

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Room 400, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, April 4, 2018
11:10 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE L. BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILMAN WILLIAM K. GREENLEE
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN BOBBY HENON
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN AL TAUBENBERGER

BILLS 180162, 180163, and 180164
RESOLUTION 180185

- - -

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
3 morning. We're going to get started.
4 This is the public hearing of the
5 Committee of the Whole regarding Bills
6 No. 180162, 180163, 180164, and
7 Resolution No. 180185.

8 Mr. Stitt, please read the
9 titles of the bills and resolution.

10 THE CLERK: Bill No. 180162, an
11 ordinance to adopt a Capital Program for
12 the six Fiscal Years 2019 through 2024
13 inclusive.

14 Bill No. 180163, an ordinance
15 to adopt a Fiscal 2019 Capital Budget.

16 Bill No. 180164, an ordinance
17 adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal
18 Year 2019.

19 Resolution No. 180185,
20 resolution providing for the approval by
21 the Council of the City of Philadelphia
22 of a Revised Five Year Financial Plan for
23 the City of Philadelphia covering Fiscal
24 Years 2019 through 2023, and
25 incorporating proposed changes with

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 respect to Fiscal Year 2018, which is to
3 be submitted by the Mayor to the
4 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
5 Cooperation Authority (the "Authority")
6 pursuant to the Intergovernmental
7 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an
8 Ordinance of this Council approved by the
9 Mayor on January 3, 1992 (Bill No.
10 1563-A), by and between the City and the
11 Authority.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

13 Thank you, Mr. Stitt.

14 Today we continue the public
15 hearing of the Committee of the Whole to
16 consider the bills read by the Clerk that
17 constitute proposed operating and capital
18 spending measures for Fiscal 2019, a
19 Capital Program, and a forward-looking
20 Capital Plan for Fiscal 2019 through
21 Fiscal Year 2024.

22 Today we will hear testimony
23 from the following departments: We have
24 OPA, Commerce and OEO, and Parks and
25 Recreation.

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2 Mr. Stitt, the first person to
3 testify is?

4 THE CLERK: Michael Piper.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

6 Thank you, sir.

7 Mr. Piper.

8 (Witnesses approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
11 morning.

12 MR. PIPER: Good morning,
13 Council President Clarke, members of City
14 Council. I'm Michael Piper, Chief
15 Assessment Officer for the City of
16 Philadelphia, and joining me today are
17 James Aros Jr., Deputy Chief Assessment
18 Officer, and Delicsha Wilds, our
19 Administrative Services Director. I am
20 pleased to provide testimony on the
21 Office of Property Assessment's Fiscal
22 Year 2019 Operating Budget.

23 The Office of Property
24 Assessment is responsible for determining
25 the value of all real property in

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 Philadelphia and is dedicated to doing so
3 in a fair, accurate, and understandable
4 way. OPA's primary goal is, through
5 ongoing assessments, to improve accuracy
6 and uniformity of all property values and
7 to instill confidence in Philadelphia
8 taxpayers regarding the fairness of the
9 property tax system, as well as the
10 competency and professionalism of
11 Philadelphia's assessment office.

12 For Tax Year 2019, OPA recently
13 completed a reassessment of the entire
14 city that included all 580,000 parcels,
15 with the goal of continuing to improve,
16 through annual reassessments, the level
17 of accuracy and uniformity of
18 Philadelphia's real property assessments.
19 This involved a detailed analysis of
20 improved residential parcels, vacant
21 land, commercial and industrial parcels,
22 and institutional and government-owned
23 properties. Since almost all parcels
24 will see some change in either the value,
25 land-to-building allocation, or taxable

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2 status, many of these property owners
3 will likely file appeals. OPA expects to
4 spend much of Fiscal Year 2019 providing
5 property-specific reports in defense of
6 the proposed revisions at market value
7 appeal hearings. However, due to the
8 extensive research and analysis conducted
9 by OPA's evaluation staff and statistical
10 modeling experts in producing the
11 proposed 2019 assessments, and thanks to
12 the additional outside resources provided
13 to OPA at Council's recommendation, we
14 are confident that the final product will
15 represent a substantial improvement to
16 the accuracy and uniformity of the City's
17 assessment rolls.

18 OPA will also continue to
19 pursue the goal of better and more
20 reliable assessments for all
21 classifications of property throughout
22 the City of Philadelphia through ongoing
23 and regular reassessment efforts. During
24 Fiscal Year 2019, our reassessment
25 project will include a comprehensive

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2 review of the entire universe of
3 residential, commercial, and industrial
4 real estate in the City, with the
5 immediate goal of improving the
6 reliability of real property assessments
7 and accurately tracking assessments to
8 the local real estate market. Much of
9 this effort will include a refining of
10 assessments through improved data
11 capturing and property database
12 maintenance. This reassessment,
13 effective for tax year 2020, is necessary
14 in order to enhance the relationship
15 between market value and assessments and
16 prevent a reoccurrence of the lag in
17 up-to-date assessments that contributed
18 to the lack of confidence in assessments
19 during the years prior to the Actual
20 Value Initiative.

21 Finally, after the completion
22 of a thorough needs assessment and
23 extensive market research, and in
24 conjunction with the Office of Innovation
25 and Technology as well as the Office of

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2 Property Data, OPA is well into the
3 initial phases of implementation of the
4 City of Philadelphia's first
5 state-of-the-art computer-assisted mass
6 appraisal, or CAMA system. The software
7 system, known as iasWorld, and created by
8 Tyler Technologies, a leading system
9 software manufacturer, will, along with
10 extensive process modifications, lead to
11 increased efficiency for the entire
12 property assessment system.

13 While hard work still lies
14 ahead, we are confident that
15 implementation of this system will prove
16 to be more than a worthwhile investment
17 for the City of Philadelphia.

18 The Department anticipates
19 being able to use certain aspects of this
20 software during FY2020 for the assessment
21 for Tax Year 2021.

22 We are here to answer any
23 questions, and we thank you for the
24 opportunity to provide testimony today.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

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2 Thank you. I'm going to jump right into
3 a couple of questions, probably
4 anticipated.

5 When we look at the projected
6 estimated 11 percent increase in
7 assessments, can you just kind of briefly
8 talk about why such a dramatic increase?
9 And furthermore, if the assessment
10 increases were more gradual as opposed to
11 a -- because once you get to double
12 digits, we start getting those phone
13 calls. So can you talk to me about why
14 the number is, from our perspective,
15 relatively high and why wouldn't it be
16 more gradual?

17 MR. PIPER: So I think the 11
18 percent actually represents the increase
19 from last year to this year in the
20 taxable assessment, not the overall but
21 the taxable. But that's what the tax
22 bills will be based on, and that's, of
23 course, what you'll get the phone calls
24 about.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

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2 That's all that matters.

3 MR. PIPER: Yes. The 11
4 percent, you're right, it's substantially
5 higher than what we would predict for one
6 year to the next. When we're asked to
7 look into the future, of course the
8 further in the future you're trying to
9 look, the harder it is to predict, but
10 just looking at actual situations that we
11 make assumptions, reasonable assumptions,
12 as opposed to hypotheticals, we usually
13 assume anywhere from a 2 to 3 percent
14 growth. That's just natural for a real
15 estate market the size of this region.
16 And what we've done over the past few
17 years was address some of the, I'll say,
18 shortcomings in where we were at the end
19 of the first year of AVI, some of the
20 things that we saw needed addressing in
21 the residential inventory, the
22 commercial, and industrial inventory. We
23 looked at, for instance, the year before
24 last the land-to-building allocation, and
25 most of the adjustments we made were

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2 based on a reallocation of the land part
3 of the assessment. The year prior to
4 that we looked at parts of the City in
5 which our measurements of uniformity were
6 out of whack or unacceptable, and we
7 addressed that.

8 What we did this past year was
9 address everything, but we saw some lag
10 in the commercial and industrial. And so
11 a lot of what we did resulted in
12 revisions to some of the commercial
13 properties. What you're seeing now is an
14 overall assessment that is nowhere near
15 as dramatic as the changes that we saw in
16 the first year of AVI, but somewhat more
17 dramatic than we'd like to see, because
18 we understand it's a substantial increase
19 from one year to another that causes
20 folks to be somewhat anxious about their
21 bill. A 2 or 3 percent increase, true,
22 that would be a lot less -- people would
23 be a lot less upset about that. And what
24 we're striving to do in the future -- and
25 this is why we continue to say we want to

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2 do some reassessment every year, because
3 the more often we do everything, the more
4 likely we're going to see less dramatic
5 increases.

6 So what we've done over the
7 past few years is continue to improve
8 things, but in some sense it's a
9 continuation of what we did the first
10 year of AVI, was kind of catch up for all
11 the years that we hadn't done anything at
12 all, and then we did one big catch-up and
13 then subsequently we did smaller
14 catch-ups.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Okay. So that was a long answer.

17 MR. PIPER: I'm sorry.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
19 not sure much of it really responded to
20 my question, with the exception of you
21 essentially saying, at least my
22 interpretation of what you just said, is
23 that we had inaccurate assessments in the
24 prior three years, three, four years, and
25 now we have the appropriate assessments.

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2 MR. PIPER: What we have --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Based on what you're telling me, you're
5 saying that there were inconsistencies
6 and now it's 11, we're catching up, and
7 there should have been a period where
8 much higher incremental increases over
9 the years. I'm not really sure what that
10 response was. My question is, why is it
11 an increased 11 percent over last year if
12 we've been doing assessments more
13 frequently over the last several years
14 since AVI? Why is it now -- where do you
15 get this 11 percent from?

16 MR. PIPER: We've been doing
17 them.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
19 either you made a mistake in the earlier
20 years or what?

21 MR. PIPER: We didn't make a
22 mistake, but we didn't complete
23 everything we were doing from one year to
24 another.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So

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2 did you not assess the entire City?

3 MR. PIPER: We did. We looked
4 at the entire City.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
6 don't understand. If you're telling me
7 you took sections of the City and you did
8 an assessment for those sections, then I
9 can understand if you said, well, we
10 didn't really get to that portion of the
11 City in prior years, but now we're
12 catching up. But if you did an
13 assessment last year, the entire City,
14 and now you got 11 percent bump-up,
15 either you made a mistake last year or
16 you just for some reason think that over
17 a year's period of time the values have
18 gone up that dramatically. I mean, I'm
19 trying to be helpful to myself and you to
20 understand why we --

21 MR. PIPER: I understand. What
22 we've done every year is tried to improve
23 the assessments. We have not ever said
24 that every year we've done it, this is
25 the perfect, and then we leave it alone.

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2 What we said is, we did it the first year
3 and it was 1,000 percent better, and then
4 each year we got more accurate and tried
5 to be more uniform.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

7 That's what I'm saying, that you had
8 inaccurate assessments in the prior
9 years. You're saying the same thing.

10 MR. PIPER: I don't think I'm
11 saying they were inaccurate.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: If
13 you say you're getting more accurate now
14 than you were before, that means you
15 weren't accurate the prior year.

16 MR. PIPER: They were more
17 accurate, yes.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

19 Excuse me? I'm trying to understand.
20 I'm serious. I'm not trying to like -- I
21 got some other stuff that I want to get
22 with you about.

23 MR. PIPER: I do understand
24 what you're saying. You're saying more
25 accurate meaning last year was

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2 inaccurate, and --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: If
4 you said that you're getting more
5 accurate this year, it implies that you
6 weren't as accurate the prior year.
7 That's just the language.

8 MR. PIPER: Well, two things.
9 Number one, we've gotten better since
10 last year but, number two, things have
11 changed since last year in the market.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: That
13 was my original question. What has
14 changed that caused you to go 11 percent?

15 MR. PIPER: The changes that
16 are reflected in the assessments are the
17 changes that the market reveals to us in
18 sale prices.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: In a
20 year?

21 MR. PIPER: Yes.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Okay. So if that's your answer, that the
24 market has increased in a period of a
25 year that dramatically -- I mean, that's

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2 an answer as opposed to what you were
3 telling me earlier.

4 MR. PIPER: My answer is, it's
5 a combination of things.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
7 right. It's the old saying, beating a
8 dead horse. I'm not going to do that
9 right now.

10 All right. So let me ask you
11 about in your testimony your additional
12 request for funding for staff purposes,
13 and you currently have around 28 unfilled
14 full-time positions. One, why are there,
15 based on the documents we read, 28
16 unfilled positions and why would we grant
17 you or appropriate additional money for
18 new positions?

19 MR. PIPER: The unfilled
20 positions are, for the most part,
21 evaluators or assessors that we're still
22 looking to hire. We've gotten better at
23 staffing up over the past few years.
24 We've gotten closer and closer to our
25 goals.

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2 I'm not sure if that answers
3 the question.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Why
5 are you asking me for more money if you
6 haven't filled the position that -- you
7 got funded last year for those 28. So
8 why are you asking us for additional
9 funding if you haven't filled the 28?

10 MR. PIPER: I'm just going to
11 ask my Administrative Service Director to
12 fill in some of the blanks, because I
13 don't think I'm answering this question.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Sure.

16 MS. WILDS: Good morning. A
17 portion of the funding is for additional
18 positions that was not included. So
19 there is a vacancy rate that we have --

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Pull
21 that up a little closer.

22 MS. WILDS: Sorry. Is that
23 better?

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Better.

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2 MS. WILDS: So there is a
3 vacancy rate. So there's not enough
4 funding for us to actually pay for all of
5 our positions if we were to fill them
6 all. We're looking to fill those
7 additional 28 positions. We have
8 requested testing, so we're looking to
9 fill those positions, and in order to
10 actually pay for them all, we'd need to
11 get additional funding for that. In
12 addition, we added -- there is a vacancy
13 for a deputy administrator that we need
14 to fill, and we just recently hired a
15 program manager. And so those are the
16 additional funding. That's additional
17 funding.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 That's still not answering my question.
20 You have 28 unfilled positions.

21 MS. WILDS: Correct.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Which you got appropriations for last
24 fiscal, this fiscal. You haven't filled
25 those positions, but yet you're asking

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2 for an additional, what is it, 407? So
3 are you going to hire these 28 people
4 tomorrow?

5 MS. WILDS: The 407 is not
6 enough to cover the 20-some positions
7 that you're referring to. So we did
8 hire -- we hired five new employees the
9 beginning of the year. We promoted three
10 people into evaluator positions. So that
11 was a part of the funding that we had
12 gotten for last year. The additional
13 400,000 is actually for two administrator
14 positions and for the program manager
15 and -- those are three of the positions,
16 and the other part is for, I think, pay
17 increases.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 We're still in the 20's.

20 MS. WILDS: In the 20's? No.
21 So it's not for additional 28 people that
22 the \$400,000 is for. The additional --

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
24 know. I'm trying to figure out with the
25 28 unfilled positions, when are you going

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 to hire those people?

3 MS. WILDS: We've had testing
4 for those. I'm trying to --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: But
6 why wouldn't you just staff up based on
7 your appropriations and then mid year or
8 whenever you get that done and you need
9 to hire some additional employees, you
10 come for a mid-year transfer as opposed
11 to asking for additional money on top of
12 the money that you've already been
13 appropriated?

14 MS. WILDS: So we have staffed
15 up according to our appropriations. So
16 based on where we are currently, we have
17 staffed up. The additional 400,000 --

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 There are no more unfilled positions?

20 MS. WILDS: There are unfilled
21 positions, but the money does not match
22 the actual additional 28 positions. So
23 there is space in there.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
25 you're saying the 407 is reflective --

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2 I'm trying to understand.

3 MS. WILDS: I know. Go ahead.

4 I'm listening.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm

6 trying to understand. You got 28

7 unfilled positions. You are currently

8 filling those positions.

9 Mr. Dubow is coming up.

10 (Witness approached witness

11 table.)

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

13 Explain to me, real simple, why we're

14 asking for additional funding when you

15 have on the record -- maybe my

16 information is incorrect, and that's been

17 known to happen.

18 MR. DUBOW: So, yeah. Rob

19 Dubow, Finance Director.

20 So what's happened over time,

21 the OPA budget was kind of based on a

22 certain number of vacancies. They've

23 been filling more positions. So they

24 actually this year in '18 are going over

25 budget because they have more filled

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2 positions than we assumed. So, in
3 essence, they had a vacancy allowance,
4 but the vacancy allowance is probably too
5 large, because they've been filling
6 positions. So for '19, we actually think
7 if we just base the budget on the
8 original '18 budget, they'd have that
9 same kind of gap. So we're trying to
10 close what's become a structural gap in
11 their Class 100.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And
13 you still have not explained to me --
14 okay. I'll ask you this question: How
15 many unfilled positions do they currently
16 have?

17 MR. DUBOW: So I think the
18 indication is that they will fill those
19 positions.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: How
21 many do you currently have?

22 MS. WILDS: There are 28
23 positions.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Okay. So going back to what you just

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 said, the 28 positions that are unfilled
3 that we have appropriated funding for,
4 real simple -- maybe I'm a little slow
5 today -- if you have funding for the 28
6 and you're asking for additional funding,
7 why --

8 MR. DUBOW: So we build --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Why
10 don't you just hire who you need to hire
11 with the money that you've already been
12 appropriated if you just have a carryover
13 budget.

14 MR. DUBOW: So the issue is in
15 each budget, we build in a vacancy
16 allowance. So we don't assume that
17 positions are filled for the full year.
18 As positions are filled for a larger part
19 of the year, we actually need more
20 dollars.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: For
22 what?

23 MR. DUBOW: We need more
24 dollars because positions -- we don't
25 have funding -- even though it says 28

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2 vacancies, the funding that's in their
3 budget doesn't fund even the positions
4 that are filled now. So we budget on
5 dollars --

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
7 is that in a different class, the
8 positions? I mean, isn't it all one
9 class?

10 MR. DUBOW: It's one class.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
12 Personnel is a particular class.

13 MR. DUBOW: It is.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So I
15 don't understand.

16 MR. DUBOW: So there's kind of
17 a misalignment between what we're showing
18 as their number of positions and the
19 dollars we have to fund those positions.
20 What we're trying to do is actually kind
21 of make it consistent with what they
22 actually have on staff.

23 If we don't give them more
24 money, they'll be coming back for a
25 transfer ordinance, which is what

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 happened this year.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: We
4 do that every year.

5 MR. DUBOW: Because we'd rather
6 have the budget be a more accurate
7 reflection at the beginning of what we
8 think they're going to spend during the
9 year rather than knowing they're going to
10 have to come back because we've budgeted
11 too low.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
13 due respect, that's not making any sense
14 to me. Maybe it's me. It's just not
15 making any sense.

16 MR. DUBOW: And --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
18 mean, you do mid-year transfers every
19 year when the need arises.

20 MR. DUBOW: Right, but we try
21 not to set up the budget knowing that
22 we're going to have to do that.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: You
24 do it every year, though, Rob, ever since
25 I've been here.

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2 MR. DUBOW: I know, but it's
3 usually for things that are
4 unanticipated. We don't set up a budget
5 intentionally to have too little funding.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: You
7 know what, in the 28, I'm assuming that
8 wouldn't be as much of an issue -- it may
9 be -- if that's all you were asking for,
10 the carryover budget to reflect this
11 fiscal's for next fiscal, but when you're
12 asking for additional money and you have
13 that many unfilled positions, which has
14 caught the attention of my trusty and
15 capable crew here, that's why I'm asking
16 this line of questions.

17 MR. DUBOW: And it really is
18 because there's not sufficient funding.
19 That's why we had a transfer ordinance
20 this year.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 There's not enough funding to hire people
23 that you have not even hired and you
24 don't even know when you're going to
25 hire. That's basically --

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2 MR. DUBOW: Well, you have
3 classes -- I think you guys can talk
4 about the timing of the hiring, right?

5 MS. WILDS: Sure. So we have
6 requested exams, and exams should be out
7 April the 9th, is when it's going to be
8 announced, and then the testing will be
9 in -- I think they said in June for --
10 based on how many people we get for the
11 EV 1. They're doing periodic testing for
12 in-house people as well, and that exam is
13 scheduled for -- is coming up shortly.
14 I'm not sure of the exact date. I think
15 it's April the 5th.

16 So we're looking to hire -- we
17 won't reach the total 28, but we will be
18 closer to it.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 Okay. The Chair recognizes Councilman
21 Henon for a point of order.

22 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman. Just a point of order and
24 point of information. So just as I'm
25 trying to get the clarity to some of the

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 questions that Council President is
3 bringing up. So there's 28 vacancies
4 that we're carrying over that we are
5 still trying to fill, right?

6 MS. WILDS: Yes.

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Okay. I get
8 that. \$407,000 in addition to the
9 carryover for additional employees that
10 you are going to -- that you're planning
11 for. How many employees is that?

12 MS. WILDS: The additional
13 carryover is for pay increases for some
14 and an additional three positions.

15 COUNCILMAN HENON: Excuse me?

16 MS. WILDS: It's pay increases
17 for some and then an additional three
18 positions.

19 COUNCILMAN HENON: So \$407,000
20 is for pay increases and three positions?

21 MS. WILDS: Yes.

22 MR. DUBOW: And for full
23 funding of your existing positions,
24 because there's not enough funding in the
25 budget for --

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: But we have
3 the carryover for -- I'm just really
4 trying to get clarity now myself. So if
5 there's 28 carryover vacancies, right,
6 and that's already -- it's carrying over
7 in the budget, and above that is the
8 \$407,000 additional costs for Class
9 100 -- so you already have the funding
10 for 28 and it's carrying over?

11 MR. DUBOW: We don't have
12 sufficient funding for the staffing that
13 they have in their budget, and that's
14 what we're trying to fix and that's why
15 there was a transfer ordinance this year.

16 COUNCILMAN HENON: What is not
17 the sufficient funding? Is it because of
18 pay raises, an increase in cost of
19 salaries and benefits?

20 MR. DUBOW: And we assumed a
21 certain level of vacancy too. So there
22 wasn't -- if you look at the way our
23 budgets are set, and it's true for
24 departments, there's an assumption about
25 what vacancies will look like during the

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2 year. And so there isn't funding -- the
3 funding doesn't assume that each position
4 is filled for an entire year, and so
5 basically what's happening is, they have
6 positions --

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Are they
8 filled part time?

9 MR. DUBOW: No. They just
10 start during the year, right? So the
11 budget may assume that they'll hire
12 people in April, right, but instead
13 they've come on board in October. So you
14 have them for six more months. So you
15 have more costs than you anticipated for
16 those positions.

17 COUNCILMAN HENON: So do you
18 need 31 more people to fully assess the
19 City for one year for staffing? Again,
20 I'm trying to understand the assumed
21 costs.

22 MR. PIPER: So our level of
23 staffing for assessors is based on IAAO
24 standards based on how many assessors we
25 should have per parcel count, and I

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2 don't -- I can't speak for other
3 departments, but I can tell you we've
4 over the years found it difficult to hire
5 the number of assessors that we've needed
6 because of a couple different reasons,
7 but they kind of come down to how many
8 folks are qualified to come even take the
9 test who are residents of Philadelphia.

10 We did get -- we have been able
11 to look outside the City. We got a
12 temporary waiver for folks, but even that
13 has only gotten us so far in being able
14 to get hired up, which is why we're
15 giving the test at least twice this first
16 half of this year and we just gave it a
17 few months ago last year, and we exhaust
18 the list pretty quick.

19 So the expectations of vacancy
20 that Mr. Dubow referred to were
21 realistic, but they were large because
22 we've lived with those vacancies for so
23 long. We're getting staffed up. Now,
24 we're close to it, but now the problem is
25 being able to have the funding to pay for

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2 the folks as they're about to come in,
3 hopefully.

4 MR. DUBOW: It might be
5 helpful, I think, because it's clearly --
6 we should give you a little -- we will
7 send you a letter with a little
8 spreadsheet that explains what we think
9 the issue is and then we'll talk about it
10 to make sure it makes sense to you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
12 I'm understanding from Mr. Stitt we've
13 asked for a vacancy allowance citywide,
14 and we haven't gotten that back yet.

15 MR. DUBOW: Well, a vacancy
16 allowance is shown in the budget detail.
17 You can look at it for every department,
18 but we can show you kind of how we got to
19 the number we -- we'll talk to him about
20 what --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
22 right. Because I'm way over. All right.
23 We'll revisit that.

24 The Chair recognizes Councilman
25 Jones.

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2 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
3 Mr. President.

4 Still good morning, barely. So
5 I'm sitting here, Council President,
6 stunned with the fact that my property
7 assessment has officially doubled. Now,
8 I guess that should be good news in some
9 senses, but the narrative to explain that
10 to average taxpayers I need you to help
11 me with, putting in context that we are
12 looking at some increase in real estate
13 taxes for the kids. And in some of my
14 neighborhoods, the citywide average of 11
15 percent, I think it is, is actually 25
16 percent in some cases.

17 So it's 2019. We're going to
18 fast forward. I'm not knocking on one of
19 my constituent's door and saying, hi, I'm
20 Councilman Curtis Jones, I just raised
21 your taxes X, Y, and Z. Help me with
22 that narrative.

23 MR. PIPER: The increase in the
24 assessments, which is the part that we're
25 responsible for, is based on the research

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2 that we've done, and that research is
3 leading us from information we get from
4 the market. So, in other words, we're
5 not looking at a particular percentage
6 increase or even an average. I know the
7 11 percent, like I said, was just an
8 average of the -- that was what the
9 taxable assessments changed from last
10 year, but if you -- we have a report that
11 I think we shared with Council and we
12 still need to share with your office,
13 Councilman Jones, that indicates what
14 percentage of the assessments decreased,
15 and that was a pretty big percentage;
16 what percentage didn't change at all,
17 that was a very small percentage, to be
18 honest with you, about 19,000; and then
19 the percentage increases over the rest of
20 the inventory in the City. So some
21 increases were less than 10 percent, some
22 increases were 10 to 20 percent, and then
23 some increases were over 20 percent. And
24 the 11 percent is a little misleading,
25 because that just looks at the City

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2 citywide, but our information is, I will
3 say, property and area-specific, but it's
4 all based on information that we derive
5 from the market.

6 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I'm going
7 to move away from my sticker shock of
8 doubling my taxes, and I'm definitely not
9 saying that when I knock on my
10 constituents' door. That was a little
11 highbrow for me. I won't say anybody
12 else.

13 So tell me, there are issues of
14 automation Council President talked
15 about, issues of staff and hiring, and
16 that if those things are not in place,
17 how can we go forward with any proposed
18 tax increase when the valuations aren't
19 automated, we don't have everybody
20 putting in the proper information?

21 One of the issues that was
22 raised by one of my colleagues was the
23 disparity, and you explained it. I'll
24 preface that you did give me a good
25 explanation of that, that on the same

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2 block there are very different tax
3 assessments and how that variance -- we
4 were supposed to change that with AVI,
5 that there was going to be a uniformed,
6 explainable, predictable playing field
7 and assessment field.

8 So help me, because I'm still
9 not knocking on that door, talking to how
10 we explain those large differences in
11 assessments.

12 MR. PIPER: One of the things
13 that we initiated for the first time in
14 2013 for tax year 2014 was the idea that
15 taxpayers could bring, for instance, that
16 type of example to us and say, this
17 doesn't make sense. I have the same type
18 of property as the family across the
19 street. Why is there such a disparity in
20 the value? And leaving ourselves open to
21 the idea that maybe we were just wrong
22 because we have wrong data, we initiated
23 the first-level review, or the FLC.
24 That's the opportunity for taxpayers to
25 come and show us what they believe are

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2 similar properties being assessed in
3 disparate ways. Okay? But in order to
4 answer a specific taxpayer that has that
5 question, we would need to see that
6 specific instance, because in some
7 instances what a taxpayer may see is
8 exactly like their neighbor. We may look
9 at and say, well, we see the
10 similarities, but there are enough
11 differences that we're assessing them
12 slightly different.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: So you
14 explained to me offline how the
15 difference can be you live on the corner
16 property, you live in the middle, you're
17 closer to the park, you're closer to a
18 different amenity, you might be too close
19 to certain things, and it can vary that
20 way. So that narrative kind of makes
21 sense to me, but when I start to look at
22 folk and we have -- you don't have to
23 worry about this, but we do. We have to
24 knock on a door and say, based on our
25 funding formula, this percentage is going

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2 to schools. Many of the people in my
3 district -- I happen to have a district
4 that has the largest number of senior
5 citizens. Councilwoman Parker talks
6 about people on retirement, fixed
7 incomes, and I hold up the picture of the
8 kid getting on the school bus and say,
9 it's for the kids. And they say, my kids
10 are grown and living elsewhere.

11 So I need more data, for
12 example, to show overlapping maps of
13 where these assessments have gone up and
14 why, to go along with what does that mean
15 positively for a person whose house like
16 mine has doubled. Does that mean -- and
17 we need to say this more. That means you
18 have more equity in your home. So in a
19 way, it is good news.

20 I'm concerned because President
21 Trump is talking about taking away that
22 deduction. Are you familiar with that?

23 MR. PIPER: Sure.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: So what is
25 that going to mean to the bottom line of

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2 these people, Council President, when we
3 say -- we used to say, you get the
4 write-off, it's okay. It's a deferred
5 payment. You're going to pay it now.
6 You're going to write it off later.

7 What in the world do we say
8 when we can't say that?

9 MR. PIPER: Sure. I mean, like
10 you said, Councilman Jones, it's a
11 positive thing in some aspects, but let's
12 be honest, for most taxpayers if they're
13 looking to just live in their home and
14 then have to pay the taxes and there's an
15 increase, it's not a good thing. Okay?

16 As far as specific data that
17 you're asking for and how the increases
18 took place over certain neighborhoods, we
19 certainly can provide that in whatever
20 form you like, maps or reports.

