                    MS. PAGAN:   Yes.

9                    COUNCILMAN HENON:   -- amount of  
10          petitions?

11                   MS. PAGAN:   Yes.

12                   COUNCILMAN HENON:   Okay.  Would  
13          you be able to at a certain -- can they  
14          file that petition at any time?

15                   MS. PAGAN:   They can, yes.  The  
16          petition nunc pro tunc is simply Latin  
17          for now -- so I'm filing now for then.  
18          So it really is a late filed application  
19          that you can take at any time.

20                   COUNCILMAN HENON:   Okay.  So at  
21          a certain point again, would you be able  
22          to provide to the Chair what the  
23          likelihood of the amount that was  
24          successful in their petition --

25                   MS. PAGAN:   Yes.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- for  
3 appeal and the cost for the BRT time and  
4 any kind of legal expenses that occurred  
5 throughout the whole process?

6 MS. PAGAN: Yes.

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Which is an  
8 ongoing process, I understand.

9 MS. PAGAN: Yes, it will be.

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: My last  
11 question is, I had a couple constituents  
12 who because of the backlog with OPA they  
13 didn't have a response to their  
14 first-level review, and by the time they  
15 did hear some kind of response, they had  
16 the appeal from BRT, and then they have  
17 two different, quite different, in some  
18 cases drastic, in the amount of like  
19 \$15,000 apart, two different types of  
20 conclusions.

21 Is there -- it just brings up  
22 kind of the questions on how we -- are we  
23 doing something different when you're  
24 taking a look at the reassessment from  
25 the BRT as from OPA or -- I mean, are

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           they supposed to be similar or off of  
3           national standards? And I know we've  
4           heard that over and over and over again,  
5           but what we haven't heard up until this  
6           point is how you're getting two  
7           conflicting conclusions.

8                   MS. PAGAN: Okay. So first I  
9           want to say one different thing the Board  
10          is doing this year for those people that  
11          had first-level review applications that  
12          weren't decided by our filing deadline,  
13          we did accept those appeals that were  
14          technically late, but we took them in as  
15          timely. And when people got those  
16          decisions, some were reduced, but then  
17          they said they still want to keep a Board  
18          appeal open because they wanted further  
19          reduction.

20                   But usually what we've seen is  
21          that the Board's decisions typically come  
22          close to perhaps what the first-level  
23          review application may have. If not, the  
24          Board is typically lower. Sometimes the  
25          taxpayer may send zero to a couple of

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           supporting documents with their  
3           first-level review, and perhaps if that  
4           got denied or just reduced not to their  
5           satisfaction, they may have sent  
6           additional documents in for their hearing  
7           or presented new testimony that would  
8           support a further reduction. So that's  
9           usually how that may happen, but from  
10          what we've seen, the Board is usually  
11          pretty close.

12                    COUNCILMAN HENON: So if we  
13           happen to have a situation like that, we  
14           just contact one of the two, I guess, the  
15           latter of --

16                    MS. PAGAN: Yes. If you run  
17           into that --

18                    COUNCILMAN HENON: -- of the  
19           appeals?

20                    MS. PAGAN: Yes. I would say  
21           contact us, because the Board did also  
22           agree that if in fact a Board decision  
23           comes in higher than a late decision on a  
24           first-level review, that the Board  
25           would -- they wouldn't override a lower

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           value. They would accept the lowest  
3           decision.

4                   COUNCILMAN HENON: Perfect.

5                   MS. PAGAN: So it's to benefit  
6           the homeowner.

7                   COUNCILMAN HENON: Absolutely.  
8           Going through the fair process --

9                   MS. PAGAN: Yes. It's only  
10          fair.

11                  COUNCILMAN HENON: -- that they  
12          have experienced.

13                  Great. Thank you for your  
14          time.

15                  I have no further questions.

16                  COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
17          you, Councilman.

18                  Councilman Goode.

19                  COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,  
20          Mr. Chair.

21                  This is actually a followup to  
22          Councilman Oh's line of questioning. I  
23          just thought of a few questions.

24                  How long have you been at the  
25          BRT?

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 MS. PAGAN: I've been with the  
3 City seven years. So I was with the old  
4 BRT before the new BRT. So the new BRT  
5 has been around since 2010.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm speaking  
7 of the old BRT.

8 MS. PAGAN: So since 2007.

9 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So the old  
10 BRT used to administer the tax abatement  
11 program?

12 MS. PAGAN: Yes, and they still  
13 do. Well, now it's the OPA, correct.

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: But the old  
15 BRT used to administer it directly?

16 MS. PAGAN: Yes.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And when the  
18 old BRT was administering that program,  
19 did you find that it was impacting the  
20 assessment process particularly for  
21 properties that were in close proximity  
22 to tax-abated properties? Was it driving  
23 up assessments under the old BRT?

24 MS. PAGAN: No, I wouldn't say  
25 so. And if it did drive assessments, it

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           wasn't the abatement program that drove  
3           the assessments. It's that people were  
4           renovating properties, taking them from  
5           nominal or low value and then  
6           rehabilitating them so their values --

7                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm actually  
8           not speaking of tax-abated properties,  
9           but properties that are in close  
10          proximity to tax-abated properties.

11                   MS. PAGAN: Well, so yes and  
12          no. Sales is the number one factor that  
13          changes value.

14                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: Now it does.

15                   MS. PAGAN: Well, it was back  
16          then too. It should -- that's how it  
17          always should be.

18                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: That's how  
19          it should have been. I'm not questioning  
20          whether it was that way or not. I'm  
21          actually trying to actually start a  
22          discussion of pre-OPA and post-OPA in  
23          terms of the impact of tax abatement on  
24          assessments. I'm trying to have an  
25          honest discussion about that.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 So under the old BRT, were  
3 values greatly impacted by the tax  
4 abatement program if you were in  
5 proximity to a tax-abated property?

6 MS. PAGAN: So then I'd have to  
7 say no.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Under the  
9 new BRT, are properties greatly impacted  
10 by being in proximity to a tax-abated  
11 property?

12 MS. PAGAN: So under OPA's AVI,  
13 if those abated properties have sold,  
14 then yes.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay. So is  
16 there a difference in the appeal process  
17 between the old BRT and the new BRT in  
18 terms of whether you take into  
19 consideration how the tax abatement  
20 program has impacted the assessment of  
21 properties that are in proximity to  
22 tax-abated properties?

23 MS. PAGAN: So, no, there's no  
24 new appeal process regarding that piece.  
25 And the values of non-abated properties



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           in close proximity to abated properties  
3           typically would not impact value unless  
4           there's actually a sale of them.

5                   COUNCILMAN GOODE:   So did  
6           properties in proximity to tax-abated  
7           properties receive an extra jump  
8           post-OPA?

9                   MS. PAGAN:   Pre-AVI?

10                   COUNCILMAN GOODE:   Post-AVI.

11                   MS. PAGAN:   So post-AVI, I  
12           would probably say yes if that abated  
13           property sold.  So if it was one of those  
14           abatement programs where it was rehabbed  
15           and then sold to a new homeowner, then  
16           yes.  If it was one of those abatements  
17           where I was the homeowner and put a new  
18           addition on the back but never sold my  
19           house, then no.

20                   COUNCILMAN GOODE:   So I'm just  
21           curious and just for the record, is that  
22           taken into consideration at all in terms  
23           of the appeal process now?

24                   MS. PAGAN:   Yes.  So when the  
25           Board looks at people's appeals and

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           perhaps they may have all of us on the  
3           same street, I've been in my house for 60  
4           years, old kitchen, maybe you bought your  
5           house a couple months ago, rehabbed with  
6           a ten-year tax abatement, and then  
7           there's someone in the middle, the Board  
8           does look at the range of values of all  
9           those property -- same properties, same  
10          block, different conditions. So they  
11          should be within a range, and the Board  
12          does consider that low range and high  
13          range.

14                    COUNCILMAN GOODE: And how many  
15                    situations have you come upon in terms of  
16                    appeals so far?

17                    MS. PAGAN: Well, that's one of  
18                    those trends maybe that we went over  
19                    before. It happens a lot where in those  
20                    neighborhoods that have seen a lot of  
21                    sales or a lot of gentrification or  
22                    improvement of real estate.

23                    COUNCILMAN GOODE: And what's  
24                    generally happening in terms of the first  
25                    review by OPA? Are they taking that into

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           consideration? Because when I questioned  
3           them about it, they say they don't take  
4           into consideration whether there's an  
5           abated property close to it when they do  
6           the initial assessment, but they did not  
7           say what they do upon first review in  
8           terms of whether they take it into  
9           consideration then. I doubt that they  
10          do, but I can't speak for them.

11                        So the question is, is the BRT  
12          taking that into consideration? Does  
13          that affect and change your position on  
14          whether you generally accept what OPA  
15          does in terms of first review?

16                        MS. PAGAN: Well, I'm going to  
17          go back a minute. The abatement is not  
18          the real driver. It's not that driving  
19          factor --

20                        COUNCILMAN GOODE: It's the  
21          sale.

22                        MS. PAGAN: -- whether you have  
23          an abatement or not. It's the actual  
24          sale. So that's probably why the OPA is  
25          saying it wasn't a factor that would

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           impact AVI. It shouldn't unless that --

3                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: I get that.

4           The question is, what is BRT doing in

5           terms of appeals on properties that were

6           not necessarily at full value before AVI,

7           were not necessarily impacted by the tax

8           abatement program in the same way, but

9           are impacted by the tax abatement program

10          through sales? Is the Board taking that

11          into consideration on appeals?

12                   MS. PAGAN: Yes. So, again,

13          the Board will look at a range. One of

14          the very useful reports that the Board

15          has before going into a hearing or when

16          they're reviewing cases, for short we

17          just call it the Block Report, but it

18          allows you to see every single house on a

19          block, the recent sales on the block, and

20          it also gives the condition codes,

21          interior and exterior, and also the

22          building square feet and land square

23          feet. So then the Board can easily see,

24          Oh, this house here sold for half a

25          million, it was abated. The house next

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           door, maybe the taxpayer sent in photos,  
3           old kitchen, old bath, no recent sales,  
4           they can see that range of value. So,  
5           yes, they take that into consideration.

6                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: And so OPA  
7           probably has higher revenue estimates  
8           based upon their assessments than will be  
9           realized after the appeals on those  
10          properties; is that fair to say?

11                   MS. PAGAN: I don't know for --  
12          so, yes, it's a fair statement. I don't  
13          know if OPA makes those projections or is  
14          it generating more from the Finance  
15          Department with the OPA. But, yes, I  
16          know there is an allowance made for  
17          appeals.

18                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: So I guess  
19          the question I'm asking in the end is,  
20          are we going to lose money on appeals  
21          because people are finally taking into  
22          consideration how assessments are  
23          impacted by proximity to tax-abated  
24          properties that are sold?

25                   MS. PAGAN: So will the City

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           lose money on appeals? There will be a  
3           difference with the taxable dollar value  
4           of all the assessments on record now  
5           versus the taxable value of the dollar of  
6           assessments after the 2014 appeal hearing  
7           season is done.

8                        COUNCILMAN GOODE: OPA says  
9           that it has not yet taken into  
10          consideration proximity to tax-abated  
11          properties yet. They said that they have  
12          experience and will look toward that in  
13          the future.

14                       To what extent is the BRT  
15          taking that into consideration in terms  
16          of the impact of tax-abated properties on  
17          properties that are in close proximity,  
18          and are there any numbers associated with  
19          that?

20                       MS. PAGAN: There's no numbers,  
21          but when someone does appeal, they take  
22          in all the factors into consideration, or  
23          at least the factors that the person is  
24          appealing about. Maybe it's because they  
25          live next door to a house that sold for a

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           whole lot more than theirs is worth and  
3           it has a tax abatement. So maybe their  
4           argument is non-uniformity. So the Board  
5           will make that consideration, and they'll  
6           look at the numbers. Or maybe it's just  
7           simply condition.

8                         So it's -- I hear you saying  
9           the impact of the abatement on the  
10          values, but the abatement is just a piece  
11          that may drive a bigger picture. So it's  
12          not the abatement that's impacting the  
13          neighbor's property. It's --

14                        COUNCILMAN GOODE: It's the  
15          abatement that caused the overvalue of  
16          the property that's impacting it upon  
17          sale.

18                        MS. PAGAN: Of the abated  
19          property or the house next door?

20                        COUNCILMAN GOODE: Both.

21                        MS. PAGAN: On the abated  
22          property, yes, and on the house next  
23          door, yes, if it's a sale on the block,  
24          if that abated property has sold.

25                        COUNCILMAN GOODE: See,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Councilman Oh was asking about the  
3           sticker shock created in those  
4           situations. I'm just asking whether  
5           there's any analysis being done in terms  
6           of how the Finance Department might have  
7           fallen short because of what's going to  
8           happen on appeal. And I understand how  
9           to some extent that conversation is not  
10          supposed to be had in terms of Finance  
11          Department projections and BRT appeals.  
12          I'm asking, does anyone know the number  
13          or projection?

14                       MS. PAGAN: Someone employed by  
15          the City knows the number. I don't know  
16          that number, but I know that number is  
17          looked at yearly, what the tax roll is  
18          off assessments and what that factor is  
19          for appeals, yes.

20                      COUNCILMAN GOODE: I'm speaking  
21          specifically about appeals related to  
22          those properties in proximity to  
23          tax-abated properties that caused the  
24          property to be overvalued and then sold  
25          at a higher price than it should have.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 MS. PAGAN: So that's not  
3 specifically looked at because -- so when  
4 I hear you say cause the neighboring  
5 property to be overvalued, well, perhaps.  
6 So the house next door shouldn't be at  
7 the same value as a newly rehabbed abated  
8 property, but, yes, the house next door's  
9 value will increase. So if I'm the worst  
10 house on my block, the value of my house  
11 will still rise if the sales on my block  
12 are going up, even if I live in the worst  
13 house.