21 COUNCILMAN JONES: So you have
22 it based on census tract?

23 MR. PIPER: We have it based on
24 a more scientific definition of a
25 neighborhood. We call it the geographic

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2 marketing area, or the GMA, which narrows
3 the neighborhoods down to areas within
4 boundaries that the market has defined
5 based on the similarity in property and
6 several other factors. We have those.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I'm
8 hoping that you have a citywide map that
9 you'll do, but for District Council
10 people, what we really -- although
11 citywide people care. About
12 neighborhoods like Fairmount, I want to
13 know how that juxtaposes on top of
14 Fairmount or Overbrook Farms or Parkside
15 or Carroll Park in my definition of a
16 neighborhood.

17 MR. PIPER: We have citywide
18 and we have by Council district each GMA,
19 the average change. We ran maps that
20 were just the average change for
21 single-family and multi-family and
22 condos, which is what most folks call
23 where they live, which we figured you
24 guys would be interested in that, but we
25 have it for citywide and for each

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2 district, yes.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
4 Mr. Leader. I'm done.

5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
7 Councilman.

8 The Chair recognizes Councilman
9 Johnson.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair.

12 Is Mr. Dubow available? Can
13 you please approach the table as well.

14 (Witness approached with
15 witness table.)

16 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you,
17 Rob. I just want to go through some line
18 of questioning regarding obviously the
19 new property assessments that are going
20 to have a significant impact in the
21 Second Councilmanic District, roughly 27
22 percent. We're still waiting for a
23 breakdown by zip code or neighborhood, if
24 you can provide that information to me.
25 Similar to how we had AVI, you would

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2 break down Graduate Hospital area, Point
3 Breeze as compared to Paschall. So I'm
4 waiting for that data.

5 MR. PIPER: Right. We did get
6 the e-mail from your staff, and we're
7 going to send -- we're going to give them
8 a phone call so I can get very
9 specifically what he's looking for.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So the
11 reason why I asked for Mr. Dubow to come
12 to the table as well, because what it's
13 going to appear to look like to the wider
14 public is that we're raising taxes two
15 times in one year. We're being asked to.
16 One is the property assessment, which
17 comes at an increased tax bill, and the
18 second component, obviously there's a
19 proposal to raise taxes as well. And so
20 have you taken in consideration raising
21 beyond the 45K for the homestead
22 exemption? Because if you're going to
23 increase -- we've already increased
24 assessments, and I know some parts of my
25 district people won't qualify for the

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2 homestead exemption because you have an
3 increase in assessments and then now
4 there's a proposal to raise taxes, so
5 they won't qualify. Originally we
6 thought certain individuals whose homes
7 are under \$120,000 would actually be
8 okay, but as we see these numbers now
9 rising, they're going to be significantly
10 impacted.

11 So have we looked at going
12 beyond the 45,000 homestead exemption to
13 provide for our constituents? But also
14 there's this narrative that's going on,
15 right, progressive administration, but at
16 the end of the day, we're going to
17 low-income and middle-class people to
18 kind of balance this city's budget.

19 So what other alternatives are
20 we taking to kind of alleviate some of
21 this pressure in terms of the increase of
22 property taxes? And in terms of the
23 assessments, what is this going to look
24 like moving forward? Are we going to
25 every year through the assessments -- I

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2 think you talked about, sir, that you
3 didn't want people to have a sticker
4 shock, so to speak, by doing it less
5 frequently. So how is this going to look
6 forward in the future? Because right now
7 I know in my district, we've been getting
8 calls already this morning and people are
9 already going up on the blocks talking
10 about how devastating this is going to
11 be. So give me some feedback from the
12 Administration side as well as OPA.

13 MR. DUBOW: So let me handle
14 the abatement questions first and then
15 I'll hand it over to Mike to talk about
16 what assessments will look like year to
17 year.

18 We had not looked at abatement
19 over 45,000. We can look at that. We'd
20 also have to look at kind of how to pay
21 for that, and we've looked at paying for
22 it through the transfer tax. So we could
23 look at that trade-off, what, for
24 example, a \$50,000 abatement -- I'm
25 sorry; exemption would mean in terms of

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2 what we'd need to do for the transfer
3 tax. We're happy to look at that. And
4 part of the reason that we looked at
5 increasing the homestead exemption is,
6 clearly coming from a percentage basis,
7 the higher exemption has a much bigger
8 impact on lower-valued homes. So that
9 the kind of effective increase is much
10 smaller for a lower-valued home if you
11 have a larger homestead exemption, and
12 you'll have many more properties with
13 lower values that would see a decrease.

14 So, for example, we looked at
15 the median-valued home, which is 128,100,
16 what the increase would have to be for
17 you to essentially break even under our
18 proposed package, and it's about 8.7
19 percent. If you looked at a home that
20 was valued \$50,000, that percent goes up
21 to something like 28 percent. So the
22 homestead has a much bigger impact on the
23 lower-valued homes, kind of that point
24 that you were asking about before.

25 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And we

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2 know in areas such as Point Breeze 120
3 might be on the low end for a person's
4 home who they may have purchased in 1973
5 for \$5,000, \$7,000, \$10,000, but I don't
6 even think the typical number is around
7 120, because now you have the new
8 assessments that are coming out, right,
9 so it might have been 120 last year.

10 MR. DUBOW: Actually, this
11 assumes the new assessments. So last
12 year the median value was about 113.

13 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: 113.

14 MR. DUBOW: Yeah.

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So the
16 128 --

17 MR. DUBOW: 128 is the new
18 median.

19 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay. Go
20 ahead, sir.

21 MR. PIPER: So the Second
22 Councilmanic District in some senses is
23 unique in that there's a few
24 neighborhoods -- I mean, Point Breeze,
25 some parts of Graduate Hospital, and I

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2 know some parts of Southwest Philadelphia
3 that for many years -- and I know you
4 were around, but perhaps before you were
5 the District Councilperson -- they
6 weren't the most attractive
7 neighborhoods, and I can kind of speak to
8 some personal experience having lived not
9 too far from there.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I lived in
11 Point Breeze and Graduate Hospital all my
12 life, so I understand.

13 MR. PIPER: And actually having
14 sold real estate in those neighborhoods.
15 And, I mean, at some point as recently as
16 maybe a little over 20 years ago, to be
17 honest with you, folks couldn't wait to
18 get out. Okay? It's the opposite. It's
19 not unique in that way now.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I want to
21 beg to differ with you. Now, I've lived
22 down there all my life, right, and I'm
23 just being frank with you, and I watched
24 the neighborhood go through a transition.
25 I've never heard, just being honest with

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2 you, I've never heard a resident come to
3 me and say, I am dying to get out of
4 here. Now, we might have had some blight
5 in Point Breeze and Grays Ferry, but I
6 think the result of the development
7 that's coming in --

8 MR. PIPER: Yes.

9 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: --
10 people's feelings have been quite the
11 opposite. I can't pay my taxes;
12 therefore, I'm moving out.

13 MR. PIPER: Let me kind of
14 correct --

15 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just being
16 honest with you.

17 MR. PIPER: Right. Let me
18 correct and fill out what I was saying.
19 What folks would say to me as the person
20 who they were asking to sell their house
21 for them, the listing agent, is we want
22 to move. But they weren't necessarily
23 moving out of the Second District. They
24 were moving from one part to another,
25 because the area itself was taking off.

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2 But now it's the entire area, Point
3 Breeze, Graduate Hospital.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

5 MR. PIPER: It's not unique in
6 Philadelphia in that respect, but it's
7 one of the districts, I will say, where
8 there are several very attractive
9 neighborhoods that have become more
10 attractive.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: I'm going
12 to cut straight to the chase and I'll let
13 you finish answering. What are we going
14 to do to mitigate the unforeseen negative
15 consequences of the rising real estate
16 cost and the impact it's having on the
17 people that live inside these
18 neighborhoods? And I don't mean just
19 long-term residents, because I get calls
20 from new residents complaining about the
21 bait and switch regarding they may have a
22 tax abatement on their home, but now
23 we're assessing the land value. So I get
24 complaints from new residents and old
25 residents, right? And we understand

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2 development has to take place because
3 that's the market, but what are we going
4 to do aggressively as a city to address
5 the tale of two cities that we're going
6 to be seeing as we move forward? And
7 that's where I asked for Rob to come up
8 and also the Office of Property
9 Assessment, because when I go out into my
10 communities, obviously we're on the front
11 line, right? We have a tax proposal
12 that's on the table, and most people
13 believe that the assessments are a way to
14 just juice up our revenue coffers so we
15 can do different things for the City.
16 I'm just being frank with you. That's
17 what we have to deal with going out into
18 the community.

19 So what are we going to do to
20 mitigate these unforeseen negative
21 consequences on people?

22 MR. DUBOW: Right. And it's
23 kind of the reason behind our relief
24 programs. The abatement is one of them,
25 but there are also things like the new

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2 OOPA, the new property tax delinquency
3 payment, senior tax freeze, LOOP that
4 obviously you know about. So that's kind
5 of why we have the array of programs to
6 try to provide relief.

7 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: So I'm
8 going to ask for this as I wrap up my
9 question. I'm going to ask for the
10 Administration, if they're going to put
11 forward a plan to help homeowners stay
12 inside their homes. Like, in other
13 words, the same aggressive approach that
14 we're taking to protect bike lanes, the
15 same aggressive approach that we're doing
16 to address the opioid crisis, if the
17 Administration is saying, listen, these
18 reassessments are significantly going to
19 increase your taxes and now I want to
20 also increase your taxes because we want
21 to support the young people who attend
22 the Philadelphia Public School District,
23 I think that it's incumbent upon the
24 Administration to put forward an
25 aggressive plan to say, listen, we care

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2 about long-term residents, we care about
3 the new people who are moving into their
4 homes who are also suffering from these
5 two tax increases that we're going to see
6 back to back, and it's going to be
7 devastating across the board.

8 And so I take this part very
9 seriously, and since I've come into
10 Council in 2011, first it was AVI, and we
11 dealt with that moving forward, but also
12 we have to deal with the landlord
13 component, because we also know that a
14 lot of landlords are going to take these
15 increases out on renters, and what are we
16 going to do with that population of
17 people? And so I just wanted to put that
18 out there.

19 MR. DUBOW: Yeah, and we will.
20 And in addition to the relief programs,
21 we have money in the budget for
22 additional housing counseling to make
23 sure people have access to that. So
24 we'll get you a whole plan, because it is
25 something we take very seriously.

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2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Okay.

3 Thank you, Mr. Dubow.

4 Thank you, sir.

5 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,

6 Councilman.

7 The Chair recognizes Councilman

8 Oh.

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

11 Good morning. Good afternoon.

12 MR. PIPER: Good afternoon.

13 COUNCILMAN OH: I had the
14 opportunity to meet with you yesterday
15 and go over a lot of things, so it's not
16 so much questioning as I just want to
17 point out again but publicly my concerns
18 about this process, and I welcome your
19 input, because you kind of know what my
20 concerns are.

21 So I understand there are
22 sections of the City where the taxes are
23 not going up, sections of the City where
24 the taxes are going down. That's not my
25 concern. My concern is that there are

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2 sections of the City where we expect the
3 taxes to go up. They're building \$1.2
4 million condominiums, they're building
5 new homes for \$800,000, they're highly
6 desirable Center City locations, those
7 types of things, understood. The
8 question is when properties that we do
9 not expect to receive these high
10 increases are receiving high increases
11 and continually so over the last five
12 years.

13 And so I'd like to focus a
14 little bit on the Baltimore Avenue area
15 around 48th, 49th. You and I are both
16 very familiar with it. And my concern is
17 this, that a home that has been on the
18 market at like 80,000 for 20 years that
19 has had no improvements is now being
20 assessed at 450,000, 500,000 because of
21 sale price, but what I don't see in that
22 is a person who has lived there who may
23 be retired or have a working-class job.
24 They live there, they pay their taxes,
25 they take care of the home. Somebody

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2 else who comes in who received the
3 benefits that University of Penn offers
4 for living in that geographic area, Penn
5 Alexander School, they don't pay tuition
6 if their kids go to University of Penn,
7 they have different loan programs and
8 other things as an incentive, along with
9 the ten-year tax abatement, for them to
10 go and pay a much higher price for the
11 location, put in a large investment to
12 improve that house better than anybody
13 else's house, and that total cost raises
14 in some way, possibly raises if enough
15 people continue to do this, the
16 assessment on everybody else's house.
17 And some of the people who are purchasing
18 the homes can also be a member at an
19 exclusive or at least a pretty, I'd say,
20 expensive private club in the area. This
21 is not an amenity available to the
22 current residents.

23 And so assessing the home based
24 on the sale price of new people coming in
25 who have benefits that are not available

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2 to everyone in the neighborhood to me is
3 not an accurate way of assessing the
4 actual value of the residents.

5 And I can also look at
6 development close to really desirable
7 locations and the fact that the
8 investment will then affect the
9 neighboring blocks.

10 We're hearing that there needs
11 to be 28 or so more staff members, and
12 I've heard that for a while, that you're
13 not fully staffed. At the same time, I
14 understand that the software for this,
15 the Tyler software program, really is
16 going to be in play for 2021.

17 My question is, rather than
18 raising the assessments and the taxes and
19 then doing certain types of programs to
20 address long-term residents, why not just
21 put a moratorium on this process until
22 the software system, which I think is
23 quite sophisticated, can be employed into
24 this assessment process?

25 MR. PIPER: So I'll try to

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2 address some of your last questions
3 first.

4 The software that we're looking
5 to have implemented sometime within the
6 next couple years that will be in use for
7 some parts of the 2021 assessment is
8 going to bring many benefits to the City
9 of Philadelphia. And you mentioned
10 automation, but that's just one. Okay?
11 Better data integrity, better valuation
12 processes in general, quicker response
13 between decisions that happen on our side
14 or on the Appeals Board side between the
15 time the decisions are made and the time
16 a taxpayer gets a new tax bill.

17 What we're looking for probably
18 more than anything is to not have to use
19 multiple databases. And it's going to
20 increase the efficiency of what we do.
21 In fact, it's going to make many of the
22 processes that we use right now redundant
23 or unnecessary altogether, but it doesn't
24 mean, however, that we needn't continue
25 to do reassessments every year.

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2 And, in fact, I'll just kind of
3 go back to some of Council President
4 Clarke's first questions about the
5 increase of 11 percent overall, speaking
6 to the idea that the more frequently --
7 which is what we've been saying. The
8 more frequently we do these, if we do
9 them annually, we don't expect the
10 change. And I'll say "change" because we
11 don't know how it's going to come out.
12 The market could take a downturn.
13 Typically real estate markets go up over
14 time, but the change will not be as
15 drastic because we're keeping tabs on it.

16 So the anxiety that's produced
17 in taxpayers, I think we probably agree
18 on that, and that is the drastic changes
19 that take place, and particularly you
20 mentioned some neighborhoods where
21 there's more drastic changes than others.
22 So just to kind of speak to that, and you
23 mentioned some areas where they expect to
24 see increases and some areas where they
25 don't.

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2 I can only say that -- I mean,
3 we do understand that there's a
4 difference between what we define as
5 value, meaning something that is a good
6 thing the more it increases. I can sell
7 my house for more because it's worth
8 more. I can borrow more money on it
9 because it's worth more. But that
10 doesn't help me if I just want to live
11 there and not have to pay higher taxes.
12 We understand that.

13 The assessment -- we're
14 responsible for trying to make sure that
15 the assessment is tied as close as
16 possible to the market, and that's what
17 we're tasked with doing right now. And I
18 think we've been doing it better. We're
19 not perfect, and with 580,000 parcels, we
20 will never be exactly perfect. We'll
21 have some properties that we'll get
22 wrong, and we'll correct them as we see,
23 but overall the assessments in general I
24 think are getting better every year.

25 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I'm

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 going to conclude, but I guess my overall
3 opinion is at this point in time -- and I
4 appreciate your explaining and talking to
5 me and we go through that, but I
6 understand that if someone's house can be
7 sold for 300,000 more dollars than what
8 they bought it for, that they have a
9 benefit, although they don't want to
10 move, but when their taxes shoot up like
11 that and they can't sell their house and
12 nobody is going to buy their house, but
13 their house property has been increased
14 because of neighboring properties, as I
15 said, some people have certain benefits
16 that because of where they're employed,
17 that don't apply to the rest of the folks
18 in the neighborhood, I don't see that as
19 an accurate process. And I have spoken
20 to some people in the Administration.

21 My second point is, what is the
22 policy? What if in fact the properties
23 are assessed at a higher rate, but the
24 people cannot afford to pay that rate and
25 they have to do reverse mortgages or they

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2 have to plan on leaving the community and
3 they can't find a home to purchase based
4 on the fact that they've inherited the
5 home that they live in? The policy issue
6 then would be that you're pushing out
7 residents, Philadelphians from their
8 neighborhoods where they live with their
9 families and they have all their
10 connections to being dispersed. I'm not
11 clear on is that a policy? Is there no
12 policy? It's just an assessment that
13 doesn't come into play. And I see Rob
14 Dubow came up, and I know my bell just
15 rang, but I'll ask the Chairman would it
16 be okay if Rob Dubow answered that
17 question?

18 MR. PIPER: And I understand
19 what you're asking in the statement,
20 because it is a policy issue. I'll pass
21 the mic.

22 MR. DUBOW: And then this goes
23 back to the questions that Councilman
24 Johnson was asking, and we told him we
25 would put together a document that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 summarizes all the things we're doing to
3 help homeowners, tax relief programs,
4 housing counseling, the homestead
5 exemption. So we'll put that together
6 and we'll share that with Council.

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

9 I just ask that you share it
10 with the Chair for distribution.

11 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

12 COUNCILMAN OH: And that you
13 come back, because I can look at it in
14 the privacy of my office, but I would
15 like to have it a public process so
16 people understand what we're looking at
17 and talking about.

18 MR. DUBOW: And later in the
19 process we have a hearing on revenue
20 measures, so I assume we'll be talking
21 about it that day.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Yes. Thank
23 you.

24 Thank you very much.

25 COUNCILMAN HENON: You got it.

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2 Thank you, Councilman.

3 The Chair recognizes Councilman
4 Domb.

5 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
6 Mr. Chairman.

7 And good afternoon. I have a
8 couple questions I wanted to ask. I just
9 want to make sure that I lay out all the
10 facts as I understand them.

11 Two years ago we billed 134
12 billion -- we had a market value of 134
13 billion in the City. Last year we had
14 150 billion of market value. This year
15 we're going to 162 billion of market
16 value. When we get 134 billion in market
17 value, we billed 96 -- I'm sorry. It was
18 about -- we had 1.3 million of revenue.
19 We billed 160 roughly of people who paid.
20 Non-profits didn't pay. Ninety-one were
21 payments -- five or six were in payment
22 plans. But here's my point: We've
23 increased our revenues of 1.3 billion two
24 years ago to what we're projecting today
25 to 1.7 billion, \$400 million in two

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 years, 400 million, of which 176 million
3 comes to the City and 215 million goes to
4 the School District. That's per year
5 with this proposal. It's a 31 percent
6 increase in billing in two years. And I
7 have looked at the rate of inflation.
8 For most people it's between 2 and 2 and
9 a half, maybe 3 percent. So I'm trying
10 to understand where all this money is
11 going that we've been collecting. Okay?

12 But let me just state a few
13 more facts, because I think it's
14 important.

15 Of the 537,000 properties, 24
16 percent of the homes are going down, 2
17 percent are unchanged, 32 percent have a
18 10 percent change or less, 40 percent are
19 seeing increases over 10 percent, and 20
20 percent are seeing an increase over 20
21 percent. There's some major, major
22 increases. And what I'm not clear on, in
23 addition to that -- first of all, I don't
24 know how we answer to the citizens that
25 we went from 1.3 billing to 1.7 billing

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 in two years. That's \$400 million.

3 When you look at the chart, for

4 some reason we had about 40, 41 billion

5 of exempt properties two years ago.

6 Today we still have the same 41 billion.

7 So are our exempt property values not

8 going up or are we not addressing them?

9 MR. PIPER: It depends on what

10 type of exempt properties you're talking

11 about, Councilperson, because we have

12 exempt properties that are statutorily

13 exempt, the institutionally owned

14 properties. We also --

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: They could be

16 exempt from paying taxes, but they're not

17 exempt from putting the right values on

18 them, is my point. The values on exempt

19 properties have not changed in two years.

20 MR. PIPER: So I'm going to

21 say -- and I would have to look in the

22 specific properties to see why -- to

23 really answer your question, but when we

24 look through the same report that we gave

25 you all last week, we did see some

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 substantial decreases in, for instance,
3 the value of exempt land. Okay? What we
4 call exempt land includes the land that
5 is owned by, say, RDA -- PRA and PIDC,
6 and then when that land gets sold to
7 developers, it becomes taxable. So
8 there's an increase -- a decrease in the
9 exempt land that shows up as an increase
10 in the taxable land. That's one big
11 difference.

12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: But here's my
13 point, just in global --

14 MR. DUBOW: One other
15 difference is, you're not looking
16 necessarily at the same set of
17 properties, because there are some
18 properties that showed as exempt in one
19 year that are no longer exempt. So if
20 their abatement rolls off. So you might
21 see a total value that's the same, but
22 the property value may have actually
23 changed significantly.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Do we have an
25 assessor who goes and looks at the exempt

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 properties this past year and reassessed
3 them?

4 MR. PIPER: We have a group
5 that looks at the exempt properties, yes.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I mean, when
7 you look at the chart which you guys
8 provided, which is a very good chart, it
9 looks like no change is going on there,
10 I'm just saying, and the changes are
11 dramatic --

12 MR. PIPER: So on some -- most
13 of the institutionally owned properties,
14 the churches and universities, you're not
15 going to see a lot of sales that are
16 going to drive changes. They just don't
17 tend to sell. The values change, but not
18 perhaps as dramatically as the ones --

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So that goes
20 to my other point, though. When real
21 estate goes up in value -- I was always
22 taught this. What goes up in value is
23 the demand for the location, which is
24 really about the land value, because if I
25 build a building in Councilman Johnson's

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 district or build one in Councilwoman
3 Parker's district, the construction costs
4 are going to be almost identical per
5 foot. And so what goes up is the land
6 value, and when I look at the chart of
7 what we increased, we increased taxable
8 land value across the board about 8.4,
9 but the building values went up about
10 9.7. I'm just saying from an assessing
11 standpoint, I would have thought that the
12 land values would have gone up
13 dramatically more than the building
14 values.

15 MR. PIPER: I can give you one
16 reason you're going to see that every
17 year, and that's because -- so the land
18 value did increase, but the building
19 value was created by new buildings.
20 There's no new lands. Land is finite,
21 but there's new buildings, and that
22 increases the aggregate numbers that show
23 the total building value.

24 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me get
25 back to my major point. This is for Rob,

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 though. If I'm a resident of the City of
3 Philadelphia and I'm looking at the City
4 and saying in the last two years, the
5 real estate revenue has gone from 1.3
6 billion to 1.7 billion, where is that
7 \$400 million? That's a lot of money
8 every year.

9 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. And I need
10 to check your numbers, but I can tell you
11 there are three main places where revenue
12 is going. One is to the School District;
13 two is, on the City side, is going to pay
14 the value of the homesteads; and three is
15 setting up the Federal Reserve in
16 anticipation of whatever might happen in
17 Washington. Those are the three biggest
18 areas that funding went to.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: But I guess
20 my concern is, people who are homeowners,
21 the City side is 176 million a year every
22 year from that number. The School
23 District side --

24 MR. DUBOW: I don't think
25 those -- I'll check, because I'm not sure

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 those are accurate.

3 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Well,
4 I just took 162 million in market value
5 and deducted the 41 of exempt and
6 multiplied that by our current rate of
7 1.4, not even in the new rate, and that's
8 where I got the numbers from.

9 MR. DUBOW: It's a little more
10 complicated than that, but --

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: It's pretty
12 accurate.

13 MR. DUBOW: We can show you.
14 But, again, that's where the money went,
15 those three places.

16 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Right. So
17 having said that, though, can you give me
18 an answer on how do you explain to
19 people -- and, remember, this land value,
20 you had ten-year tax abatements that have
21 gone up dramatically, because a lot of
22 people who had ten-year tax abatements,
23 the land values have, as Councilman
24 Johnson pointed out, have skyrocketed,
25 which may have skewed that number. I

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 still don't understand how building
3 values have gone up greater than land
4 values.

5 MR. PIPER: Again --

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Building
7 values are typically tied to the rate of
8 inflation. So you have to pay
9 contractors more. You got to pay for
10 materials more. So this is tied to the
11 rate of inflation. I don't think we saw
12 9.7 percent -- maybe we did, but I didn't
13 see that -- in the rate of inflation in
14 the City.

15 MR. PIPER: I'll just look at
16 it at a very micro level. One piece of
17 ground, vacant ground, may increase in
18 value from one year to the next because
19 of the desirability of the location, but
20 if it's vacant and I have a shed on it
21 that's worth \$20,000, I'm going to
22 develop it, because that's not the
23 highest and best use. I'm going to put a
24 multi-story condo building. Times 20,000
25 or 30,000, you're going to see new

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2 buildings coming up. So the aggregate
3 numbers you're seeing reflect the
4 increase in new construction even if you
5 take out just the market-derived
6 increases.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me go
8 back to my other point. If the market
9 value two years ago was 134 billion and
10 today it's going to be 162 billion and
11 the amount of non-profits is constant at
12 41 billion, if you take 134 minus the 41,
13 tax it by the number -- or just take the
14 delta between 134 and 162, which is 28
15 billion, and multiply that by 1.4, you're
16 at \$392 million per year. So I think
17 these numbers are pretty accurate, unless
18 there's other math that I'm missing.

19 MR. DUBOW: I think there might
20 be, so we'll show you exactly what the
21 increment is and, again, those are the
22 three areas it went to and --

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: But values
24 were 134 billion two years ago. We had
25 40 to 41 billion of exempt. Values are

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 162 billion under this program. We still
3 are 40, 41 billion of exempt. There's
4 still 28 million that we've added to our
5 inventory in value that 100 percent of it
6 pretty much we're getting taxes for.

7 MR. DUBOW: Again, we'll look
8 at that.

9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: All right.
10 Thank you. Thank you very much.

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
12 Councilman.

13 The Chair recognizes
14 Councilwoman Gym.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
16 very much, Mr. Chair.

17 So good afternoon.

18 MR. PIPER: Councilwoman.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I mean, I
20 know the Council President said a little
21 earlier that he didn't want to beat a
22 dead horse about some of the assessment
23 stuff, but honestly, I feel very
24 frustrated as well, along with many of my
25 colleagues, because I think I've asked

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 routine questions, as my colleagues have,
3 about the importance of these annualized
4 assessments, and there were clear
5 assurances that the City was being
6 assessed, that we are doing annualized
7 assessments, that we recognize what had
8 happened with AVI before and we didn't
9 really want to revisit that.

10 So to hear -- so can you say
11 again -- and I just want to be clear.
12 You are committed to these annual
13 assessments.

14 MR. PIPER: Yes.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And your
16 argument is is that they were done
17 inaccurately in the past three years
18 since AVI?

19 MR. PIPER: I'm sorry. Our
20 argument is that there were done?

21 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: For the
22 reason for the 11 to 12 percent jump.

23 MR. PIPER: Is that they were
24 done -- no, not inaccurately, but that
25 they were done accurately and then

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 between changes in the market and better
3 information that we've gotten on some
4 properties, we've improved the accuracy
5 in the ensuing years.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And is it
7 your feeling that the improvements that
8 come through will be better under CAMA or
9 that they will be no different from
10 whether they would be manually done?

11 MR. PIPER: No. No. The
12 improvements under CAMA will be -- I
13 mean, I named a few in terms of the
14 automation process, the better integrity,
15 the efficiency of how the processes work
16 now versus how they would work with one
17 CAMA system.

18 Right now we're using several
19 different database management systems to
20 do assessments, which is sort of the
21 equivalent of having to walk across the
22 City, changing your shoes every ten
23 miles. We still have to get there, but
24 the CAMA system puts us in a new car in
25 which we can do what we have to do, but

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2 more efficiently by eliminating some of
3 the processes that are in place. We
4 can't change the processes without CAMA,
5 but even with CAMA, we have to undergo a
6 lot of process modification.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That brings
8 me to a question about what kind of
9 quality assurance processes do you have
10 within OPA? Like do you have any kind of
11 process in place to self-audit your
12 results to kind of review what you're
13 doing? I guess there's metrics like COD
14 and PRD that are used. What do you do to
15 self-audit?

16 MR. PIPER: Well, a few
17 different things. We have a Quality
18 Assurance Unit that just looks at some of
19 the basic tasks that OPA is responsible
20 for, and I think maybe what you're
21 referring to are our measurements of how
22 well we're doing our job, accuracy and
23 uniformity. We do look at measurements,
24 coefficient of dispersion. I try not to
25 bring that up. I know folks don't want

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 to hear those type of terms, but that's
3 actually what we use and what all
4 assessment jurisdictions use to measure
5 the level of uniformity; the
6 price-related differential, which
7 measures the same thing but on a vertical
8 basis between high value and low value
9 properties; sales ratios. We have to
10 look at this every year before we undergo
11 a reassessment to see where our problems
12 are, where our deficiencies are.

13 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: But beyond
14 the typical coefficient of dispersion and
15 the price-related differentials, what
16 else do you use to self-audit, to
17 determine whether you're doing the best
18 job possible? Are those the only two
19 metrics that you measure yourself up
20 against? Are there others that you're
21 taking a look at?

22 MR. PIPER: Well, throughout
23 the year we look at sales ratios. We
24 look at our numbers and see how well they
25 line up with actual factual historical

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 sales.

3 MR. AROS: Good afternoon.
4 James Aros, Deputy Chief Assessment
5 Officer.

6 So as Mr. Piper was saying,
7 throughout the year as new sales come in,
8 we validate those sales and we look back
9 historically over a several-year period
10 and see where the sales are kind of
11 falling, do they reflect the values that
12 we have, and if there's a difference, is
13 that because it's a change in the market
14 or is there a data element that needs to
15 get corrected on certain properties. And
16 we do that throughout the year, and
17 basically that kind of put -- when we do
18 our values for certification, that gives
19 us a head start of saying, okay, well, I
20 have five years worth of historical sales
21 in this neighborhood and I can see that
22 over a period of time these properties
23 have gone up 25 percent or 30 percent.
24 And so when we see the numbers, as we do
25 them every year, we kind of have an idea

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 to say, okay, I looked at my sales in
3 this neighborhood, I'm expecting these
4 values to go up or I'm expecting these
5 values to go down or to stay flat,
6 because the evaluation staff has already
7 had their hands in the data throughout
8 the year. So it's not like we're doing a
9 bunch of stuff and then once a year we
10 get a bunch of numbers and we have no
11 idea what's behind them. It's a whole
12 process throughout the year between data
13 collection and validating sales that gets
14 us to that point. So when we get to the
15 end there and we start looking at
16 numbers, we've been doing a quality check
17 on the data all along the line to get to
18 those numbers in the end.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I guess
20 one of the things that I think has been
21 difficult is that many people are unsure
22 about how these numbers and values get
23 arrived at. So I assume you use some
24 kind of algorithm or formula to arrive at
25 these values. Are you making these

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2 public?

3 MR. PIPER: So one of the
4 things -- and I know you asked about
5 self-auditing, but taxing jurisdictions
6 have to answer to a state oversight
7 board, and they are sort of the final
8 arbiter of how well we're doing
9 assessment-wise. They're not making
10 judgments on the fairness or anything
11 like that, but they're looking at how
12 closely we are doing our assessments in
13 relation to sales, and we have to report
14 to the state Tax Equalization Board every
15 month all of the City sales, and they
16 take a measurement of how far we are from
17 perfection, I'll say, for us, which is --
18 because we're assessing at 100 percent
19 now. And over the past few years since
20 AVI, we've been 98, 99 percent every
21 year, and that's published. Their
22 numbers are published on their website.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. So
24 back to the question about arriving at
25 values. Do you make those public, the

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 algorithm and the formula that you use to
3 arrive at values?

4 MR. PIPER: We make public
5 anything someone asks for. So typically
6 when you say the algorithm, we value
7 different types of property using
8 different types of methodology. Most of
9 the residential properties we use sales
10 models. In each part of the City the
11 model will look a little different, the
12 script would look a little different.
13 It's -- and we do get requests from folks
14 who want to see what the models look
15 like, and we make those available for the
16 public.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So can we
18 just have the algorithms be made public
19 then? I mean, this is important I feel
20 like for public transparency and
21 confidence as we move forward. Is there
22 a -- a number of jurisdictions do make
23 their algorithmic decision-making public.
24 Is there a problem with making that
25 public?

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2 MR. PIPER: I don't know that
3 there's a problem with making it public.
4 I guess we'd have to, I guess, maybe get
5 a clearer understanding of exactly what
6 you wanted to see made public.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: The
8 algorithm and the formula that you use to
9 arrive at the value of the property.

10 MR. PIPER: Yeah. I don't
11 think there's a problem making it public.
12 I think it's just taking what we have and
13 saying this is what we're going to put
14 out there, this is -- we're going to
15 address someone's concerns if this is
16 what you need. I don't think we have a
17 problem making it public, though.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Well, I
19 think that that's what I'd be looking
20 for, to see that we can make it public as
21 we start to take a look at this,
22 especially as you're talking about the
23 different databases that we've got, the
24 different values that we're seeing that
25 are kind of going all over the place,

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 that it would be helpful to know that
3 that is something that will be publicly
4 available.

5 MR. PIPER: Sure. I do
6 understand what you're asking for. I'm
7 not sure what all it entails, but we will
8 definitely look into it.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So we can
10 follow up with you on that.

11 MR. PIPER: Yes.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thanks.

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
14 Councilwoman.

15 It would be my turn. I just
16 happen to be up here. So I have a few
17 questions.

18 Let me -- I think Councilman
19 Domb raised a lot of good questions that
20 I hope you can provide some of those
21 answers or a little more -- shed a little
22 more clarity to the Chair.

23 One of the things that you had
24 mentioned -- we talked about is the 11
25 percent increase in one year, and I guess

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2 that's a combination of the taxable
3 building and land.

4 MR. PIPER: Right.

5 COUNCILMAN HENON: Which really
6 doesn't kind of -- I just think there is
7 a little misunderstanding of the increase
8 in like 162 billion of anticipated
9 taxable properties in the City of
10 Philadelphia. So that would be helpful.

11 So we had an 11 percent
12 increase last year alone. What were the
13 increases in assessments the two years
14 prior in each year?

15 MR. PIPER: In the taxable
16 assessment?

17 COUNCILMAN HENON: In the
18 taxable assessment.

19 MR. PIPER: I don't remember.
20 I can get that for you.

21 COUNCILMAN HENON: Could you
22 get that?

23 MR. PIPER: Sure.

24 COUNCILMAN HENON: There's been
25 conversation, and I know we've had it in

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 a briefing. It would have been -- and
3 obviously it's always nicer to -- it's a
4 little easier to handle a gradual
5 increase in property values. Increase in
6 property values is great. I mean, that
7 means we have a thriving market in our
8 neighborhoods, but an 11 percent in one
9 increase. But the two previous years, I
10 would anticipate that they'd be a smaller
11 increase in assessed value?

12 MR. PIPER: I believe they
13 were.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: If you don't
15 have them --

16 MR. PIPER: I don't have them
17 right --

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: It wouldn't
19 be 11, 11, 11, right, or 6, 8, and 11.

20 MR. PIPER: I just don't
21 remember what they are, but we can get
22 that.

23 COUNCILMAN HENON: If you can
24 get that, I'd appreciate it.

25 So last year this came up that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 your office can't build in anticipated
3 value the way private market can and that
4 this anticipated value often comes from
5 an intended reuse; is that correct?

6 MR. PIPER: An intended reuse?

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Intended
8 reuse of the property or land.

9 MR. PIPER: Of the land? Not
10 the intended reuse, but the actual use,
11 the new construction versus undeveloped
12 land, yeah.

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Right. So
14 you just answered that question. All
15 right. So is the known use in the eyes
16 of the OPA derived from zoning or any
17 other building categories, descriptions?

18 MR. PIPER: It's derived from a
19 combination of sources. Zoning is one
20 thing, and we understand just -- we're
21 getting a better understanding, I should
22 say, of how zoning works in Philadelphia,
23 but it's just one source. We're also
24 looking at permits, which give us a
25 picture of what a developer intends on

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2 doing with the piece of ground, yeah.

3 COUNCILMAN HENON: That's
4 great, because that is what I was going
5 to ask. Have you given any thought --
6 the office been giving any thought and
7 coordinated with Planning or L&I in their
8 remapping process to make sure that the
9 information that you do have and that you
10 can look at is a little more accurate?

11 MR. PIPER: Yeah. Permits,
12 just like sales information, is sort of
13 our bread and butter. Permit information
14 is what we use to make judgments going
15 forward on new construction and
16 substantial renovation. So that does
17 affect the land values.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: And we do
19 have an increase of permits for the year?

20 MR. PIPER: Yes. I think
21 we're -- are we getting all the permits
22 now?

23 MR. AROS: Good afternoon,
24 Councilman.

25 We get -- we don't get every

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 single permit that's filed to L&I, only
3 because some of the stuff just doesn't
4 affect value, but all of the major
5 permits as far as major renovations or
6 structural work or anything that goes
7 along with the properties, we get a file
8 once a month from L&I. We get hard
9 copies of everything that's filed and
10 it's sent over to us.

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: But if
12 you're working or collaborating with
13 multiple departments on the anticipated
14 use, that will give you a better snapshot
15 of the reuse and the value when you're
16 making your assumptions for the following
17 fiscal year; is that correct?

18 MR. PIPER: Yes.

19 COUNCILMAN HENON: All right.
20 So I'm going to submit some questions to
21 the record. I'm going to read them out
22 loud, and I want you to answer them,
23 because I'm just going to read them. I'm
24 going to read them out loud and then
25 we're going to submit them to the office.

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 Officially if you can provide that back
3 to the Chair so it could be distributed.

4 The number of properties and
5 specifically the number of residential
6 properties that are delinquent in
7 property taxes; the number of delinquent
8 owners who are known to be out-of-town
9 owners and investors; the number of
10 investment properties overall; the number
11 of homes and the aggregate value of the
12 homes sold in the past five years broken
13 down by neighborhood, if possible. And
14 we've had some of these conversations --

15 MR. PIPER: Sure.

16 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- in our
17 meeting.

18 The number of housing
19 inspection license and the number of
20 units that correspond with those
21 licenses.

22 MR. PIPER: Councilman, I'm
23 sorry. Can I interrupt you? I don't
24 want to let you go on until I just
25 clarify a couple things.

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2 So some of those questions we
3 can answer. We can get some information
4 for you. And some of those questions, I
5 don't even want to say it's a different
6 department, because I'm not even sure if
7 some of that information is even tracked.

8 MR. DUBOW: You were asking
9 about delinquency by out-of-town owners?

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: Correct.

11 MR. DUBOW: Yes. We can get
12 you that.

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Right.
14 That's why I'm asking the questions. And
15 really I don't want to have a debate. I
16 mean, but these are the things that I
17 think that will be helpful to members.
18 As you know, it comes up a lot when we're
19 talking about our real estate collection
20 rate and the improvements and the --
21 especially the big thing is -- well, at
22 least that Councilman Domb, myself, and
23 Councilman Squilla and O'Neill are
24 interested in, securitization, tax liens.
25 So that's going to be coming up

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2 throughout this budget process.

3 MR. DUBOW: And Revenue has a
4 report on property tax delinquencies and
5 how many are out of Philadelphia.

6 COUNCILMAN HENON: Right.

7 MR. DUBOW: Philadelphians,
8 owner-occupied, not owner-occupied. So
9 we can get you all that.

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: I get that.
11 That was touched on yesterday for a
12 little bit. So I'm just going through my
13 list here. I will officially submit it
14 over for you, but I think it's good to
15 talk about it publicly and let the
16 general public know that we are asking
17 the questions we need to ask and hoping
18 to receive the answers back in a timely
19 fashion, before we make overall budgetary
20 decisions that reflect our communities.

21 So I left off at the number of
22 homes and the aggregate value of the
23 homes sold in the past five years broken
24 down by neighborhoods, if possible; the
25 number of housing inspection licenses and

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 the number of units that correspond with
3 those licenses.

4 Just let me finish here. You
5 don't have to respond.

6 You can also provide the
7 following information to the Chair in the
8 six districts specifically, the aggregate
9 value of property taxes paid, that are
10 being paid, broken down by property type,
11 residential, commercial, industrial in
12 those categories; the number of
13 first-level review both in the Sixth
14 District and -- I'm not going to speak
15 for Councilman O'Neill, but Northeast
16 specific in both FY18 and during the
17 switch of AVI; and to provide the number
18 of first-level review appeals that are
19 granted and those that are refused; and,
20 lastly, the number of appeals to the BRT
21 in both FY18 and during the switch to
22 AVI, including the number of appeals
23 granted and the number of appeals
24 rejected, both for the Sixth District and
25 for Northeast Philadelphia.

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2 MR. PIPER: Okay. Councilman,
3 I was just going to ask one -- I
4 understand you read it for the record.
5 I'm hoping you're going to have your guy
6 e-mail that to me, because someone was
7 trying to write as quick as possible,
8 but --

9 COUNCILMAN HENON: That's what
10 I said, you don't need to do that. I
11 will provide that in writing, but I
12 wanted to state it for the record so it's
13 recorded --

14 MR. PIPER: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- in this
16 public hearing process --

17 MR. PIPER: Got you.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- that
19 we're going to be asking those questions.

20 MR. PIPER: Sure.

21 MR. DUBOW: We may need to
22 follow up to clarify on a couple of them.

23 COUNCILMAN HENON: When we were
24 switching over to AVI a few years ago,
25 there was the conversation about where

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 the burden of the increase was going to
3 be, on residential and commercial. Do
4 you have that broken down or could you
5 provide that to the Chair, the increases
6 this year and the 11 percent, not
7 including the 4 percent proposed increase
8 for residential, commercial, and
9 industrial?

10 MR. PIPER: We have that broken
11 down into every sub-property category
12 type, yes, residential, commercial,
13 industrial.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: If you could
15 provide that to the Chair, I'd appreciate
16 it. Thank you.

17 MR. PIPER: Sure.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: The Chair
19 recognizes Councilman Squilla.

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

22 And thank you because a lot of
23 the questions that we had have been
24 asked, but my question is on appeals.
25 Knowing that we had a total of -- how

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 many properties were changed this year?

3 MR. PIPER: About 540,000 to
4 550,000.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So we
6 probably won't have as many as the
7 original AVI appeal. That was over
8 20,000, was it?

9 MR. PIPER: About 25,000, but
10 of course during the first year of AVI,
11 we had two drastic changes. Number one,
12 we had not done a reassessment in decades
13 really. Number two, we went from a
14 fractional assessment system to full
15 value.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: We saw
17 this year we have approximately 6,000
18 appeals --

19 MR. PIPER: Right.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: --
21 correct?

22 So I would say next year we're
23 going to have at least that, just from
24 experience of what's going on. And we
25 know when we have that many appeals,

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2 sometimes it seemed to hurt the ability
3 to do assessments in that same year. Is
4 that going to change?

5 MR. PIPER: Well, it certainly
6 did the first year. Not that we didn't
7 anticipate a record number of appeals.
8 We, in fact, anticipated even more, and I
9 think we've gotten better at learning how
10 to process, working in conjunction with
11 the Appeals Board, learning how to
12 process the first-level reviews with the
13 market -- with the BRT appeals in a way
14 that we're not doing things twice and
15 we're getting through the processes a
16 little bit better.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
18 And then --

19 MR. PIPER: So to answer your
20 question, it will affect it, sure, but I
21 don't think anywhere near as much as it
22 did in the first year of AVI.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right.
24 Because now we're seeing this large
25 assessment increase, and we feel like if

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2 you don't do the assessments or have the
3 ability to really look in the assessments
4 the following year and maybe similar to a
5 two-year assessment instead of an
6 every-year assessment, because we didn't
7 get to do the whole City, even though
8 we're supposedly doing the whole City
9 every year.

10 But my question relating to
11 that is, we have -- people who have
12 appealed last year's taxes have gone to
13 the BRT, received a revision. Some of it
14 has not been put into the record at this
15 point yet, but then next year's
16 assessment has them going right back up
17 to what they appealed or even greater
18 than what their appeal winning was this
19 year. And I thought there was a policy
20 that -- I mean, we weren't -- if they
21 just win their appeal and we're putting
22 them back up, they have to go appeal the
23 same thing again. I thought we were
24 going to have a year where at least they
25 would not have that assessment be

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2 increased automatically after they won
3 their appeal.

4 MR. PIPER: Sure. In all
5 fairness, Councilman, I think part of
6 that assumption was actually from
7 conversation we had in which we did have
8 conversations about taxpayers who file an
9 appeal and have expectation that that
10 revision is going to be rolled over into
11 the next year. Okay? But the real
12 answer is, it's not quite that simple.
13 It depends on, number one, the time of
14 the year that the appeal is filed. It
15 also depends on what decision the Board
16 has made. That's the general answer, but
17 if you don't mind, I'm going to ask OPA's
18 attorney, Drew Aldinger, to come up and
19 explain it to you in terms of what it is
20 that we are allowed and prohibited from
21 doing by law.

22 (Witness approached witness
23 table.)

24 MR. ALDINGER: Good afternoon,
25 Councilman. Drew Aldinger, counsel to

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 the Office of Property Assessment.

3 And the date cut-off that

4 Mr. Piper was referring to would be after

5 the first Monday of October, which is the

6 appeal filing deadline for the next tax

7 year. Any Board hearings and Board

8 decisions that are issued after that

9 first Monday of October will, as a matter

10 of law, include the following tax year.

11 So, for instance, the 2018

12 appeals that are being heard now, any

13 that get heard after the first Monday of

14 October will automatically address tax

15 year 2019 current. Any hearings that

16 occur before that date won't.

17 And kind of circling back for a

18 second just to your earlier question

19 about how the appeal process might impact

20 future assessments, you are right,

21 there's 6,000 or 6,500 appeals filed for

22 '18. About 3,100 of those have already

23 been resolved. So we're sitting here in

24 early April, we're already more than

25 halfway through. When I say "we," the

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2 Board of Revision of Taxes scheduling.
3 They're already more than halfway through
4 that already.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Which is
6 great, by the way. And I know we had a
7 hearing earlier and we had asked them to
8 try to make sure that they heard them,
9 and hopefully over the summer they will
10 be able to maintain this pace to be able
11 to get them done before the end of the
12 year. But as we see, you said after
13 October. So a lot of these are heard
14 after October, right, October, November,
15 December, January? So now we're in
16 April, right, of this year? There's
17 still appeals that were decided that
18 aren't even put into the system yet. So
19 we're -- now they're receiving 2019
20 appraisals that are either the same as it
21 was the year that they won it or even
22 higher. So what is their recourse? How
23 do we fix that? So they're going to
24 decide now. Does OPA then go and, once
25 they get that appeal in there, fix this

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2 current year and then 2019's?

3 MR. ALDINGER: Well, sitting
4 here today as of April 1, the 2019 values
5 have already been certified. So
6 certainly if the Board were to consider
7 both tax years in the context of the
8 hearing and the applicant --

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But they
10 haven't because they're considering just
11 the '18.

12 MR. ALDINGER: Right. Well,
13 there's only been one day of hearings to
14 date post-certification. So
15 pre-certification they certainly could --
16 it would have been impossible for the
17 Board to consider the 2019 assessments
18 before Monday because they had not yet
19 been certified, but sitting here today
20 and going forward, certainly those values
21 for '19 would have been certified, so the
22 Board could consider it.

23 My experience has been in the
24 past would be that if the applicant came
25 into the hearing and they had evidence

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2 that would have -- that would cover both
3 years, the Board would be open to
4 considering it and conducting the hearing
5 to cover both years, but it can't
6 automatically cover that.

7 For instance, if you have an
8 office building that had a 50 percent
9 vacancy in '18 that's fully leased up in
10 '19, you couldn't just assume that the
11 value for '18 should then automatically
12 carry forward for '19.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I'm
14 talking mainly residential, because what
15 I'm seeing from a lot of the commercial,
16 they really haven't increased that much
17 from last year to this year.

18 MR. ALDINGER: So even in the
19 residential context, so the same
20 hypothetical situation can apply. You
21 might have a property that was -- perhaps
22 it was assessed as initially being in an
23 average condition. The applicant comes
24 in with evidence that shows on 1/1/18 it
25 was in below-average condition, and now

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2 they're working on it in '18, so in '19
3 it's going to be above-average condition.
4 So the same -- the same -- just like the
5 example I gave for the office building,
6 you still couldn't make the same
7 assumption in the residential context
8 that the value for '18 would necessarily
9 carry forward.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Just in
11 lay terms then, if I had an appeal. My
12 house -- they came and they say it was
13 assessed at 450,000. I go through the
14 appeal process. Last week they say, all
15 right, it's 350,000, right? Now, I won
16 this appeal. I look at my assessment on
17 2019 today and it says it's 500,000. How
18 do I get that fixed?

19 MR. ALDINGER: Right. So from
20 the perspective of the Office of Property
21 Assessment -- when you say "they," I
22 think you're referring to the BRT, what
23 that decision letter says. The Office of
24 Property Assessment is going to be
25 restricted to following the determination

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2 of the decision of the Board of Revision
3 of Taxes. So if the Board of Revision of
4 Taxes says next week after
5 post-certification that we're changing
6 the value for '18 to X -- and I forget
7 what X was --

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right.

9 MR. ALDINGER: -- in your
10 hypothetical. If that decision letter
11 from the Board of Revision of Taxes says
12 it's 350 for 2018 period, the Office of
13 Property Assessment is then obligated to
14 go and change the value for 2018. If
15 that same decision letter says we're
16 changing the value for '18 to X --

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: That's a
18 problem.

19 MR. ALDINGER: -- and for '19
20 to X or '19 to Y, maybe it's something
21 different, then --

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So we have
23 to do legislation to make sure we have a
24 two-year to do that. Because the problem
25 is that BRT is not going to say '18 and

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2 '19, because they didn't know what '19's
3 was.

4 MR. ALDINGER: Well, they do
5 know.

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Well, last
7 week.

8 MR. ALDINGER: Right. So last
9 week there's actually caselaw that would
10 have prohibited the Board of Revision of
11 Taxes -- last week pre-certification they
12 absolutely, Board of Revision of Taxes,
13 could not have made a decision for '19
14 because the '19 values had not been
15 certified.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right.
17 But now you raise '19 back up to 500.
18 That's not fair. We're not being fair
19 with our constituents and the people who
20 had just went through the whole process
21 to win an appeal. And so you just said,
22 all right, you won it, we're changing it
23 back, and we don't care because they
24 weren't certified and you got to come and
25 appeal it again.

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2 MR. ALDINGER: Right. I mean,
3 as we're kind of thinking about the
4 process out loud, there's a couple things
5 to keep in mind. One is that the Board
6 of Revision may have -- it could have
7 been based on what the real market value
8 was, what it might have sold for or it
9 also could have been on the grounds of
10 uniformity. So if it's on the grounds of
11 uniformity, the Board might have said,
12 well, it's non-uniform for '18. Well,
13 guess what? It may have been perfectly
14 uniform for '19, because all the
15 properties were reassessed.

16 And then the other thing that I
17 think we have to keep in mind is that
18 there's a constitutional requirement of
19 uniformity, and we'd have to make sure
20 that you don't run afoul of saying, well,
21 if you file an appeal in '18, you escape
22 a reassessment for 2019 even though
23 everybody who didn't appeal for 2019
24 got --

25 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But

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2 understanding a homeowner who just went
3 through this process, you're saying you
4 don't care because this is the law.
5 That's basically what you're saying. You
6 just went through this whole process.
7 You don't care, because next year we're
8 making it the same as it was or higher.

9 MR. PIPER: I think what we're
10 saying, if I can just jump in for a
11 minute, Councilman, is so for 2018, which
12 is, number one, the year which the
13 taxpayer filed the appeal, BRT made the
14 decision and OPA came to the hearing
15 ready to defend the value for 2018
16 only -- and I know you're speaking mostly
17 residential, but we have to look at all
18 types of properties, where there's
19 situations where the '18 conditions may
20 be one thing and that may change for
21 2019. Even though we're, by the way,
22 having this discussion because maybe
23 taxpayers have let you know that they
24 were changed on a subsequent year, in
25 most cases we do look at the subsequent

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2 year and say, you know what, there's no
3 change, and we do put that same value on
4 in most cases. The only time we don't is
5 when we know a change for the subsequent
6 year is warranted. So there is an avenue
7 for a taxpayer to address that, which is
8 what every taxpayer has, and that is to
9 file the appeal.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Another
11 appeal for '19.

12 MR. PIPER: For the following
13 year.

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So, I
15 mean, every year we have to file an
16 appeal. Now, it just doesn't make sense.
17 I think legislatively we have to look at
18 that and to be able to then dictate it,
19 because it's going to really hurt you in
20 the end, because then we're going to make
21 it so everybody who wins that appeal will
22 then be able to say you have that same
23 average next year, because most of the
24 people are hearing this before they're
25 certified. And I don't know any Board

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2 certification that came in from the BRT
3 that says this is for '18 and '19. I
4 haven't seen -- or '19 -- or '15 and '16.
5 They just rule on that appeal. So unless
6 we got to get to the BRT and say you have
7 to do both of them. And I think that we
8 have to look into legislation to do that
9 since obviously it's not something that
10 you say legally you could do. So we have
11 to make it legal, I guess; is that
12 correct?

13 MR. ALDINGER: So to step back
14 a little bit, I wouldn't say -- I
15 wouldn't say so much that we don't care.
16 We're sensitive to the issue in the
17 fact --

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: You're
19 saying legally you can't do it. You do
20 care, but legally you can't do it.

21 MR. ALDINGER: You have to work
22 within the confines --

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: So if we
24 make that the law, then it makes it then
25 legally you could do it.

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2 MR. ALDINGER: If it were legal
3 to do it, then certainly we could do it.
4 I don't know that -- off the cuff, I
5 would tell you I think that would be a
6 state law issue. It wouldn't be
7 something that City Council could change.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: We could
9 try.

10 MR. ALDINGER: Because it's
11 based on the certification data.

12 When you said that you haven't
13 seen any decisions so far where the Board
14 of Revision of Taxes covered both years,
15 you're absolutely right about that for
16 '18 because we just got certified for
17 '19.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Even last
19 year.

20 MR. ALDINGER: There were some
21 decisions that covered both years.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Not many
23 that we've seen, because a lot of the
24 people -- last year not many residential
25 went up, so we didn't get that. They

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2 sort of seemed like they had a year
3 reprieve. But we have people that just
4 got certified -- well, didn't get
5 certified yet because it didn't change on
6 the system, and now they're going to be
7 getting a new assessment next week that
8 jumps it up even higher than what they
9 just did it. I mean, to go from the BRT
10 to next year and say, all right, this
11 year it went up to -- you moved it down
12 to 350. They're saying it's 500 now. It
13 didn't go up that much money in a year.
14 It's going to come back down. But the
15 timing to do that and having these people
16 to go through that again -- and I'm sure
17 it's not a big number, but it just seems
18 like we would have some type of policy
19 that we can make it happen. And legally
20 if you can't do it, then maybe we have to
21 do it or have our friends in the state to
22 be able to do it to make sure that we at
23 least protect the people who have won
24 their appeal and the following year don't
25 feel like why appeal it if they're just

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 going to change it -- that one year I get
3 a reprieve, the next year they change it
4 back.

5 MR. PIPER: We get the concern,
6 Councilman. We've had the conversation.
7 I do understand the concern.

8 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Well,
9 we're going to look at that. I'm just
10 saying because in my district -- and you
11 know the assessments, what have
12 happened -- over 50 percent of the
13 residential properties have received an
14 assessment greater than 20 percent. So
15 that's a lot, and we have to deal with
16 these people.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Thank you. Thank you, Councilman.

19 The Chair recognizes
20 Councilwoman Bass.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
22 Mr. President.

23 MR. PIPER: Good afternoon,
24 Councilwoman.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 afternoon, evening.

3 So I just had a couple of
4 questions, and I had some concerns
5 obviously like everyone else here in
6 terms of the property increases. And it
7 just felt like it was just a convenient
8 time to see such large increases in
9 property values, and my biggest question
10 is, how are we working to protect our
11 low-income and vulnerable homeowners,
12 especially in gentrifying neighborhoods?

13 And so I wanted to -- a lot of
14 my questions have already been floated
15 and asked, but I did have a couple of
16 things I just wanted to hone in on, one
17 of which is what are we going to do to
18 address the gap in tax increases and do
19 we at all look at the stagnation in
20 salaries and wages at the same time when
21 we're making these calculations? I don't
22 know that that has come into
23 consideration when we make these kind of
24 decisions, but you can raise my taxes,
25 raise my taxes, raise my taxes, but at

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2 some point I am unable to pay unless I've
3 had the same sort of corresponding
4 increase in my salary.

5 And so I'm wondering what have
6 we done to look at that. And also have
7 we looked at the median income, I'd like
8 to know, of homeowners who have received
9 abatements.

10 MR. PIPER: The median income
11 of the homeowners that have received
12 abatements? I don't know that we've ever
13 captured that information.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Can we
15 capture that? Because we have a lot of
16 other information, and I think that that
17 is information that people want to know
18 and it should be a part of the
19 conversation. We keep having this
20 conversation about abatements and who
21 benefits, and there's a lot of
22 speculation, and I think having that
23 information around the income actually
24 will make a big difference and contribute
25 to the conversation.

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2 MR. DUBOW: I think we can
3 probably do it geographically. I don't
4 know that when people apply for
5 abatements, they have to put any
6 information about their income. So we
7 can give you geographic information about
8 where the abatements are.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, we
10 have that. We already have the
11 geographic.

12 MR. DUBOW: We could probably
13 give you property values for abatements,
14 but we can't give you income, because we
15 just don't have the information.

16 MR. PIPER: It's just not
17 currently a requirement for an abatement
18 to be processed. Like Rob said, we have
19 areas. We can show changes in abated
20 properties.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, we
22 know that there's a lot of information
23 that we can get and that we're a wealth
24 of information in the City of
25 Philadelphia.

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 MR. PIPER: We may be able to
3 work with Council with the information we
4 do capture and the information you're
5 able to get to try to get you where you
6 need to go, sure.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That would
8 be great. I think it's an important part
9 of the conversation that we're not
10 accurately having.

11 MR. DUBOW: So we can meet with
12 you and kind of walk through what we have
13 and how that would help you get at what
14 you want and then provide it to the full
15 Council.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And
17 the other part of the question in terms
18 of sort of like matching up, as we are
19 talking about assessments, are we looking
20 at -- how much time do we spend looking
21 at the corresponding increases in wages
22 and salaries, where there's stagnation in
23 particular neighborhoods, what the
24 unemployment rate is? Are we looking at
25 any of those factors as well?

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2 MR. DUBOW: So we did look and
3 we can -- we have to kind of refine this
4 a little. We did look at kind of
5 matching up various income levels with
6 home value levels to see what those would
7 mean. It's not precise because we had to
8 make some assumptions, but we can kind of
9 show you what we did there and what that
10 looks like.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. All
12 right. Have we considered revamping the
13 LOOP program at all in this conversation?
14 So right now the threshold of property
15 increases, value increases, is 300
16 percent, I believe?