14 COUNCILMAN GOODE: One more  
15 question, Mr. Chair.

16 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.  
17 Councilman Jones is already giving me  
18 dirty looks, but that's okay.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: The question  
20 simply is, so from the way the Board is  
21 approaching this, is it safe to say that  
22 those long-term homeowners won't feel the  
23 full impact until they sell their own  
24 properties?

25 MS. PAGAN: Long-term

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           homeowners are going to feel impact if  
3           the sales prices have risen in their  
4           neighborhood. Yes, they will. If the  
5           prices are rising in your neighborhood,  
6           you're going to feel the impact. What  
7           we're hearing is, Oh, great, and this is  
8           why they're so ecstatic about LOOP. So  
9           LOOP was a solution or remedy or help for  
10          them, yes, but sure, long-term property  
11          owners will feel it more.

12                    COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay. Thank  
13          you, Mr. Chair.

14                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
15          you, Councilman.

16                    Councilman Jones.

17                    COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
18          Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your  
19          timekeeper's promise.

20                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I saw the  
21          looks you were giving over here,  
22          Councilman.

23                    COUNCILMAN JONES: That's all  
24          right.

25                    Quick question. Number one, on

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           my colleague's line of questioning, it's  
3           just my theory and I remember asking in  
4           these Chambers to figure out what the  
5           actual process it was that they were  
6           using, and you had to have a Master's in  
7           advanced math in order to understand it,  
8           but in layperson's terms, if you have ten  
9           houses on a block, three of them get  
10          abatements and they put in \$200,000 worth  
11          of improvements, the tipping point is not  
12          at the point of the sale where people  
13          start to speculate and start to pick up  
14          two or three houses in anticipation of  
15          getting that kind of profit windfall that  
16          comes when a neighborhood is viewed as up  
17          and coming. All you have to do is look  
18          at what once was North Philly and is now  
19          Brewerytown or look at parts of  
20          neighboring areas in North Philly up and  
21          around --

22                           COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I'm  
23           always going to mention Francisville,  
24           Councilman.

25                           COUNCILMAN JONES: No. I

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           wasn't going to do you like that.

3                     But there are plenty of these  
4           examples where these abatements do have  
5           an immediate impact, even before sale,  
6           because people see the investment going  
7           into the area and say, Oh, it's hot.

8                     Now, one would argue one way or  
9           another if that's a good thing, but the  
10          impact, the unintended consequence to the  
11          neighbor living next door is dramatic.  
12          We've had people come from around the  
13          City and show us that they bought that  
14          property 40 years ago and now are faced  
15          with a tax bill that is more than the  
16          original amount of the house. So whether  
17          the chicken or the egg, which one came  
18          first, the impact is still the same to  
19          them, whether it's the point of sale or  
20          point of abatement, and I think I would  
21          agree with my colleague that it has a  
22          dramatic impact.

23                     So that wasn't my question, but  
24          just my observation going through this.

25                     The question I have is, we went

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           through AVI and we went and -- did we,  
3           question, examine 90 percent of the  
4           properties actually or would you claim a  
5           hundred percent?

6                   MS. PAGAN:   When you say  
7           examine?

8                   COUNCILMAN JONES:   Reassessed,  
9           revalued, actual valued, whichever you'd  
10          like.

11                   MS. PAGAN:   As far as I know,  
12          the OPA --

13                   COUNCILMAN JONES:   This is not  
14          a court of law.

15                   MS. PAGAN:   -- reassessed the  
16          entire City, yes.

17                   COUNCILMAN JONES:   So my  
18          question becomes, at what point in time  
19          are we going to attempt to do that again  
20          or is there a different methodology that  
21          will be employed neighborhood by  
22          neighborhood, sporadic sales by -- what  
23          is your next phase of this to keep track  
24          of what the actual values are?

25                   MS. PAGAN:   So I don't know.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 That's an OPA question.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's fair.

4 MS. PAGAN: The OPA will set  
5 that plan for the City.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: They haven't  
7 talked to you to give you a sense of here  
8 we go again, it's getting ready to  
9 happen, gear up kind of thing?

10 MS. PAGAN: We know it's not  
11 happening for 2015, so I think everyone  
12 took a sigh of relief. We'll see about  
13 '16, but '16 conversations have not --  
14 nothing is solidified yet.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Because one  
16 good model in the criminal justice thing,  
17 they have a CJAB, where the DA knows what  
18 the Police Commissioner is doing, the  
19 Police Commissioner knows what the Prison  
20 Commissioner is doing, the Prison  
21 Commissioner knows what the Defense  
22 Attorneys are doing, because one impacts  
23 the other.

24 MS. PAGAN: Yes.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: Similarly,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           you guys need to talk to each other so  
3           that if I need to ramp up my staff to  
4           deal with appeals or hire a different  
5           type of personnel to deal with the  
6           actions of another department, that's a  
7           good model for you guys to follow so that  
8           everyone is aware of the impacts of  
9           decision, one department to another.

10                   MS. PAGAN: So we do talk with  
11           OPA a lot. We work very closely  
12           together. So, yes, what they put out  
13           directly impacts what our production will  
14           be for the following year, and they do  
15           share that with us. And then our  
16           computer systems are so closely linked,  
17           so we do communicate.

18                   COUNCILMAN JONES: So when  
19           you're in that room again, ask them what  
20           their methodology is going to be so that  
21           you can anticipate, so that we can  
22           anticipate the fallback of this. Because  
23           in some neighborhoods it's a lot more  
24           drastic than others, and fortunately  
25           everybody wasn't impacted.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           The second part of that  
3           question is, in that second round, a  
4           lot -- in my district, I believe the  
5           figure was 69 percent of the homes either  
6           stayed the same or even went down.

7           MS. PAGAN: Okay.

8           COUNCILMAN JONES: And that's  
9           fine. Everybody didn't have that  
10          experience, but if it means that the  
11          second swing when you come back around  
12          that sticker shock now hits the other  
13          group, we need to be prepared for that as  
14          well.

15          MS. PAGAN: Yes.

16          COUNCILMAN JONES: So that  
17          methodology is critically important to  
18          us. It took us, what, damn near a decade  
19          to get our heart up to do this one, and  
20          the tremors and shocks have been felt  
21          around the City. So any anticipation of  
22          that kind of thing so that we can learn  
23          from the first time would be helpful.

24          MS. PAGAN: You'll probably  
25          know before me, though, I think.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.

3 I look forward to that.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
6 you, Councilman.

7 Councilman Oh and then  
8 Councilman Johnson.

9 COUNCILMAN OH: All right.  
10 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

11 Just a quick question on nunc  
12 pro tunc appeals. Do you know the -- are  
13 those -- at what rate are those being  
14 accepted as legitimate appeals?

15 MS. PAGAN: So if the taxpayer  
16 simply documents why they're filing their  
17 2014 appeal late, the Board will accept  
18 that nunc pro tunc petition, and I'll  
19 probably know by next spring if the  
20 majority of those get granted or not.

21 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. The  
22 reason I ask is because typically as far  
23 as I'm an attorney, nunc pro tuncs are  
24 rarely approved, because they typically  
25 involve some situation where a person,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           they were in a coma, something like that.

3                   MS. PAGAN: Right.

4                   COUNCILMAN OH: And the reason  
5           I bring that up is because we get phone  
6           calls from people who did not file on  
7           time saying, I'm going to file nunc pro  
8           tunc, I'm going to pay this amount of  
9           money and should I do it, and basically,  
10          you know -- so without really knowing if  
11          there is a large amount of people that  
12          are paying fees and going ahead and  
13          that's going around and people are filing  
14          all these nunc pro tuncs, which basically  
15          are not based on any good reason, we'd  
16          like people to know you can file it and  
17          you can pay \$5,000 or whatever you're  
18          paying, \$8,000 in some cases for these  
19          nunc pro tunc appeals, but the chances of  
20          them actually being granted simply  
21          because you're late. And I deal with a  
22          lot of people who don't speak English,  
23          and they believe that even though they  
24          filed late, without any good reason, that  
25          by paying an attorney, that they have a

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           legal basis for getting a late filing  
3           reviewed.

4                   MS. PAGAN: So the Board  
5           does -- when people come in and ask about  
6           nunc pro tuncs, whether they call or  
7           e-mail or come in the office, we do let  
8           them know that no attorney is required,  
9           number one, and there's no filing cost.  
10          And even the Court of Common Pleas, if  
11          you go down there to file a nunc pro  
12          tunc, they will actually offer now, Hey,  
13          save your \$180, \$200 and file free at the  
14          BRT.

15                   So there's no filing cost, and  
16          we won't require an attorney. And, yes,  
17          historically nunc pro tunc petitions  
18          typically do get denied. We will find  
19          out this spring the degree of the Board's  
20          leniency this year, because, you know, it  
21          was a challenging year for the entire  
22          City. So without speaking for them, I'm  
23          sure the Board will show some leniency in  
24          granting those petitions.

25                   COUNCILMAN OH: All right.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           Thank you very much.

3                   I will note for the Chair that  
4           I've come across cases where clients are  
5           being charged \$5,000 to \$7,000 to file a  
6           nunc pro tunc in court, and that's just a  
7           shame.

8                   Thank you.

9                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:   Yeah.  
10          And oftentimes those people don't have  
11          the resources to do that.

12                   Before I recognize Councilman  
13          Johnson, on that same note, I would think  
14          possibly -- and I know you can't maybe  
15          answer this definitively -- possibly one  
16          of the reasons -- and I think other  
17          Councilpeople brought this up. We  
18          understand OPA, BRT, all that kind of  
19          thing. To other people, it's alphabet  
20          soup. There were people who thought,  
21          even though we tried to get as much  
22          knowledge out as possible, that when they  
23          filed their initial review, they were  
24          filing a BRT appeal. Do you think that  
25          certainly one of the issues, because we

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           hear it now, is, I didn't know I had to  
3           file BRT, I filed for the initial review.  
4           And I think they're being honest. I  
5           don't think they're trying to get out of  
6           it. So do you think that that could  
7           possibly be one of the arguments that  
8           will be listened to that maybe is  
9           different from other years because of  
10          this possible confusion that people could  
11          have?

12                       MS. PAGAN: Yes. Absolutely.  
13          And we do ask people, Did you file that  
14          first-level review? Because if you did,  
15          we allow them to bypass that nunc pro  
16          tunc process.

17                       COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

18                       MS. PAGAN: And then just take  
19          their late appeal as though timely filed.

20                       COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.

21          Great. Great. Okay.

22                       Again, before I recognize  
23          Councilman Johnson, just for the record,  
24          we're going to go right through to the  
25          revenue tax bills just so we can keep

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 moving rather than taking a break.

3 I'm sorry. Councilman Johnson.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.

5 How you doing today? I just  
6 want to get an idea of the -- it was  
7 mentioned that the -- well, one, how many  
8 appeals have been done thus far this year  
9 and, two, because of the 1,000 percent  
10 increase, give me an idea of what  
11 practices that you will have adjusted to  
12 addressing such an increase in value.

13 MS. PAGAN: Yes. So of the  
14 23,000 appeals filed this year, 6,000  
15 have been heard or decided, and I think  
16 the piece you may have missed, since the  
17 bill passed last month, our hearing  
18 sessions have gone from three to five per  
19 week to 14 a week. So in the past where  
20 we were hearing approximately 150 cases a  
21 week, it's closer to 600. So that's good  
22 news. So we're hoping to have all  
23 residential appeals heard or decided by  
24 the end of September.

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: End of

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 September?

3 MS. PAGAN: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And just  
5 one last thing. In following up on  
6 Councilman Jones' comment regarding the  
7 collaboration between the Board of  
8 Revision of Taxes, OPA, and I will even  
9 add on the Revenue Department, like do  
10 y'all have weekly meetings where you're  
11 all in one room? Because one affects the  
12 other.

13 MS. PAGAN: Not weekly  
14 meetings.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Monthly,  
16 biweekly?

17 MS. PAGAN: Depending what's  
18 happening at the moment, I may be in  
19 meetings with the OPA three days a week  
20 and then may not see them again for a  
21 month.

22 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So --

23 MS. PAGAN: It depends what the  
24 issues are and --

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Let me

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           intervene just for a second. I just want  
3           to bring up my good constituent from the  
4           2nd Councilmanic District, Rebecca.

5                       MS. RHYNHART: I'm sorry.

6                       COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Can you  
7           come on up just for a second on behalf of  
8           the Administration. I'm just trying to  
9           get an understanding of why -- I know  
10          there's a new Managing Director  
11          restructuring under this new  
12          Administration, and you know it works --  
13          well, it works in a variety of different  
14          capacities in terms of restructuring how  
15          that particular component operates. So  
16          I'm thinking on the financial side and  
17          revenue collections, all things regarding  
18          our taxes, how come there isn't a more  
19          coordinated effort between Department of  
20          Revenue, OPA, and the BRT?

21                      MS. RHYNHART: Rebecca  
22          Rhyhart, Budget Director.

23                      There is coordination between  
24          Revenue and OPA. They're both under the  
25          Finance Director.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

3 That's correct.

4 MS. RHYNHART: So there is  
5 definitely coordination. And my  
6 understanding is the OPA and BRT do have  
7 communications.

8 MS. PAGAN: Yes.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: They have  
10 communications, but not weekly, biweekly.  
11 Is it just based upon the issues that  
12 come up? Like, for instance, the  
13 question was asked when are we going to  
14 do another assessment again. So  
15 obviously the question here was we're not  
16 going to do it in 2015, things are -- we  
17 may see what happens in 2016, but I --  
18 and I don't want to speak for Richie  
19 McKeithen because he's not here, but I  
20 think he will probably give me a  
21 different overview of where he's at or  
22 probably more detailed conversation of  
23 where he's at in terms of doing the  
24 actual annual assessments, because he  
25 said something totally different when he

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           came here before regarding how we're  
3           going to take a look at doing assessments  
4           in the future.