17 MR. PIPER: Correct.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And so it's
19 unrealistic that that would happen
20 outside of the original AVI when we did
21 that in 2013. So have we looked at
22 revamping LOOP so that people could see
23 the benefit of that? I can't see how we
24 can continue to offer abatements and not
25 have any restrictions or any -- nothing

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2 sort of tied to those abatements that are
3 offered, and yet with the LOOP program we
4 have what I think is a significant
5 restriction. So there's just not going
6 to be that kind of a market created right
7 now.

8 MR. DUBOW: There were -- and
9 LOOP was really designed to address those
10 specific really large increases, like the
11 tripling in values at the time of AVI.
12 What's happened to LOOP, there was just
13 legislation passed that essentially
14 extended the timing of LOOP for people
15 who meet certain income requirements. I
16 think it was at 150 percent of AMI. So
17 that change just happened. We did not
18 look at changing the assessment growth
19 related to LOOP. So that's not something
20 we've looked at yet. We can do an
21 analysis to look at various options and
22 what that would look like. I think it
23 would probably be pretty expensive, but
24 we can look at that.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

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2 Yeah. I think that that's important
3 information that we want to take a look
4 at as well, because I just think we have
5 to retool LOOP before we can even have a
6 conversation about increased assessments
7 and increasing taxes. I just think that
8 has to be a part of the conversation.
9 And also homestead. One of the problems
10 that we have with the homestead exemption
11 is that we know that there's a large
12 portion of our city where people still
13 have not applied for their homestead
14 exemption. And so we've done outreach.
15 I remember, again, back to AVI in 2013,
16 and we did a lot of outreach. There were
17 multiple ways that reached out. I know
18 our office did a huge mailing, several
19 mailings. The folks were all over the
20 place talking about this homestead
21 exemption and how people can take
22 advantage of it, and still here we are to
23 this day, years later, and we still don't
24 have a sizable population that are taking
25 advantage of the homestead exemption.

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2 So has there been conversation
3 by OPA in terms of how we're going to
4 make sure that we get more people into
5 homestead?

6 MR. DUBOW: Homestead is
7 actually run by Revenue now.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

9 MR. DUBOW: There are about
10 210,000 property owners who have
11 homesteads, and Revenue has put together
12 kind of a new outreach program for this
13 year to try to ensure that we get more
14 people enrolled. So it's a program that
15 includes more door to door. It includes
16 social media. It includes advertising.
17 It includes robo calls. So that they put
18 together a program to try to make sure
19 that we can get more people signed up.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Do you know
21 when that's scheduled to roll out?

22 MR. DUBOW: I think over the
23 next few months, but we'll get back with
24 a more specific timeline.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay.

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2 Yeah. Well, we can ask Revenue certainly
3 when they come in terms of what their
4 plans are since they're going to be
5 handling that now.

6 And I understand that you're
7 working on a map of areas and what those
8 areas will look like in terms of
9 increases. We've heard that in areas
10 that I represent, Chestnut Hill, Mount
11 Airy, that they're having significant
12 increases, and they had significant
13 increases in 2013. And then other areas
14 that I also represent, including North
15 Philadelphia and other areas, are having
16 significant decreases. So when will we
17 see a full map of that?

18 MR. PIPER: Actually, we have
19 maps that I'm going to send this week
20 over to Council citywide and by district
21 that show average increase on a
22 percentage basis per individual
23 neighborhood within each Council
24 district.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: That would

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2 be really helpful, because as we have
3 these discussions and folks are paying
4 attention and they're asking us and
5 they're very anxious. And so I would
6 just, if I could, just advise that in the
7 future, it would be helpful if at the
8 start of the conversation we were able to
9 have those maps, because we get beat up
10 pretty badly.

11 MR. PIPER: Sure.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Because
13 people want to know and they want to know
14 as quickly as possible. So us not having
15 the information has been a bit of -- a
16 little bit of an issue.

17 Let me see. One other
18 question. Have we looked at -- as we
19 look at property values and increases --
20 I know my colleague Councilman Henon
21 asked if you had a breakdown in terms of
22 residential, commercial, and industrial
23 properties in terms of what the average
24 increases were.

25 MR. PIPER: So we actually

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2 prepared that in a report that we shared
3 with Council Thursday, I think Thursday,
4 individual Councilmembers, whoever came.
5 And I know there was something else going
6 on, so not everyone was available, but
7 we'll make sure a copy of that report
8 gets forwarded to your office too.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Does that
10 include our large non-profits, our
11 universities?

12 MR. PIPER: We broke it down
13 into as many categories as we thought
14 would be relevant, the non-profits, the
15 residential, the condos, the commercial,
16 the industrial, the vacant land, the
17 government-owned, the sale sites,
18 whatever we thought would be relevant, as
19 long as it captured everything in the
20 City in some category. And if there's
21 something else you wanted us to query
22 for, we could do that too.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. I
24 know my time is up, but the only other
25 thing I just want to add really quickly

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2 is that, in my opinion, for us to be able
3 to move forward and to talk about how
4 we're funding the School District of
5 Philadelphia, we have to put the
6 homestead exemption back on the table,
7 again, for our low-income, our
8 vulnerable, our seniors, and so forth.
9 We have to put that back on the table and
10 really ramp it up in terms of making sure
11 that people have access to it. And also
12 the LOOP program. We have to retool that
13 program so that folks are able to
14 actually be able to apply and benefit
15 from it.

16 We're not going to see another
17 time when we have what we had during AVI,
18 which was 300 percent property increases,
19 which were pretty common, but we still
20 had the program available. But if we
21 really want the program to work for
22 somebody or anybody or everybody, then we
23 have to make sure that it's a program
24 that's going to work. What we have right
25 now on the books, it doesn't really work.

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2 MR. PIPER: Right. Understood.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you
4 so much.

5 MR. PIPER: You're welcome.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
7 Thank you, Councilwoman.

8 The Chair recognizes
9 Councilwoman Parker.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
11 you, Mr. President.

12 And hello to all of you. Let
13 me start by just sharing some data with
14 you about the Ninth Councilmanic District
15 that I want to just make sure we get on
16 the record. So this is according to the
17 snapshot that's provided to us by the
18 Revenue Department.

19 The Ninth Councilmanic District
20 has the number one; that is, the highest
21 percentage of tax-paying residents who
22 have entered into a payment arrangement,
23 so a payment agreement, right? So they
24 could not pay in full, but the largest
25 percentage of residents who are in

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2 payment agreements are in the Ninth
3 Councilmanic District.

4 In addition to that, we have
5 the third fewest of delinquent accounts
6 of all taxpayers in the City of
7 Philadelphia in the Ninth Councilmanic
8 District.

9 In addition to that, you know
10 we do have a significantly high rate of
11 homeownership compared to the rest of the
12 city. Our numbers now, we're at about 52
13 percent according to some data we just
14 received from tech staff. While we have
15 it by ward, we don't have the total
16 number for the Ninth, but it's
17 significantly higher than that 52
18 percent.

19 With that being said, I also
20 want to -- and I'm talking about these
21 neighborhoods, from Mount Airy -- if it's
22 a shooting in Cedarbrook, but it was
23 Mount Airy, West Oak Lane, Olney, East
24 Oak Lane, Lawncrest, Lawndale, Burholme,
25 Oxford Circle, Summerdale, and Logan.

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2 And the median household income ranges
3 from -- because it's important to me that
4 OPA, Revenue, along with residents in the
5 City get that I'm not talking about a
6 wealthy constituency. The median
7 household income in the Ninth ranges from
8 some \$28,000 and goes to our highest
9 median income is \$48,000. And I say that
10 to say obviously we're not talking about
11 a rich constituency here, but they're the
12 largest constituency to enter into a
13 payment agreement to make sure that they
14 pay their fair share and they pay their
15 taxes.

16 It's with that in mind that I'm
17 going to ask you to answer these
18 questions. First, has the City enacted
19 or do we have an operating, what we would
20 call, property tax calculator? I don't
21 want to have to be a whiz and/or a genius
22 to figure out the numbers myself, but
23 right now as we're moving forward, is
24 there a place where I can send my people
25 that they can go and plug in their

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2 numbers to find out what they owe in
3 taxes now and what they will owe after
4 the proposed change, whether it's 4, 3, 2
5 or 1, so that they can begin preparing?
6 Do we have that in existence?

7 MR. PIPER: So I think we're
8 going to have a conversation with someone
9 over in OIT about that, because we did
10 have the tax calculator during the first
11 year of AVI.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Right.
13 So I'm asking for that tool to be enacted
14 for this purpose. So no matter what the
15 number ends up being, if there is an
16 increase of any kind, people right now
17 from a self-sufficiency perspective
18 should be able to plug in those numbers
19 to see what their costs will be in the
20 end.

21 MR. PIPER: You're right,
22 Councilwoman. That was a very useful
23 tool, because when we went out to various
24 meetings that Councilmembers had, that
25 was a good tool for us to be able to show

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 if you got a change, if you have the
3 homestead, all that was already factored
4 in. So we are looking into that.

5 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So thank
6 you. I appreciate that, and we'll be
7 waiting sort of anxiously to see how
8 we're advancing.

9 My next question is in regards
10 to the homestead exemption. Now, I just
11 completed last night my East Oak Lane and
12 Olney budget briefing and town hall
13 meeting at the York House. We talked
14 about that potential increase in the
15 homestead exemption, and am fortunate to
16 have been Chair of the Philadelphia
17 delegation in Harrisburg when the
18 enabling authority for the City of
19 Philadelphia to enact LOOP. The
20 homestead exemption was provided. I was
21 in Harrisburg and worked with Council
22 President Clarke during that time.

23 I've heard that 70 to 80
24 percent -- and that is not like a minor
25 number -- of eligible owner-occupied

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2 residents here in Philadelphia are
3 actually enrolled. So I'm putting that
4 on the record to say I'm not saying that
5 the City of Philadelphia has not done its
6 work in encouraging people to get
7 enrolled. That's 70 to 80 percent of
8 those eligible owner-occupied residences.
9 My challenge is this: I want to zero in
10 on that constituency. I heard you just
11 tell me about what Revenue is doing, but
12 I'm wondering, do we have a map of where
13 that other 20 percent, that 20 to 30
14 percent who are in owner-occupied, who
15 are eligible, and they have not? Can we
16 see that by Council district so that we
17 can see where we've been doing well or
18 where people are responding versus areas
19 where they're not?

20 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay. So
22 the sooner you could get that to us, we
23 can begin to be proactive about that.

24 The next question is in regards
25 to the abatement. Now, we all -- it is

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2 no secret, right, that the abatement has
3 been largely used in areas that are
4 seeing a lot of growth. I josh
5 Councilman Johnson and Councilwoman
6 Blackwell, Clarke, and Squilla about
7 their growth. I wish I had some of those
8 problems in the Ninth District. But in
9 addition to that, can you literally map
10 for us by Council district where those
11 abatements are being taken advantage of?

12 MR. PIPER: Sure.

13 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Because I
14 communicate to my constituency that
15 although it is available throughout the
16 City of Philadelphia, it is just
17 particularly being used significantly in
18 certain regions versus the other.

19 In addition to the number of
20 abatements by Council district, can we
21 also have the actual value of the
22 abatements by Council district? And this
23 is why this is important to my
24 constituency: I already told you how
25 much they pay and that they pay and

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2 they're paying their fair share. We
3 should have a right, the taxpayers, that
4 is, to know where abated properties are
5 and the value of those abatements by
6 Council district. Because if I am to go
7 out and promote to my constituents, who,
8 for the record, support investing in
9 public education and local control 1,001
10 percent, that is not the issue. But if
11 we're talking about increasing what they
12 have to pay in order to make an
13 investment, it has to be worth taxpayer
14 dollars and make good economic sense, and
15 right now without the calculator, without
16 seeing where the abatements are being
17 utilized and the value of the abatements
18 by area, people feel like they don't
19 understand or they actually just don't
20 have enough information to make an
21 informed decision about the program. So
22 tell me how soon you think you can
23 provide that data to us for distribution.

24 MR. PIPER: Well, the last
25 thing you asked for I think is fairly

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2 simple. We can provide a map that shows
3 graphically where the abatements are, but
4 we can also provide a report, if you want
5 it, for your Council district to show
6 each assessment what the value is and how
7 much of that value is being abated.

8 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Right.
9 But that's exactly -- so the sooner you
10 can get that, the better. We just
11 finished the second one. We have about
12 five or six more of these meetings to
13 take place in the Ninth, and I want my
14 folks to know.

15 In addition to that, I also
16 want to make sure we get this on the
17 record. We must be creative in the
18 future about how we talk about
19 incentivizing growth and development in
20 the City of Philadelphia. This
21 conversation about affordable housing --
22 and I think, Council President Clarke,
23 with your leadership, what we've done
24 with the program for home repair, the
25 increase in the realty transfer tax to

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 try to make that investment in existing
3 homes for homeowners that haven't been
4 able to take advantage of BSRP, we also
5 have to find a way to creatively
6 incentivize development in districts that
7 are not currently taking advantage of the
8 abatement as is.

9 And so as I talk to some
10 developers -- and this is not sort of
11 just for OPA but, Rob Dubow, from the
12 Administration's perspective -- how do I
13 get you to not just think about the
14 Seventh District and the Third District
15 and the First District and the Second?
16 How do I get you to come to the Ninth
17 District and look at potential
18 opportunities? The first thing they say
19 is, you've got to package an incentive
20 that encourages us to move. So I don't
21 know if that is a targeted abatement in
22 regions that are not currently
23 benefiting.

24 I know Councilman Domb, I know
25 I've heard the President talk about it,

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 I've had some conversations. But we
3 seriously have to look at that, because
4 for a district like the Ninth -- and I
5 mentioned the neighborhoods -- they're
6 paying their fair share, but they don't
7 see the investment equal to what they're
8 paying coming back in the form of
9 services. And the data that we're asking
10 you to provide to us, that will help
11 inform our advocacy in the future. Okay?

12 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. And one
13 thing I should mention is, we are having
14 an outside consultant work with us to
15 look at potential changes to the
16 abatement program and what impact they
17 might have. So it may make sense for us
18 to sit down with you and your staff to
19 figure out whether there are scenarios
20 that you want us to look at as part of
21 that study.

22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: The final
23 thing I want to note is, Mr. Piper, you
24 hit on the subject that was extremely
25 important to me. You'll probably

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2 remember. I brought it up last year.
3 And we were talking about -- you were
4 talking about assessors, and I think I
5 heard you say it in response to another
6 question earlier, how there has been a
7 difficult time sort of within
8 Philadelphia in and of itself recruiting
9 the skill set that you actually need.

10 MR. PIPER: Right.

11 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: I want to
12 note again for the Department, along with
13 the Administration, is that we have a
14 challenge in higher level sort of
15 management, and all we have to do is go
16 back to the rule of two, all of that data
17 that was reported of people of color or
18 the demographic that is living in the
19 City of Philadelphia in management
20 positions working in the City.

21 I will continue to be a strong
22 advocate for us making the investment and
23 it's worth taxpayer dollars to ensure
24 professional development so that every
25 skill set that you're looking for for

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2 that assessor that you cannot find or
3 that there is a challenge finding within
4 the City now, what do we have to do to
5 equip our existing personnel that are not
6 at that level yet so that they can get
7 the preparedness necessary that will
8 qualify them to be able to do the
9 assessor's job efficiently and
10 effectively? So do you have any
11 professional development plans or
12 investments that are made that will help
13 that workforce sort of move up and become
14 prepared?

15 MR. PIPER: Sure. So there's
16 educational requirements to retaining the
17 position of full performance assessor.
18 As you would imagine, though, most of the
19 folks that take advantage of those
20 requirements or those educational
21 offerings are folks that have been hired
22 by the Department.

23 On the outside, it's such a
24 narrow profession that you're not
25 necessarily finding people that have the

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2 skill sets to come in. So Department of
3 Human Resources has a number of options
4 available for folks to be able to at
5 least get qualified to take the exam, and
6 we're always looking at that to try to
7 make sure we're getting the best people.

8 We're not, for instance -- at
9 one point we were looking at folks that
10 just had a college degree, and we figured
11 out that's not necessarily getting people
12 that have the skill sets that we want.
13 That's a good thing to have. That's an
14 option, but we also want people that have
15 some real estate background. So we're
16 always looking to revisit that to see
17 where we're lacking, because it has been
18 a challenge.

19 I will say with Council's
20 support and the Civil Service Commission,
21 we've made some changes. We're close to
22 being staffed up, but if there's -- I say
23 every year, but all the people that are
24 qualified in the City of Philadelphia to
25 work for us unfortunately are already

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2 working for us, and we're just trying to
3 look to make the changes to see if the
4 qualifications can kind of meet what's
5 out there rather than trying to make
6 people on the outside meet the
7 qualifications.

8 Nobody -- to be honest with
9 you, we understand, nobody goes to school
10 and says, I want to be a tax assessor one
11 day. It just happens to be a very
12 specific part of the real estate
13 profession, and the folks that we have,
14 we will have to say -- I'm proud to say
15 right now we have just about all of our
16 staff is certified with the State of
17 Pennsylvania. We have, I would say,
18 close to 90 percent. And the remaining
19 10 percent are folks that are on their
20 way to certification, and that's the
21 highest it's ever been.

22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
23 you, Mr. President.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
25 Thank you, Councilwoman.

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2 The Chair recognizes
3 Councilwoman Quinones-Sanchez.

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Thank
5 you.

6 And I'll to be brief, because
7 I'm assuming that OPA will be coming back
8 for a callback. But I thought it was
9 important to put some points on the
10 record that will help shape some of the
11 datasets that all of my colleagues have
12 requested.

13 In May of 2017, I introduced
14 the fair assessment legislation, and at
15 that time, we talked a lot about what
16 were the state formula restrictions about
17 how we valued what I considered
18 unrealized value in property and the
19 abatement part of what people were
20 receiving. Tell me how you factored that
21 in in generating your GMAs in the area.

22 MR. PIPER: Well, the GMAs,
23 every year we look at the boundaries that
24 are already set from the previous year,
25 and the only thing we're really factoring

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2 in, because they have to do just values
3 based on sales --

4 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So let
5 me go to that, because you're not going
6 to eat up my clock. So is there a policy
7 or a legal reason why we cannot reduce
8 the unrealized abatement value of
9 properties when we generate a GMA average
10 to determine assessments?

11 MR. PIPER: I would say there's
12 not a policy in place. Whether or not
13 there's a legal reason we can or can't do
14 it, we'd have to look into the specific
15 wording and the intent.

16 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: I think
17 when I introduced the legislation, I was
18 kind of pretty clear, and if we haven't
19 asked for a legal opinion, we should have
20 it.

21 The state formula was developed
22 before abatements. And so then we have a
23 program that, again, creates value. I'm
24 going to continue to call it unrealized
25 value, because until you're paying

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2 property taxes on your value, it's
3 unrealized value in the assessment of the
4 properties and, therefore, a GMA may be
5 overassessed, right?

6 MR. PIPER: A GMA itself?

7 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Yes.

8 MR. PIPER: I'm trying to
9 remember some of the wording in your
10 legislation, and I remember it coming up
11 last spring.

12 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: It was
13 real simple. I wanted you to take out
14 the unrealized value of the abatement so
15 that my neighbors are not paying for more
16 value when the person next door is paying
17 no value.

18 MR. PIPER: Just to speak to
19 that, the possibility of that actually
20 being something that's legally
21 permissible, I will say that there are
22 types of properties that for different
23 reasons in Pennsylvania and other states
24 we are allowed to value a little
25 different and prohibited from factoring

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2 certain things in, like the low-income
3 tax credit type of properties, for
4 instance. So I don't know -- I don't
5 want to say that's not something that we
6 can't do, but you would have to look into
7 it legally.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Well, I
9 think it's important, because as Rob
10 mentioned earlier, there's the whole
11 review of the abatement, right, and then
12 the whole discussion about fair
13 assessments, this whole notion of
14 unrealized value in abatements and if
15 that should be one of the changes that we
16 make to this around how we assess.

17 Now, obviously we want to
18 collect money, but it seems to me that
19 without a full exemption of abatement
20 value, there's no way that we can protect
21 outside of homestead, LOOP, and all the
22 stuff that we'll continue to do, there's
23 no way we can protect a block where
24 people may have a property with old
25 fixtures, no improvements from their

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2 assessment value being overassessed.

3 MR. PIPER: I think your
4 concept of unrealized value is maybe the
5 thing -- to be honest with you, from
6 where I've seen it done before, that's
7 exactly what they looked at when they
8 came up with other laws in other states
9 and in Pennsylvania in how they value
10 certain types of properties different.
11 That might be -- I don't know.

12 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So is
13 that something that we need state
14 authorization or is that something that
15 we can locally look at? Again, the
16 estate code does not account for
17 abatements.

18 MR. PIPER: No.

19 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So I
20 don't want to get them involved in this,
21 because then we'd be having a
22 conversation for years. Is there a way
23 that we could account for that in a way
24 that doesn't negatively impact long-term
25 residents?

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2 MR. PIPER: I think that's
3 something you'd have to -- it's a legal
4 question you have to ask maybe the Law
5 Department and have them ask someone in
6 the state who is familiar with
7 Pennsylvania county assessment law.

8 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: Okay.
9 Well, we will formally request some legal
10 opinion and guidance on that as we have
11 this conversation, and maybe we can add
12 it to the abatement review --

13 MR. PIPER: Sure.

14 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: -- that
15 the Administration is going through.

16 I just wanted to note -- and I
17 didn't look at your performance goal
18 measurement pieces, but I wanted to note
19 that there has been no language access
20 training in your department. You have a
21 language access coordinator. There's no
22 language access plan. It is the law.
23 And so one of -- to Councilwoman Parker's
24 point, one of the under-enrollment areas
25 continue to be language minority

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2 communities, and I think if we had a more
3 thoughtful language access plan around
4 how we reach those language minority
5 communities --

6 MR. PIPER: I believe we have a
7 language access plan and it is up on the
8 website.

9 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: No. I
10 keep telling folks a plan is not we're
11 going to do training. A plan is this is
12 how we communicate.

13 MR. PIPER: That's true. The
14 training is May 2nd. That's correct.

15 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: So you
16 haven't even done training. So we'll be
17 looking for something a little bit more
18 thoughtful than that.

19 MR. PIPER: Okay.

20 COUNCILWOMAN SANCHEZ: All
21 right.

22 Thank you, Mr. President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 Thank you, Councilwoman.

25 We will now start round two.

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2 We'll shift to five minutes. I see a
3 couple people not here. So Councilman
4 Domb, you're next up.

5 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
6 Council President.

7 Good afternoon. A couple quick
8 questions. When we install CAMA, will we
9 need the same amount of employees or will
10 we be able to reduce the overhead?

11 MR. PIPER: We'll need more
12 employees than we have now, because we
13 still are understaffed, but to answer
14 your question, the implementation of CAMA
15 will not result in a reduction of staff.

16 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So we're
17 going to produce the same results but
18 have technology helping us but not change
19 the labor cost?

20 MR. PIPER: Right. So that's
21 another question. Will we produce the
22 same results? And hopefully the answer
23 to that is we'll produce better results
24 and in a more efficient way.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I'm just used

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 to when we install technology, usually
3 there's some sort of labor savings.

4 MR. PIPER: And that's true
5 when the benefit of the technology is
6 primarily automation, which is not what a
7 CAMA system in itself is -- that's not
8 the primary objective.

9 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me ask
10 you a question so I understand maybe
11 better. If I'm one of the appraisers in
12 your department and you put a CAMA system
13 in, what does that mean for me as an
14 appraiser? What is the benefit of that?
15 What am I going to see on the computer?
16 What is that going to do?

17 MR. PIPER: That's a good
18 question. What you're going to see is in
19 many instances seven different parts of a
20 process that you have to do now to make
21 changes and maintain your data reduced to
22 one or two more efficient, more reliable
23 processes. We can't make those changes
24 without the CAMA system, but with the
25 CAMA system, we can't do things the same

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2 way.

3 I'm not sure if that answers
4 the question, but it's --

5 COUNCILMAN DOMB: You know what
6 would be helpful to me -- we don't have
7 to do this today, but offline I would
8 love to see a demonstration of the CAMA
9 system so we can understand what that
10 tool -- how that tool will help.

11 MR. PIPER: Okay.

12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: If that's
13 possible. Is there a demonstration
14 possibility that we could have for some
15 of the members that might be interested?

16 MR. PIPER: I'm going to ask
17 someone who may be here who --

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Because we've
19 been talking about CAMA for so many
20 years, we should probably know what we're
21 going to get.

22 MR. PIPER: Sure. Sure. Sure.

23 (Witness approached witness
24 table.)

25 MR. PIPER: I'm going to

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 introduce John Hodge, Director of the
3 Office of Property Data.

4 MR. HODGE: Good afternoon. As
5 Mike Piper said, John Hodge, Deputy
6 Director of Finance and Executive
7 Director of the Office of Property Data.

8 We certainly can coordinate a
9 demonstration of the current can system,
10 if you will.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So let me go
12 back to my question. If I'm an appraiser
13 in your department and I have to appraise
14 two properties in Council President
15 Clarke's district, under the current
16 system how long does it take me and with
17 CAMA how long will it take me?

18 MR. HODGE: So I believe that
19 it's hard to quantify that difference,
20 but what we can say is that in the future
21 with a modern CAMA system, the update
22 that I make on a certain parcel that then
23 requires someone else in the Department
24 to do a next step, if you will, will be a
25 lot more fluid. So the overall time that

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2 a process would take should be
3 dramatically decreased.

4 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So if I'm
5 responsible to do two appraisals a day,
6 with CAMA can I do three? I'm trying to
7 understand if we're going to achieve some
8 savings here and how will that technology
9 help us in doing the job.

10 MR. HODGE: I think that
11 overall you will -- if an evaluator has a
12 certain parcel inventory, let's say, they
13 should be able to touch more parcels in a
14 certain amount of time than they
15 currently are able to because of
16 technology limitations.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And how much
18 does it cost for the CAMA system at this
19 point?

20 MR. HODGE: The CAMA system
21 is -- the implementation, I believe, is
22 around 9 million.

23 COUNCILMAN DOMB: In total?

24 MR. HODGE: In total for the
25 implementation, yes, sir.

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2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And in your
3 opinion, what do you think the goal was
4 of us installing the CAMA system? What
5 will it accomplish?

6 MR. HODGE: The goal of the
7 CAMA system -- well, first I'd say that
8 we recognize this project as a business
9 improvement project with a technology
10 component. So the goal of the CAMA
11 system is to bring in new technology that
12 will drastically increase the efficiency
13 of the work that is done at the OPA. It
14 will also increase the efficiency by
15 which we transfer data between the OPA
16 and, say, Revenue. It should also
17 increase efficiencies between how we
18 consume data from, say, the Department of
19 Records and make it available to the
20 employees in the Office of Property
21 Assessment.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So there's
23 two things I'm hearing, efficiencies and
24 more accurate information, right?

25 MR. HODGE: Yes.

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2 COUNCILMAN DOMB: With
3 efficiencies come time saved, because
4 it's more efficient. So I have to -- we
5 may not know this yet, but there's got to
6 be a way that we're going to save on
7 labor by having the same saved through
8 the CAMA system.

9 MR. HODGE: I would say those
10 time savings would translate into
11 evaluators being able to touch more
12 parcels during the course of their
13 workday and certainly during the course
14 of an assessment cycle.

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: You know,
16 without the CAMA system -- first of all,
17 I got to give you guys kudos, because you
18 touched 537,000 properties this past
19 year. You touched them all. I mean, in
20 some ways there's two sides of this coin.
21 The side of the coin that we don't want
22 to hear is that we've increased the
23 revenue like from 1.3 to 1.7, \$392
24 million a year, but the other side of the
25 coin is that you went and did all this

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2 work on all these properties, a
3 tremendous amount of work that you should
4 be thanked, because you changed the
5 values on 537,000 properties without
6 CAMA. And that's my point. You did this
7 without CAMA this year and no real
8 outside help, to my knowledge. So when
9 you have CAMA, there should be some
10 savings. I don't understand that.

11 MR. PIPER: Part of your first
12 question, Councilman, you asked how
13 would -- I'm an assessor. I'm going to
14 appraise two properties today. With CAMA
15 can I do three? Typically, for instance,
16 a residential assessor is responsible for
17 several thousand. So, yeah, without
18 CAMA, he may have to -- he or she may
19 have to look at what they're doing with a
20 handful today, because it's a manually
21 driven system with multiple database
22 management systems that we're using, and
23 with the CAMA system, the processes
24 themselves change. So there's, I will
25 say, there's less risk of bad data, and

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 once we get the data, the better data,
3 it's easier to capture and retain in one
4 CAMA system. It's not getting lost every
5 time there's a change and every time some
6 change has to go from one system to
7 another one. So the processes themselves
8 are the things that we focus on. Like
9 John said, it's a business process
10 improvement tool, not so much an
11 automation that is designed to --

12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Here's my
13 other question -- is it okay to keep
14 going -- 130,000 properties went down in
15 value. As a Council with myself and my
16 colleagues, does that mean that are there
17 areas of the City decreasing in value?
18 Because roughly the 24 percent, 22
19 percent of the properties in the City
20 went down. Is there an area of the City
21 where you're seeing a trend where
22 property values are going down that we
23 should be aware of?

24 MR. PIPER: When we looked at
25 the number of decreases, that didn't

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2 factor in the amount of the decrease.
3 Sometimes it just may have been
4 corrections. But in terms of areas of
5 the City, we didn't look any further into
6 it yet.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Do you have
8 any ability to gather that kind of data
9 for us and share with us?

10 MR. PIPER: Well, we do, and I
11 think part of what we shared the other
12 day did take that same report that
13 included the decreases, and we did one
14 for each Council district.

15 COUNCILMAN DOMB: You did?

16 MR. PIPER: Yeah. If you want
17 it further, we can show that also.

18 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Are we seeing
19 any Council districts that are having
20 issues with decreasing values?

21 MR. PIPER: I don't know that
22 we necessarily looked at that yet.
23 Again, we had the reports, but we didn't
24 do an analysis.

25 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Is that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 something you can provide to us by
3 Council district, where the decreases are
4 and if there's any kind of pattern?

5 MR. PIPER: Sure. Sure. We
6 can provide that in a map and in a
7 separate report.

8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And then my
9 other question, would you happen to know
10 how much the City will collect in revenue
11 due to the latest reassessment of all
12 properties, the actual dollar figure?

13 MR. PIPER: I'm going to ask
14 Rob to come up and answer that one.

15 (Witness approached witness
16 table.)

17 MR. DUBOW: So for the School
18 District side over five years, it's a
19 hundred and --

20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let's just
21 say this coming year total and then we'll
22 split it up.

23 MR. DUBOW: I have a five-year
24 number in my head, but to get you this
25 year, I'd have to get back to you. So

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2 for the District over five years, the
3 increase in assessments is \$197 million
4 over five years. So the City side would
5 be, I'm guessing, like 150ish.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So is it
7 together like 340?

8 MR. DUBOW: Probably over the
9 five years.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: 340, 350.

11 MR. DUBOW: Something like
12 that.

13 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And on our
14 appeals, do we know how many properties
15 are currently in appeal? You may have
16 answered this before.

17 MR. PIPER: You mean how many
18 are under appeal for 2018?

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Right. Right
20 now that we have to deal with on appeals.

21 MR. PIPER: We could get that
22 information. I mean, more specifically
23 what you're asking for. If it's for each
24 year, we could get that information. If
25 it's outstanding appeals, we can get

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2 that.

3 MR. DUBOW: For '18 I think
4 there were about 6,000 appeals and about
5 3,000 have been heard.

6 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So halfway
7 done basically.

8 MR. PIPER: The '18 appeals,
9 yes.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And I know
11 there was a lawsuit filed by some
12 commercial property owners. Is there any
13 status on that lawsuit?

14 MR. PIPER: I'm going to ask
15 OPA's attorney, Drew Aldinger, to come up
16 and comment, to the extent that he can,
17 on that lawsuit.

18 (Witness approached witness
19 table.)

20 MR. ALDINGER: Good afternoon,
21 Councilman. It's Drew Aldinger again. I
22 serve as counsel to the Office of
23 Property Assessment.

24 It's my colleagues in the Law
25 Department are really defending that, the

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 folks in the litigation group of the Law
3 Department. What I can tell you is that
4 it is being vigorously defended, and
5 right now it's basically at the discovery
6 stage.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Let me ask
8 you a question --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
10 Councilman, there was nobody else in the
11 room when we had the five, but
12 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown has hit her
13 mic, so I want to be fair.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Can I ask
15 just one follow-up question to that and
16 I'll be done?

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
18 Sure. You promise?

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Yes.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
21 just messing with you.

22 COUNCILMAN DOMB: At some point
23 I'd like you to come back to us. If you
24 feel that you need to have outside
25 counsel support the lawyers for the City

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2 to defend that appeal, we should engage
3 them.

4 MR. ALDINGER: Sure. I'll pass
5 that message along to the Acting City
6 Solicitor.

7 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you.
8 Thank you very much.

9 Thank you, Council President.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

11 Thank you, Councilman.

12 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

14 One question. I've been trying
15 to pay close attention to the observation
16 that you're having trouble capturing
17 professionals with the necessary talent
18 or skill set to handle the assessments?

19 MR. PIPER: Right.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. And
21 so your search is -- the protocols and
22 recruitment for search is simply to put
23 it in newspapers or what? How does one
24 get to know that you have that void, that
25 shortage in your office?

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2 MR. PIPER: Right. So,
3 Delicsha, you want to speak to that, how
4 we go about the recruiting any different
5 from any other civil service.

6 MS. WILDS: So for us, outside
7 of putting in regular announcements, we
8 do --

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: You should
10 probably state your name for the record.
11 I'm sorry.

12 MS. WILDS: I'm sorry.
13 Delicsha Wilds, Administrative Services
14 Director.

15 So for OPA, there are several
16 organizations that they put the
17 announcements in, as well as the City's
18 announcements. So there are the AAP --

19 MR. PIPER: Sort of the trade
20 journals within the state. The Assessors
21 Association of Pennsylvania has a
22 quarterly journal and they have meetings
23 and the regional chapter has meetings,
24 and that's kind of how the word gets out
25 to folks who actually work in this field

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 right now.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

4 MS. WILDS: And then in

5 addition to that, we offer classes

6 internally for people who are assessment

7 aides and assessment clerks for them to

8 take the CPE courses so that they will

9 later qualify.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay. One

11 recommendation or suggestion I'd like to

12 offer is to reach to African Americans

13 who actually do this as realtor agents,

14 who do it for a living, who might be

15 looking to link up with the City where

16 it's guaranteed employment and benefits.

17 I'm sure that there's a trade association

18 where they convene and get together to

19 talk about their industry. And so it's a

20 non-traditional way of going after the

21 type of talent that you're looking for.

22 My experience has been to rely on trade

23 organizations to tell your story is not

24 always fruitful, unless you're going

25 before them to actually make a

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 presentation face to face, eyeball to
3 eyeball and make the appeal.

4 So that's what I would offer
5 up, because if jobs exist and folks want
6 work, then it's clear to me as an
7 outsider that we not have turned over
8 every single stone to get the word out to
9 fill those opportunities that are in your
10 office.

11 MS. WILDS: Thank you.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
13 Mr. President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
15 Thank you, Councilwoman.

16 Councilman Squilla.

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

19 I know some states have limits
20 on amount of increases per year as far as
21 percentage-wise. Do you see that as a
22 possibility in our state, that we
23 couldn't raise it more than 20 percent
24 per year or something like that?

25 MR. PIPER: It's a possibility.

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2 I haven't heard anything specific
3 mentioned in any of the state or
4 assessment-related meetings that I've
5 been to, the County Commissioners
6 Association. I've heard different issues
7 about property taxes being discussed.
8 Not that one in specific.

9 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Do you
10 know of any other state that has these
11 regulations?

12 MR. PIPER: Not offhand.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay.
14 Because it just seems that, again, if we
15 do it every year, I think we project in
16 our Five Year budget a 3 percent increase
17 for assessments overall per year. And I
18 know this year was 11 percent, but, I
19 mean, there are individuals that received
20 20, 30, 40, 50 percent increases, and it
21 just seems like there's -- maybe if we
22 had some protection that even if you're
23 going to raise it 50 percent, you can't
24 do it in one year, you would have to
25 raise it 25 percent in one year and 25

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 the following year to get that value
3 there. It would be easier for some folks
4 to be able to pay these amounts. So I
5 was just wondering if you knew of that or
6 if we could look and work with our state
7 legislators to see if they would be
8 willing to look into that for us.

9 MR. PIPER: Sure.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

12 Thank you, Councilman.

13 You promised, sir.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: One more.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
16 right. Councilman Domb.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I just have a
18 question on this chart that Rob gave us
19 last week. What are non-institutional
20 vacant land, cemeteries, nominal
21 buildings? Because they saw a big drop.
22 I'm just wondering why that would happen.

23 MR. PIPER: We try to put
24 labels on it, if nothing else, at least
25 point out what I understood them to be so

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 I could explain it to you guys. But some
3 of them are a little misleading.

4 Non-institutional. So not
5 necessarily owned by the non-profits.
6 But vacant land that may have some
7 nominal building value on it, like, for
8 instance, some cemeteries, believe it or
9 not. And some of those are taxable, but
10 they have usually some very nominal
11 building structure.

12 COUNCILMAN DOMB: It looks like
13 you took a major write-down from building
14 values of 144 million to 11 million.

15 MR. PIPER: Yeah. That's what
16 we saw.

17 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. All
18 right. Thank you very much. Thank you.

19 Thank you, Council President.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

21 Thank you, Councilman.

22 I actually had a couple of
23 questions I wanted to ask, but I know we
24 have to get a break for the stenographer,
25 and some of us need a break. What I was

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 going to ask you, I want to ask you about
3 this issue in the low-income housing tax
4 credit deals. We can probably continue
5 to disagree with respect to the whole
6 capitalization issue. They're income
7 restricted, and we believe that the
8 ability to raise assessments should be
9 extremely limited, because they don't
10 have the wherewithal to keep pace with
11 operating costs versus market rate, where
12 if you have market rate apartments, they
13 can do whatever, whatever the market
14 calls for. So this whole, I think it's,
15 7 percent, 7.5 rate we believe is not
16 adequate, but I'll follow up with you
17 offline. You know what I am talking
18 about?

19 MR. PIPER: Yes; the LIHTC
20 properties.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 Yeah. And the other thing, I was going
23 to get with you with respect to some of
24 the issues on the, quote/unquote, the bad
25 data that continues to exist, and I can

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 do this offline. We don't have to have
3 this big format. But we continue to look
4 at the bad data as recent as last week,
5 and it still exists. So I will have that
6 offline.

7 MR. PIPER: Okay.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: That
9 can probably add another half an hour.
10 All right?

11 MR. PIPER: Sure.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
13 Okay. So I want to thank you.

14 We're going to take a brief
15 recess. Let's say 2:30, with the
16 understanding for -- Commerce is next.

17 So this has nothing to do with
18 you all, other than you can get the heck
19 out of here.

20 MR. PIPER: Thank you.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 We're going to take a recess and we'll
23 just have Commerce come in. I'll say
24 2:30, with the understanding that we'll
25 probably bleed into the 2:35, 2:40.

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 All right. Thank you. Thank
3 you very much.

4 (Recess.)

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
6 afternoon. We're going to start. Next
7 up is Commerce Department.

8 (Witnesses approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And
11 OEO.

12 Good afternoon.

13 MR. EPPS: Mr. Chairman, good
14 afternoon.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Please proceed.

17 MR. EPPS: Good afternoon,
18 President Clarke and members of City
19 Council. I will not be reading my entire
20 testimony. You have that in the records,
21 but, again, I am Harold T. Epps, Director
22 of Commerce. I am joined at the podium
23 today by Silvie Gallier Howard, First
24 Deputy Commerce Director, and Iola
25 Harper, Deputy Commerce Director for

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 Economic Opportunity. Also present are
3 many other deputy directors and members
4 of the Commerce team, and I am pleased to
5 provide a brief testimony on Commerce's
6 Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget.

7 Many of you have heard from me
8 lately and you have heard me say that
9 Philadelphia is -- we are blessed to be
10 at an economic apex. After 50 years of
11 decline, our population has increased
12 year over year for the last decade.
13 Millennials and immigrants are fueling
14 this growth, adding jobs and contributing
15 to the local tax base.

16 Since the height of the great
17 recession, the number of Philadelphians
18 who are employed has increased by 13
19 percent, while employment across the
20 country has increased by 9.6 percent.
21 Philadelphia has seen significant job
22 growth over the past two years. At a 3.6
23 percent rate of growth, we are surpassing
24 the national average of 3.4 percent and
25 even New York's average of 3.3 percent.

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2 In 2017, our average unemployment was 6.2
3 percent and the City had 707,000 jobs,
4 that being the highest number of jobs
5 since 1991.

6 The Department, of course --
7 I'm sorry; the Department of Commerce
8 cannot claim responsibility for all this
9 progress, but we do feel that our work
10 makes an important contribution, such as
11 we attract and retain businesses, which
12 result in jobs in Philadelphia. We
13 provide one-on-one support to businesses
14 of all sizes for the neighborhood
15 corridor -- from the neighborhood corner
16 store to multi-national firms. We
17 distribute business improvement grants
18 and connect entrepreneurs to financing
19 and technical resources. We expand
20 opportunities for minority and
21 women-owned businesses, and we support
22 college and career readiness through our
23 own and partnering job training programs.

24 A detailed list of our
25 accomplishments has been provided in

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2 written testimony, and Iola Harper will
3 be able to speak to the specific numbers
4 for the OEO when she shares her brief
5 supplemental testimony in just a minute
6 or two.

7 While progress has been made,
8 it is not enough. Our poverty rate is
9 stuck at 25.7 percent, and over the last
10 three years, the average rate of black
11 unemployment, 8.5 percent, is twice that
12 of white unemployment of 4.2 percent.
13 This is why in FY19 and beyond Commerce
14 is increasing its efforts to ensure
15 equitable economic development, focusing
16 on economic growth with equity,
17 increasing resources and technical
18 support for neighborhood businesses,
19 expanding access to City contracts for
20 women and minority firms, and developing
21 a robust talent pipeline for employers --
22 for Philadelphia's current and future
23 employers.

24 All the work that Commerce is
25 involved in ultimately is about job

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2 creation, and it is imperative that our
3 efforts contribute towards reducing
4 disparity and increasing access for the
5 City's low-income and minority
6 populations.

7 In keeping with that goal, I am
8 very proud of the fact that our team at
9 Commerce, including senior staff, is very
10 diverse and reflective of Philadelphia's
11 demographics.

12 I will end by speaking to the
13 importance of fostering a
14 business-friendly environment in
15 Philadelphia. Day in and day out,
16 Commerce talks to businesses that are
17 considering their options either to open
18 a new office or headquarters or
19 considering a relocation due to an
20 expiring lease.

21 The bid that Philadelphia
22 recently submitted to Amazon was much
23 more high profile than usual, but the
24 competition that we are in is not
25 unfamiliar. Philadelphia competes with

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2 surrounding counties, cities, nationwide,
3 and even internationally when we work to
4 attract and retain companies.

5 When businesses consider
6 Philadelphia, they look at our talent,
7 our tax structure, and our
8 business-related regulations. I want to
9 stress that we try to keep it as simple
10 and as streamlined as possible so that we
11 can welcome new companies and new jobs.

12 Through the Special Committee
13 on Regulatory Reform, we are making
14 important changes, changes such as
15 allowing new businesses to pay their
16 second year of estimated taxes quarterly
17 instead of all at once and the pilot that
18 Commerce, Health, and L&I are involved in
19 to improve the process of opening
20 restaurants.

21 It takes numerous partners and
22 significant collaboration to drive
23 economic and development forward, make an
24 important dent in our poverty rate, and
25 ensure revitalization occurs throughout

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2 the City. I want to thank City Council
3 for working with us closely to push
4 forward important changes and
5 improvements to further the momentum that
6 we are experiencing and to ensure a
7 better Philadelphia for all.

8 This concludes my testimony,
9 but I would like to hand the microphone
10 to Iola Harper, who heads the Office of
11 Economic Opportunity, so that she can
12 share the progress of OEO and the
13 outcomes of that important work.

14 MS. HARPER: Thank you, Harold.

15 Good morning, Council President
16 and members of City Council. My name is
17 Iola Harper and I'm Deputy Commerce
18 Director charged with leading the Office
19 of Economic Opportunity. My remarks will
20 be brief and are meant to supplement the
21 testimony provided by Director Epps.

22 We are moving closer to the 35
23 percent participation goal set by this
24 Administration. Thanks to the hard work
25 and diligence from City departments and

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2 OEO staff, the City committed 248
3 million, or 33.8 percent, to minority,
4 women, and disabled-owned business firms
5 in FY17. The quasi agencies added an
6 additional 65 million in spend, for a
7 total commitment of 32.06 percent for
8 FY17, up from 30.6 in FY16.

9 Thanks to ramped-up outreach
10 efforts, the registry grew by 184
11 certified firms, for a total of 2,765
12 firms, which represents a 7 percent
13 increase over FY16. On your desks you
14 will see a copy of my testimony that
15 lists -- that outlines numbers that I
16 won't read now, but I'm happy to answer
17 questions about. I'm going to skip to
18 additional accomplishments.

19 MED Week, thanks to the support
20 of this body as well as over 40 agencies
21 across the City, MED Week hosted over
22 1,200 diverse businesses during the week
23 of events. The list of participating
24 agencies has grown to include the
25 Independence Business Alliance, which

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2 serves the local LGBT Chamber, as well as
3 the Sustainable Business Network. OEO
4 honored Wilson Goode, Jr., as Advocate of
5 the Year.

6 Two new local agencies were
7 added to the list of agencies whose
8 certification is accepted by the City of
9 Philadelphia. The United States Business
10 Leadership Network provides certification
11 services to businesses owned by persons
12 with a disability. The Enterprise Center
13 will provide certification for both
14 minority-owned and disabled-owned firms.

15 The Philadelphia OEO convenes
16 quarterly meetings of similar groups
17 across the country to discuss best
18 practices and effective policy. The size
19 of the DBE roundtable group has doubled
20 this last year, growing from nine firms
21 to 18. Participating cities and states
22 include New York, Maryland, Chicago,
23 Rhode Island, Delaware, Pittsburgh, and
24 New Jersey.

25 Two new EOP enforcement

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2 managers have been hired and will start
3 on April 9th. These individuals will
4 manage EOP oversight, including oversight
5 committees, on-site visits, and data
6 related to EOP achievement and
7 enforcement, and maintain an
8 EOP dashboard, both by City department as
9 well as councilmanic district. They will
10 also manage the new EOP hotline as well
11 as compile EOP compliance best practices,
12 successes, challenges, and they will
13 closely monitor participation across
14 contracts and performance by vendor.

15 OEO further bolstered the OEO
16 Officer Program by creating a detailed
17 training manual as well as hands-on
18 training on the B2G system that is used
19 to input participation-related data.

20 The Emerging Vendors Program
21 has been discussed with this body
22 previously. We anticipate the program
23 will be launched in the 2018 calendar
24 year in partnership with Rebuild. The
25 EVP is designed to increase the

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2 availability of certified
3 Philadelphia-based firms who are ready to
4 do business with the City. The EVP will
5 assess not-yet-certified firms for
6 inclusion in Rebuild opportunities.
7 Emerging vendors will have the
8 opportunity to work on projects while
9 receiving the back-end support needed to
10 become a certified MBE, WBE or DSBE.

11 More specifically, an emerging
12 vendor will be counted towards
13 participation goals on Rebuild
14 opportunities, with an individual
15 contract amount not to exceed \$150,000
16 annually. Emerging vendors will have 18
17 months to work with Rebuild technical
18 assistance providers as well as OEO and
19 external agencies to address their
20 individual challenges related to becoming
21 certified. Emerging vendor status will
22 terminate on the 18-month anniversary
23 with no possibility of renewal. This
24 program supports OEO's belief that the
25 introduction of new local minority firms

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2 into the registry is very important.
3 Likewise, OEO believes that stabilizing
4 and assisting mid-sized firms with
5 capacity to grow is critical to the local
6 economy. Currently, there are few MBE
7 firms with an internal capacity to take
8 on very large or multiple projects
9 simultaneously, and as a result, they are
10 not benefiting from the City's ongoing
11 construction boom.

12 In addition to the Emerging
13 Vendors Program, OEO is always looking
14 for new ways to make it easier for
15 M/W/DSBEs to gain opportunities. We are
16 actively exploring options to reduce
17 payment time to vendors and to create
18 mentor-protege opportunities and to
19 foster growth for M/W/DSBE businesses.

20 I thank City Council for their
21 ongoing support and look forward to our
22 continued partnership and pursuit of more
23 opportunities for our minority, women,
24 and disabled-owned businesses.

25 That concludes my remarks, and

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 I too am available for questions that you
3 may have.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

5 Thank you. Thank you so much for your
6 testimony.

7 I got a couple of quick
8 questions. The agreement between the
9 City and SEPTA on the panels as it
10 relates to advertisement, can you tell me
11 where we are with that? It's the panels
12 on the head houses. And I want to thank
13 Mr. Christmas for negotiating a pretty
14 good deal, at least on paper.

15 MR. FEGELY: Hi. Karen Fegely,
16 Deputy Commerce Director.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Pull
18 it forward.

19 MS. FEGELY: Yes. It was a
20 great deal. We appreciate it. And we
21 are -- we actually have -- we had met
22 with John Christmas and Matt Stitt a
23 while back and talked about like how we
24 would run a program to make sure those
25 funds are best used in the communities.

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2 We at Commerce have created an
3 application and sort of some guidelines,
4 and our intent was to share that with
5 District Councilmembers and make sure
6 people feel like it's --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

8 These were guidelines for the --

9 MS. FEGELY: So we were going
10 to put it out to make it a fair and
11 transparent process, put out an
12 application, simple, straightforward. It
13 won't be like a formal RFP. It will be
14 just a grant application for people to be
15 able to submit -- when I say "people,"
16 organizations that work on commercial
17 corridors -- to be able to submit
18 projects such as beautification projects,
19 banners, festivals, things that promote
20 their commercial corridor, and then
21 through that, a selection process that,
22 again, we would review with all of your
23 colleagues. We would make sure that we
24 would then do small grants to those
25 groups to get that to happen.

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: How
3 close are we to concluding the
4 formulation of the application and --

5 MS. FEGELY: We have the draft,
6 so it's -- we actually -- I'm looking at
7 Matt, because I just e-mailed earlier
8 today, coincidentally. So we're going to
9 meet next week and just make sure that
10 we're all on the same page as far as what
11 this looks like and everything. So I
12 would hope we would be able to put it out
13 within 30 days, give people maybe a
14 30-day turnaround, and then make awards
15 and get them out. These are small
16 grants. I think we're thinking like
17 \$5,000 to \$10,000, maybe \$5,000 to
18 \$15,000 grants. So it should be pretty
19 straightforward.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Is
21 there going to be a relationship to the
22 eligibility for the commercial corridors
23 in proximity to the panels/transit ways
24 where we're going to advertise?

25 MS. FEGELY: The way the

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2 agreement is written, yeah, there has to
3 be some relationship to sort of where
4 SEPTA stops are, but it will be able to
5 support most communities, I think.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
7 right. So I'm just bringing this up.
8 There was some concerns about significant
9 portions of the City that don't have
10 subways.

11 MS. FEGELY: Right. I remember
12 we had a conversation too, and I feel
13 like we came to a resolution. I can't
14 remember exactly what the details were.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Just
16 on the record.

17 MS. FEGELY: It was definitely
18 a point we had to discuss, how do we make
19 sure that we can distribute this so
20 that -- to impact the most areas and the
21 areas that need it the most.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And
23 revenue, where are we at with the
24 revenue?

25 MS. FEGELY: With the funds?

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2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Have
3 we already started getting contributions?

4 MS. FEGELY: Yes. I think
5 it's -- I think it's \$167,000, if
6 something can confirm that. Yes. And
7 it's been transferred into Commerce's
8 budget for us to --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: To
10 go directly to Commerce or to the MDO's
11 Office? That's important.

12 MS. FEGELY: Went to Commerce.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
14 Because when it go to the MDO Office,
15 there's no telling where it's going to
16 end up.

17 MS. FEGELY: We got it.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Are
19 you sure?

20 MS. FEGELY: That's what I'm
21 being told, yup.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
23 Okay. And did we have a projection on
24 the amount of revenue on an annual basis?
25 Any incremental increases in panels?

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2 MS. FEGELY: It is projected, I
3 believe, to go up again next year and
4 then probably to get steady from there.
5 I don't know the number off the top of my
6 head.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Do
8 we have another round of panels that need
9 to be installed?

10 I know the answers to these
11 questions, but I'm asking you so we can
12 be on the record, because I want to show
13 that there's an agreement. It was
14 between SEPTA and the City.

15 MS. FEGELY: There is an
16 agreement, right, that a percentage of
17 whatever that revenue is --

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
19 There's supposed to be incremental
20 increases of panels across the City where
21 we have these particular head houses.

22 MS. FEGELY: As more panels go
23 in, as their revenue goes up, the
24 agreement states that a percentage will
25 always go to this program. So if the

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2 revenue goes up, then the amount that we
3 get to grant out goes up as well, because
4 it's a percentage of that revenue.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
6 right. So can you provide to us in
7 writing the specifics of the projections,
8 because that's what I'm most interested
9 in.

10 MS. FEGELY: Yeah, sure.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
12 right. I'll stick on advertising, kind
13 of off the script, since we're talking
14 about that. So I know this is always an
15 interesting subject. It goes back a lot
16 of years. We always talked about ways of
17 raising revenue outside of sticking our
18 hands in the taxpayers' pockets, which
19 we're known for. That's what we do.
20 Government has the authority to do that.

21 The attempt to create other
22 revenue streams and other revenue sources
23 has been significant over the years, both
24 in the prior Administration and this
25 Administration. Does the Commerce

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2 Department have an official position on
3 public advertisement? If you go on East
4 Market right now, if you walk out of the
5 Reading Terminal on Market Street, it
6 looks kind of hot. It looks like a
7 little miniature -- at least one block --
8 Times Square on the new building going up
9 on, what is it, the 1100 block of Market,
10 and it brings a kind of synergy, and we
11 can make some money off of that.

12 Does the Commerce Department
13 have an official position on
14 advertisement for purposes of generating
15 revenue? And I put a little caveat in
16 the bill for School District funding,
17 because it seems like when it's for the
18 kids, everybody says it's okay, you know.

19 MR. EPPS: Councilman, if you
20 look at our mission and vision statement,
21 you would not find that as part of our
22 responsibility. We co-chair the opinion
23 of conversation with the Planning
24 Department. So I would say officially in
25 Commerce on a day-to-day basis, we do not

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2 have an official position.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Why
4 not?

5 MR. EPPS: Because that is
6 really -- that's not our role.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Why
8 not?

9 MR. EPPS: That's the role of
10 the Planning Department.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Why?

12 MR. EPPS: That's where we have
13 put that responsibility. It doesn't make
14 it right.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: It's
16 not in the Charter. The Commerce
17 Department is the department that's
18 supposed to generate commerce. That's
19 money. Money is commerce. So why
20 would --

21 MR. EPPS: We will take it
22 under advisement. Today that is not
23 something that we look at on a day-to-day
24 basis. It crosses many departments, and
25 today the lead responsibility for that

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2 does not reside in Commerce. I'm not
3 saying whether it's right or wrong. It's
4 just today that is not --

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Is
6 that something that's written? I'm
7 trying to understand.

8 MR. EPPS: I would say --

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
10 Because it ended up in the Art
11 Commission.

12 MR. EPPS: As technology has
13 come into many domains, it crosses many
14 different departments, and some things
15 overlap. I would say that would be one
16 of them. And today we don't have an
17 official position on that. We'll be more
18 than willing to take it under advisement
19 and get back to you as to what it is, but
20 prior to you asking it, I would say that
21 months would go by where we in Commerce
22 do not proactively engage in the
23 conversation about revenue generated from
24 City assets. Others may, but we don't do
25 that in Commerce on a day-to-day basis.

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2 We get --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Were
4 you told not to do that --

5 MR. EPPS: No.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --
7 or is this just something you all choose
8 not to be in?

9 MR. EPPS: It's just something
10 that probably falls in the gray area.
11 There are other places where those
12 conversations get had. We get pulled
13 into them, but it's not something that we
14 lead.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Where?

17 MR. EPPS: Sometimes it's IT,
18 sometimes it's Streets, sometimes it's
19 Planning.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
21 Every place but the place that's supposed
22 to generate commerce.

23 MR. EPPS: Well --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: That
25 sounds kind of strange.

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2 MR. EPPS: I would say it's
3 something that would be new as technology
4 has come into the forefront and it's just
5 something that we probably need to take
6 as an action item to figure out how we as
7 an Administration want to respond to that
8 in a cohesive way.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: If
10 you had an opportunity.

11 MR. EPPS: You're asking a very
12 legitimate question, but --

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
14 usually do.

15 MR. EPPS: I know you do. It's
16 something today that is not prominent on
17 our plate. We'll take it as an action
18 item. We'll get back to you to let you
19 know how this cross-functional entity
20 should have a cohesive response.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
22 Okay.

23 MR. EPPS: There are five -- in
24 a six-month period of time, there may be
25 five different ways that question comes

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2 up, but I'm saying it is rare that it's
3 prominent into Commerce.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
5 if Amazon says we want to have some
6 advertisement on their building when they
7 come here, you guys will be involved in
8 that, right?

9 MR. EPPS: Because we would be
10 the forefront of the conversation, yeah,
11 but we could not make that decision as a
12 sole department.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
14 Okay. All right. Okay. So I'm going --

15 MR. EPPS: We have it as action
16 item.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
18 only saying we got a pending deal for --

19 MR. EPPS: I live on --

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --
21 \$800,000 for like a couple of signs that
22 are not even digital across the street,
23 and I can't seem to find anybody else
24 other than the Art Commission who wants
25 to take some public position on it. And

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2 it's pretty stunning to me that we're
3 trying to get money for schools and we're
4 asking people to pay more taxes, but yet
5 we can hang a couple of signs up and we
6 can't figure out a way to have somebody
7 responsible for making a decision on that
8 to generate that commerce.

9 Okay. You can't find the
10 appropriation of SEPTA on ad-sharing
11 revenue for FY19. Just a little note.

12 MR. EPPS: I'm sorry. Say that
13 again.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: The
15 ad-sharing revenue, we don't see the
16 appropriation for that, because we have
17 to appropriate the money to Commerce. So
18 you all can track that down?

19 MR. EPPS: Yes.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
21 believe you when you say that the money
22 is coming or it's here, but I'd like to
23 see a document --

24 MS. HOWARD: It was already
25 transferred in the mid-year transfer --

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2 oh, I'm sorry; for '18.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: For
4 '19.