5                        So I'm just trying to figure  
6           out how do we get all three departments  
7           like really speaking with one voice on  
8           this issue, or do you address it based  
9           upon what the issue --

10                      MS. RHYNHART: I mean, the BRT  
11           is a separately elected office.

12                      COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

13                      MS. RHYNHART: Rob.

14                      COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Come on,  
15           Rob.

16                      And I know it's separate, but  
17           as a result of AVI -- and I'm probably  
18           one of the people that can speak from  
19           experience -- we've seen the impact  
20           significantly throughout the 2nd  
21           Councilmanic District, and the calls we  
22           get are pretty much in some ways  
23           interconnected.

24                      MR. DUBOW: I think -- and  
25           Carla can correct me if I'm wrong -- I

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           think there's constant communication  
3           between OPA and Carla. I think they work  
4           very closely together, Richie and Mike  
5           Piper, I think pretty regularly.

6                       MS. PAGAN: Yes.

7                       MR. DUBOW: I don't know that  
8           it's a scheduled weekly meeting, but I  
9           think they're in contact all the time.  
10          And I think there's constant interaction  
11          between OPA and Revenue. I don't think  
12          that that kind of communication exists or  
13          really should exist, needs to exist  
14          between BRT and Revenue.

15                      COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

16                      MR. DUBOW: So I think that's  
17          kind of how that plays out.

18                      COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So in  
19          terms of the overall plan as we move  
20          forward with reassessing individual homes  
21          in the City of Philadelphia moving  
22          forward, there will not be a concerted  
23          effort of all three of those particular  
24          organizations working together. OPA will  
25          just take the lead and will BRT just

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           follow? And then I guess Revenue will  
3           just chime in as need be?

4                   MR. DUBOW: So in terms of  
5           actually doing the assessments, so  
6           that's -- I mean, that's obviously OPA's  
7           function, but clearly impacted a lot by  
8           BRT and kind of the amount of time  
9           they're spending on the appeals process.  
10          So those two things interact really  
11          closely. I mean, the more time they're  
12          spending on appeals, the less time they  
13          can be spending on their assessment  
14          functions.

15                   COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

16                   MR. DUBOW: So this year  
17          obviously was kind of unique in that not  
18          only were all the properties reassessed,  
19          but there were some significant changes  
20          in values because there hadn't been this  
21          type of reassessment in years, and you  
22          know that better than anyone. So there  
23          were more appeals than you'd see in a  
24          typical year and probably more complex  
25          issues. So it will take longer to get

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           through that process, which means that  
3           OPA is spending more time on that, which  
4           is why there's not a '15 assessment.

5                   COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I  
6           understand now.

7                   MR. DUBOW: So that's why those  
8           two really need to work closely together.  
9           I mean, the way it affects Revenue is on  
10          the billing side. That's an OPA issue.  
11          That's an OPA interface. When BRT  
12          changes a value, that goes to OPA and  
13          then OPA will send it to Revenue. So OPA  
14          and Revenue need to work really closely.  
15          OPA and BRT need to work really closely.

16                   COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I got you.  
17          All right. Thank you.

18                   Thank you.

19                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
20          you, Councilman.

21                   Councilman Goode.

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

24                   I was waiting for Mr. Dubow to  
25          volunteer to come to the table.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 MR. DUBOW: You can always call  
3 me.

4 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Since you  
5 volunteered to come to the table, I think  
6 you know the question. What is the  
7 Finance Department's analysis as it  
8 relates to BRT appeals? Do you wait for  
9 them to be over? Do you track them on an  
10 annual basis? Do you track them  
11 geographically in terms of how appeals  
12 are going?

13 You heard the questions I asked  
14 related to tax-abated properties and  
15 those type of things where there could be  
16 a revenue loss in terms of what was  
17 projected. So how do you actually do  
18 that and when do you let us know how the  
19 appeals are going and how that number may  
20 have changed?

21 MR. DUBOW: Right. So in the  
22 budget, we have a projection on what we  
23 think appeal losses will be. We assumed  
24 a 50 percent increase in appeal losses,  
25 about \$30 million in losses. So that's

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           what's in the budget. And then we're  
3           tracking as the process goes through  
4           what's actually happening with appeals  
5           and looking at -- it's really early. So  
6           it's really too early to tell, but we'll  
7           be tracking on a regular basis what  
8           appeal losses look like as a percent of  
9           assessed value.

10                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: I get all  
11           that. When will you change your  
12           projections, at what point and what point  
13           will you let us know what's happening?

14                   MR. DUBOW: So we've changed  
15           already in some ways because looking at  
16           the schedule -- the original projection  
17           was that all the appeals will be done by  
18           the end of this fiscal year. So that  
19           clearly isn't going to happen. So our  
20           projection now is based on the majority  
21           of those appeals being resolved next  
22           year. And since when you appeal this  
23           year, you pay the old amount rather than  
24           new amount. We essentially assumed that  
25           anything that wasn't heard this year, we

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 treated it like an appeal loss.

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So you

4 are --

5 MR. DUBOW: And that will come

6 back next year after the appeals or at

7 least a portion of it would.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So is your

9 new number based upon those things that

10 are under appeal and the assumption that

11 they will pay the current tax bill?

12 MR. DUBOW: In '14 for the ones

13 that aren't heard. And then in '15, that

14 there would be -- after appeals are

15 heard, some of that revenue would come

16 back.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: So what's

18 that new number? It was 30 million. It

19 is now what?

20 MR. DUBOW: Do you know what it

21 is by year, '14 and '15?

22 Well, I'll get back to you.

23 We'll get you those exact numbers for

24 each year.

25 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
4 you, Councilman.

5 Being no -- okay. I thought  
6 somebody teed up there. Being no further  
7 questions, thank you very much.

8 MS. PAGAN: Thank you.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank you  
10 very much. Our last -- Rob, you might as  
11 well stay there.

12 MR. DUBOW: Oh, okay.

13 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Our next  
14 area is revenue tax bills.

15 (Witnesses approached witness  
16 table.)

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:  
18 Commissioner, hello again.

19 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good  
20 morning again. My name is Clarena Tolson  
21 and I'm pleased to be here as part of the  
22 Committee of the Whole to address a  
23 couple of Council bills, Bills No. 140148  
24 and Bill No. 140147.

25 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Did you

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 have a prepared statement?

3 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Please

5 proceed. I'm sorry.

6 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: I'm here  
7 to testify in support of Bill No. 140148,  
8 which extends the authorization to the  
9 School District to impose a real estate  
10 tax in Fiscal 2015.

11 This bill would continue the  
12 combined City and Schools tax rate of  
13 1.34 percent. Fifty-five percent of the  
14 funds raised through the property tax go  
15 to the School District. The City's Five  
16 Year Plan anticipates that the rate will  
17 remain in place over the life of the  
18 Plan.

19 I am also here to testify in  
20 support of Bill No. 140147, which extends  
21 the authorization for the School District  
22 to impose the U&O tax, or use and  
23 occupancy tax, to Fiscal 2015.

24 The business use and occupancy  
25 tax is a tax on the business, trade or

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           other commercial use and occupancy of  
3           real estate located in Philadelphia. The  
4           tax is collected, and the returns are  
5           filed by the owner of the property.

6                     The estimated current use and  
7           occupancy tax revenue is projected to be  
8           \$138.3 million in Fiscal '15, all of  
9           which is allocated to the School District  
10          of Philadelphia. In Fiscal 2015, the tax  
11          rate will remain 1.77 percent. For the  
12          tax year that began July 1st, 2013 and  
13          thereafter, there is a 177,000 exemption  
14          amount from the assessed value of each  
15          property actually used for the purposes  
16          of doing business. This translates into  
17          a 2,000 annual tax exemption.

18                    Both bills are essential for  
19          generating the funds we need to support  
20          our schools. We request a continuance of  
21          these bills so that they can be heard on  
22          May 5th so that they may be heard at the  
23          same time as the other bills related to  
24          the School District.

25                    We thank you for the

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           opportunity to testify today.

3                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
4           you, Commissioner.

5                   Mr. Dubow, do you have anything  
6           to add?

7                   MR. DUBOW: I'm just here for  
8           moral support, not that Clarena needs  
9           that.

10                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.  
11           Commissioner, for the record, the amount  
12           of money that's located in the proposed  
13           tax rates, the real estate and the U&O,  
14           how much money is located in those for  
15           delinquent collections?

16                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON:  
17           Delinquent collections? One moment,  
18           please, sir.

19                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Sure.

20                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: For  
21           School District -- give me one moment.  
22           I'll give you the number.

23                   Our estimate for our current  
24           delinquent or prior taxes due is \$62  
25           million.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And  
3 that's an increase from last fiscal year?

4 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: That's  
5 for Fiscal '14. An increase from the  
6 prior year, yes.

7 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All  
8 right. Thank you.

9 Councilman Johnson.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you.  
11 How you doing, Commissioner  
12 Tolson?

13 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Good  
14 afternoon, sir -- or good morning, sir.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just a  
16 couple questions regarding -- do you know  
17 off the top the percentage of individuals  
18 who enter into payment plans under our --  
19 individuals who enter -- I'm sorry;  
20 individuals who enter into payment plans  
21 who foreclose on their homes through our  
22 City's payment plans?

23 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Payment  
24 agreements?

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Payment

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 agreements, thank you, Commissioner.

3 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Surely.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I just

5 want to get an idea.

6 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Surely.

7 For Calendar Year '13, we had

8 approximately 30,000 payment agreements.

9 Calendar Year '14 to date -- we're still  
10 in the midst of that obviously; it's only  
11 four months in -- we have approximately  
12 21,500.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Twenty-one  
14 thousand?

15 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And out of  
17 the numbers for '13, do we have the  
18 amount whose houses were actually  
19 foreclosed on just based upon them not  
20 adhering to their payment agreement?

21 COMMISSIONER TOLSON: No, I do  
22 not. I can certainly look --

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: If you can  
24 provide that for me for '13. Obviously  
25 we're in the middle of '14, but year to

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           date will still be sufficient for me.  
3           It's just based upon some research we're  
4           doing. And that's citywide, correct?

5                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Yes.

6                    COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Is it  
7           possible for you to break it down into  
8           districts?

9                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We will  
10          do our very best.

11                   COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Are you  
12          able to pull zip codes or the 2nd  
13          Councilman District? If you can, that  
14          will be very, very helpful for me.

15                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We will  
16          investigate both numbers.

17                   COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you  
18          very much, Commissioner.

19                   COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
20          you, Councilman.

21                   Councilman Goode.

22                   COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you,  
23          Mr. Chairman.

24                   Mr. Dubow, these bills are  
25          being continued -- I thought you were

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 still at the table.

3 MR. DUBOW: Sorry. We were  
4 trying to figure out the answer to your  
5 last question.

6 COUNCILMAN GOODE: These bills  
7 will be continued to May 5th. You are  
8 aware the tax abatement bill that's  
9 scheduled for that day?

10 MR. DUBOW: I am.

11 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And you are  
12 aware of the legal opinion associated  
13 with that bill?

14 MR. DUBOW: I am not.

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: There is a  
16 Solicitor's opinion related to that bill.

17 MR. DUBOW: I have not seen  
18 that.

19 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Okay.  
20 Beyond that opinion, are you aware of the  
21 flexibility the SRC may or may not have  
22 with regard to the abatement bill if  
23 enacted?

24 MR. DUBOW: What the abatement  
25 bill says the SRC's role would be; is



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 that what you mean?

3 COUNCILMAN GOODE: And what  
4 flexibility they may have with regard to  
5 the abatement program if that bill is  
6 enacted.

7 MR. DUBOW: I think I am, yes.

8 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Will the Law  
9 Department be prepared to respond to that  
10 on May 5th beyond the legal opinion  
11 that's already been issued?

12 MR. DUBOW: So are you asking  
13 that we have someone from Law here to do  
14 that?

15 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Yes.

16 MR. DUBOW: Okay.

17 COUNCILMAN GOODE: Thank you.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
20 you, Councilman.

21 Councilman Jones.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
23 Mr. Chairman.

24 Actually two years ago we  
25 submitted a report that showed the large

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           amount of delinquent real estate that was  
3           owned by non-residential owners and also  
4           looked at the percentage of delinquency  
5           that they had in their respective  
6           hometowns versus in the City of  
7           Philadelphia.

8                     Have you in your collection  
9           efforts developed a strategy to go after  
10          individuals who are absentee owners that  
11          kind of take Philadelphia for granted?

12                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: Surely.  
13          There was recent -- thank you,  
14          Councilman. There was recent state  
15          legislation that allows counties to lien  
16          properties in counties outside of their  
17          home base. We have been working with the  
18          courts and prothonotaries around the  
19          state to develop a process, and our  
20          expectation is that within, I think, the  
21          next two months, two and a half months,  
22          we should have a system in place and be  
23          pursuing liens, so that if you live in  
24          Lower Merion and you own property in  
25          Philadelphia that you don't pay taxes on,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           that we can then lien your property in  
3           Lower Merion.

4                   COUNCILMAN JONES: Do you  
5           recall the size of that particular  
6           universe or receivable? I remember a  
7           figure, but if you have it close to your  
8           mind, I'd like to know what the potential  
9           for that collectable would be.

10                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON:  
11          Councilman, I don't recall that number  
12          right now, but I will get it for you.

13                   COUNCILMAN JONES: My  
14          recollection --

15                   COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We have  
16          it. I just don't recall it and I don't  
17          want to misstate it.

18                   COUNCILMAN JONES: It was  
19          closing in on 400 million as a universe,  
20          and that's that quality of folk that were  
21          out there. If in fact 50 percent, 20  
22          percent of that could come in, it would  
23          solve a whole lot of revenue problems.  
24          And I don't know what the amount was, but  
25          it was staggering.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           So in two months, we hope to be  
3           able to implement that. That should  
4           create a spike in receivables, I would  
5           imagine. I may not care too much about a  
6           North Philadelphia property or a West  
7           Philadelphia property that I wanted to  
8           speculate its way back into worth, but I  
9           sure enough will care about my Lower  
10          Merion home and the stigma that a Sheriff  
11          Sale or lien might mean to that. So I  
12          think that's a powerful tool on your tool  
13          belt that will get us a spike in people  
14          with suddenly good conscience and wanted  
15          to pay their debts to Philadelphia.