5 MS. HOWARD: Okay.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
7 wanted to ask you a quick question about
8 contracts I guess with respect to
9 participation and I guess generally. So
10 we have this thing in the City, they call
11 them no-opportunity bids, which means
12 that there's no opportunity to reach a
13 certain goal based on the unavailability
14 of people that could provide this in the
15 categories that we're interested in or
16 the demographics, and my question is,
17 when you look at the no-opportunity
18 bids -- and I don't know what those
19 numbers are -- could it potentially have
20 an impact on the overall number? So if
21 you include the no-opportunity bids, that
22 means we can't find any minorities or
23 females or DBEs to bid on this. If that
24 is included in the aggregate number,
25 those numbers could be less. So talk to

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2 me about no-opportunity bids.

3 MS. HARPER: Sure. So I am
4 trying to locate -- we calculate it both
5 ways. So we calculate participation with
6 the few or no dollars in and with them
7 without. So the numbers that I stated in
8 my testimony of 32.06 percent
9 participation achievement is the
10 participation number that has the
11 no-opportunity deductions taken out. If
12 you were to look at the same set of
13 numbers and include the few or no, our
14 participation rate as a whole would be
15 29.06 for FY17.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
17 Okay. So we're under 30 if you include
18 the no-opportunity bids?

19 MS. HARPER: Correct.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
21 isn't that the real number?

22 MS. HARPER: Well, I don't know
23 if it's the real number, but it's the
24 real number taking into consideration or
25 including the fact that there are large

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2 contracts and opportunities for which
3 there are no minority, women or
4 disabled-owned vendors able to take that
5 on.

6 MR. EPPS: So, Councilman, in
7 my private sector experience, I spent two
8 decades in procurement. The standard
9 practice, whether it makes it right or
10 wrong, just the standard practice within
11 the industry is to make those deductions
12 because of the institutional reality that
13 there is no ability to meet the number.
14 So the one that everybody uses is if the
15 City or Comcast or somebody is buying
16 helicopters --

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
18 not in the private sector.

19 MR. EPPS: I know. In the
20 government.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I'm
22 in the government.

23 MR. EPPS: If there were a
24 category of helicopters, you would deduct
25 that number because the studies have been

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2 done and there are no minority companies
3 or women-owned companies that have an
4 ability to supply helicopters. So the
5 standard practice in the public and
6 private sector, government included, is
7 to deduct that category from the spend so
8 you can measure spending against the
9 categories where there's possibility to
10 spend the dollars. It doesn't make it
11 right or wrong. It's just the way the --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
13 didn't say it was right or wrong. I'm
14 just asking you what the real number is.
15 If it's 29, then it's 29. I understand
16 if you can't find them. Although the
17 historical -- from a historical
18 perspective, too often a lot of people
19 are always told that you can't find them,
20 and you know the history of that whole
21 thing. Well, there's nobody out there
22 that can do this. And then when you dig
23 a little deeper, you actually find, you
24 know what, if we do a little more, we can
25 actually find --

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2 MR. EPPS: That's why we
3 measure both ways.

4 MS. HARPER: Also if I can add,
5 our world is the OEO registry in terms of
6 what we're looking at in terms of
7 availability. There are registries that
8 the Women's Business Enterprise Council
9 has, that the PAUCP has, and that the
10 ESMDC -- that are the certification
11 agencies that do certification. Their
12 registries are much larger than the
13 City's registries, and people that are
14 certified by those agencies have to opt
15 into the Philadelphia registry. So we
16 meet with those certification agencies
17 annually, and one of the things that we
18 are going to discuss this year --
19 actually our meeting is next week -- is
20 looking at the few or no opportunities to
21 see if there are in fact firms that
22 aren't in the OEO registry, but happen to
23 be in their registries that we might be
24 able to court to our registry to begin to
25 take on some of these things. But even

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2 then, some of the few or no categories
3 include things like software or, you
4 know, things -- specialized vehicles and
5 things like that where there just isn't
6 availability for those type of companies.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

8 Okay. All right. Thank you.

9 The Chair recognizes Councilman
10 Greenlee.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Thank
12 you, Mr. President.

13 Good afternoon. A couple quick
14 questions. One, the Rules Committee,
15 which I chair, often has the issue of
16 business improvement districts before it,
17 BIDs. In fact, we have another one
18 coming up on Monday with Northern
19 Liberties. And I was just wondering just
20 generally have you found them -- I mean,
21 we basically hear positive things, but I
22 was wondering what are you hearing? Do
23 they seem to be something that has really
24 done what it says, improve businesses in
25 certain areas?

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2 MR. EPPS: I would like to
3 answer that in two tiers. I'll answer it
4 based upon my 40 businesses. I want
5 Karen Fegely to come and give you the
6 technical response. But my perspective
7 after two and a half years is absolutely
8 positively yes. We see from the
9 fundamentals of safe, clean, and well
10 lit, which every district wants, that
11 those that have a business improvement
12 district are in better shape. Those
13 without it struggle. And we are big
14 advocates of as many business improvement
15 districts as we can find and afford to
16 fund.

17 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: I was
18 hoping that would be your answer. So
19 when people come -- there's always going
20 to be a few people who come, and I'm
21 expecting them on Monday, who say it's
22 not worth it and all. So I'd like to get
23 that on record that --

24 MR. EPPS: We absolutely beg to
25 differ. And when we go into parts of the

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2 City and advocate and they vote them
3 down, we become very -- we recognize the
4 underutilization of performance that the
5 district is going to have, because all
6 our data shows that not only are they
7 valuable, but they help improve the real
8 estate values, both on the residential
9 side and the commercial side where they
10 exist.

11 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Right. I
12 totally agree, but I wanted to get that
13 on record.

14 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. And I
15 concur obviously that it's a great
16 program for neighborhoods where it makes
17 sense. I will say even once a business
18 improvement district is in place, it
19 requires -- I mean, the management of it
20 is a real concern, just that it has to be
21 well managed and maintained and they have
22 to keep that connection with the
23 community and with the property owners
24 who are paying into it. And also when
25 they're getting started, we've set out

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2 sort of best practices. We published a
3 guide. We try to coach people on how to
4 get a BID started, so that usually by the
5 time they come in here into City Council,
6 hopefully there's not a whole lot of
7 resistance because they've done the
8 appropriate and necessary outreach.

9 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: There's
10 always usually a little bit, but yeah,
11 you're right. I know what you're saying.

12 MS. FEGELY: There's always a
13 little bit.

14 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And the
15 other one real quick, Mr. Epps, you talk
16 about the pilot that Commerce, Health,
17 and L&I are involved to help improve
18 opening restaurants, because I know
19 there's a lot of confusion on do you go
20 to L&I first, Health first. Is that the
21 kind of thing you're talking about?

22 MR. EPPS: Well, we've got more
23 task forces than our days of the week
24 working on that initiative. I'll let
25 First Deputy talk about it since she's

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 chairing some of that work.
3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: Okay.
4 MS. HOWARD: Actually, two
5 business owners are chairing the
6 subcommittee, but I'm staffing it. So
7 that's part of the Committee on
8 Regulatory Reform and Review, and
9 basically what we've learned through the
10 process is that the process of opening a
11 restaurant, some of the departments, the
12 systems don't necessarily talk to each
13 other and sometimes it's frustrating most
14 of the times for restaurants because they
15 don't necessarily know where they are in
16 the process. So the pilot that we're
17 going to do is using Salesforce, which
18 the City already has a contract with
19 Salesforce, basically is a customer
20 management tool, so that if a
21 restauranteur is stuck somewhere in the
22 process and they call someone, in this
23 case it will be Commerce that's doing the
24 pilot, that person will be able to go on
25 and say, okay, last time -- this is where

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2 you are in the process, last time you
3 talked with someone this is what the
4 issue was, and just help them as you
5 would probably experience with a lot of
6 different companies when you're trying to
7 do something.

8 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: And are
9 there language issues sometimes with
10 that, some of the immigrant communities
11 coming in trying to open up restaurants?

12 MS. HOWARD: Yes. Yes. And
13 that's one of the reasons that Commerce
14 has bilingual service managers as well.

15 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE: All
16 right. Thank you.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: The
19 Chair recognizes Councilwoman Blackwell.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
21 you, Mr. President.

22 We were happy to have visitors
23 yesterday to talk about Africatown and to
24 give you a copy of where we are and where
25 we see it. So we've also made that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 available to the Mayor's Office, and we
3 hope that we can move forward.

4 These are exciting times, and
5 we hope that we end up in Africa this
6 summer, as you know, so that we can
7 continue to do great things. These are
8 exciting times, and certainly with the
9 work and cooperation and our ability to
10 try to get things done with your
11 department, we think we can get there.

12 Number two, I like the way you
13 all change the time where people have to
14 pay all taxes into quarterly. That's a
15 good thing. Good thing. But I wanted to
16 ask you about our commercial corridors.
17 As you all know, it's not working now,
18 and I think we pay them 50,000. It's not
19 working. We have got to work out paying
20 more money so that we can have our
21 corridors cleaned every day. What would
22 it take to do that? Can we talk about
23 that? You all can research it and get
24 back to us, but we got to do something
25 about commercial corridors, because

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2 they're still filthy.

3 MR. EPPS: You are on one of my
4 greatest hot buttons.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Pull
6 your mic up, would you.

7 MR. EPPS: You are one of my
8 greatest hot buttons. There is no other
9 response, is that they are still filthy,
10 including Center City. We have -- and
11 it's a good thing -- next Saturday is
12 Philly Cleanup Day. We'll see how long
13 it lasts, but, yes, it is a resource.
14 It's a human resource challenge and it's
15 a financial resource challenge.

16 You know, we talk about our
17 poverty rate. As a result of all the
18 other things we have to fund, we just are
19 not able to give it what it deserves.
20 And so there is no other answer that I
21 know of other than changing the behavior
22 of 1.6 million people to take
23 responsibility for their own trash, and
24 we don't do that as a city and, as a
25 result, government is left through either

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2 direct or indirect and partnership
3 funding to try to mitigate what is bad
4 behavior that exists in our city.

5 So I have no other response,
6 Councilwoman, other than I completely
7 agree with you, and we try to take -- we
8 don't try. We take the resources that
9 are allocated and maximize their utility
10 with our partners, but it's nowhere near
11 what the City needs.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: I
13 think that many of us would be willing to
14 deal with what we fund to give more
15 funding to this and less funding to
16 something else if we had to, because it's
17 just, you know -- it's not a total waste,
18 but if we can't get our commercial
19 corridors clean and we're funding them to
20 some degree, we're losing out. I'd
21 rather fund that to a greater degree and
22 not fund something else to make sure that
23 we can get something. And I'm sure that
24 if we really polled my colleagues, that
25 they would agree with me.

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2 Don't you guys agree with me?

3 COUNCILMAN GREENLEE:

4 Absolutely.

5 MR. EPPS: So I would like to
6 go back to Councilman Greenlee for a
7 minute.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank
9 you. So I hope that we can consider
10 doing it. Will you all consider that and
11 get back to the President?

12 MR. EPPS: We will take it
13 under advisement with the rest of the
14 organization, but let me just make one
15 comment. You can walk down a commercial
16 corridor and this side of the street is
17 within the business improvement district
18 and this side of the street is not, and
19 it will take you about ten seconds to see
20 the difference. So, yes, we're nowhere
21 near what we need it to be, but that
22 intervention is making a recognizable and
23 noticeable difference on any corridor
24 where you can see within a block or two
25 what's being cleaned and what's not being

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 cleaned.

3 MS. HOWARD: I just checked
4 with our Finance Director and I do have
5 one piece of good news, which is in FY18
6 we put about 600,000 in commercial
7 corridor cleaning grants, and it will be
8 800,000 in '19. So we will be increasing
9 our cleaning in FY19, and that's 26
10 corridors that we work on.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: All
12 right. Well, we're glad to hear there is
13 some increase, and we'll see what happens
14 from there, because we would really like
15 to do what it takes to get it done.

16 Let me ask you, you all also
17 talk about in your remarks the Office of
18 Workforce Development and this whole
19 issue of Fair Chance Hiring program where
20 you hire people who need jobs, people who
21 are offenders, people in big trouble.
22 How will that work? Where will they go?
23 Do you have it all worked out how we can
24 use --

25 MR. EPPS: Well, we're still in

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 the pilot phase, and I'm going to ask the
3 new Chair of our Workforce Development
4 Office, Sheila Ireland, to come up and
5 talk about where we are, but another
6 program that is an attempt to get at some
7 of our most vulnerable citizens. This is
8 our first year. It's been refunded for
9 next year. But to answer your question
10 is it all worked out, I would say
11 probably not, but we are making progress.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good.
13 Thank you.

14 (Witness approached witness
15 table.)

16 MS. IRELAND: Good morning,
17 Councilwoman Blackwell.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good
19 morning.

20 MR. EPPS: Afternoon.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Or
22 afternoon, I guess it is.

23 MS. IRELAND: I have three
24 jobs. I'm sorry.

25 So on the Fair Chance Hiring

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2 grant, there is 500,000 allocated to this
3 particular fiscal year. So far, 440,000
4 has been allocated. That's 85 positions
5 available for people, with 27 employers
6 involved in the Fair Chance Hiring
7 initiative.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.
9 So where are we? How do people apply?
10 How does it go? We're really interested
11 in this program. I went to a fair this
12 weekend with a program called One Click
13 that helps -- Councilman Jones knows
14 about it. Their first affair, and they
15 work hard with people coming home. We're
16 glad that so many teenagers, as you know,
17 come home and so many people are coming
18 home. We want every available
19 opportunity to refer them some place. So
20 tell us what we do.

21 MS. IRELAND: So I would
22 suggest that the best way to connect
23 people to those opportunities with those
24 employers is through RISE. So the grant
25 -- I'm sorry; the tax credit specifically

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2 is about giving the businesses that are
3 engaged with that particular program a
4 tax credit for hiring the graduates of
5 RISE.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.
7 We know about RISE forever and we know
8 how to get in touch with them.

9 Also, all of us know Maceo
10 Cummings. Have you all been around long
11 enough to remember Maceo Cummings? His
12 partner was Alan Brown. They deal with
13 Mike Roepel, Philadelphia Neighborhood
14 Housing Services, 52nd and Chestnut,
15 PNHS. And Maceo, of course, got sick and
16 passed away, I guess it was -- maybe it
17 was last summer. Time moves so quickly.
18 It might have even been the summer
19 before. And so we want to ask if you
20 will check into their group. They were a
21 funded group. They do first-time
22 homebuyers, PNHS, Philadelphia
23 Neighborhood Housing Services. A person
24 named AJ Moore now runs that program for
25 them. They're at 5234 Chestnut Street,

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 and they invited me to speak to their
3 class on Friday. So I went there, spoke
4 to all those who were interested in being
5 first-time homebuyers and -- but they are
6 interested, and they've been fighting,
7 Michael Roepel and Alan Brown, who was
8 Maceo Cummings' partner, they've been
9 fighting to maintain some level of
10 funding to keep that program going.
11 Would you check into that and let me
12 know?

13 MS. IRELAND: Absolutely.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: And I
15 have direct numbers and any other
16 information you may need.

17 And I think that is it for me
18 for the moment.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
21 Councilwoman.

22 The Chair recognizes Councilman
23 Jones.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman.

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2 And good afternoon, everyone.

3 Could I ask Nazirah Sabri to join you at
4 the table, please.

5 I see you in the back.

6 And as you do so, I want to
7 preface my remarks with the fact that
8 often on this side of the table, we are
9 often critical of performances of
10 departments. What I want to do is take
11 the opportunity to thank you publicly on
12 the record for when you exceed my
13 expectations as well.

14 (Witness approached witness
15 table.)

16 COUNCILMAN JONES: So -- no.
17 You too. I wanted her to be a part of
18 it.

19 I have had the pleasure of
20 walking in maybe a half dozen commercial
21 corridor tours with you where you
22 absorbed what was going on and understood
23 the difference between Market Street and
24 Main Street, where you cited statistics
25 to people on Ridge Avenue about -- I

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2 think the median income in their areas
3 was somewhere in the neighborhood of
4 \$84,000 per person or it was 64, one of
5 those two, where you --

6 MR. EPPS: In Roxborough?

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: In
8 Roxborough, yeah.

9 MR. EPPS: 64.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: And knowing
11 the difference between what the needs of
12 a commercial corridor like Market Street
13 were, and in so doing and understanding
14 those walks that we participated in, we
15 were able to get a \$50 million investment
16 on Market Street. That's not exactly
17 Main Street. So understanding those
18 subtle differences has given us an
19 opportunity to flourish on both ends of
20 the spectrum, if you would. So I wanted
21 to thank you, put that on the record.

22 You went beyond that, though.
23 I'm a pain. I thought you had all kinds
24 of times of night, if I see trash on the
25 street or something that needs

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2 improvement on a commercial corridor.

3 I took a tour on Lansdowne
4 Avenue maybe a year and a half ago, and
5 some of the questions some of the
6 neighborhood advocates were asking I did
7 not have answers to, and the answers are
8 probably better found in the Commerce
9 Department. You guys took the time not
10 only to deal with that corridor, but a
11 half dozen other corridors, Lancaster
12 Avenue, 63rd Street, that needed that
13 technical assistance. Didn't
14 understand -- they knew what they wanted,
15 but didn't know how the process went to
16 get it. You took the time to tutor them
17 and are working to give them technical
18 assistance.

19 So it's wonderful that you're
20 going after Amazon. I get it. And I
21 understand the economic benefit to the
22 City of Philadelphia, but where I live
23 and the corridors I walk on, that is
24 equally important, and I see that you
25 guys can do that.

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2 So I wanted to say that on the
3 record. Thank you on the record. From
4 Haverford Avenue to Roxborough, thank
5 you.

6 So having said all the good
7 stuff --

8 MR. EPPS: Here it comes.

9 COUNCILMAN JONES: -- I'm going
10 to segue a little bit. I need to know
11 what our plans are also for Hunting Park
12 Avenue and Parkside Avenue, how we top
13 off. And we've had some development, but
14 I want that same kind of Amazon versus
15 commercial corridor attention given to
16 those big industrial parks. We do the
17 doggone thing to the Navy Yard, and I get
18 that, big picture, but Hunting Park has
19 been there since the industrial rust
20 belt. We no longer make tanks and
21 automobiles there. What is the game plan
22 for them?

23 MR. EPPS: Councilman, I would
24 not say that we have a cohesive game plan
25 for Hunting Park, but what I can say is

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2 when -- and we do explore daily
3 opportunities in Philadelphia and we do
4 consider all of the possibilities of
5 location, including Hunting Park, but
6 until there is some level of clarity and
7 definition, they are done quite often
8 pretty confidentially, because that's the
9 way the end user wants it.

10 But I do want to say this about
11 Amazon. If we want to be to fortunate
12 and privileged to have Amazon come --

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: It's going
14 to Hunting Park?

15 MR. EPPS: No. But a
16 by-product of that is, every corridor in
17 the City would have some level of
18 benefit, because over a decade or so,
19 over 100,000 people would likely make
20 Philadelphia their home. And I got to
21 cite statistics. You know, we still have
22 1.6 million against a historical high of
23 2.1, 2.2. So we are 20, 25 percent down
24 from our historical high, and that's why
25 we have so much decay and so much

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2 available land, including Hunting Park.

3 So we work every day.

4 Sometimes it is without fanfare, where we
5 show people around, and trust me, Hunting
6 Park comes up in the conversation often.

7 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I was up
8 there with you too when we had a tour of
9 the potential of some railcars being put
10 in, and I know you -- but I need a plan
11 similar to what we do for other areas, I
12 think.

13 I want to segue, because we
14 can't do that plan today. We had an
15 interesting hearing on Commerce and
16 Economic Development on ERISAs.
17 Councilman Green introduced a resolution,
18 and these employee-owned option buyouts
19 were so intriguing, that there's a mill
20 up in my district that closed. It was
21 100 years old, and the employees did not
22 have an opportunity to make a bid to buy
23 the facility, and I was thinking that if
24 we could -- and I guess the general
25 understanding of the business model was

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2 that there are certain financial
3 institutions that are willing to finance
4 the employee purchase of an entity. It's
5 almost socialist and socialism at its
6 best, but it can stop plant closures.

7 Have we engaged with them? And
8 if not, when can we?

9 MR. EPPS: If I may, can I make
10 an appointment to get on your calendar to
11 talk about that, because that's a very,
12 very long answer. I've been involved in
13 a couple of those in my private sector.
14 They're a lot more complicated than --

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: I would
16 imagine. So I'm okay with --

17 MR. EPPS: And the failure rate
18 is pretty high.

19 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm okay
20 with that, but in the case of the mill,
21 at least that would have been an option
22 for close to 100 employees, and maybe
23 they might have been the one in a million
24 that made it.

25 MR. EPPS: Traditional

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2 manufacturing will follow the lowest cost
3 around the globe. That mill closed for
4 reasons way beyond the ability for those
5 hundred employees to save it, and
6 probably one of the biggest mistakes they
7 could have ever made was to take their --

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: To sell it?

9 MR. EPPS: No; to buy it.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: I'm okay
11 with -- so I was in lending. Some of the
12 kindest things you can ever do to a
13 client is tell them no. Like, no, I'm
14 not going to take your collateral. No,
15 I'm not going to take your house. No,
16 I'm not going to -- I get that part of
17 it. But what I hope to do based on what
18 we heard and to have those kinds of
19 interactions with that group is that
20 every now and then when I was at PCDC, we
21 said yes, and yes is a beautiful thing
22 when the numbers and ROI work out.

23 So I just want to have the
24 dialogue. It's like having a quiver full
25 of arrows. You have different arrows for

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 different aspects of what you want to do
3 with that arrow. I just sat through a
4 couple of examples where it did work, and
5 so --

6 MR. EPPS: So often it is if
7 you have assets and you want to bundle
8 those, skate to the new economy, not to
9 the old. And so what we're in a better
10 position is to show you, back to the
11 few's and no's, where there's opportunity
12 where we need more capacity.

13 COUNCILMAN JONES: That's a
14 fair answer.

15 So I'm going to yield my time
16 and say thank you again and say keep up
17 the good work, because we weren't done
18 all of them, but it was a doggone good
19 start, and I appreciate what you guys
20 did. The community was enlightened by
21 what you do, because often they don't
22 know what you do.

23 MR. EPPS: Right.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: You know,
25 they don't know how hard you work. And

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2 so by presenting all of the options to
3 them, you gave them technical assistance
4 to become the next Ogontz Avenue
5 Revitalization Corps in areas that need
6 that kind of how to do things, Nicetown
7 CDC, developers, but they started in
8 humble beginnings. And so we appreciate
9 you. All right?

10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
12 Councilman.

13 The Chair recognizes
14 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you,
16 sir.

17 Good afternoon, Department of
18 Commerce.

19 MR. EPPS: Good afternoon.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Mayor
21 Kenney during his efforts to move towards
22 the second floor made it very clear of
23 two of his priorities. One was universal
24 pre-K and the other was ensuring that the
25 trends for MBE/minority participation

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2 would -- the trend would travel in an
3 upward flow. So how well are we doing
4 with regards to MBE/WBE participation?
5 What are the trends since your tenure in
6 the positions that you hold?

7 MR. EPPS: Councilwoman, the
8 leader, Iola, will give you the
9 specifics, and I would say that like
10 everything else, we are going in the
11 right direction, just painfully slow. So
12 the numbers are painfully up, but not as
13 fast as we'd like to see them.

14 MS. HARPER: Sure. Not a whole
15 lot to add to that, but specifically we
16 are at 32.06 percent this year, up from
17 30.6 percent last year. And it is slow,
18 but it's a heavy lift. And so I give a
19 lot of credit to the departments who are
20 making larger commitments to M/W/DSBE
21 firms.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Who makes
23 those decisions? Is it the commissioner?
24 Is it the deputy commissioner? Is it
25 collaboration between the commissioner

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2 and your department? Where does the ball
3 land?

4 MS. HARPER: In terms of who
5 gets a contract?

6 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

7 MS. HARPER: I think oftentimes
8 it's a cross-section of individuals. In
9 Procurement -- well, there are many
10 different ways, put it like that.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And there
12 are many different ways because of the
13 way the different -- each department has
14 their own personality for how they
15 operate around this?

16 MS. HARPER: Yes, and also due
17 to the type of contract. So public works
18 contracts, for example, are handled one
19 way versus maybe professional services
20 where they're RFP driven versus a bid,
21 so --

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Stop right
23 there. That's a lot of information. So
24 walk through with me how Public Property
25 handles theirs and how professional

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2 contracts are handled. What are the
3 protocols? What are the standard
4 operating procedures?

5 MS. HARPER: I don't know that
6 there's a standard operating procedure
7 from a City perspective. I imagine that
8 every department has a way that they
9 handle it. So I think the question that
10 you're asking is, is there a standard
11 way, and there isn't from OEO's
12 perspective, put it like that.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Stop right
14 there. So what I'm hearing you say is,
15 we cannot go to a document on the desk of
16 commissioners and find the written
17 protocols about how contracts of any type
18 are handled for that particular
19 department?

20 MS. HARPER: No; I'm not saying
21 that. You might be able to go, for
22 example, to Public Property and they
23 might have a protocol on how an RFP is
24 written up or how a selection committee
25 is --

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Assembled?

3 MS. HARPER: Assembled, right.

4 But I don't know that there is one
5 document that dictates how it works for
6 every single department. There may be,
7 but I'm not aware of one document that
8 dictates how all of those decisions are
9 made from department to department to
10 department.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So having
12 heard that, what becomes the response to
13 the question where's the transparency?
14 Why isn't that considered public
15 information so that when folks seek
16 opportunities, they have some level of
17 assurance that the process is standard
18 and transparent?

19 MS. HARPER: That's a good
20 question. So in terms of consistency,
21 there typically is a -- there's a
22 standard place where people can access
23 opportunities. It's like PHLContracts or
24 eContracts. There are pre-proposal
25 meetings that are often held for

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2 proposals. Those are put up online and
3 those are in the RFPs. So there are
4 benchmarks or --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN:
6 Milestones?

7 MS. HARPER: -- milestones
8 throughout the process that offer
9 transparency. I guess what I'm trying to
10 share is that I'm not aware of whether
11 every department does it exactly the same
12 way, but there are rules, for example, in
13 terms of needing to have a pre-proposal
14 meeting, needing to have certain things
15 in RFPs, needing to have certain
16 information available about what the
17 participation expectations are for a
18 given contract. So there are standard
19 rules from that perspective, but from a
20 process perspective, I am not aware of a
21 document that outlines a process that
22 every department goes through to kind
23 of -- that goes from the RFP process
24 through --

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Through to

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2 the award?

3 MS. HARPER: Correct.

4 MR. EPPS: I think it's safe to
5 say that there is rules and guidelines
6 and process for the methodology to get
7 you to --

8 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Pull the
9 mic closer. Repeat what you just said.

10 MR. EPPS: I think there are
11 rules and guidelines and processes to get
12 you to the decision. How the decision
13 gets made is on the
14 department-by-department basis.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: On
16 department-by-department basis.

17 MR. EPPS: And is that a
18 written protocol? To our knowledge, the
19 answer is no.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So you've
21 provided the path to get there, but
22 ultimately how the decision is rendered
23 sits with that department head?

24 MR. EPPS: That is correct.

25 MS. HARPER: And I'm providing

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2 my feedback from OEO's perspective and
3 our involvement in that process.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

5 MR. EPPS: So let me stress
6 that one of the roles of OEO is the
7 registry and another is to advocate for
8 the participation for minority and
9 women-owned companies, and sometimes the
10 decision-making process does include a
11 representative from OEO, often Iola, to
12 be on the decision-making team.
13 Sometimes.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So the
15 operative there is "sometimes." What
16 becomes the trigger for OEO's
17 involvement? If the Mayor has made it
18 exceedingly clear in multiple venues to
19 multiple audiences that this issue
20 matters to him and it's clear to me
21 sitting on this side of government that
22 we have some commissioners who understand
23 that language and are ready to understand
24 that music, hear the music and will dance
25 to the music, and there are others who we

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2 get invited to the party, but we're not
3 asked to dance.

4 MR. EPPS: So I was in two
5 meetings this week with my peer, Nolan
6 Atkinson, Chief Diversity and Inclusion
7 Officer, and we are ramping up our report
8 carding and accountability measures back
9 down to the commissioner level, and those
10 conversations are being rolled out on a
11 quarterly basis where they will be given
12 a scorecard of last year's performance to
13 this year's performance, and that
14 information will be provided to the Mayor
15 and the Chief of Staff on a quarterly
16 basis, and they will be dealt with in a
17 positive way or a negative way based upon
18 his or her performance. The same is
19 being done on the workforce side.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

21 MR. EPPS: Now, still there is
22 opportunity -- let me say it this way:
23 One of the ways that triggers the
24 increasing participation from OEO, often
25 Ms. Harper, is the size of the contract.

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2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

3 MR. EPPS: So we have learned
4 through some of the things that we could
5 have done better that we need to get OEO
6 involved early in the process to help
7 make sure that there is full recognition,
8 participation, and evaluation of the
9 minority and women-owned company as part
10 of the decision-making process. The
11 second part is to report the data at the
12 commissioner level and held him or her
13 accountable for their performance or
14 under-performance.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'm
16 pleased to hear that there's clear
17 communication between you and our Chief
18 Diversity Officer, because he too spoke
19 about the processes they're putting in
20 place so that we have hard data.

21 So what's the end goal date?
22 When do you see a scorecard becoming a
23 tangible new tool?

24 MR. EPPS: For sure between now
25 and September. Whether it's between now

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2 and June, I'm not sure, but for sure as
3 we come back into the fall, we'll have
4 it.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So that
6 suggests then come this time next year
7 during budget hearings, we as members of
8 Council will have -- well, let me not be
9 presumptuous. May have a look-see on
10 which departments are doing well and
11 which departments are flawed in what
12 they're doing?