16                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: You're  
17                    right, Councilman.

18                    COUNCILMAN JONES: I look  
19                    forward to that.

20                    COMMISSIONER TOLSON: We will  
21                    get that information.

22                    COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
23                    Mr. Chairman.

24                    COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank  
25                    you, Councilman.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Being no further questions,  
3 thank you all very much for coming.

4 Thank you for all the work you do.

5 This Committee will stand in  
6 recess until this evening, April 22nd at  
7 6 o'clock, at which time we will  
8 reconvene here in Room 400, City Hall for  
9 public testimony on the proposed  
10 Operating and Capital Budgets.

11 Thank you all very much.

12 (Recess.)

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good  
14 evening, everyone.

15 (Good evening.)

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Man,  
17 that's pretty sad. You all sound like  
18 you don't want to be here.

19 Good evening, everyone.

20 (Good evening.)

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
22 That's what I'm talking about.

23 Welcome, and thank you all so  
24 much for coming down this evening.

25 Now we'll get official. This

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           is a continuation of the public hearing  
3           of the Committee of the Whole.

4                     Let me give you the public  
5           testimony ground rules. We are here this  
6           evening to hear from you about the  
7           proposed budget and where you believe the  
8           City should focus its spending  
9           priorities. To ensure that there is an  
10          opportunity for all that is here this  
11          evening to be heard, certain ground rules  
12          have been established.

13                    I hate using the term "ground  
14          rules," just the whole rule thing, but  
15          this is what the script says, so I don't  
16          want you to think that I'm imposing rules  
17          on you. I follow orders.

18                    First, your testimony should be  
19          about the budget and proposed spending  
20          priorities. Copies of that are available  
21          on the table at the back of the room.

22                    All speakers must sign up in  
23          order to testify. If you have not  
24          already signed up, please do so now by  
25          signing your name at the list at the same

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           table in the back of the room. Your name  
3           will be called in the order in which you  
4           have signed up. You will have three  
5           minutes to speak, in order to be fair,  
6           because we have such a significant number  
7           of people who are interested in  
8           testifying tonight. We want to make sure  
9           everybody gets an opportunity.

10                   We have a timer, and when you  
11           hear the old-fashioned egg timer, when  
12           your three minutes are up, that timer  
13           will go off, and if you feel like you  
14           want to stop before the three minutes are  
15           up, it's okay.

16                   I would ask Ms. Lewis to please  
17           read the name of our first speaker.

18                   MS. LEWIS: Our first speaker  
19           is Jeannine Lisitski.

20                   COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: You  
21           know what, why don't we just bring three  
22           up at a time.

23                   MS. LEWIS: Jeannine Lisitski,  
24           Kathleen Hall, and Tan Vu.

25                   (Witnesses approached witness

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 table.)

3 MS. LISITSKI: Good evening.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

5 evening.

6 MS. LISITSKI: My name is

7 Jeannine Lisitski and I'm the Executive

8 Director of Women Against Abuse, and we

9 appreciate the ongoing support of City

10 Council.

11 Women Against Abuse is the

12 largest domestic violence service

13 provider and advocacy organization here

14 in Pennsylvania. We serve about 15,000

15 people each year, and we're funded

16 through a number of line items, both

17 government and private. Philadelphia's

18 Office of Supportive Housing and

19 Department of Human Services are integral

20 in supporting the services of Women

21 Against Abuse.

22 Last year, our Safe Haven, the

23 only one in Philadelphia for survivors of

24 domestic violence, turned away an

25 all-time high of nearly 9,000 requests



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           for safe shelter. As you know, City  
3           Council prioritized funding for a new  
4           100-bed Safe Haven, and we are really  
5           happy to announce that we're making  
6           steady progress on renovations on our new  
7           building and will open this spring. The  
8           new Safe Haven will double Philadelphia's  
9           capacity to shelter survivors.

10                    Additionally, thanks to the  
11           strategic thinking of the Office of  
12           Supportive Housing, we've established a  
13           domestic violence specialist within OSH's  
14           Central Family Intake. The DV specialist  
15           is able to meet with clients to triage  
16           their housing and safety needs and  
17           directly connect them to intake in our  
18           Safe Haven, as well as the emergency bed  
19           placements that are available through our  
20           domestic violence sister agencies. The  
21           installation of this staff person has  
22           created a more seamless and safer  
23           emergency housing response for survivors.

24                    Although we are extremely  
25           grateful for the additional funding made

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           available, the 2.5 million that was  
3           allotted to the Safe Haven leaves a  
4           financial gap as well as a gap in client  
5           services. Specifically, there's not  
6           enough funding to provide parallel  
7           on-site children's and behavioral health  
8           services that we are able to provide at  
9           our current Safe Haven.

10                           Almost done.

11                           COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Go  
12           ahead.

13                           MS. LISITSKI: Both of these  
14           services are critical interventions for  
15           persons experiencing DV as they move  
16           forward from trauma, and filling this gap  
17           is fundamental to effectively addressing  
18           complex trauma.

19                           So we ask that you continue to  
20           remember victims of domestic violence in  
21           the budget and particularly those who  
22           need emergency housing and life-saving  
23           legal protections. Together, we know  
24           that we can break the cycle of abuse and  
25           create safety for families and for our

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           community.

3                       So thank you very much.

4                       COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5           Thank you so much, and thank you very  
6           much for your good work.

7                       Hold on one second, please.

8                       Councilwoman Tasco. The Chair  
9           recognizes Councilwoman Tasco.

10                      COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Good  
11           evening and thank you so much for coming  
12           out. Thank you for the wonderful work  
13           you're doing.

14                      Are there any funds from the  
15           state that are available to you for  
16           increasing locations for families?

17                      MS. LISITSKI: There's  
18           little -- state funding has been flat for  
19           so long and only last year there was a  
20           very slight increase that helped to  
21           offset the federal sequestration cut. So  
22           right now the state does support our  
23           current Safe Haven, which they support a  
24           large chunk and the City does too, but  
25           there's no additional funds.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: Thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Thank you, Councilwoman.

5 MS. LISITSKI: Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 Thank you so much for your testimony.

8 Hold on. I'm sorry. One more  
9 question. Sorry.

10 The Chair recognizes  
11 Councilwoman Brown.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

13 Good evening.

14 MS. LISITSKI: Good evening.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:

16 Councilwoman Tasco raised a question  
17 about state contribution. Speak briefly  
18 and more about the work you're doing on  
19 behalf of children in that circumstance.

20 MS. LISITSKI: So within -- we  
21 have children's case management. So  
22 every family that comes to us, we have a  
23 case manager specifically for the  
24 children. So they literally make sure  
25 that their school is seamless. You know,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           if they have to transfer to schools, they  
3           go and help create a safety plan, because  
4           those kids are also in danger. They make  
5           sure that the children are getting  
6           trauma-informed behavioral healthcare,  
7           whether it be with us or within the  
8           community, and that their needs are  
9           addressed.

10                         We have many children who come  
11           to us and are not speaking because of the  
12           trauma that they've seen, and by working  
13           with them, by having behavioral  
14           healthcare on site, we're able to turn  
15           that around quickly. We're seeing that  
16           children are very resilient, but only if  
17           they can get these critical services.  
18           And so in our current shelter, we have  
19           them, but in the new Safe Haven, we  
20           won't, because we have 2.5 million  
21           allotted and that's not enough.

22                         COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: What about  
23           after-school programming for the  
24           children?

25                         MS. LISITSKI: And that's part

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           of what we do as well. We have  
3           after-school programming at our current  
4           Safe Haven. We will not have that at the  
5           new Safe Haven because of the gap.

6                    COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. All  
7           right. That's what I needed to know.  
8           And so with that, then, any connectedness  
9           or support from the Philadelphia  
10          Foundation?

11                   MS. LISITSKI: Yes, a lot of  
12          support.

13                   COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

14                   MS. LISITSKI: They've been a  
15          champion of this work.

16                   COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay,  
17          then. Thank you.

18                   Thank you, Mr. President.

19                   COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
20          Thank you, Councilwoman.

21                   Thank you.

22                   Please proceed.

23                   MS. HALL: Hi. My name is  
24          Kathleen Hall. I'm a medical case  
25          manager at a federally qualified health

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           center within West Philadelphia area, and  
3           I come speaking on behalf of a new  
4           program that we're trying to get started  
5           called New Beginnings. New Beginnings  
6           would be a non-profit organization, and  
7           we're looking to target teen pregnancy  
8           prevention.

9                        I've been in the non-profit  
10          field for over 25 years, and what I  
11          experience and see in teenagers and  
12          pregnancy, as young as 12 years old are  
13          pregnant and up to the age of 19, and I  
14          see what teen pregnancy can do to  
15          teenagers with lack of income for  
16          families, lack of housing, lack of  
17          support system, and this program would  
18          target prevention of pregnancy by  
19          educating teenagers on pregnancy  
20          prevention, counseling, healthcare. We  
21          could link them into health services as  
22          well as education to encourage them to  
23          continue their education as well as  
24          preventing pregnancy.

25                        The purpose of this would be to

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           hope that the City Council will look at a  
3           community after-school educational  
4           program within the West Philadelphia  
5           area, and this would focus on educating  
6           teenagers in group and individual  
7           settings on prevention of not only  
8           pregnancy, but prevention of STD and HIV.  
9           Also, we would hope that -- there are  
10          really no current programs within the  
11          West Philadelphia area that would service  
12          such a community of teenagers to help  
13          educate them on reasons why to delay  
14          sexual behaviors and to use birth control  
15          if they are sexually active.

16                        The benefits of this program,  
17                        not only would it be to prevent STD and  
18                        HIV, also the benefit would be to partner  
19                        with the Family Planning Council in their  
20                        program called I Matter. And I Matter is  
21                        a program that also speaks to teen  
22                        pregnancy prevention. This program would  
23                        also help to refer teenagers into  
24                        healthcare as well as give them other  
25                        options, because we feel as though the



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           more options they have, the better  
3           choices that they would make.

4                       There are several buildings  
5           throughout West Philadelphia that I have  
6           noticed, such as the building at 60th and  
7           Haverford, that are vacant. There's  
8           another one at 55th and Media that is  
9           also vacant, and these buildings will  
10          also be a good place to have an  
11          educational center for teenagers after  
12          school or even before school. It would  
13          be like a place where teenagers could  
14          come and get information on prevention.

15                      COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16          Thank you. Man, I hate the way it  
17          abruptly cut you off. Were you done?

18                      MS. HALL: Yes.

19                      COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

20          Okay. It just sounded like it cut you  
21          mid sentence. Okay. Thank you. Thank  
22          you so much for your testimony.

23                      MS. LEWIS: The next three  
24          speakers, Tan Vu, Farah Jimenez, and  
25          Julie Hawkins.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 (No response.)

3 MS. LEWIS: Tan Vu, Farah  
4 Jimenez, and Julie Hawkins.

5 MS. HAWKINS: There's a whole  
6 group of us. That's why we're together  
7 as a panel.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: My  
9 understanding is there's four  
10 individuals --

11 MS. HAWKINS: There's four of  
12 us. Do you want us all to come up now?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Did  
14 we call any of the names?

15 MS. HAWKINS: Just mine.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Oh,  
17 okay. So you want to come up together?

18 MS. HAWKINS: Yes.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
20 Fine. Sure.

21 MS. LEWIS: Julie Hawkins,  
22 Michael Norris, and Christina Rose.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
24 Let's just do the four.

25 (Witnesses approached witness

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 table.)

3 MS. HAWKINS: We have copies of  
4 our testimony.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And  
6 if you have any information in support of  
7 your testimony, you can just submit it  
8 for the record and we will include it in  
9 the docket.

10 Good evening.

11 MR. NORRIS: Good evening,  
12 Council President Clarke and members of  
13 City Council. Thank you for the  
14 opportunity to speak with you this  
15 evening about the --

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
17 Could you all just for the record give  
18 your name at the start of your testimony  
19 when you testify just for the  
20 stenographer.

21 MR. NORRIS: Sure. I'm Michael  
22 Norris. I'm the Interim Executive  
23 Director of the Greater Philadelphia  
24 Cultural Alliance.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Thank you.

3 MR. NORRIS: Thank you for this  
4 opportunity to speak with you about the  
5 cultural sector's impact on our city and  
6 the need to restore funding for the  
7 Philadelphia Cultural Fund to its  
8 previous level of \$3.2 million.

9 I'm the Interim Executive  
10 Director of the Greater Philadelphia  
11 Cultural Alliance. The Cultural Alliance  
12 represents over 400 of the region's  
13 cultural organizations, and nearly  
14 three-quarters of those organizations are  
15 here in Philadelphia. We are also proud  
16 to be one of the 273 Philadelphia  
17 Cultural Fund grantees.

18 Today, you will hear from Julie  
19 Hawkins, Board President of the  
20 Philadelphia Cultural Fund; Steven  
21 Wittenberg, Board President of Spells  
22 Writing Lab, another Cultural Fund  
23 grantee; and Asia Kaiser, a Philadelphia  
24 teen who participates in arts programs  
25 around the City.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Today, we are celebrating  
3 Philadelphia Arts Advocacy Day. Arts  
4 supporters from across the City have  
5 signed our petition, taken to social  
6 media, and joined us here today, all to  
7 show their support for the Cultural Fund.  
8 The people who participated in this  
9 campaign hail from every district in the  
10 City and represent different backgrounds,  
11 ages, and socioeconomic statuses. The  
12 diversity of these advocates reflects the  
13 vast impact that our cultural  
14 organizations have on the people of  
15 Philadelphia.

16 Philadelphia is home to a  
17 vibrant and celebrated cultural sector.  
18 The mile from City Hall to the  
19 Philadelphia Museum of Art is often  
20 lauded as the most artistic mile in the  
21 country, but it isn't just the famed  
22 "Museum Mile" that makes Philadelphia a  
23 world-class cultural destination. We  
24 have art galleries in Old City, jazz  
25 festivals in West Oak Lane, and public

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           gardens in Strawberry Mansion. We are  
3           also home to organizations like Spells  
4           Writing Lab that are stepping up and  
5           providing creative outlets for students  
6           with no access to arts education.

7                     All these programs and  
8           organizations have a major impact on the  
9           Philadelphia economy. The Philadelphia  
10          cultural sector has a total economic  
11          impact of \$2.8 billion and generates  
12          30,000 jobs, \$766 million in household  
13          income for Philadelphia residents, and  
14          \$119 million in tax revenue for the City.

15                    But all the vibrancy generated  
16          by our cultural assets is threatened by  
17          financial vulnerability. Almost half of  
18          the organizations we monitor are in the  
19          red. Our belief is that if our community  
20          wants the cultural sector to continue  
21          delivering these economic and social  
22          benefits, we need to invest in it.  
23          That's why we support public policies  
24          that provide cultural organizations with  
25          the resources they need and why we

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2 encourage City Council to restore the  
3 Cultural Fund to \$3.2 million.

4           In closing, I would like to  
5 read a statement from Pulitzer  
6 Prize-winning playwright Quiara Alegria  
7 Hudes, who is a Philadelphia native and  
8 the niece of Councilwoman  
9 Quinones-Sanchez. As a teenager, Quiara  
10 joined Philadelphia Young Playwrights,  
11 another Cultural Fund grantee, where she  
12 wrote and produced her first play.  
13 Quiara writes that, quote, "When I put  
14 pen to paper and wrote my play, I decided  
15 to articulate the City of Philadelphia as  
16 I had experienced it growing up in West  
17 Philly. Articulating my world view,  
18 giving voice to a new side of things  
19 changed my relationship with my world. I  
20 suddenly was an active shaper of my  
21 community, an intellectual, an  
22 entertainer, a truth teller. Young  
23 Playwrights prepared me for a life in  
24 literature, a life of civic action, a  
25 life of activism, and a true democratic

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 engagement with my community."

3 One sentence.

4 On behalf of the supporters in  
5 this room and across the City, I ask you  
6 to restore the Cultural Fund's budget so  
7 that all the residents of our city,  
8 especially young people like Quiara and  
9 Asia, can benefit from Philadelphia's  
10 rich and diverse cultural assets.

11 Thank you.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

13 Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. HAWKINS: Hi. I'm Julie  
16 Hawkins, Board President of the  
17 Philadelphia Cultural Fund. Thanks again  
18 for the opportunity to be here today.

19 For the last month or so,  
20 you've seen a lot of tweets and posts  
21 about what Philly Arts Do. You saw it  
22 happening live in the hallways just a few  
23 hours ago. You've also seen a lot of  
24 requests today to restore arts funding in  
25 Philadelphia. So I'm here tonight to



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           tell you more about what Philly Arts Do  
3           so that we can work together to restore  
4           that arts funding.

5                        What Philly Arts Do for people  
6           and communities is documented in multiple  
7           research studies. The arts in  
8           Philadelphia promote individual growth,  
9           educational gains, economic development,  
10          community dialogue, and social cohesion.  
11          They animate spaces, celebrate our  
12          diverse heritage, provide pathways to  
13          opportunity, and support healing.

14                      What Philly Arts Do is provide  
15          a great return on investment. One  
16          example is an after-school program like  
17          Rock to the Future that provide safe and  
18          empowering environments for Philadelphia  
19          youth. At Rock to the Future, students  
20          receive individual music lessons, learn  
21          to read sheet music, compose their own  
22          songs, play a range of instruments, and  
23          form their own rock bands. Rock to the  
24          Future does what Philly Arts Do so well.  
25          It engages the whole person by tapping

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           into and then building on what matters to  
3           them.

4                   What Philly Arts Do is step up  
5           to the plate. Despite cuts in funding,  
6           organizations and artists maintain their  
7           support of classrooms, curriculum,  
8           teachers, and students in the  
9           Philadelphia School District. Groups  
10          like Musicopia, who had two wonderful  
11          musicians playing in the hallway earlier  
12          today, provide not just music  
13          instruction, but musical instruments to  
14          schools across the District and the  
15          region. Last year alone, Musicopia  
16          served more than 34,000 students.

17                   What Philly Arts Do is  
18          wonderful. It's vital, but it needs your  
19          increased support in the City budget.  
20          When the recession hit, the Philadelphia  
21          Cultural Fund was cut by 42 percent, from  
22          \$3.2 million to \$1.84 million. It's been  
23          flat-lining ever since. Among the  
24          country's five most populated cities,  
25          Philadelphia has by far the lowest

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           per-capita local government investment in  
3           arts and culture. This is also true of  
4           cities whose populations are comparable  
5           to Philadelphia's and smaller cities  
6           whose cultural sectors, dare I say, are  
7           maybe not as vibrant and diverse as ours.  
8           We need you to restore arts funding in  
9           Philadelphia.

10                   What Philly Arts Do is forge  
11           ahead despite the obstacles. Even with  
12           sustained cuts in funding, the Cultural  
13           Fund has increased its access to  
14           Philadelphia's artists and cultural  
15           organizations. We've redesigned our  
16           grant process to be more inclusive and  
17           more supportive of the diversity and  
18           range of our city's cultural assets and  
19           its people. These changes are working,  
20           and they need your support.

21                   What Philly Arts Do deserves  
22           more investment from Philadelphia. An  
23           increase in the Cultural Fund will enable  
24           us to bring back youth arts enrichment  
25           grants. They make investments in arts

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           education that serve K through 12  
3           students in the School District.

4                   Thank you for the chance to  
5           speak today, for the work that you do on  
6           behalf of all Philadelphians, and for  
7           considering the City's investment in what  
8           Philly Arts Do. Restore our funding.

9                   (Appause.)

10                   COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11           Thank you.

12                   MR. WITTENBERG: Good evening.  
13           My name is Steve Wittenberg, the  
14           President of Spells Writing Lab, a small  
15           but growing non-profit located in Council  
16           President Clarke's 5th District in North  
17           Philadelphia on the campus of the Village  
18           of Arts and Humanities. Our mission is  
19           to instill the love of creative writing  
20           in Philadelphia's school-age children  
21           through fun and imaginative writing  
22           programs, which includes an after-school  
23           writing club, workshops, and a six-week  
24           summer writing camp, all free programs.

25                   Over our four-year history, we

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           estimate that we've engaged over 4,000  
3           students in schools and in over 70  
4           community programs such as the  
5           Philadelphia Science Festival and Mayor  
6           Nutter's PhillyGoes2College program.  
7           Eighty to 90 percent of our students are  
8           considered underprivileged. We've  
9           achieved success on a meager \$40,000 per  
10          year budget. All other accomplishments  
11          come by way of pro bono services, local  
12          college interns, and volunteerism.

13                   Over the next few years, we aim  
14          to make a significant impact on  
15          Philadelphia's youth. With increased  
16          funding, we will be able to renovate a  
17          blighted building, which will double our  
18          capacity. We can help local schools  
19          create after-school writing programs. We  
20          can expand other areas of the City. This  
21          month we met with Drexel University to  
22          begin discussions on a collaboration to  
23          bring Spells to West Philadelphia as part  
24          of the President's Promise Zone program.  
25          Our success depends on an influx of grant

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           money from endowments like the  
3           Philadelphia Cultural Fund. Last month  
4           we received a modest, but meaningful,  
5           grant from the Fund, which unfortunately  
6           decreased almost 50 percent from prior  
7           years. The current grant will help us,  
8           but is not nearly enough.

9                         We've heard our challenges  
10           echoed by other organizations with whom  
11           we collaborate. As the Director of  
12           Legacy and Philanthropy Solutions at SEI,  
13           I'm exposed to the same budget issues of  
14           many meaningful organizations throughout  
15           the region. We understand the  
16           constraints of the City's budget, but ask  
17           that you strongly consider increasing the  
18           Philadelphia Cultural Fund's allotment in  
19           future years.

20                        Writing is a key to success,  
21           both in school and future endeavors. In  
22           this struggling educational climate,  
23           Spells is an outlet to improve children's  
24           writing. I invite you to our lab, our  
25           writing lab, where you'll see the impact

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           small organizations can make. You'll see  
3           students like Vanessa and Amir  
4           experimenting with words in a safe and  
5           welcoming space, reaching for books and  
6           computers to expand the world through  
7           stories and ideas, and you'll see those  
8           same students create their own works and  
9           take that skill and love of writing home  
10          with them. The proof of our success is  
11          our impact on the students.

12                         In closing, I leave you with  
13          the musings of Trinity, age 12, who wrote  
14          the following in a Martin Luther King,  
15          Jr. workshop called "I have a dream."

16                         I have a dream. I have a dream  
17          that there will be no more writer's  
18          block, because right now I have writer's  
19          block.

20                         I have a dream that one day  
21          I'll know what to say and what I'm  
22          talking about.

23                         I have a dream that one day I  
24          won't have writer's block, because I've  
25          always had lots of things on my mind, but

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           never quite had time to sort them out.

3                   I have a dream. I have a dream  
4           that my mind will one day sort out all my  
5           thoughts and make me a better writer.

6                   I have a dream that one day I'd  
7           eat octopus with my best friend Machiah  
8           because we want to eat some.

9                   I have a dream that one day I'd  
10          stop rambling about random things because  
11          then people will listen. I want to be  
12          the voice of the voiceless. This is my  
13          hope. This will be the day when I move  
14          on to 7th grade, and when this happens,  
15          I'll be best writer in my school and take  
16          on writing assignments anyone gives me.  
17          I have a dream.

18                   We at Spells have a dream too.  
19          Without the assistance of organizations  
20          like the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, we  
21          will not be able to fulfill the dreams of  
22          Trinity and students like her who strive  
23          to embrace and explore new forms of  
24          self-expression.

25                   Thank you.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

3 Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. KAISER: Hello.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 Hello.

8 MS. KAISER: My name is Asia

9 Kaiser and I'm a sophomore at J.R.

10 Masterman. I'm also on the Teen Council

11 for STAMP, the Greater Philadelphia

12 Cultural Alliance program which gives

13 Philadelphia teens free access to museums

14 across the City.

15 I love having access to so many

16 cultural opportunities in the City with

17 my STAMP pass. When I was younger, my

18 mom would take me to museums all the

19 time, and I've loved having the

20 opportunity to branch out on my own and

21 explore my own interests.

22 I was born and raised in

23 Philadelphia and I love the City because

24 of its beautiful arts, great cultural

25 diversity, and historic importance. I

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           believe that Philadelphia's rich talent  
3           in the arts is part of what makes it the  
4           unique city it is.

5                       I am so grateful that there are  
6           so many ways for me to see art and  
7           experience culture in Philadelphia and  
8           also that there are so many organizations  
9           that give me opportunities to participate  
10          in the arts.

11                      One organization I'm especially  
12          close to is Musicopia, a Philadelphia  
13          Cultural Fund grantee organization. I  
14          play the cello in their orchestra, and  
15          I'm very passionate about what I do. I  
16          love music and the experience of playing  
17          in an orchestra with fellow musicians. I  
18          believe that playing an instrument is a  
19          beautiful form of self-expression and  
20          freedom and an opportunity that every  
21          student in Philadelphia should be able to  
22          experience.

23                      I was principal cellist in  
24          Philadelphia Middle School All-City and I  
25          have been a member of the High School

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           All-City Orchestra for two years, and I'm  
3           very proud of my accomplishments, which  
4           have been made possible by these type of  
5           organizations across the City.

6                     I think one way to make  
7           Philadelphia an even more amazing city is  
8           by giving opportunities for all children  
9           to explore the arts, whether it's in  
10          school, on their own or through one of  
11          the many amazing cultural institutions in  
12          Philadelphia, like the Philadelphia  
13          Cultural Fund grantee organizations.

14                    Thank you.

15                    COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

16           Thank you.

17                    (Appause.)

18                    COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I

19           pity who has to follow you in this  
20           testimony. Thank you so much.

21                    MR. NORRIS: Thank you.

22                    MS. LEWIS: The next three  
23           witnesses, Beth McConnell, Judith  
24           Robinson, and Linda Richardson.

25                    Beth McConnell, Judith

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Robinson, and Linda Richardson.

3 (Witnesses approached witness  
4 table.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good  
6 evening.

7 MS. McCONNELL: I have some  
8 longer written testimony. I'll  
9 summarize.

10 Good evening. Thank you for  
11 the opportunity to testify. My name is  
12 Beth McConnell, Policy Director at the  
13 Philadelphia Association of CDCs.

14 As you all know, Congress has  
15 slashed funding that Philadelphia  
16 receives for affordable housing and  
17 community development by more than 40  
18 million since 2002, and another cut of  
19 740,000 is projected for our CDBG  
20 allocation next year. These cuts have  
21 devastating impacts on Philadelphia's  
22 low-income residents and distressed  
23 neighborhoods. In fact, we only have  
24 about 38 units of affordable housing for  
25 every 100 households that are extremely

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           low income. The waiting list for housing  
3           repair programs are years long, and too  
4           many of our neighborhood commercial  
5           corridors are plagued with vacancies,  
6           poor property conditions, and litter.

7                        We want to applaud Council and  
8           the Administration for your leadership in  
9           creating and expanding both the CDC Tax  
10          Credit Program and the Philadelphia  
11          Housing Trust Fund, but the City's annual  
12          General Fund outlay is inadequate to meet  
13          the enormous needs. Just a little over 3  
14          million is proposed for next year, and  
15          that's down from 5 and a half million in  
16          FY07.