13 MR. EPPS: I would say you have
14 to take that up with the Mayor's Office.

15 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yeah.
16 That's why I said "may." Okay.

17 When it comes to the submission
18 of documents, what's the protocol?
19 Electronically or manually or both?

20 MS. HARPER: For proposals?

21 MR. EPPS: For proposals?

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

23 MS. HARPER: I think it's a
24 combination. There are some departments
25 that have -- where you have the ability

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2 to upload all of your documents into a
3 system, and I have still seen some
4 departments or some entities within
5 government that require that you drop off
6 copies of your proposal or multiple
7 copies of your proposal. But I would say
8 most of the departments that I'm familiar
9 with are using the system where you can
10 upload your documentation for review.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So not for
12 now but for the next round, I need you to
13 help me understand why that is not
14 uniform across government and why that is
15 not universally understood by outsiders
16 across government, on the next round.

17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
19 Councilwoman. Something uniform across
20 government? That's almost comical. I
21 think you have your part-time job.

22 MR. EPPS: Councilman, I was
23 trying to figure out how I was going to
24 answer that question the next time
25 around.

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: We do have
3 eDocs, right? So that's our electronic
4 system.

5 So thank you, ladies and
6 gentlemen, for coming in here. It is my
7 round of questioning.

8 We started off by talking about
9 the commercial corridors. I don't
10 necessarily need Karen to come up, but I
11 do believe in the success of every
12 neighborhood is a successful commercial
13 corridor. It's 80, 85 percent of the
14 businesses in the City of Philadelphia.
15 They employ local people. And I would
16 encourage any and every single program
17 that goes along with commercial corridors
18 be fully funded and fully implemented and
19 enforced to the best of our ability.

20 I can tell you that we have a
21 BID in my neighborhood, in one of my
22 district neighborhoods, and the special
23 service districts, as they were called --
24 I guess they're created through the state
25 Municipality Act -- is critical for the

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2 dedicated funding, and the dedicated
3 funding is for cleanup, the dedicated
4 funding is for marketing, dedicated
5 funding is for public safety and
6 attraction of small businesses that's
7 walkable. We're changing all our
8 planning and zoning laws to a walkable
9 Philadelphia, and I think that these BIDs
10 are, where possible on corridors, are
11 extremely important and they can --
12 they're putting stake in their own
13 business. So the money is going back
14 right to themselves. So is it an
15 additional tax or fee? Yes. Where is it
16 going? Right back to you, back to the
17 ability to grow. So I believe in that.

18 I'll ask in a few seconds,
19 Karen, I do have a few questions for you
20 before I get into some manufacturing and
21 some land use. Regarding the CDC tax
22 credit program, how many CDCs are
23 currently enrolled in the tax program
24 now?

25 MS. FEGELY: There's --

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: Or is
3 allowed by law?

4 MS. FEGELY: There's 36 CDCs
5 and there's four intermediary
6 organizations and then two others that
7 are food-related organizations.

8 COUNCILMAN HENON: So 42?

9 MS. FEGELY: 42.

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: With a
11 little bit of whatever discretion,
12 however they're described.

13 How many additional CDCs have
14 expressed interest in participating in
15 the program?

16 MS. FEGELY: I know there are
17 some actively seeking partners and sort
18 of -- and slots. I would say there's
19 probably five to ten that are interested.

20 COUNCILMAN HENON: Now, would
21 you say that this is a successful
22 program, the CDC tax credit program that
23 the City offers?

24 MS. FEGELY: Generally, yes. I
25 think it's a great program to be able to

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2 offer -- we really rely on the CDCs as
3 our partners, sort of our boots on the
4 ground to do community economic
5 development, housing development,
6 everything, but this program is
7 particularly focused on economic
8 development, and it's great for them to
9 be able to have steady funding that can
10 be used for their operations and overhead
11 so they're not solely reliant on grants
12 that are usually sort of --

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: I mean, it's
14 not a lot of money, but it does help.

15 MS. FEGELY: Right. Depending
16 when they enter the program, it's either
17 \$85,000 or \$100,000 a year.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: Right. So
19 how does the CDC tax program complement
20 commercial neighborhoods and development
21 strategies, in your opinion?

22 MS. FEGELY: Well, again,
23 because the organizations that receive it
24 are -- they are required to be doing
25 economic development activities, it

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2 just -- it adds to their capacity and can
3 kind of give that steady funding to make
4 sure that they have staff to implement
5 programs. Typically most of the
6 organizations manage a corridor. They
7 manage some type of economic development
8 efforts, whether it's -- again, most of
9 them are corridor related because they're
10 in the neighborhood. Sometimes there
11 might be an industrial or riverfront
12 focus. But it definitely -- it leverages
13 other investments even from the City,
14 because when we grant out CDBG funds or
15 other City funds, they're usually for
16 very restricted uses. This gives
17 organizations some flexibility to really
18 respond to what their particular
19 neighborhood needs.

20 COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, I
21 think it does, and it really kind of puts
22 a cohort of like business services
23 together with the Commerce Department so
24 you can leverage or match other monies.

25 How is the usage of the rate --

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2 what's the rate of usage of the In-Store
3 program and how is that measured?

4 MS. FEGELY: I'm not sure
5 what your question is.

6 COUNCILMAN HENON: The In-Store
7 program, so commercial corridor to
8 commercial corridor.

9 MS. FEGELY: Like how many?

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: Right. Like
11 how do you measure the success of it? Is
12 it being utilized? Are we maxed out?

13 MS. FEGELY: It's definitely
14 being utilized, yeah. We have maxed out
15 and we have a pipeline. Actually, there
16 is additional funding in the budget this
17 year to be able to expand that to match.
18 We funded the program 100 percent with
19 CDBG funds in the past. This year we are
20 adding some General Funds to the program
21 to be able to just do more and meet the
22 demand.

23 COUNCILMAN HENON: Which I
24 think could be even more successful.

25 MS. FEGELY: Yes. It's a great

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2 tool. It's intended -- In-Store is
3 intended to be a business attraction or
4 expansion program for our low-income
5 corridors that need a little extra help
6 to get new businesses to come that
7 will -- and it's businesses that will
8 come and will bring new foot traffic that
9 then benefits all the other businesses on
10 the corridor.

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: And how do
12 you measure the selection of the interest
13 across the City? I know that's a tough
14 question. I know it comes down to
15 resources.

16 MS. FEGELY: Right. I mean,
17 we're always doing outreach. Everyone in
18 Commerce is doing outreach constantly on
19 our programs and, again, we rely on these
20 partners, the CDCs and business
21 associations.

22 COUNCILMAN HENON: Because the
23 SIP program is incredible.

24 MS. FEGELY: Storefront
25 Improvement Program is also very well

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2 used. Storefront Improvement Program is
3 not as selective. It's kind of any
4 business on a corridor that goes through
5 our program, we will get them to win
6 approval. In-Store is very competitive
7 because it's a bigger -- it's \$50,000.
8 It's a forgivable loan program, so
9 actually they do have to go to settlement
10 as a loan. So the paperwork is a little
11 more extensive and it's more selective
12 because it's a bigger pot of money and we
13 want to make sure that the recipients are
14 going to be ones that are really going to
15 make an impact.

16 COUNCILMAN HENON: Because with
17 the blessing of other District
18 Councilmembers, I tour other commercial
19 corridors and really try to identify
20 certain businesses to come into the Sixth
21 District. So it can be the difference
22 between somebody taking the risk and a
23 chance on --

24 MS. FEGELY: And that's exactly
25 what it was designed to be, yeah.

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: Can I ask
3 for -- I'm done with the commercial
4 corridors. Can I ask for manufacturing,
5 Altoro or Duane. So my first thing is,
6 what's the status of the KOZ at the state
7 level and do we anticipate a KOZ approval
8 in this springtime?

9 (Witnesses approached witness
10 table.)

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: Because I
12 know they're talking about some other, I
13 guess, like hybrid ways. Instead of
14 doing a KOZ, offering grants or something
15 through the City. So I'm just curious,
16 is the KOZ, to your knowledge, still on
17 the table from the state that we've
18 already selected and applied for for more
19 acreage here?

20 MR. BUMB: Duane Bumb, Deputy
21 Commerce Director.

22 Councilman, the KOZ -- adding
23 new sites to the KOZ program, which was I
24 think your question, we've not gotten
25 positive direction from the state to

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2 submit an application to add sites. We
3 about two years ago had submitted an
4 application to the state for probably
5 over 100 sites in the City. That
6 application was not sort of approved.
7 We've been checking in since to sort of
8 determine whether that had changed. To
9 date, it hasn't. We do have authority to
10 extend current sites that have KOZ
11 designation if they remain vacant, and so
12 we've gotten City Council authorization
13 last --

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: Which
15 included the Amazon --

16 MR. BUMB: Which we sort of did
17 in the context of that's one large
18 potential user, but we did it for
19 industrial sites, for example, in the
20 Northeast and in the Southwest and sort
21 of sites all across the City that already
22 had designations, large and small sites
23 for that. So we're maximizing the
24 program wherever we can, but as of today,
25 we don't believe we have the ability to

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2 sort of expand the program.

3 COUNCILMAN HENON: Well, I'm
4 not even saying expand them. I just was
5 asking, in your opinion, do you believe
6 the state is going to authorize them just
7 because we feel -- I mean, have they
8 authorized what we sent up to Harrisburg?

9 MR. BUMB: They've authorized
10 everything we've sent up to Harrisburg,
11 both in terms of extension for time
12 and -- which are the last ones that we've
13 done.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: I mean, we
15 should -- are we marketing that? I mean,
16 in addition to some of the national RFPs
17 that are going out there, because I was
18 not aware of the state authorizing that.
19 I mean, that's something that we should
20 be talking about.

21 MR. BUMB: Privately held sites
22 always feature the Keystone Opportunity
23 Zone benefit. It's a great sort of
24 incentive for buyers. PIDC, which owns
25 and manages many of the large industrial

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2 parks in the Navy Yard, also sort of
3 lists that as one of the key benefits to
4 locating there. But sort of all the
5 privately owned sites around the City, if
6 they are available for development, they
7 absolutely list them. That is a key
8 selling point.

9 COUNCILMAN HENON: It is a key
10 selling point.

11 MR. BUMB: It is, absolutely.

12 COUNCILMAN HENON: I think it's
13 fantastic.

14 MR. BUMB: The program is
15 probably one of the most competitive and
16 compelling in the country as far as
17 incentive programs.

18 COUNCILMAN HENON: Right.
19 Well, we'll talk offline and catch up
20 over that, because I wasn't aware that
21 the state actually authored and the
22 Governor approved it. I thought they
23 were sitting on it.

24 MS. HOWARD: Just to clarify,
25 the proposal that we submitted last fall,

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2 I think it was, was not authorized. The
3 more recent one that had seven
4 properties, that one was authorized.

5 COUNCILMAN HENON: So there was
6 only a few selective sites. Did that eat
7 up all the acreage?

8 MR. BUMB: I'm sorry.

9 COUNCILMAN HENON: So we were
10 only allowed a certain amount of acreage
11 as a city for the extension for the KOZ?

12 MR. BUMB: Right. We never
13 got -- the cap for that is --

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: Like I said,
15 the ones that we submitted two years ago,
16 they failed.

17 MR. BUMB: They failed, so we
18 would have to resubmit, but only if we
19 had --

20 COUNCILMAN HENON: So that's
21 what I was talking about. All right.

22 So the industrial land, there
23 has been a bill that this Council body
24 passed that states any zoning changed for
25 industrial land or buildings, certain

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2 departments need to be notified,
3 including the Zoning Board. Are you
4 aware of the departments being notified?
5 Is the Commerce Department, is the
6 Planning Department, is L&I, and are they
7 communicating with the Zoning Board that
8 it's industrial land and industrial land
9 preservation? We actually have a policy
10 in place now. Whoever wants to answer.

11 MR. BUMB: Yes. Both Altoro
12 Hall and I actually receive directly
13 notices for each variance request on
14 sites that are industrially zoned. So we
15 get those multiple times a week, and it
16 gives us the opportunity to sort of check
17 the sort of requested variance to
18 determine if it's in fact sort of
19 counterproductive to the industrial
20 integrity of the area or whether we
21 should be supportive of it. So we work
22 very closely with Planning, with L&I,
23 with PIDC to formulate, sort of take a
24 position on whether we are supportive of
25 the variance request. Sometimes it's a

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2 variance on industrially zoned property
3 which --

4 COUNCILMAN HENON: It could be
5 corrective zoning.

6 MR. BUMB: Yes.

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: Which I
8 understand. I mean, right now I'm going
9 through something where it's a little
10 strip mall. It's been a strip mall as
11 far as I can remember, but it's --

12 MR. BUMB: It's zoned
13 industrial.

14 COUNCILMAN HENON: -- zoned
15 industrial. So in that circumstance,
16 it's going to reflect the use, the
17 current use.

18 MR. BUMB: Correct.

19 COUNCILMAN HENON: Do we
20 emphasize the value of not having enough
21 land for industrial and manufacturing and
22 industrial land here in the City?

23 MR. BUMB: So I think what we
24 sort of focus on is making sure that sort
25 of land that is still competitive for

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2 industrial has been used for industrial
3 and is still competitive for industrial,
4 that we not lose any of that for that
5 use, so we retain and preserve that
6 industrial integrity.

7 COUNCILMAN HENON: So
8 Councilman Jones was talking about -- he
9 talked about manufacturing that closed
10 down, and there unfortunately have been a
11 few, and we're dealing with that through
12 the process that is set up and making
13 sure that people don't get displaced. So
14 that circumstance that he's at least
15 described to me is disturbing because you
16 have businesses going out -- going out of
17 business for -- I mean, there must be
18 other factors that go into play, but
19 commercial is a much higher valued land
20 than it is industrial. Is the demand for
21 industrial and manufacturing space
22 driving prices up? I mean, how can we be
23 more competitive from a land value to
24 deal with commercial or residential?

25 MR. BUMB: Right. In the

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2 marketplace, generally commercial and
3 residential uses will command a higher
4 per acre.

5 COUNCILMAN HENON: They are. I
6 mean, I totally understand that, but the
7 lack of land and the lack of space for
8 industry, light industry, maybe energy,
9 whatever the industry would be, wouldn't
10 that drive the price up? How does the
11 market correct? Will the market
12 determine that?

13 MR. BUMB: I mean, to the
14 extent that there are shortages, I mean,
15 larger sites, 10, 20 acre sites, are much
16 more valuable than smaller sites for
17 industrial uses, and sort of depending on
18 the user, a distribution user will pay a
19 premium to find a site sort of in a
20 population center like Philadelphia. So
21 even though we've got very little land to
22 work with, if your business need is to
23 sort of actually be able to reach that
24 population and to reach a workforce for
25 that facility, they'll pay the premium.

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2 COUNCILMAN HENON: I'm going to
3 just from a policy standpoint on my
4 end -- and I'm going to heed to
5 colleagues and I'll come back at a second
6 round, but my policy is for my district
7 that unless there's a hardship, I'm not
8 giving up any industrial land.

9 The Chair recognizes
10 Councilwoman Parker.

11 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank
12 you, Mr. Chairman.

13 And good afternoon to each of
14 you. I just want to, for the benefit of
15 the record, thank my colleague
16 Councilwoman Reynolds Brown for her
17 laser-like focus on diversity and
18 inclusion as it relates to minority-owned
19 businesses and to thank you, Commissioner
20 Epps, for making us aware that the report
21 card is on track and you give us
22 something to look forward to to measure.
23 So I wanted to start there.

24 I also want to shift the
25 conversation sort of back to that from a

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2 district perspective, and I know I'm
3 biased because I used to be a member of
4 the staff before I got elected. And much
5 like folks do with Councilmembers, they
6 see us, they see our names, but I'm proud
7 of the very able-bodied team who are
8 overworked and underpaid to do what they
9 do and help me in serving the Ninth
10 District.

11 And with that being said,
12 Commissioner -- and the reason why I'm
13 going to call these names is, again,
14 because when I don't think someone is
15 doing a good job, they know I call their
16 names then too. So I want to say a
17 special thanks to Commerce Department
18 employees Yvonne, Naz -- and I'm not
19 saying last names because I will screw
20 them up. Yvonne, Naz, Jihae, Karen,
21 Salim, Michelle, Duane, Gwendolyn,
22 Gregory, Roger, and Dawn. I know we bug
23 you all the time and we act as if you
24 only work for the Ninth Councilmanic
25 District --

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2 MR. EPPS: Oh, we don't?

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Yeah.

4 Tell us about it. But that's because of
5 the questions that the people demand
6 answers to. But I just want to, for the
7 sake of the record, to thank you all for
8 being responsive and helping us answer
9 the questions for our constituency.

10 With that being said,
11 Commissioner, I want to go back to the
12 issue of commercial corridors that
13 Councilman Henon brought up. And this is
14 extremely important to me because when I
15 hear you all talk about the benefits of
16 BIDs, NIDs, and special services, not all
17 BIDs, NIDs, and special services
18 districts are created equal in
19 neighborhoods throughout the City of
20 Philadelphia, because some based on their
21 organizational experience and technical
22 capacity and administrative capacity are
23 not there where they've been fortunate
24 enough to be that organized to create
25 that, but nevertheless deserve

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2 investment.

3 With that being said, I want
4 you to talk to me, if you will, about the
5 proposed cut for the FY19 Capital Budget
6 for commercial corridor improvements to
7 \$1.5 million, and that's down from the
8 typical \$5 million a year. Last year for
9 the FY18 budget, the budget was actually
10 zeroed out, but I remember because you
11 had some funds from the prior year, we
12 were able to keep some projects going on.

13 Just for the benefit of the
14 public, these are funds that we use for
15 lighting, to replace sidewalks and curbs,
16 pedestrian safety improvements, traffic
17 calming, and landscaping and street
18 furniture. And in my district, for
19 example, I can think of about \$3 million
20 worth of improvements in the short term
21 that we hope are in the pipeline relative
22 to 5th Street, but there are millions
23 more that are needed. And so I need to
24 know from an advocacy perspective,
25 because what I see being proposed, if you

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2 were just spending it in the Ninth
3 Councilmanic District, I might say okay,
4 I would be happy about that, but what is
5 the plan relative to commercial corridor
6 improvements? And we say that these
7 corridors are the lifelines of our
8 neighborhoods, but when we look at the
9 dollars that are allocated for these
10 programs, it doesn't signify to me the
11 type of investment to say that the
12 program is valued.

13 So is there something that is
14 going to be added? The Administration
15 said during some past testimony we're
16 willing to work with Council on this
17 issue. I just want to know from your
18 perspective are we familiar with any
19 adjustments being made to this line item?

20 MR. EPPS: So before Karen gets
21 to the details, this is one of those
22 areas where we talked about earlier, the
23 pace of government, and this is clearly a
24 place where we do not get these projects
25 done as quickly as anybody would like.

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2 And so the pace and the dollars sitting
3 in accruals is a place where if you can't
4 spend it as fast as you'd like, more is
5 not allocated until you spend what's
6 already been accrued, and that's the
7 problem, and Karen will talk to the
8 detail.

9 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. As Harold
10 said, we have a large pipeline of
11 projects.

12 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: \$33
13 million, and every Council district in
14 the City of Philadelphia is included, but
15 I'm talking about the decrease from the
16 \$5 million that was previously allocated
17 and it was cut to 1.5 million.

18 MS. FEGELY: So as Harold said,
19 we've been asked again this year to work
20 within -- sort of to work in spending
21 down the previous year's allocation. All
22 of that money is committed, is verbally
23 or sort of more than verbally committed,
24 but the projects are not under contract.
25 And so we're going to spend this year

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2 getting those projects constructed.
3 They're all very close. And as I've
4 mentioned here before, one of the things
5 we do to try to balance like the sort of
6 long lead time it takes to do a major
7 project, when you're digging up streets
8 and sidewalks, it just requires a lot of
9 engineering and coordination. It takes a
10 lot of lead time. So to balance that,
11 we're going to continue to use some
12 dollars to do what I call a la carte
13 projects, things like upgrading to LED
14 lights, bus shelters, big bellies, things
15 where we can spread it out and really hit
16 a larger number of corridors with sort of
17 some immediate impact and make sure that
18 we're doing things that are meeting other
19 departments' priorities as well.

20 But as far as the -- I was glad
21 to hear our colleagues in Budget answer
22 the question the other day too. They
23 said -- and they've told us, they've
24 committed to us that as we go out and
25 seek funds from the state -- PennDOT and

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2 DCED have programs. There's other
3 programs where we try to seek matching
4 dollars that will match our capital
5 dollars. They said we should continue to
6 go after those funds, continue to promise
7 that we're going to match those funds, so
8 that when we get those funds in hand, we
9 will -- we're going to be going to the
10 Budget Office and saying, okay, now we
11 need those allocations for this project.

12 So we're continuing to move on
13 our pipeline. It's --

14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: And I
15 hear you're doing your best to respond,
16 and I appreciate your response, but I
17 want to say as a person who has also been
18 on the other side to secure those state
19 funds that you needed to match economic
20 development projects that were
21 contributed to on the City side and we
22 secured dollars on the state side, I
23 think that is extremely important, but my
24 advocacy here today is on behalf of the
25 City's commitment to this program for

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 neighborhood commercial corridors and
3 particularly for funding that is not
4 coming from the Community Development
5 Block Grant line item that limits where
6 those dollars can be spent.

7 I know I heard your testimony
8 earlier and to a previous conversation,
9 but I just want to note that for the
10 record, because we will be advocating for
11 additional funding.

12 In addition to that, I want to
13 comment relative to the SIP program.
14 FY17 provided an additional \$600,000 for
15 the SIP program, and we were happy about
16 that. However, it's two years later and
17 we have not seen any additional
18 increases. Is there anything sort of on
19 the books or plans in motion to increase
20 funding for SIP?

21 MS. FEGELY: The increase that
22 we got this year for -- we're planning on
23 it going towards In-Store. If we need
24 some for SIP, we may direct it that way.
25 We have not -- we get very close to

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2 reaching the cap on SIP, but we have not
3 needed additional funds to date.

4 We also do have in the past,
5 and will continue to, seek some funds
6 from DCED to match SIP to use that for
7 some of our neediest low-income corridors
8 where they need a little more than maybe
9 the 50 percent match.

10 So we're okay right now. We
11 would love to do more, but the supply is
12 meeting the demand at this time. We'll
13 let you know.

14 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Well, I
15 appreciate that, and, again, I want to
16 just state for the benefit of the
17 Administration, along with your
18 department, if you want to see the
19 quality of life in a particular
20 neighborhood thrive, all you have to do
21 is walk through a neighborhood-based
22 commercial corridor, and I'm talking
23 about in those neighborhoods where you
24 have to take transportation in order to
25 get to the subway. So I'm not even

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2 talking about those that are connected
3 into mass transit. And for districts
4 like mine -- Councilman Curtis Jones and
5 I talk about this -- he has City Line
6 Avenue and I have Cheltenham Avenue and
7 also the Lower Northeast where they don't
8 have far to travel in order to do county
9 shopping. Investment in these
10 neighborhood commercial corridors is what
11 will help to keep our neighborhoods
12 alive.

13 Cheltenham Mall, we're about to
14 do a ribbon-cutting in about a week or
15 two, because they're almost finished with
16 their rehab. Cedarbrook Mall, I don't
17 know if you noticed what it looked like
18 ten years ago and what it looks like now,
19 but these -- it's a regional economy.
20 These malls are booming, and our
21 neighborhood-based stores are trying to
22 compete with that industry. So that is
23 why you hear me advocating for
24 investment, because it is what will allow
25 our regions to be neighborhoods of

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2 choice.

3 So thank you for your patience
4 and thank you, Mr. Chair.

5 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
6 Councilwoman.

7 I remember Cedarbrook Mall
8 working on that Caldor that was there a
9 long time ago.

10 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: You're
11 too young to know about that.

12 COUNCILMAN HENON: Listen, I
13 remember that.

14 Councilwoman Gym.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
16 very much, Mr. Chair. And I just want to
17 also echo my gratitude to my colleagues
18 for their focus on diversity hiring, the
19 importance of all of that, as well as the
20 focus in on small business corridors,
21 small businesses in general. It's
22 amazing to me when you visit cities
23 around the world that are devoted to
24 really enhancing small businesses how
25 much it means in terms of the life of a

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2 city.

3 I think we -- there are a
4 number of City members from Philadelphia
5 who are invited to visit the City of
6 Copenhagen. That city actually buys up
7 the first floor of many commercial
8 buildings in order to allow for
9 businesses and start-up businesses to get
10 an initial boost by opening up business
11 there and having a certain time period,
12 but they're very clear that their
13 vitality and investment around small
14 businesses has to extend, to a large
15 extent, beyond even more than just some
16 of the streetscape, but really invest in
17 helping businesses get off the ground and
18 get through those first couple of years
19 when it's so difficult for them. But
20 thank you for that.

21 Along those same lines, I know,
22 Karen, you and I were talking a little
23 bit about some supports that we're doing
24 or that you're exploring around immigrant
25 businesses, ones that may extend beyond

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2 corridors and services that were -- I
3 think over the last year we've heard from
4 a number of businesses who have raised
5 concerns about needing help in dealing
6 with maybe police issues, public safety
7 issues, helping better understand some of
8 the complicated new regulations that
9 we're bringing in, getting some clarity
10 and assistance if there's problems or
11 difficulties with neighbors, and getting
12 to some assistance with resolution.

13 So could you share a little bit
14 about where we might be with some of that
15 conversation.

16 MS. FEGELY: Sure. I think our
17 main strategy is really making sure that
18 there's folks out there who are there to
19 talk to businesses through all of these
20 issues. So we have made hiring some
21 bilingual staff, particularly within our
22 Office of Business Services team, a
23 priority. We look to partner again with
24 the CDCs and fund corridor managers so
25 that there's folk out there on the ground

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2 talking to these people, and we
3 coordinate with our other City
4 departments to try to make sure that
5 things are being communicated, whether
6 it's coming from L&I or Police or Health,
7 in a way that is sort of
8 business-friendly and sensitive to what
9 an immigrant business owner might be
10 going through on a day-to-day basis.

11 We also fund a number of
12 technical assistance providers to provide
13 both workshop and one-on-one assistance,
14 and a few of those have immigrant
15 business owners as the targeted
16 population.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And how does
18 that latter one that you mentioned
19 actually operate functionally? So how
20 would they target an immigrant business,
21 for example?

22 MS. FEGELY: So we really leave
23 it up to them. We put out an RFP for
24 organizations that provide technical
25 assistance to businesses, and we sort of

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2 tell them what some of our target areas
3 are. But they come to us with their
4 proposals of how and have to identify --
5 so they all do it a little bit
6 differently, but how they're going to go
7 out into the community and identify
8 businesses that need services, reach out
9 to these businesses. Sometimes it's
10 where they'll do an assessment of the
11 business and figure out what their needs
12 are. Sometimes it's just a lot of
13 outreach and education around different
14 topics, whether it's bookkeeping or
15 marketing or buying their building or so
16 forth.

17 So in this current year, we're
18 funding organizations like Finanta, which
19 has made service to Spanish-speaking
20 businesses and even consumers a priority
21 and has also instituted the ROSCA, the
22 peer lending models in a few different
23 neighborhoods around the City, Woodland
24 Avenue and others.

25 We also fund the Welcoming

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2 Center for New Pennsylvanians and Women's
3 Opportunity Resource Center, which both
4 prioritize and have multilingual people
5 on their staff.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: I think one
7 of the questions that I had is that there
8 are specific issues that I think have
9 come up with immigrant businesses over
10 the last couple of years where there's an
11 identified problem. So, for example,
12 relationships with police, trying to
13 understand like violations of the law
14 that involve them, the Police Department,
15 issues about language access and those
16 particular things, relationships that
17 come up when there's a new opening in an
18 immigrant business, and I guess what I'm
19 curious about is whether the Commerce
20 Department itself has like some directed
21 point of entry with some of the
22 businesses. So I would very specifically
23 specify relationships with the Police
24 Department negotiating problems that
25 happen with a business's safety issue.

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2 So that might be like one body of work.
3 And then the second body of work that I
4 think that maybe we had discussed a
5 little bit about is when a new business
6 opens and it's an immigrant business,
7 that they get a package of work that is
8 specifically directed for them, as in
9 here -- in their language, here is your
10 regulations that are new to your business
11 and related, here's people that you can
12 call. These are the things that I think
13 is different a little bit from asking --
14 I think what happens with populations and
15 groups that tend to be marginalized is
16 that when they are just kind of looped in
17 as part of the broader bucket of
18 services, they can often get lost within
19 that. So sometimes what is also
20 effective and what I think I was hoping
21 that we could talk about a little bit
22 more were the targeted areas in which we
23 know that there have been points of
24 dissension and struggle and have been
25 articulated to us by immigrant businesses

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2 and whether we can still maybe continue
3 to refine that conversation.

4 MS. FEGELY: I think it's
5 absolutely an ongoing conversation and
6 things that have been raised over the
7 last year. I mean, as much as it's been
8 contentious, it also offers opportunity,
9 because it's brought new people to the
10 table. And you're absolutely right, you
11 need to connect to people, not just sort
12 of announce programs or send them flyers.
13 And I just want to make that point, that
14 is, again, why I think it's that personal
15 service and outreach. Often it's not
16 just a language barrier. It's a cultural
17 barrier or it's getting into working with
18 a partner organization that can create
19 that entree to the business owners so
20 that there's some trust built there.

21 I mean, that's one of our
22 issues working with, frankly, any small
23 business owner. You have to build some
24 trust before they're going to listen to
25 our advice, right? But when there's a

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2 cultural difference or a language
3 barrier, it's even more important.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And I think
5 that personal connection matters so much
6 and also helping strengthen the
7 specialties that that person is
8 particularly good at and adept at. It's
9 also one of the scopes that we're trying
10 to work on. So thank you very much for
11 working on that, and I look forward to
12 continuing that.