17                       So we want to urge that you  
18          work with the Administration to pass  
19          legislation to increase funding for the  
20          Housing Trust Fund this spring by  
21          increasing the mortgage and deed  
22          recording fee by \$5. That could provide  
23          up to 750,000 per year to help restore  
24          some of the cuts to affordable housing  
25          development and preservation.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2                   We also urge Council to work  
3 with the Administration to provide a  
4 million in new General Fund dollars for  
5 two key commercial corridor programs,  
6 which would allow the Commerce Department  
7 to expand the programs to as many as 12  
8 corridors. Our neighborhood commercial  
9 corridors are the economic veins of our  
10 city, and research shows that when  
11 they're in good condition, they increase  
12 home values by 36 percent, but the  
13 opposite is true when they're in bad  
14 condition. But of the more than 60  
15 corridors throughout our city, fewer than  
16 18 actually receive support from the  
17 Targeted Corridor Management Program and  
18 the Corridor Cleaning grants, all of  
19 which are funded by CDBG funds. And some  
20 distressed corridors, particularly in the  
21 Northwest, are not eligible to receive  
22 funding from these programs because of  
23 federal program restrictions. So  
24 providing some General Fund dollars would  
25 give Commerce the flexibility to direct

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           resources to corridors that are not CDBG  
3           eligible, but really still in need of  
4           management and cleaning.

5                         We also urge Council to support  
6           Mayor Nutter's request for \$500,000 from  
7           the General Fund as part of a larger  
8           funding strategy for the Land Bank. Once  
9           fully implemented, the Land Bank will, of  
10          course, transform the way we get vacant  
11          properties back into productive reuse,  
12          generating property tax revenue that our  
13          schools and cities need.

14                        In closing, more than 42  
15          percent, or more than \$20 million, of  
16          Philadelphia's CDBG allocation will be  
17          spent on operational costs for the City  
18          in FY15, and those are dollars that are  
19          not then available to community  
20          organizations on the ground that provide  
21          critical services, support, and economic  
22          development activity in our  
23          neighborhoods. The work that City staff  
24          does with those funds is very important,  
25          but it's time for the General Fund to

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           replace some of those dollars. At a time  
3           when some parts of the City are seeing  
4           new private investment and growth, it's  
5           really our responsibility to invest  
6           public dollars in equitable development  
7           strategies to benefit neighborhoods and  
8           residents that would otherwise be left  
9           behind.

10                         Thank you very much for  
11           allowing us to provide testimony.

12                         COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
13           Thank you so much for your testimony.

14                         Hold on.

15                         The Chair recognizes Councilman  
16           Jones.

17                         COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
18           Mr. President.

19                         I just want to thank you for  
20           your testimony. We just engaged in a  
21           dialogue with the Office of Housing and  
22           Community Development, the Redevelopment  
23           Authority, and they're talking about the  
24           continued cut from CDBG dollars, and I  
25           wanted to task them to look in



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           non-conventional ways to figure it out  
3           how to get affordable housing, how to get  
4           affordable rental, and one of the  
5           proposals Council President Clarke did is  
6           to look outside the box to figure out how  
7           we can create a total of about 3,000  
8           units within affordable housing.

9                        So I don't know if you had an  
10           opportunity to check that out, but we  
11           would love to collaborate with you on  
12           figuring it out. So I just wanted to put  
13           that out there and make that offer.

14                       MS. McCONNELL: Absolutely.  
15           Thank you, Councilman.

16                       COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
17           Mr. President.

18                       COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
19           Thank you, Councilman.

20                       Thank you so much for your  
21           testimony.

22                       Good evening.

23                       MS. RICHARDSON: Good evening.  
24           My name is Linda Waters Richardson and I  
25           serve as the President of the Uptown

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Entertainment and Development  
3           Corporation. My organization is the  
4           owner of the historic Uptown Theatre.  
5           Our mission is to provide neighborhood  
6           stabilization through programs such as  
7           planning -- we are a Registered Community  
8           Organization -- our youth programs, art  
9           and culture, and economic development.

10                       We are currently convening many  
11           art and cultural groups that provide  
12           services to the broader community, but  
13           whose mission is to promote and  
14           perpetuate African American culture. If  
15           fully operational, our combined operating  
16           budgets would have an impact of 189 jobs  
17           and our construction capital budget would  
18           represent 225 jobs. Our organizations  
19           are in neighborhoods that are low income  
20           and many are doing historic preservation  
21           while providing vital services to  
22           underserved residents. While our  
23           missions are culture in nature, we do not  
24           have a one-and-done approach to tourism.  
25           Many of us visiting historic sites visit

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           in elementary school, or when we have  
3           children, take them, or when we are  
4           lucky, like myself, have grandchildren,  
5           take them.

6                   Our organizations and sites  
7           provide ongoing services to ensure  
8           community enhancement, and many of us are  
9           models of the National Historic Trust  
10          emerging sites that are looking at a  
11          broad range of approach to historic  
12          preservation. The first African American  
13          historic preservation trail that we have  
14          convened promotes health and wellness  
15          through biking, walking, and adding  
16          cultural enrichment, which was launched  
17          in February of 2013. The pilot project  
18          was supported by the Delaware Valley  
19          Regional Planning Commission.

20                   There are over 400 African  
21          American historic sites documented.  
22          However, many of those sites no longer  
23          exist, and those that do are in need of  
24          capital and operating support. Many of  
25          those sites in our network promote 19th

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           and 20th century icons such as the Paul  
3           Robeson House in West Philadelphia, the  
4           John Coltrane House in North  
5           Philadelphia, Tindley Temple in South  
6           Philadelphia and, of course, the Uptown  
7           Theatre.

8                       I can talk a little bit about  
9           the trail. So I'm going to truncate my  
10          presentation, but the trail is organized  
11          in historic areas that promote the  
12          Philadelphia 7th Ward, the Echoes of the  
13          Great Migration, Music as an Expression  
14          of Culture, Religious Institutions as  
15          Community Builders, and the Underground  
16          Railroad to Civil Rights, Pathways to  
17          Freedom.

18                      I'm just going to say we want  
19          to support and we are asking for support  
20          for funding of culture as well as  
21          expanding the General Fund for support of  
22          the neighborhood cultural corridors, the  
23          Cultural Cleaning grants, and I have a  
24          list of those groups that I represent and  
25          in my testimony.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 So I want to thank you for your  
3 support.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5 Thank you so much.

6 MS. LEWIS: The next three  
7 witnesses, Frank Monaghan, Charles  
8 Lanier, and Amy Dougherty.

9 (Witnesses approached witness  
10 table.)

11 MR. MONAGHAN: Should I start?

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good  
13 evening.

14 MR. MONAGHAN: Hi. Good  
15 evening. Thank you for the opportunity.  
16 I'm Frank Monaghan, Executive Director,  
17 Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia. We  
18 work to transform lives. We build and  
19 repair homes in Philadelphia for people  
20 who are in between 30 and 60 percent of  
21 the median income. The families buy the  
22 house from us at a zero interest mortgage  
23 after they do 350 hours of sweat equity.  
24 Tomorrow we will be dedicating our 174th  
25 house, actually in Council President

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Clarke's district, and we're very proud  
3           of that.

4                       We also restore and preserve  
5           existing homes for low-income homeowners  
6           by providing repairs, needed  
7           modifications, and weatherization. We're  
8           able to do this through two robust  
9           Habitat repair programs that work in many  
10          neighborhoods throughout the City.  
11          Habitat is able to assist 75 to 100  
12          homeowners and their families each year  
13          through these preservation programs. We  
14          found that if the roof goes in four  
15          years, the home becomes vacant. So we  
16          try to catch it early on.

17                      Habitat is strategically  
18          building and preserving communities  
19          throughout the City. We leverage every  
20          dollar we spend to provide \$4.50 worth of  
21          critical services, yet we are bound by  
22          our limited financial resources. Federal  
23          and state funding for community  
24          development and affordable housing has  
25          been drastically cut over the last few

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           years. At Habitat, we very much  
3           appreciate that the City and specifically  
4           OHCD is facing nearly \$40 million in  
5           budget cuts from the federal government.  
6           We understand that this is for City  
7           agencies to make some extremely difficult  
8           decisions about how to prioritize the use  
9           of CDBG and other funds.

10                       While funding has decreased,  
11           the need has not. The National Low  
12           Income Housing Coalition estimates that  
13           Philadelphia has only 38 affordable units  
14           for every 100 households. We need  
15           approximately 60,000 more units to meet  
16           the need of residents who live at or  
17           below 30 percent of AMI.

18                       We understand these cuts hurt  
19           all agencies that are working to  
20           preserve, restore, and build safe and  
21           affordable homes for hundreds of  
22           thousands of low-income residents in  
23           Philadelphia. However, locally generated  
24           funds have also been inadequate in  
25           comparison to the extreme needs. The

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           City's General Fund contribution to  
3           affordable homes and community economic  
4           development is minimal at just \$3 million  
5           per year. Of this, \$2.3 million from the  
6           City's General Fund allocated for vacant  
7           land management is essential, but we also  
8           need more funding that goes to preserve  
9           affordable homes and Philadelphia  
10          traditional housing stock.

11                       Specifically, we urge the  
12          Nutter Administration to work with City  
13          Council to introduce and pass legislation  
14          to increase funding to the Housing Trust  
15          Fund by raising the mortgage deed and  
16          recording fees by \$5, which could raise  
17          an additional \$750,000 per year.

18                       We also ensure adequate funding  
19          for the Land Bank so that organizations  
20          like Habitat are able to acquire and  
21          aggregate vacant land to seize and  
22          capitalize on all opportunities for more  
23          affordable housing. Mayor Nutter has  
24          proposed using 500,000 General Fund  
25          dollars towards the Land Bank's total



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           budget. It is critical to ensure that  
3           whatever local sources of revenue are  
4           identified, that funding is adequate to  
5           ensure the Land Bank works.

6                    Consider utilizing some larger  
7           proportion of CDBG funding for housing  
8           preservation for low-income homeowners.  
9           According to the Year 40 Preliminary Con  
10          Plan, more than 42 percent of  
11          Philadelphia CDBG allocations will be  
12          spent on operational costs. This is a  
13          significant amount totalling more than  
14          \$20 million. This puts a significant  
15          drain on the potential funding for the  
16          essential community organizations that  
17          provide critical services.

18                   Habitat also supports -- I'm  
19          just about done -- the City's DCED  
20          application for 300,000 in state grant  
21          funds for residential and commercial  
22          facade improvements as a way to leverage  
23          the exciting opportunities of the Promise  
24          Zone designation in Mantua, as well as  
25          the Choice Neighborhoods federal grant

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           applications in Eastern North  
3           Philadelphia.

4                     Thank you very much for  
5           everything that you do.

6                     COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
7           Thank you for your testimony, sir.

8                     Councilwoman? Councilwoman,  
9           did you --

10                    COUNCILWOMAN TASCO: I'll talk  
11           to him on the side.

12                    COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: You  
13           okay? Thank you.

14                    MR. LANIER: I also have my  
15           testimony to distribute.

16                    Good evening.

17                    COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good  
18           evening.

19                    MR. LANIER: Thank you for  
20           allowing me the opportunity to present  
21           testimony on behalf of the Neighborhood  
22           Advisory Committees and Neighborhood  
23           Action Centers, hereafter called NACs.  
24           My name is Charles Lanier and I am the  
25           Board President of Strawberry Mansion

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Neighborhood Action Center as well as the  
3           Interim Executive Director of the Hunting  
4           Park Neighborhood Advisory Committee.

5                   I have chosen as my theme "The  
6           Choice - The Issue of Community Survival  
7           in Philadelphia." I've made this choice  
8           as a theme because it has become a matter  
9           of survival for all of the committed and  
10          dedicated NAC Board members, staff, and  
11          volunteers that believe in the mission of  
12          promoting the general development,  
13          welfare, and well-being of all people  
14          residing or established in the  
15          communities of the City of Philadelphia,  
16          utilizing established and innovative  
17          methods of developing the community,  
18          focusing primarily on, but not limited to  
19          the areas of housing, education, economic  
20          development, social welfare, neighborhood  
21          beautification and recreation, without  
22          displacing residents.

23                   I emphasize innovative methods  
24          because as NACs, we are the most  
25          innovative and compassionate group of

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           people representing the population of  
3           people we serve every day, the majority  
4           of who are low- and moderate-income  
5           individuals and families who may not have  
6           the necessary resources to make a  
7           difference in their lives. As NACs, we  
8           make that difference.

9                        We work long hours. We are the  
10           ambassadors of our communities. We  
11           provide services that allow our  
12           communities to have access to programs,  
13           events, and community activities and, in  
14           many instances, we are the voice of the  
15           community. In many of our communities,  
16           through the use of community computer  
17           labs, many of the community would be  
18           facing severe barriers to the  
19           technological information highway.

20                       In addition to being the  
21           advocates between the City and the  
22           community, community organizers, and  
23           information resource centers, we provide  
24           services and programs that consist of,  
25           but not limited to, basic systems repair,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           weatherization, energy conservation,  
3           energy programs (LIHEAP, CRISIS, UESF,  
4           LICAP), housing counseling, heater  
5           repair, emergency food centers, and  
6           technology centers. We provide community  
7           service briefings. We are also a  
8           Registered Community Organization that  
9           inform our communities about zoning  
10          issues and we organize block captains,  
11          conduct vacant property surveys, and have  
12          community appreciation days, providing  
13          free food, fun, information, and  
14          entertainment to show our appreciation  
15          for the continued support of our  
16          residents.

17                       Over the years, the NACs have  
18                       consistently been reduced and the service  
19                       area boundaries have consistently  
20                       increased and, at the same time, the  
21                       funding levels for NACs have consistently  
22                       been reduced. We have reduced staffing  
23                       levels that are underpaid, overworked,  
24                       and we are competing for funding for  
25                       program survival such as computer labs,

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           jobs for adults and youth, health  
3           services, and our seniors.

4                   We are called upon to support  
5           and promote major City events, City  
6           Council, RDA, PHDC, a host of other  
7           organizations and services that are  
8           related to the City of Philadelphia.

9                   Our major funding source is the  
10          Office of Housing and Community  
11          Development, for which we are very  
12          grateful.

13                   Please, we are surviving, but  
14          the struggle is getting harder and the  
15          lack of resources makes our survival a  
16          matter of choices, but what services do  
17          we have to cut this year.