13 My colleague was talking a
14 little bit about the Keystone Opportunity
15 Zone program. The recent CAFR study
16 released -- or the recent CAFR report
17 from the City revealed that the Keystone
18 Opportunity Zone, which I value very
19 much, is an important program, but as the
20 City expands or seeks to continue to
21 expand the Keystone Opportunity Zone, one
22 of the things that has come up in the
23 past are questions about whether there
24 are guidelines. I mean, this is a
25 program -- it's also shown its ability to

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2 evolve. For example, it's been
3 responsive to needs around the School
4 District.

5 But there have been questions
6 about whether the program in order to be
7 valued in the way that it should be,
8 which is as a true incentive, it's almost
9 like winning the lottery, to be perfectly
10 honest, given the amount of incentives
11 that it brings in. The City also gives
12 up \$119 million in tax revenue as a
13 result of making sure that these
14 businesses get off the ground.

15 Is the Commerce Department
16 developing guidelines for how future
17 expansion of the Keystone Opportunity
18 Zones can be used? There are questions
19 about whether -- for example, it's come
20 up to us that certain businesses feel
21 like Keystone -- a business receives a
22 Keystone Opportunity Zone, they
23 absolutely can't compete with that
24 business, that they need a Keystone
25 Opportunity Zone, and we start to build

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2 out contiguous Keystone Opportunity Zones
3 that come as a result. There's questions
4 about whether Keystone Opportunity Zones
5 should be targeted towards particular
6 industries.

7 So to some extent as these
8 things come up, I would like to see the
9 program truly be seen as what it is. It
10 is an enormous perk. It's meant to spark
11 the kinds of incentives or areas where
12 they would not normally be. But if we
13 are starting to use them in a way that's
14 much more aligned with the abatement, if
15 we're trying to maximize every
16 opportunity to take advantage of KOZs, it
17 seems like the Department needs to come
18 up with some guidelines and clarity about
19 how entities actually qualify for it,
20 especially as we get more and more of
21 them in the City.

22 MS. HOWARD: So as you know,
23 we've been working with your office in
24 terms of the subsidy reporting program
25 and also we're working on an incentive

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2 study. The KOZ program is a state
3 program, so really the guidelines are
4 dictated by the state. What the City
5 does is certify that anyone who -- any
6 property that's zoned as a KOZ, when they
7 come in, that they meet those guidelines.
8 We can't really create our own, although
9 we have conversations with the state, and
10 that's how we ended up with the PILOT,
11 the payment in lieu of taxes.

12 We will be learning a lot more
13 about the program through -- now we know
14 a lot more through the subsidy reporting,
15 but we also will learn a lot more through
16 the study, and I think that will provide
17 us opportunities should the program --
18 right now the program isn't growing or
19 isn't really that active at the state
20 level, but it will provide us
21 opportunities to have conversations with
22 the state about it if we learn --

23 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yeah. And
24 while I agree that it is a state program
25 and it has its own clear set of

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2 guidelines, the City does approve
3 expansion of the KOZs, and you take a
4 look at different sites. And I know that
5 it's already come up that a number of
6 sites want to be next to contiguous
7 other -- they want contiguous KOZ zones,
8 because they find that they can't compete
9 with someone that already has a KOZ.

10 So I guess I'm looking for
11 clarity and understanding about whether
12 the Commerce Department is drawing any
13 boundaries about that, how you define it,
14 whether we are creating the potential for
15 large KOZs as opposed to isolated ones
16 that spark geographic investment or
17 whether you're looking at
18 industry-specific type of KOZs that
19 you're wanting to appeal to, because
20 right now I don't think it's entirely
21 clear about what we're approving. Even
22 though any particular entity might
23 technically meet the guidelines of the
24 state, it is \$119 million of City money
25 that gets put into it that we're -- just

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2 in 2017 alone and as we expand it. How
3 are we defining it to help understand
4 that program as other people seek to
5 apply?

6 MS. HOWARD: So typically when
7 there's legislation in place at the state
8 level, so the community developers become
9 aware that there's the possibility of
10 having those tracts of land zoned as
11 KOZs, we get calls from developers about
12 having -- if it's a vacant property or
13 building, then it may qualify. So we get
14 calls about including those.

15 We have conversations with all
16 the Councilmembers in the different
17 districts about any land that they may
18 know of that could be qualified, and we
19 also discuss any of the applications or
20 the requests that we received, and that's
21 sort of how that list gets formed. We do
22 look at areas that may not need it as
23 well when we consider those requests.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. Well,
25 my time is up and so I'll leave it at

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2 that. I just think that there needs to
3 be some clarity about whether we are
4 truly, as Mr. Bumb said, maximizing the
5 program or whether we're refining and
6 curating the program.

7 Thank you.

8 MS. HOWARD: Sounds good.

9 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
10 Councilwoman.

11 The Chair recognizes
12 Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All
14 rightly. So let's circle back to where we
15 left off and as a follow-up to your
16 response, it has been painfully slow, the
17 trends are moving upward, but it's
18 painfully slow. With that in mind, what
19 our government has done successfully with
20 the nudging of Councilwoman Sanchez and
21 Councilwoman Gym is to make sure that we
22 have language access professionals in
23 each one of the departments to better
24 serve our citizens. So how -- and I'm
25 searching for tools, because government

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2 has taught me that we can do it
3 legislatively to get it done or we can
4 rely on the goodwill of leadership in
5 various departments to figure it out and
6 get it done and to be in compliance with
7 the Mayor's order.

8 So if there's 60 City
9 departments, when you have to have
10 discussions about contracts and RFPs and
11 the like, what's the possibility of
12 training a professional in each one of
13 those 60 departments to also be your
14 go-to person for all OEO-related matters?

15 MS. HARPER: So --

16 MR. EPPS: We're glad you
17 asked.

18 MS. HARPER: We do have OEO
19 officers.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: In every
21 single department?

22 MS. HARPER: Every department
23 with a budget. So we have about 47 OEO
24 officers, and we meet with them on a
25 quarterly basis, and during those

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2 meetings, we do actually talk about --
3 actually, we get into specifics about
4 contracting. They're able to look at
5 what we've pulled from the system in
6 terms of their individual departments.
7 They're able to edit, correct, update us
8 on what's going on. We provide training
9 during those. So we have actually -- we
10 actually created a training manual for
11 the OEO officers. So we have training on
12 the B2G system as well, which is the
13 system that we use to monitor
14 participation.

15 So we meet with them on a
16 quarterly basis. We also have annual
17 department meetings with every
18 department -- every department again with
19 a budget.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So at
21 those department meetings, are they
22 required to submit a report, a status on
23 what's happening in this area?

24 MS. HARPER: We actually
25 provide them with what we have pulled

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 from the system, and we're able to
3 discuss it from that point. And at our
4 annual meeting, we provide a recommended
5 goal for the year, that their contracting
6 is discussed, what the scopes of what --
7 scope of their various projects are going
8 to be, and then we jointly arrive at
9 what's an agreed-upon goal. So that's
10 kind of the process on an annual basis,
11 at least since I've been on board.

12 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And they
13 will become pivotal in the scorecard
14 process --

15 MS. HARPER: Absolutely.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: -- that
17 the Commerce Director has spoken about.
18 That's 47. 47 from 60. Why not the
19 balance of that.

20 MS. HARPER: Some of the
21 departments are independent departments.
22 Some of the departments have zero
23 budgets. So setting a participation
24 range is not something that we do.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: So

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2 separate out those that have zero
3 budgets. What's the distinguishing
4 factor for independent departments? Who
5 are they?

6 MS. HARPER: The District
7 Attorney's Office, for example, is one
8 office.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Can you
10 send that list to the President, please,
11 so we can take a closer look-see at that?

12 MS. HARPER: I can send you a
13 list of the departments that we've
14 extracted as independent departments so
15 I'm not arbitrarily kind of remembering,
16 but I'm happy to provide that,
17 Councilwoman.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: That's the
19 question. That's the request. So I
20 guess we're in a wait-and-see mode with
21 regards to the scorecard that the
22 Commerce Director spoke about.

23 MR. EPPS: So one of the things
24 that we are doing now is making sure that
25 the data is accurate. You talk about

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2 government, 60 departments, 47, whatever
3 the number. We're in information clarity
4 and data accuracy mode at this point.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: All right.

6 MR. EPPS: Iola has raised the
7 level of accountability to departments,
8 that they must have a dedicated person.
9 In the past they could just send somebody
10 ad hoc. That person did not have --

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: They could
12 care less.

13 MR. EPPS: -- the skill set,
14 the competence or the knowledge. So we
15 have said, no, that won't work. We need
16 to have a person that you hold
17 accountable, that we will hold
18 accountable that will be your messenger
19 for that performance.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Very much
21 encouraging.

22 Legislation was passed that
23 requires those who want to do business
24 with the City to report to us women on
25 boards and the demographics of board

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2 composition. Are we keeping that data as
3 well? Is that a standard operating
4 procedure?

5 MS. HARPER: We are keeping the
6 women on boards. We're in the process
7 right now of creating a process to ensure
8 that OEO gets the non-profit metric, such
9 as board composition and workforce
10 composition.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

12 MS. HARPER: So we are in the
13 process of ensuring that OEO gets that
14 now. I know that it's being collected,
15 but at some point in the past prior to my
16 arrival, I am not sure how we stopped
17 getting the information. So now we
18 are working on --

19 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Make it a
20 priority.

21 MS. HARPER: Yes.

22 MR. EPPS: Councilwoman, in the
23 spirit of where I know your intent is
24 from what I heard -- and if it's not, I
25 would ask that it be modified to include

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2 women and people of color on boards,
3 because as a majority-minority city,
4 without that comprehensive perspective,
5 trust me, you'll get the outcome that you
6 don't want.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.
8 Thank you. Thank you. So the bell rang.
9 I have to honor it, but I have many more.

10 Councilwoman Gym.

11 The bell rang.

12 COUNCILMAN HENON: Councilman
13 Henon had the button pushed for the
14 second round here.

15 Can we bring up manufacturing
16 again, please. And for the record, I do
17 believe in any kind of data that we show
18 on the KOZs and tax abatement. I believe
19 that is what attracts a lot of business
20 and it's a job creator and it -- maybe
21 it's driven by the market. Maybe it's
22 not. I don't know. But that is a state
23 law that we obviously take advantage of
24 or will be left out. We have the same
25 kind of issue with the movie tax credits

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2 that the state doesn't allow us to have
3 anymore. So they held up on that, and
4 the movies go elsewhere. So you stay in
5 those lines of thinking when it comes to
6 business attraction, then business will
7 go elsewhere. So that's just my opinion.

8 (Witness approached witness
9 table.)

10 COUNCILMAN HENON: So, Altoro,
11 how are you?

12 MR. HALL: All right.

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Welcome to
14 your first hearing. I'll be kind. I'm
15 just to ask you a bunch of questions, and
16 I know we're going to be getting the band
17 back together, I hear, soon, the
18 Manufacturing Task Force.

19 MR. HALL: Yes. Altoro Hall,
20 Director of Manufacturing and Advanced
21 Industries.

22 Yes. We do look forward to
23 working with you to put together a larger
24 workforce group -- I'm sorry; a larger
25 manufacturing group to see how we can be

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2 of assistance to our manufacturers in the
3 City.

4 COUNCILMAN HENON: At least a
5 group that we had together before get
6 back together. I think it will be great.
7 So I would love to work with you and set
8 a date certain that we can bring --
9 because individual manufacturers have
10 reached out, and they're excited about
11 business growing here in the City and 20
12 percent increase in building permits and
13 the budget. So I think it would be
14 nice -- it would be worthwhile letting
15 the manufacturing industry know that
16 we're paying attention to them,
17 especially when we're dealing with a lot
18 of this land preservation and a lot of
19 the national talk and getting a lot of
20 national exposure.

21 Last year the Department set
22 milestones to increase student
23 participation in CTE programs. There was
24 8,000 in FY17, 12,500 in -- growing it
25 from 8,000 to 12,500 in '21. How is that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 process going when it comes to CTE
3 programs?

4 (Witness approached witness
5 table.)

6 MR. TODD: Jonathan Todd,
7 Assistant Director, Office of Workforce
8 Development.

9 How you doing, Councilman
10 Henon?

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: Hello.

12 MR. TODD: In regards to your
13 inquiry, we've taken a very proactive
14 approach throughout the year to make sure
15 that we're providing the next generation
16 of workforce with adequate exposure to
17 not only industries but workforce
18 environments, workplace environments,
19 tangible workforce situations, and then
20 also making sure that they are
21 interacting with not only the employees
22 out of respect to manufacture, but also
23 engaging with the individuals that are
24 making decisions on hiring and making
25 sure that all of our CTE students,

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 Philadelphia public school students in
3 general are being supported by our
4 department, the Mayor's Office of
5 Education, and other entities.

6 MR. EPPS: I would ask you to
7 just share with the Councilman some of
8 the activities, like the trade show that
9 took place, to let him know that actions
10 are taking place.

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: Just want to
12 know what the deliverables are.

13 MR. TODD: Absolutely. So in
14 February of this year for CTE Month, we
15 had an event at Dobbins High School where
16 over 30 employers, including a
17 significant number of manufacturers,
18 engaged with 135 students, 40 to 45
19 parents and other attendees from the
20 community where they were learning more
21 about what the different careers that
22 these manufacturers and other
23 organizations and businesses entailed,
24 and then also receiving -- if they were
25 in 11th or 12th grade, learning more

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 about internship opportunities,
3 entry-level positions that they can apply
4 for immediately, and then also having
5 access -- their parents having access to
6 see their child interact with these
7 employers so they can learn more about
8 their child's interest and appreciate
9 more what they're thinking about career
10 pathway-wise.

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: So that
12 seemed pretty successful. Can we take
13 that show on the road?

14 MR. TODD: Absolutely, and
15 we're looking forward to doing that in
16 Manufacturing Month this coming year.

17 COUNCILMAN HENON: How are we
18 on our benchmark when it comes to
19 increasing the CTE manufacturing
20 opportunities for students into those
21 direct pipelines?

22 MR. TODD: In regards to the
23 exact number?

24 COUNCILMAN HENON: So we
25 started out in '17 with a goal of 8,000,

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 training 8,000 children in our
3 Philadelphia school system, and we're
4 working towards FY21 up to 12,500. I
5 just want to see that what we're doing in
6 our efforts as far as a pipeline, which I
7 know you've been working diligently on,
8 and it's a difficult and daunting task,
9 but it's important for the growth,
10 because there's jobs in the manufacturing
11 sector available right now as we speak,
12 and we need children and kids and
13 Philadelphians who live here, who are in
14 the neighborhoods to fill those jobs; is
15 that correct?

16 MR. TODD: Absolutely.

17 COUNCILMAN HENON: So maybe if
18 you could provide to the Chair the
19 incremental success of some of the CTE
20 programs and how we plan on matching the
21 need of job opportunities for
22 Philadelphians to those and for the
23 manufacturing and/or industries.

24 MR. TODD: Sure. So we've been
25 working with not only manufacturers but

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 also career and technical education
3 employers, which really runs the gamut
4 from anywhere from culinary and finance
5 to manufacturing, building trades,
6 construction to identify best practices
7 in regards to employers where they are --
8 we're creating relationships with them.
9 They have immediate hiring needs. We're
10 identifying schools that have a strong
11 program in that specific field, making
12 sure that the connection is made between
13 the employer and the CTE school, the
14 principal, the community school
15 coordinator, and as a result, they're
16 building a very tangible pipeline where
17 you're seeing students have internship
18 opportunities. We have been working with
19 employers inside the City, the
20 surrounding Greater Philadelphia area,
21 because we understand that it's a matter
22 of exposure for them for this next
23 generation of workforce, and we want to
24 make sure that these relationships aren't
25 just for show or surface level, but we're

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 actually seeing deliverables from them.

3 COUNCILMAN HENON: We want
4 careers.

5 MR. EPPS: Councilman, at the
6 core, we're just getting -- we're not
7 even to the point yet where we have
8 mechanisms of tracking yet. So schools
9 don't have guidance counselors in them.
10 We don't yet have the ability to
11 aggregate information to measure one
12 period over the other. That's our
13 aspirational goal, but right now on April
14 the 4th, we don't have that in place yet.

15 MR. TODD: And we've been
16 working diligently with the School
17 District of Philadelphia, the Mayor's
18 Office of Education to make sure that
19 we're all on the same page and that we
20 all have the same goal in mind, and we're
21 confident that we'll reach those goals.

22 COUNCILMAN HENON: I'm going to
23 state this for the record. I think if
24 we're going to be adding any new revenue
25 to the School District, that training for

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 manufacturing or introduction for CTE
3 courses in our schools be made available,
4 because they're direct jobs right now.
5 And we're not talking about -- arguing
6 whether we're going to go from 7.25 an
7 hour to \$15 an hour. They're jobs that
8 are starting at above minimum wage, that
9 you can work towards a career and staying
10 there in advanced manufacturing where you
11 got to have a little skill set to work
12 some -- they teach you how to work a
13 simulation machine or a CNC machine or
14 become a welder, and you can make \$70,000
15 \$80,000 becoming a welder, because it's
16 needed right now. The demand is high.
17 So any kind of increase in any school
18 that I'll be voting for, if that is the
19 case, I want to see CTE training as a
20 part of it.

21 MR. EPPS: So one of the simple
22 measures that we can do -- we've been
23 talking about this simply. Come fall,
24 how many young men and women are going
25 into CTE high schools, and come next

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 spring, is the graduation numbers higher
3 than they are this year. If those
4 numbers are not getting larger, it just
5 says that we're not getting our message
6 across. That's just one indicator. So
7 there's a lot of things that we need to
8 do to monitor are the activities that we
9 are beginning to put in place, are they
10 getting the result that will yield the
11 employees that the workforce will need.

12 COUNCILMAN HENON: Do we know
13 how many manufacturers we have in the
14 City of Philadelphia?

15 MR. EPPS: Do we know how many
16 manufacturers?

17 COUNCILMAN HENON:
18 Manufacturers. Manufacturing companies.

19 MR. HALL: Right now we are
20 kind of wrapping our head around the
21 amount of manufacturers in the City.

22 COUNCILMAN HENON: So you're
23 creating a database now?

24 MR. HALL: Yes. Correct.

25 COUNCILMAN HENON: And you're

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 outreaching.

3 MR. HALL: Yes.

4 COUNCILMAN HENON:

5 Communicating?

6 What are the sources -- what
7 sorts of issues are they sharing with you
8 that are of concern for their growth and
9 success?

10 MR. HALL: Right now --

11 COUNCILMAN HENON: In addition
12 to pipeline, because that's across the
13 board.

14 MR. EPPS: Well, after that
15 it's a distant second. It's people,
16 people, people, and then it's --

17 MR. HALL: It's the ability to
18 expand. So the industrial preservation
19 part is essential for manufacturers right
20 now and continuing in the future. In
21 addition to we're seeing some regulatory
22 problems that we're working together with
23 other stakeholders to see what we can do
24 to combat that as well.

25 COUNCILMAN HENON: And how

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 often do local manufacturing companies
3 contact your office?

4 MR. HALL: Multiple times a
5 day.

6 COUNCILMAN HENON: Multiple
7 times a day?

8 MR. HALL: Yes.

9 COUNCILMAN HENON: I'll heed my
10 time.

11 Councilwoman Gym.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you
13 very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that.

14 Just for a point of
15 clarification, I know we worked on this
16 together, Sylvie, but the subsidy
17 disclosure report that should come out
18 sometime this summer will actually, for
19 the first time, reveal whether the
20 subsidies that are given out result in
21 job creation; is that correct?

22 MS. HOWARD: Yeah. So we
23 have -- from last year we do have the job
24 creation numbers, and we'll have those
25 again, and what we will have in this one

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 is also an aggregate number of the
3 dollars spent. So we'll be able to
4 compare the dollars spent to the most
5 recently available aggregate, because it
6 takes a year and a half for the
7 reconciliations because of extensions
8 that businesses request sometimes on
9 their taxes.

10 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Yeah. And
11 prior to the subsidy disclosure law that
12 we worked on together, there had not been
13 any formal disclosure about whether job
14 creation was linked to the subsidies that
15 we gave. There wasn't a requirement
16 around disclosure about that; is that
17 correct?

18 MS. HOWARD: So for some of
19 them, so --

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: It was
21 aggregate, I think.

22 MS. HOWARD: Yeah. So for the
23 job creation tax credit, there there's an
24 audit, and those tax credits are only
25 given if those jobs are created. With

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 another program that we have, forgivable
3 loan program, that's based on job
4 creation, and those loans are only
5 forgiven based on the number of jobs. So
6 it depends on the program.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And this one
8 will, for the first time, kind of reveal
9 about like, for example, KOZs and other
10 types of --

11 MS. HOWARD: Yes.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Thank you.

13 And then -- you know, the City
14 made a significant bid for the Amazon
15 contract. I think that there's been a
16 little bit of discussion about what was
17 actually in the bid. Once that contract
18 gets resolved, will the full bid,
19 unredacted bid, become publicly
20 available?

21 MR. EPPS: At this point we are
22 not in the position to have that
23 conversation at this point.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So just to
25 be clear, I just want to say that like

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 once the final choice is made.

3 MR. EPPS: We'll have to take
4 that back to legal. I'm not sure about
5 that. I can't answer that question
6 because I don't know the answer.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Okay. Maybe
8 we can follow up with that. I think that
9 would help.

10 And then, finally, I was really
11 happy to hear about how the tax credit
12 was converted into the First Hiring --
13 I'm sorry. Yeah. Thank you --
14 initiative. And I was wondering what --
15 I mean, it's interesting because the Fair
16 Chance Hiring initiative and whether you
17 have any preliminary results from the
18 Fair Chance Hiring initiative.

19 MS. HOWARD: Yes, we do. So I
20 believe we have about 85 of the 100
21 positions that we have funding for. All
22 those slots have been allocated, and what
23 we're doing now is working with RISE to
24 actually have participants be placed in
25 those jobs. So I believe some

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 participants have been placed in those,
3 but we're working getting all 85 of those
4 positions. And those applications -- we
5 actually received more applications for
6 slots than we actually had funding
7 available. So for some -- in order to
8 make sure there was diversity across
9 industries, geography, we actually
10 approved fewer slots for some businesses
11 than they were requesting.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: So I think
13 it's interesting because it was a pivot
14 from a tax credit program, which seemed
15 to be underutilized, and then into a
16 grant program, which is in high demand.
17 Can you talk about any lessons that you
18 think we might learn from that and
19 whether it could or should apply to other
20 types of initiatives in which we're
21 trying to spark hiring maybe of young
22 people or other needy groups.

23 MS. HOWARD: Yes. Absolutely.
24 So we're looking at all our tax credit
25 programs, and I think we do feel that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 some of them could be better applied as
3 grants. One of the things that's
4 happening is because we've lessened the
5 BIRT liability, tax credits to some
6 businesses are just not as valuable or
7 they're more complicated. I think that's
8 the case with this program, that the
9 businesses get a refund for those jobs
10 created and it's a direct refund of
11 dollars. So I think there are
12 opportunities to create other programs
13 based on what we're seeing in terms of
14 popularity of the program.

15 MR. EPPS: And this is still a
16 pilot, so the tax credit program is still
17 in place, but as you said, we're getting
18 better results from the grant programs as
19 we thought we would.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: And, again,
21 I think that it's -- I appreciate the
22 effort that Commerce made to try and
23 explore a different alternative and then
24 to measure the results, but I think it
25 speaks to the question of how we

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 incentivize and that traditional measures
3 of incentives may change over time, that
4 the traditional tax credit may not be
5 what businesses actually both need or
6 want or find desirable.

7 So for me it's always helpful
8 of, one, I appreciate the fact that you
9 made that effort; two, that you're
10 thinking about whether other similar
11 programs might need to change, but I
12 think it's an ongoing discussion, and
13 part of the reason why we go back and
14 review and take a look at tax credit
15 programs, tax incentives, are they
16 responsive to the times, are they worth
17 the value in their current format or can
18 we help evolve them to get us to what we
19 actually want, and I think that the Fair
20 Chance Hiring initiative is what we want.
21 It's high demand. It's working. It's
22 placing people, versus a tax credit
23 program that probably was roughly the
24 same cost, right, but people just weren't
25 excited by it. So we have a program that

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 we should be thinking about. So thank
3 you, and I look forward to continuing
4 that.

5 MR. EPPS: I want to stress,
6 that's the same spirit that the entire
7 Regulatory and Legislative Reform Task
8 Force is built upon. Let's take a look
9 at what we've been doing to make sure
10 that -- if we can find a simpler, more
11 user-friendly way to do it, we ought to
12 consider it.

13 MS. HOWARD: We do have one
14 other tax credit that we're hoping to do
15 a pilot around, which is actually --
16 Councilman Henon asked about the CDC tax
17 credit program. So because, again, with
18 the BIRT liability, that program depends
19 on businesses that have a high liability
20 of taxes, and now there are fewer
21 businesses that have that liability. So
22 we're hoping that we can pilot a grant
23 program, because some CDCs actually have
24 a really hard time finding those
25 businesses to partner with, and those

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 businesses are actually -- the taxes that
3 they save, 100 percent of that goes to
4 CDCs. So the City could give the money
5 directly as opposed to going through that
6 process of finding a business partner.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: That's very
8 helpful. Thank you very much.

9 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
10 Councilwoman.

11 The Chair recognizes
12 Councilwoman Brown.

13 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you.

14 A lot of discussion has been
15 given to business corridors, so I won't
16 bother to ask mine. My final question
17 has to do with the TIF project over at
18 the Fashion Outlets project at the former
19 Gallery, and we know that their goals
20 were set for the minority businesses
21 contracted for the during-construction
22 phase. This particular project also
23 includes a pilot program to support
24 minority entrepreneurs post-construction.

25 Where are we with that? Who is

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 responsible for keeping an eye on that
3 ball? And is that a new practice? Is
4 that a new provision for major TIF
5 initiatives in the City?

6 MS. HARPER: I can't speak to
7 the provision -- TIF initiatives. I can
8 say that the project is on board or on
9 track for meeting the
10 construction-related goals.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I'm aware
12 of that.

13 MS. HARPER: Right. So we have
14 not begun discussion about the amenity of
15 services that we'll need to -- that they
16 will need, such as cleaning and
17 operations and things of that nature. So
18 I will check in with the oversight
19 committee. We meet on a monthly basis,
20 and I can report back out to you where
21 they are.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: For the
23 record, you should know that I've been in
24 discussions with Councilman Squilla since
25 this sits in his district, but because I

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 was on Rules when this major project came
3 before us and I listened carefully to
4 their verbal commitments about what they
5 wanted to do, I have -- this is one
6 document that I kept on my desk for two
7 years, and now it's underway, and I'm
8 concerned and doing my own due diligence
9 to raise the questions, and how well are
10 we doing post-construction for
11 entrepreneurs to get a chance to own a
12 piece of the pie after it's built.

13 MS. EPPS: So that third
14 party -- third category is who are the
15 retailers in the enterprise.

16 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: And
17 restauranteurs.

18 MR. EPPS: When I say
19 retailers, yes, including restauranteurs.

20 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

21 MR. EPPS: And so, yes, I have
22 been involved in some of those
23 conversations and, no, I'm not happy with
24 the conversation outcome thus far. So we
25 have called for a meeting with them in

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 the near future to get our arms around
3 it, but my guess is we will not be happy
4 with the state of affairs at this point.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Okay.

6 MR. EPPS: I don't know that
7 for a fact. I'm giving you speculation
8 based upon the feedback that I've gotten.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: I
10 appreciate the candor. I do.

11 MS. HARPER: Our office has
12 also been contacted about operational
13 opportunities once the mall opens,
14 cleaning, security, things like that.
15 And so those are the other things that
16 I'd like to check into and get back to
17 you about as well.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Also ask
19 about the marketing.

20 MS. HARPER: Yes.

21 MR. EPPS: So if I may just
22 say, we, Commerce, needs full
23 collaboration with Council and, that is,
24 the entire process from promise and
25 commitment to actualization.

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.

2 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Yes.

3 MR. EPPS: And all of us are
4 guilty of taking our eyes off the ball
5 somewhere in the process and not getting
6 the outcome we want, and we've got to all
7 be more vigilant about seeing the process
8 through to the absolute bitter end to get
9 what we want.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Well
11 stated. Agreed. Thank you.

12 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 COUNCILMAN HENON: Thank you,
14 Councilwoman.

15 And I want to thank all the
16 members for the great line of questioning
17 and hanging in there and participating in
18 this hearing. I want to thank the
19 Department of Commerce. I think you've
20 done a wonderful job for commercial
21 corridors, which I think are the core of
22 our neighborhoods to expanding our
23 business and base and growth of our
24 economy. So I want to thank you,
25 Commerce Department, for all the hard

1 4/4/18 - WHOLE - BILL 180162, ETC.
2 work that you do, underpaid, overworked.
3 And we are going to recess this
4 Committee, this budget Committee, and I'm
5 going to have -- I have a professional
6 thing here in front of me. It says
7 Council President Clarke. That would be
8 me, Chair. There being none, this
9 Committee will stand in recess until
10 Tuesday, April 10th, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.,
11 at which time we will reconvene here in
12 this room at 10 o'clock, but we will also
13 reconvene our Parks and Rec public
14 hearing to Wednesday, May 2nd from 2:00
15 to 4:00 p.m.

16 I want to thank you all, and
17 have a great day.

18 (Committee of the Whole
19 adjourned at 5:00 p.m.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

MICHELE L. MURPHY
RPR-Notary Public

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Committee of the Whole
April 4, 2018

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