18                   Please restore our funding  
19          levels and increase the amount of funding  
20          dollars needed so that we don't have to  
21          make those choices.

22                   Recommendation/Proposal: We as  
23          NACs are required by the OHCD contract to  
24          conduct and produce vacant property  
25          surveys. We are required to convene

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           community meetings as an RCO to inform  
3           the community of zoning requests and  
4           services. We are required to support and  
5           promote community economic development  
6           projects and so forth. And whereas our  
7           budgets have consistently decreased over  
8           the last four years.

9                     Please consider the following  
10           recommendation/proposal: In accordance  
11           with the proposal to increase revenues to  
12           the Housing Trust Fund by an estimated  
13           \$750,000 per year by raising the mortgage  
14           deed and recording fees by just \$5. In  
15           addition to the allocated funds provided  
16           to the NACs, please consider increasing  
17           the mortgage deed and recording fees by  
18           an additional \$5, total \$10, to provide  
19           an estimated \$750,000 per year to provide  
20           adequate funding for NACs.

21                     Thank you very much for  
22           allowing me to present my testimony.

23                     COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

24           Thank you, sir.

25                     Ms. Dougherty.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 I'm sorry. The Chair  
3 recognizes Councilman Jones. I think he  
4 had a question for you.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: You're in a  
6 hurry to get out of that seat.

7 MR. LANIER: No, no, no, no.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: Your  
9 testimony was almost as fast as I think  
10 Chip Kelly's would have been, but there  
11 were some really good facts and I just  
12 want to clarify to make sure.

13 How many NACs are in the City  
14 of Philadelphia now?

15 MR. LANIER: Right now I  
16 believe there are 19 -- between 19 and  
17 20. I'm not sure, but it's been at --  
18 the high for NACs has been like 43, and  
19 that was years ago, many years ago. But  
20 now that is almost reduced by half, if  
21 not more.

22 COUNCILMAN JONES: And you  
23 mentioned that even though the numbers  
24 have been reduced, the areas they service  
25 are larger?



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 MR. LANIER: Yes. For example,  
3 Strawberry Mansion, because of the -- our  
4 service area has almost doubled because  
5 of the reduction in the number of NACs in  
6 our community. There was South Lehigh  
7 that represented North Philadelphia, but  
8 there's no longer a North Lehigh NAC, so  
9 we have taken over the boundaries for  
10 North Lehigh.

11 COUNCILMAN JONES: And you  
12 rattled off a whole litany of services  
13 that you provide. And if you could just  
14 hit the top three or four.

15 MR. LANIER: The top three or  
16 four? We provide the housing counseling  
17 services. We provide energy -- we are  
18 also funded as a neighborhood energy  
19 center as well. We provide -- three or  
20 four?

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'll read  
22 the testimony. That's all right.

23 MR. LANIER: Just read the  
24 testimony. It's all included.

25 COUNCILMAN JONES: And then

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           finally you came up with some creative  
3           ideas about how to raise money in light  
4           of the federal cuts. Could you repeat  
5           some of them in a slower mode.

6                       MR. LANIER: Sure. Thank you  
7           very much for allowing me to do that.  
8           Whereas, NACs are required by OHCD  
9           contracts to conduct and produce vacant  
10          property surveys; and

11                      Whereas, NACs are required to  
12          convene community meetings as an RCO to  
13          inform the community of a zoning  
14          request/variance presented to the Zoning  
15          Board; and

16                      Whereas, NACs are required by  
17          the Zoning Board to attend and/or to  
18          provide a letter supporting or not  
19          supporting the zoning request or  
20          variance; and

21                      Whereas, NACs are required to  
22          support and promote community economic  
23          development projects, and we are required  
24          to reach out to the business community in  
25          our commercial corridors and support the

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           transformation of our neighborhood  
3           centers, and as well as provide  
4           residents, businesses, and developers  
5           with assistance with the mortgage and  
6           deed transfer process required for vacant  
7           properties in our community and, of  
8           course, the underfunding from the last  
9           four years.

10                         In accordance with the proposal  
11           to increase revenues to the Housing Trust  
12           Fund by an estimated \$750,000 per year by  
13           raising the mortgage deed and recording  
14           fees by just \$5. Our proposal is in  
15           addition to the allocated funds provided  
16           to the NACs, please consider increasing  
17           the mortgage deed and recording fees by  
18           an additional \$5, which will be a total  
19           of \$10, to provide an estimated \$750,000  
20           per year to provide adequate funding for  
21           NACs.

22                                 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,  
23           sir.

24                                 MR. LANIER: Thank you.

25                                 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Mr. President.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Thank you, Councilman.

5 MR. LANIER: Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good  
7 evening.

8 MS. DOUGHERTY: Good evening,  
9 President Clarke and City Council. Thank  
10 you so much for letting me testify today.  
11 I'm here with Terry Gillen, who needs no  
12 introduction. Terry was a former Board  
13 member of the Friends of the Free  
14 Library.

15 Anyway, I'm here this evening  
16 with some good news. We can get six-day  
17 libraries back again after five years.  
18 Mayor Nutter has put a restoration of the  
19 Free Library's budget of 2.5 million in  
20 his proposed budget, and I'm here to ask  
21 all of you to ratify that so that we can  
22 have six-day libraries everywhere in  
23 every neighborhood in the City.

24 Just take you back down memory  
25 lane to the fall of 2008, the FY09 budget

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           of the Free Library was 40 million, and  
3           then of course it was cut by 20 percent,  
4           or 8 million. And then we've  
5           incrementally gone up, 32 million, 33  
6           million, 35 million this year so that ten  
7           branches can be open six days a week. So  
8           just with 2 and a half million more, we  
9           can get every library in the City open  
10          six days a week. And we all love  
11          libraries and we know why they're  
12          important.

13                        We need libraries for everybody  
14          and in every neighborhood, for working  
15          families who come home late, can't get to  
16          the library, except for a Saturday; for  
17          children and youth who are now traveling  
18          sometimes half an hour to get to and from  
19          school, they need to get to their  
20          libraries on Saturday for homework, for  
21          computers; for the 50 percent of  
22          Philadelphians who do not have home  
23          computers and need to apply for a job or  
24          do some job training or learn how to  
25          write a resume; or for those folks who

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           are signing up for the Affordable Care  
3           Act and needed health insurance, they  
4           went to their local library.

5                        So I'm just asking you -- I'm  
6           just here to ask you to please vote yes  
7           for six-day libraries throughout the City  
8           of Philadelphia by ratifying 2.5 million  
9           for the Free Library of Philadelphia's  
10          General Fund.

11                       COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
12          Thank you. Thank you for your testimony.

13                       MS. DOUGHERTY: Thank you.

14                       MS. LEWIS: The next three  
15          witnesses, Cornelia Swinson, Derek  
16          Freres, and Larry Holman and Jennifer  
17          Hawk.

18                       (Witnesses approached witness  
19          table.)

20                       COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good  
21          evening.

22                       MS. SWINSON: Good evening.  
23          Good evening, President Clarke and  
24          members of City Council. My name is  
25          Cornelia Swinson and I'm the Executive

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Director of G'Town Restoration CDC, which  
3           is located on Germantown Avenue in the  
4           heart of Germantown and Cheltenham business  
5           district. We are a non-profit, of  
6           course, and we serve the Central  
7           Germantown section of Northwest  
8           Philadelphia. We were designated as a  
9           Neighborhood Advisory Committee, a NAC,  
10          in 2012. We're funded by the Office of  
11          Housing and Community Development to  
12          serve the Northwest.

13                 We are one of what used to be  
14          two NACs designated. There was the Mount  
15          Airy NAC as well as the Germantown NAC,  
16          and we are the newest NAC in Germantown.

17                 We incorporate five core  
18          objectives into our delivery of services.  
19          Charles Lanier spoke primarily about them  
20          when he presented his testimony, and  
21          that's promoting sustainability, creating  
22          employment opportunities, enhancing  
23          neighborhood safety, and providing decent  
24          affordable housing, and working in  
25          partnership with local stakeholders to

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           foster community revitalization.

3                       We were, as I mentioned  
4           earlier, designated as a NAC in 2012, and  
5           since then, we've accomplished the  
6           following, and this is just a summary.  
7           We've served 2,600 residents, Germantown  
8           residents, by providing on-site linkage  
9           and referral services such as mortgage  
10          counseling assistance, housing, basic  
11          systems repair, first-time home buyers,  
12          credit assistance, landlord-tenant  
13          issues, clean corridors, land use issues,  
14          education and employment assistance, to  
15          name a few. We've also been very  
16          forward-thinking in developing policies  
17          to support the NAC infrastructure,  
18          including a community-driven election  
19          process, which means that our Advisory  
20          Board is elected by the residents that  
21          live in the community and not our  
22          organization. We've also developed  
23          zoning procedures.

24                       We were granted Registered  
25          Community Organization status by the City



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           of Philadelphia Planning Commission and  
3           assisted in convening what is called the  
4           Germantown RCO Collaborative Group, which  
5           hosts public community stakeholder  
6           meetings to discuss proposed zoning  
7           matters. We have at this time 12 RCOs in  
8           Germantown, and that really impacts on  
9           the ability to give a consistent  
10          community public meeting a sense of  
11          direction, and so we formed this group to  
12          help us to meet that goal. Thus far, the  
13          Germantown RCO Collaborative Group, we've  
14          developed tools to assist and enhance all  
15          our RCOs, and this is a critical  
16          community service that they provide as  
17          volunteers. Since we've been designated  
18          as an RCO, we've worked to ensure that  
19          there was inclusion of resident voices in  
20          at least 24 zoning variance matters in  
21          our neighborhoods, and that's just in the  
22          last year.

23                        We also have worked very  
24                        closely with Councilwoman Bass to  
25                        reconvene and reinvigorate the Germantown

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           Special Services District, which provides  
3           needed service in the community. We also  
4           work very hard to galvanize a  
5           collaborative effort in Germantown to  
6           clean it up, working with the Philly  
7           Spring Cleanup program the City of  
8           Philadelphia presents every year. We've  
9           assisted businesses to open up, four to  
10          be exact, in the Germantown section in  
11          the last year, and we have -- we believe  
12          that as an organization that is clearly  
13          invested in the community, what we  
14          provide is important.

15                   And last I want to let you know  
16          that Germantown is growing. There's a  
17          lot of change in Germantown. We see  
18          business opportunities in Germantown.  
19          Yes, we have developers investing in  
20          Germantown and, yes, the revitalization  
21          of the Special Services District couldn't  
22          come at a better time. Yet we know that  
23          the concept of equitable development to  
24          ensure that continued investment in the  
25          growth of Germantown is racially and

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           economically inclusive that we must  
3           champion it. The efforts of the G'Town  
4           NAC will help to make sure that everyone  
5           is included.

6                        I want to thank you for  
7           considering a special request, and that  
8           is to support the allocation to increase  
9           OHCD funding to specifically fund NACs  
10          for the great work they provide in  
11          marginalized neighborhoods.

12                       COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
13          Thank you. Thank you so much for your  
14          testimony.

15                       MR. FRERES: I have some  
16          testimony to turn in.

17                       Thank you. My name is Derek  
18          Freres and I'm here today representing  
19          the Philadelphia Parks Alliance. I also  
20          serve on the Boards of several park  
21          groups, including the Friends of  
22          Rittenhouse Square, the Fidler Square  
23          Improvement Association, and the Friends  
24          of Schuylkill River Park. These groups,  
25          I, and others work in strong partnership

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           with the Department of Parks and  
3           Recreation, Commissioner DiBerardinis and  
4           Deputy Commissioners Slawson and Focht to  
5           help improve and maintain the parks I  
6           mentioned.

7                        The Park Alliance commends the  
8           Parks and Recreation leadership for their  
9           tremendous efforts stretching every cent  
10          they have to its maximum leveraging  
11          alternative funding streams and  
12          partnering with the community to  
13          creatively maintain and improve their  
14          buildings and parkland to the best degree  
15          possible with the resources currently  
16          available. Despite their model efforts,  
17          Parks and Recreation is one of the most  
18          underfunded departments in the City, and  
19          the 10,000 plus acres of land that they  
20          oversee reflects these funding  
21          insufficiencies. While the average  
22          budget for other City departments  
23          combined has substantially increased over  
24          the past decades, the budget for Parks  
25          and Recreation has not. Philadelphia

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           spends just \$46 per resident on parks.  
3           San Francisco, Seattle, Minneapolis, and  
4           even Cincinnati spend five times that,  
5           and Pittsburgh spends more than double.  
6           We are among the lowest of major U.S.  
7           cities in dollar spending per resident on  
8           parks and on dollar pending per acre on  
9           parks.

10                         We commend this body for  
11           increasing the Parks and Recreation  
12           budget by 2.675 million for FY 2013.  
13           Even with this increase, we are still \$5  
14           million short of the \$9 million increase  
15           promised, passed, and then taken away  
16           from Parks and Recreation for FY 2009.  
17           This was to be a permanent funding stream  
18           for Parks and Recreation coming from a  
19           hike in parking taxes that occurred for  
20           FY 2009 and is still in place. These  
21           monies are currently being collected, but  
22           they are not going to parks and  
23           recreation centers. As a result of this  
24           broken promise, since FY 2009 the  
25           Department of Parks and Recreation has

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           lost over \$50 million it would have  
3           received if the dedicated funding stream  
4           passed for FY 2009 had been directed to  
5           Parks and Recreation as promised.

6                     Unfortunately, underfunding our  
7           parks is not a new problem in  
8           Philadelphia. Since the year 2000, Parks  
9           and Recreation has lost 160 staff members  
10          because of chronic underfunding.  
11          Recreation facilities have been  
12          understaffed, and in 2013, 15 recreation  
13          centers had no staff members at all to  
14          offer programming and 39 recreation  
15          centers had just one. If this one staff  
16          member is sick, kids lose a safe place to  
17          go in the summer, on the weekends, and  
18          after school. We know that  
19          Philadelphia's parks and recreation  
20          centers are the places where our city's  
21          children go after school to do their  
22          homework and play until their parents  
23          finish work, to be outside on a spring  
24          day, and have summer experiences in our  
25          camps and pools. We also know that parks

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           are more than nice places to visit. They  
3           are intimately tied to the City's  
4           economic development. People want to  
5           live where well-maintained green spaces  
6           increase the value and desirability of  
7           their neighborhoods, and we know these  
8           spaces, when lively and well programmed,  
9           decrease crime in adjacent areas.

10                   For FY 2009, the Mayor and City  
11           Council recognized the chronic  
12           underfunding of Parks and Recreation and  
13           approved a budget increase of \$9 million.  
14           All of these promised funds were taken  
15           away for FY 2009 as a result of the  
16           City's and our country's wider economic  
17           turmoil. For FY 2013, this body and the  
18           Mayor passed a much-needed \$2.675 million  
19           increase to the Parks and Recreation  
20           budget that has helped bring on more  
21           skilled trades workers to fix our roofs,  
22           ensure electric and plumbing systems work  
23           and much more. This year the Mayor has  
24           proposed an increase to the Parks and  
25           Recreation budget of just \$500,000 to add

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           programming staff. On behalf of the  
3           parks with which I am associated, the  
4           Philadelphia Parks Alliance and citizens  
5           and parks across the City, I call on City  
6           Council and Mayor Nutter to restore the  
7           remaining \$5 million promised to Parks  
8           and Recreation five years ago. This will  
9           take us back to the budget passed by City  
10          Council for FY 2009 and help us start to  
11          provide the quality of parks our city and  
12          its citizens deserve.

13                           Thank you.

14                           COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

15           Thank you for your testimony, sir.

16                           MS. HAWK: Thank you. I  
17           believe I'm going out of turn here.

18           Thank you. Good evening. My name is  
19           Jennifer Hawk. I'm the Executive  
20           Director of the Chestnut Hill Historical  
21           Society, and I believe I already  
22           submitted copies of our written testimony  
23           to the gentleman at the door.

24                           We're here today to especially  
25           highlight the historic firehouse,



1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           particularly the one in Chestnut Hill,  
3           but those across the City and the needs  
4           of those houses that house our fire  
5           personnel across the City and what they  
6           deserve, as well as for our particular  
7           interest in preserving our historic  
8           firehouse located in Chestnut Hill, and  
9           especially in their preservation, but  
10          also in the Capital Budget of purchases  
11          of new fire equipment and that the  
12          purchase of those fire equipment is  
13          appropriate both to the size of the  
14          historic firehouse but, more importantly,  
15          to meet the particular needs of the  
16          community.

17                        The trucks that are already  
18          deployed to our area already have a  
19          challenge in getting around our small  
20          streets. Larger trucks which are being  
21          proposed would have an even greater  
22          challenge of getting around our small  
23          streets. Not only will it not fit into  
24          the historic firehouse, one that was  
25          designed by John T. Windrim in 1984 as

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           part of a set, the police station is now  
3           gone, and one of the most significant  
4           Richardsonian Romanesque architectural  
5           features within the City and also one of  
6           the few remaining Windrim designed. And  
7           this was the height of the era of when  
8           the City really designed these  
9           magnificent buildings to highlight  
10          municipal services. So not only would  
11          larger trucks put that building at risk  
12          and in any way to have to alter its  
13          facade in order to fit them, but it also  
14          really would put smaller streets at risk.  
15          Small streets such as Caryl Lane where  
16          the truck can barely get down it now,  
17          Benezet, Navajo, Shawnee, just to name a  
18          few. And I think this is probably an  
19          issue that's not only just Chestnut Hill.  
20          We're an historic city and we're a city  
21          made up of small streets, and there are  
22          custom-designed trucks that can be built,  
23          but they need to be built and purchased.  
24                            We're also concerned about the  
25          serious deteriorating conditions of the

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           firehouse in Chestnut Hill and understand  
3           that Chestnut Hill is not alone in that.  
4           Specifically, physically for the building  
5           is, there's serious concern about the  
6           roof that critically needs to be repaired  
7           before the damage gets so far along that  
8           it cannot be repaired. And we happen to  
9           know that to do this in an historically  
10          significant way would be 200,000,  
11          300,000.

12                         And one more last thing is, the  
13          conditions -- what people don't know is  
14          that the conditions within the firehouses  
15          themselves. Our firefighters are  
16          sleeping on cots that have to be 50 years  
17          old, with mattresses that are one-inch  
18          thin and clothes that are just absolutely  
19          deplorable, unpainted buildings, water on  
20          the walls. These are the people that we  
21          expect to go out and save our lives in  
22          very physical, hazardous, potentially  
23          life-threatening conditions and they have  
24          really poor kitchens and really poor  
25          physical conditions, and I think we want

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           them to be the most well rested, well fed  
3           of our personnel, and I think that they  
4           deserve that. But we are particularly  
5           interested in our historic places in  
6           Chestnut Hill.

7                         Thank you very much.

8                         COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

9           Thank you so much for your testimony.

10                        Sir.

11                        MR. HOLMAN: Hello. My name is  
12           Larry Holman. I'm a veteran and I'm  
13           representing the Pointman Soldiers Heart  
14           Ministry here today.

15                        President Clarke and members of  
16           City Council, it's an opportunity to be  
17           with you, and I appreciate that.

18           President Clarke, I want to express my  
19           appreciation to you for filling the  
20           vacancy of the Director of the Veterans  
21           Advisory Commission with Scott Brown.  
22           I've met him several times. I'm very  
23           impressed with him.

24                        COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

25           Thank you.

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 MR. HOLMAN: And I understand  
3 that he will also be performing the  
4 duties of the County Director of Veterans  
5 Affairs --

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 Correct.

8 MR. HOLMAN: -- as they are  
9 performed in other counties in the state.

10 I haven't had access to that  
11 part of the budget which affects the  
12 veterans operation in the City, but I  
13 just wanted to put some questions in the  
14 record so that at some point the answers  
15 to these questions can be made public or  
16 accessible to veterans.

17 What role does the Philadelphia  
18 Veterans Advisory Commission play in  
19 developing the budget for that office?  
20 Will that part of City Council budget be  
21 made available to any veteran in  
22 Philadelphia that wants to see it? And  
23 how can a veteran get a copy or access it  
24 online?

25 We want to know also by looking

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           at that budget if we can determine how  
3           the Philadelphia Veterans Advisory  
4           Commission is organized, and can we find  
5           out if the Commissioners that constitute  
6           the Veterans Advisory Commission each  
7           have distinct roles and responsibilities  
8           and what kind of accountability goes  
9           along with that.

10                         If the office had a separate  
11           revenue stream, would it be able to  
12           expand its budget, its staffing, and its  
13           services to veterans? With 88,000  
14           veterans in Philadelphia, veterans  
15           programs are sure to bring a return on  
16           investment, because most benefits come  
17           through the federal government to the  
18           veteran who then uses that to help the  
19           economy of Philadelphia.

20                         Some of the programs that I  
21           think would be appropriate for that  
22           office to get involved with would be  
23           incarcerated veterans programs for  
24           veterans and their families; claims  
25           processing for veterans and their

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2 survivors; expediting interactions  
3 between veterans and the federal  
4 Department of Veterans Affairs and the  
5 state Department of Military and Veterans  
6 Affairs and other providers of services  
7 to veterans; and also to maintain a  
8 veterans grades registry in Philadelphia  
9 and ensure that all veterans in  
10 Philadelphia get an appropriate funeral  
11 and burial honors when they pass.

12                   I want to make sure that the  
13 folks at the Veterans Advisory Commission  
14 are able to attend meetings of the  
15 Pennsylvania State Veterans Commission  
16 and the Pennsylvania War Veterans  
17 Commission in Harrisburg and Fort  
18 Indiantown Gap. So we want to make sure  
19 that there is funding available to cover  
20 that kind of transportation cost. And we  
21 know that the more aggressive and  
22 outreach and claims processing program we  
23 have, the more federal VA dollars will be  
24 getting spent in Philadelphia.

25                               Thank you so much,

1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 Mr. President. I appreciate your help.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Thank you so much for your testimony. Do  
5 you have those questions in writing?

6 MR. HOLMAN: I'll be happy to  
7 submit them later. I'll write them up  
8 for you and get them in.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Get  
10 them to Will Carter or get them directly  
11 to Scott, and we'll make sure you get  
12 responses. And you know about the May  
13 21st date for the Veterans Fair?

14 MR. HOLMAN: Yes. Thank you  
15 very much.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: We  
17 actually have -- I understand we're going  
18 to have somewhat of a celebrity at that  
19 particular event. A good friend of ours,  
20 a former congressman is going to be  
21 there. I'm not supposed to talk about  
22 it, but I think you can figure out who  
23 that is. Has a TV show on MSNBC. And  
24 I'm not going to say anything else, but  
25 we'll have some really good people there.



1 4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2 So I look forward to seeing you there.

3 Thank you very much for your  
4 support.

5 MR. HOLMAN: Thank you very  
6 much, sir.

7 MR. ACOSTA: How you doing,  
8 Councilman? Thank you for having this  
9 public testimony, to everyone in the City  
10 Council.

11 I'm here today --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Just  
13 state your name.

14 MR. ACOSTA: My name is Orlando  
15 Acosta. I'm sorry about that. I'm  
16 basically here because I'm here to  
17 basically talk about the truancy issue of  
18 what's going on with a lot of families  
19 around the District.

20 Now, the District basically has  
21 a policy of 1.5, where a lot of families  
22 if they don't live within that 1.5  
23 radius, they can't even get bus service  
24 or transportation service. Now, what I'm  
25 systematically trying to work on is

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           trying to find out resources and ways to  
3           help these families be able to get the  
4           services they need as far as  
5           transportation, because what the District  
6           is not doing is, they're just putting  
7           truancy officers on people's door without  
8           finding out the fundamental reasons of  
9           why their children might be truant.

10                   Now, there's a lot of different  
11           reasons why, you know, you have a truancy  
12           issue, but what I'm systematically always  
13           saying to the District is before you go  
14           back and put someone under truancy, you  
15           have to fundamentally find out the reason  
16           why, and this is what they're not doing.  
17           And what myself -- I mean, I just got bus  
18           service today for my son, which I'm  
19           gratefully happy of, but it took me  
20           three, four months to navigate this whole  
21           situation and process. And, I mean, I  
22           had to go through hell to, you know, do  
23           all that, because I kept giving them  
24           information on things. They kept trying  
25           to ignore it and not pay attention to it.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2           So finally today, you know, through the  
3           caseworker I was working with, we finally  
4           broke through and they finally agreed to  
5           give him bus service.

6                        But the real reason is that  
7           they need to find out systematically --  
8           and with City Council I would like to  
9           work together to find out -- to give  
10          resources to other parents that's having  
11          that issue, because systematically there  
12          is a lot of families that's going to the  
13          District telling them that they're having  
14          hardships or whatever else. Now, on the  
15          5th or the 7th when the next testimony  
16          and public hearing, I would like to bring  
17          other family members down here as far as,  
18          you know, community individuals to give  
19          you public testimony of what difficult  
20          issues that they're going through.

21                       And what I'm also finding out  
22          is that a lot of families are having  
23          issues of the minute that they say  
24          something publicly, that, you know, they  
25          show up on the door and really try to

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           systematically give the families hard  
3           ways to go because they've said  
4           something.

5                        So the fundamental reason is  
6           that I really want to give ways that  
7           families can get over these hurdles,  
8           because it shouldn't take anyone four to  
9           five months to systematically just get  
10          something that children need, which is  
11          services or bus service or  
12          transportation.

13                      Now, I understand that the  
14          state basically runs the majority of the  
15          District, but it should be ways that we  
16          can find here within the City that we can  
17          work together to find out, whether it's  
18          car pooling or companies that will accept  
19          to give some aspect of ways that we can  
20          work together, either with any  
21          transportation service to get these  
22          children to school, because if a  
23          situation is transportation and that's  
24          the only reason that they're not getting  
25          to school on time, it's not academic

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           problems or anything like that, why  
3           should you have a truancy office hounding  
4           you or giving you issue because you have  
5           a financial reason that you can't get a  
6           child to school.

7                     It took us -- it's \$100 -- \$100  
8           to \$150 maybe, \$200 to go back and forth  
9           for one month. So you have low-income  
10          families that right now can't afford  
11          that. Some of the families don't even  
12          have heat, food or anything else.

13                    So before you have a truancy  
14          officer on the door, you need to find out  
15          the reason why. Well, not City Council,  
16          but I'm talking about the District  
17          itself.

18                    COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
19          Right.

20                    MR. ACOSTA: So, you know, I'm  
21          willing to really work with City Council  
22          to find out other resources to do that,  
23          because it's just real frustrating to see  
24          the stress that families are going  
25          through about just getting their children

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.  
2           to school.

3                   COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:  
4           Right. Okay. Thank you so much for your  
5           testimony, and we'll have the School  
6           District testimony I think May 5th.

7                   MR. ACOSTA: The 5th.

8                   COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: May  
9           5th. We'll talk to them.

10                   Thank you so much for your  
11           testimony.

12                   Ms. Lewis.

13                   MS. LEWIS: There are no more  
14           witnesses this evening, sir.

15                   COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: With  
16           that, I want to thank you and thank the  
17           Councilmembers very much for being  
18           present.

19                   The Committee will stand in  
20           recess until Wednesday, April 30th at  
21           6:00 p.m., at which time we have a  
22           neighborhood budget hearing at West Oak  
23           Lane Charter School, located at 7115  
24           Stenton Avenue, and that will be hosted  
25           by Councilwoman Marian Tasco.

1           4/22/14 - WHOLE - BILL 140144, etc.

2                   Thank you. Thank you all very  
3 much.

4                   (Committee of the Whole  
5 recessed at 7:25 p.m.)

6                                 - - -

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CERTIFICATE

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

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MICHELE L. MURPHY  
RPR-Notary Public

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